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DIGITAL MULTIMODAL COMPOSING IN EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' SLIDES: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Presentation slides are highly incorporated in the classroom. However, the EFL pre-service teachers' ability to compose meaning across different modes in presentation slides remains underexplored. This study investigates how a group of four EFL pre-service teachers designed presentation slides by analysing the visual, verbal, and gestural modes through the lens of Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA). The research aims to examine how ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings are realised in the multimodal artefacts, students' design rationale, and how the three modes unite to achieve pedagogical goals, i.e. intersemiosis. The data included 15 presentation slides and an interview transcript, which provided insight into the EFL pre-service teachers' design rationale. Findings indicate that although the slides employed the three modes, the analysis found limited intersemiosis, with modes, particularly the visual mode, not co-constructing meaning. This reflects a gap between the designers' intention to engage students and the actual execution. The study concludes that pre-service teachers require not only theoretical exposure to multimodality but also structured practice in designing materials where meaning is distributed meaningfully across modes. These findings highlight the need for teacher education to develop curriculum that explicitly scaffolds digital multimodal composing skills.

Keywords: *digital multimodal composing; EFL pre-service teacher; intersemiosis; multimodality; presentation slides; systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis*

1. Introduction

The practice of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has significantly transformed as a way to adapt to today's globalised world and students' needs. The contemporary EFL classrooms have recognised that students must possess the ability to communicate using diverse modes, such as languages, images, gestures, colours, and other non-verbal resources, to safely navigate today's digital landscape (Bock, 2016; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Danielsson & Selander, 2021; Jewitt, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 2021 in Lim et al., 2022). As a result, EFL teaching and learning have increasingly incorporated multimodal

digital media, extending classroom communication beyond traditional print-based text (LeFebvre et al., 2022). One common manifestation of this modern way of teaching is the widespread use of presentation slides as an instructional tool (Nisa, Dambaresya & Fauziah, 2021; Shin, Cimasko, & Yi, 2020; Soraya, 2022; Widyaningrum et al., 2024; Yunus et al., 2022; Zhao, Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2014a).

In academic settings, presentation slides have become a standard medium for delivering instructional content in classrooms and conferences (Zayapragassarazan & Mohapatra, 2021). Presentation tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides, Canva, and Prezi offer unique features that enable presenters to integrate text, images, sounds, animations, and videos. The effective combination of these modes can potentially enhance clarity, engagement, and interactivity in delivering a lecture (Chen, 2021; LeFebvre et al., 2022; León & García-Martínez, 2021; Zhao, Djonov & van Leeuwen, 2014b; Zhao & van Leeuwen, 2014a). Therefore, to obtain these benefits, pre-service teachers must develop the ability to design slides that integrate various semiotic resources effectively (henceforth digital multimodal composing) (Dai & Wu, 2021; Hung, Chiu & Yeh, 2012; Zhang, Akoto, & Li, 2021).

Although the use of presentation slides in education is not a new phenomenon, research suggests that many students and educators struggle to utilise multimodal resources effectively. Rather than utilising the full range of available modes, they tend to rely excessively on text-heavy slides and static images, neglecting other elements such as audio, video, spatial arrangement, and interactive features (Chen, 2021; Nisa, Dambaresya, & Fauziah, 2021; Singh, Leong & Vijayarajoo, 2024). This over-reliance on dense textual content can lead to overcrowded and disorganised slides, which in turn contribute to cognitive overload, disengagement, and reduced information retention (Castelló, Chavez, & Cladellas, 2020; Zayapragassarazan & Mohapatra, 2021). These findings highlight the urgent need to investigate more instances of designing presentation slides, particularly in higher education, to quickly detect and fix the issues regarding pre-service teachers' digital multimodal composing.

Given this shortfall in research, this study aims to analyse how EFL pre-service teachers orchestrate visual, verbal, and gestural modes in designing presentation slides through the lens of Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA). Although previous studies have explored presentation slides in various contexts using SF-MDA (see Lindenberg, 2023; Nisa, Dambaresya & Fauziah, 2021; Soraya, 2022; Zheng, 2019), few focus on the triadic interaction between visual, verbal, and gestural modes in presentation slides created by pre-service teachers. Additionally, not only does this paper investigate the emergent meaning carried out by each mode, but also how these three different modes collaborate to communicate a strong, unified meaning (henceforth intersemiosis) (Lim, 2019; Lindenberg, 2022; Liu & O'Halloran, 2009). Furthermore, in order to provide a more contextualised interpretation of meanings, this study also accounts for the design rationale from the students' perspectives. The findings of this paper can reflect the EFL pre-service teachers' capability of designing presentation slides and inform the teacher education programmes about how to design training programmes that can shape the future educators to become proficient multimodal teaching media designers.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis

One approach to breaking down multimodal text is Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA), which is informed by Halliday's Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) (Jewitt et al., 2016; O'Halloran, 2008). Systemic Functional Theory examines how semiotic resources combine to create meaning and achieve a larger social purpose within a specific context, such as teaching a concept, persuading people to buy a product, and so on.

To understand the meaning and function of semiotic resources, SF-MDA adopts SFT's metafunctional principles, which include three strands of meanings, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings (Jewitt et al., 2016; O'Halloran, 2008). The ideational meaning realises how semiotic resources can construct human experiences of the world. The interpersonal meaning informs how people build relationships with each other. The textual meaning deals with how the ideational and interpersonal meanings are organised cohesively and coherently in a text. When the EFL pre-service teachers designed their slides, they made choices regarding what to write, which colour, image, and layout to use, etc. Therefore, employing metafunctional principles can assist in understanding what these semiotic resources do and what social purposes the students aim to achieve.

2.2 Applications of SF-MDA in Language Education

SF-MDA has been utilised to carry out investigations in the three strands of multimodal research: the process of making meaning in the classroom, learners' multimodal composing, and multimodal analysis of language educational materials (Chen, Weninger, & Lim, 2024). This paper is situated in the second and third strands of multimodal research, as it assessed how the participants, who were pre-service teachers studying in the sixth semester of university, communicated their knowledge and learning experience in a multimodal teaching material, i.e. presentation slides.

While numerous studies have been conducted in the previously mentioned strands (see Ghoushchi et al., 2021; Lim, 2019; Lindenberg, 2022; Nisa, Dambaresya & Fauziah, 2021; Qi, 2023; Rafelina & Hermawan, 2022; Shin, Cimasko, & Yi, 2020; Soraya, 2022; Zheng, 2019), by limiting the investigation on one metafunction or covering only visual and verbal modes, they present a notable gap to be addressed. Moreover, past studies employing SF-MDA as the theoretical framework has tended to focus more on the artefact analysis and emphasise less of students' motivation on designing their multimodal texts because SF-MDA often centres on the 'systemic choice of meaning making' (Chen, Weninger, & Lim, 2024). This approach has drawn criticism for SF-MDA's perceived rigidity in assigning meanings to semiotic resources (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016).

By adapting metafunction-based theoretical frameworks raised by previous studies and implementing them to a wider combination of modes, this study can offer a more complex empirical approach to analysing multimodal texts using SF-MDA. Furthermore, to address criticism regarding the rigidity of SF-MDA, this study also accounts for an exploration of why students choose certain semiotic resources to convey information in the hope of presenting a more contextual meaning interpretation.

2.3 EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Digital Multimodal Composing (DMC) of Presentation Slides

In today's increasingly digitised educational environments, pre-service teachers are expected to develop digital multimodal composing (DMC) skills, which encompasses the ability to strategically integrate multiple semiotic modes using digital tools to create purposeful texts (Dai & Wu, 2021; Hafner & Ho, 2020; Zhang, Akoto, & Li, 2021). Among the many forms of digital tools, presentation slides are arguably the most widely used in EFL classrooms. Consequently, the ability to design pedagogically effective multimodal slides has become a critical competency for future educators since it does not only reflect teachers' digital fluency but also demonstrates multimodal literacy and pedagogical awareness (Chen, 2021; Dai & Wu, 2021).

Although a growing body of research has explored EFL pre-service teachers' use of digital tools for composing slides, many of these studies concentrate primarily on students' self-reported experiences, reflections, and challenges in using specific platforms (e.g., Humairoh et al., 2024; Limbong & Wadham, 2024; Syamdianita & Cahyono, 2021; Tour & Barnes, 2020; Uzun & Kilis, 2019; Widyaningrum et al., 2024). While these insights are valuable in revealing students' perceptions, they often fall short in analysing how specific design elements contribute (or fail to contribute) to achieve pedagogical goals. In other words, the focus tends to be on the designer's perspective, without critically examining the designed product itself using a clear theoretical framework.

Moreover, few studies combine a systematic artefact analysis with an exploration of the design rationale behind the choices, particularly in the context of slide-based teaching materials. This gap is significant, as it limits our understanding of how EFL pre-service teachers' utilise semiotic resources to realise their goals in teaching. Given the increasing reliance on multimodal tools in EFL classrooms, this gap is especially important. Addressing it can provide more actionable insights for teacher education programs aiming to prepare future teachers not just as digital users, but as intentional designers of multimodal pedagogic content. In response, the present study aims to contribute to this underexplored area by investigating how multimodal meanings are constructed in EFL pre-service teachers' presentation slides and why specific design decisions were made during the composing process.

3. Research Method

This study is nested in a case study design and aims at investigating the creation of multimodal presentation slides by the sixth-semester English Language Education students, covering three aspects: 1) meanings emerging from the slides, 2) students' design rationale, and 3) the intersemiosis of modes. Focusing on this specific case, the study's purpose is to provide an in-depth, contextual examination of how these EFL pre-service teachers orchestrate visual, verbal, and gestural modes in their slides.

The participants were four sixth-semester students, Satria, Dwi, Aulia, and Dodi (pseudonyms), who enrolled in a Multimodal and Digital Literacy course at a university in West Java, Indonesia. Throughout the semester, they engaged with foundational concepts of multimodal pedagogy, explored theoretical frameworks such as SF-MDA and Social Semiotics, and practised designing digital teaching materials. Additionally, the participants had completed their teaching practicum in the previous semester, which equipped them with practical experience in designing teaching media for real classroom contexts. As third-year students, they had already developed a solid foundation in both pedagogical principles

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and the use of digital tools for creating multimodal teaching materials. For these reasons, they were considered well-suited to participate in this study.

As part of their final project, the students worked collaboratively to create a set of multimodal slides based on a lesson plan provided by the lecturer. The lesson aimed to teach report texts to 11th-grade students, and while the topic of the report was left to the group's discussion, they were only required to design the slides, not to present them. Therefore, the analysis focused exclusively on the visual, verbal, and gestural elements displayed on the slides.

The data for this study included the students' presentation slides and a transcript from a group interview. Both were collected after obtaining written consent from the participants. The group voluntarily submitted a total of 15 slides, which were used as the main artefacts for analysis. An initial review was conducted to address any formatting or content inconsistencies, followed by a detailed analysis of how each mode, i.e. visual, verbal, and gestural, contributed to meaning-making through ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions.

The analysis of visual, verbal, and gestural modes in this study was guided by Halliday's metafunctional framework (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), which identifies three simultaneous strands of meaning: ideational (representing experience), interpersonal (enacting relationships), and textual (organising discourse). Visual elements were interpreted using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) Visual Grammar, verbal texts through Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), and gestures using Lim's (2017) metafunction-based model. Each mode was analysed to understand how meaning was constructed, relationships enacted, and content organized within the presentation slides. The summary of the analytical framework can be viewed in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Multimodal Analytical Framework Summary

Mode	Framework used	Focus areas
Visual	Visual Grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021)	- Representational (Narrative, Conceptual) - Interactive (Gaze, Distance, Angle) - Compositional (Layout, Framing, Salience)
Verbal	Systemic Functional Grammar (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)	- Transitivity (Process Types) - Mood (Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative) - Theme-Rheme
Gestural	Lim (2017), Martinec (2000, 2001, 2004), and Hood (2011)	- Types (Presenting, Representing, Indexical) - Attitude & Engagement - Rhythm, Direction, and Timing

Recognising the central role of intersemiosis in SF-MDA, the study also explored how visual, verbal, and gestural modes work together to produce a unified message. Effective intersemiosis has been shown to support learner comprehension in pedagogical contexts (Pi et al., 2021, in Lindenberg, 2023). To explore these relations, Lim's (2019) framework was used to distinguish between co-contextualising relations (when modes align and converge in meaning) and re-contextualising relations (when modes diverge or appear dissonant). For Intersemiotic Cohesion, building on Liu and O'Halloran's (2009) work, Lim (2019) extended two key concepts: Intersemiotic Parallelism, which occurs when different modes share a

similar form or structure, and Intersemiotic Polysemy, where one mode highlights distinct, related meanings of another mode.

Following the slide analysis, three out of four members participated in a semi-structured online interview. The interview guide was adapted from Smith, Amgott, and Malova's (2021) study on students' multimodal design processes in podcast production. The original instrument proved highly adaptable for this context, as it helped elicit participants' reasoning behind design choices. Questions included prompts such as "*Kenapa pilih template ini?*" ("Why did you choose this template?") and "*Gambar ini maknanya apa?*" ("What does this image symbolise?"). Conducted in Indonesian, the interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was later transcribed and translated into English before being analysed thematically.

Additionally, the interview transcript was analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis, as well as guidance from Lochmiller (2021), using the online platform Taguette. After carefully reading and summarising the data, the researchers generated initial codes that captured the participants' thoughts and experiences related to designing the slides. These codes were then examined for recurring patterns, similarities, and connections, which informed the development of overarching themes. Once the themes were refined through a rigorous review process, the researchers proceeded to the writing stage. This involved describing each theme, illustrating them with excerpts from the transcript, linking them to relevant literature, and discussing their broader implications for the study's findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Modes in the EFL Students' Presentation Slides

An analysis of the 15 slides revealed that the majority (7 out of 15) combined verbal (text) and visual modes (caption boxes, image, and decorative elements like plants, stationery, and geometric shapes). Apart from the caption boxes, the visual elements were generally placed in the corners of the slides and served a decorative rather than educational role. Only one slide employed animated gesture (i.e., an index finger pointing at an image, signifying a clicking gesture), indicating limited use of the gestural mode. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of modes across the slides.

Table 2

Distribution of Modes Across Students' Presentation Slides

Types of slides	Number of slides
Text + caption box	5
Text + caption box + decorative elements (e.g. geometric shape, plant, stationery)	7
Text + caption box + decorative elements (e.g. plant) + animation (i.e. mouse clicking gesture)	1
Text + caption box + decorative elements (e.g. geometric shape, symbols) + animation (i.e. finger clicking gesture) + image	1
Text + decorative elements (e.g. geometric shape, plant, stationery)	1
Total	**15**

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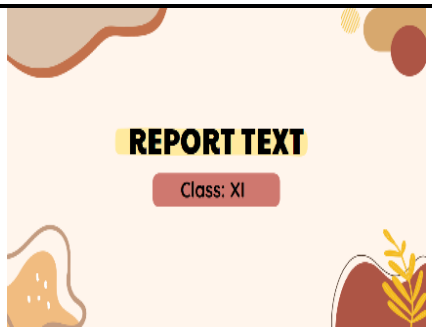
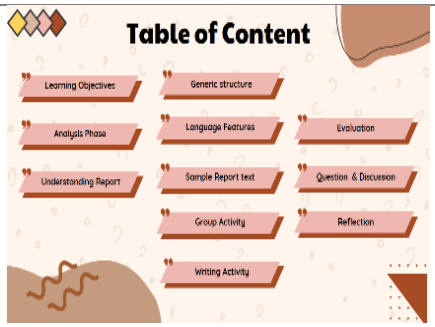
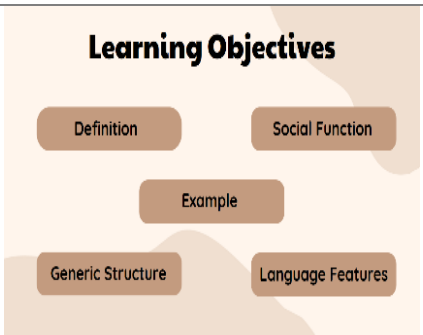
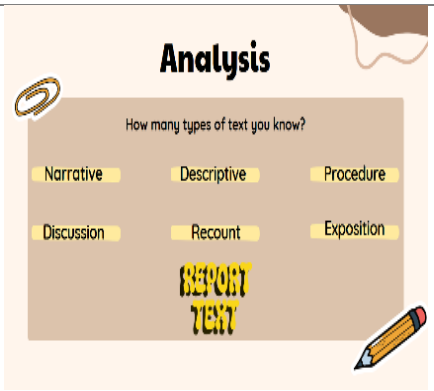
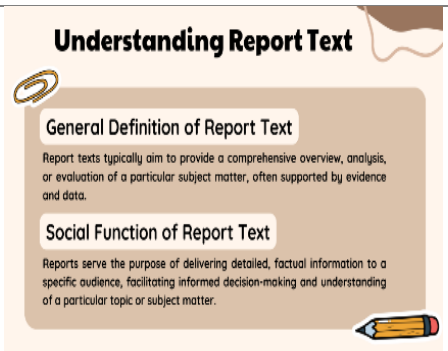
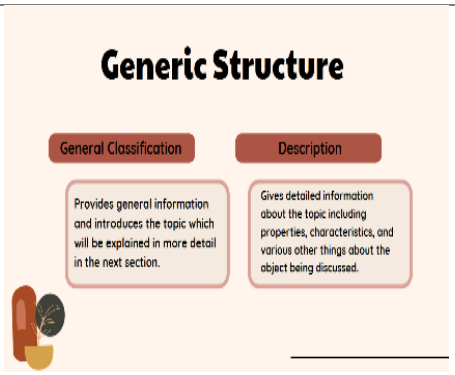
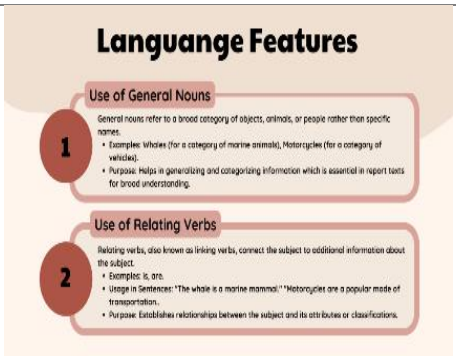
After mapping all the available modes, the multimodal artefacts were then carefully inspected through the lens of SF-MDA, focusing on ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. Table 3 below shows the visual, verbal, and gestural data analysis.

Table 3

Multimodal Analysis of Students' Slides of the Visual, Verbal, and Gestural Modes

No	Slide	Metafunction	Visual	Verbal	Gestural
1		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	Unanalysed	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance,	Unanalysed	None
		Textual	frontal view Centred, text with high salience	Unanalysed	None
2		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	Unanalysed	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, far distance,	Unanalysed	None
		Textual	frontal view Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	Unanalysed	None
3		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	Unanalysed	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	Unanalysed	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	Unanalysed	None
4		Ideational	Conceptual classificational	1 mental pr, clause simplex	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, far distance, frontal view	1 interrogative clause	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	1 topical theme (unmarked)	None

5		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	3 material pr, 1 hypotactic elaboration, 1 clause simplex	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	3 declarative clauses	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	2 topical themes (unmarked), 1 topical theme (marked)	None
6		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	3 material pr, 1 verbal pr, 1 paratactic extension, 1 hypotactic elaboration, 1 clause simplex	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	4 declarative clauses	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	4 topical themes (marked)	None
7		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	4 material pr, 3 relational attributive intensive pr, 1 mental pr, 4 clause simplex, 3 hypotactic elaboration	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	6 declarative clauses	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	4 topical themes (unmarked), 3 topical themes (marked), 1 textual theme	None

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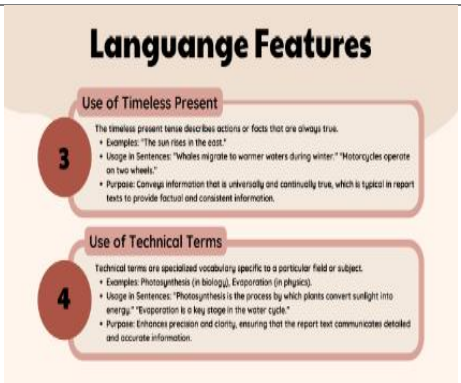
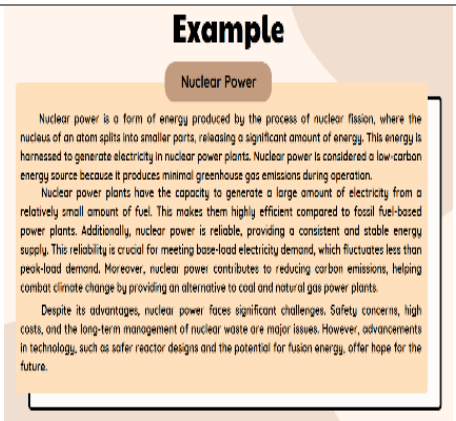
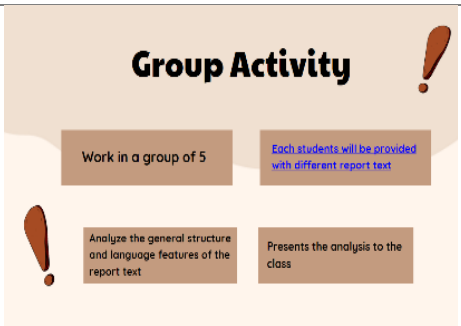
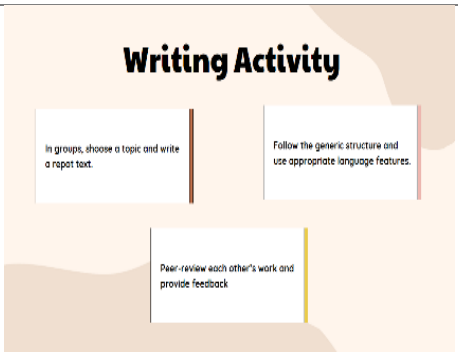
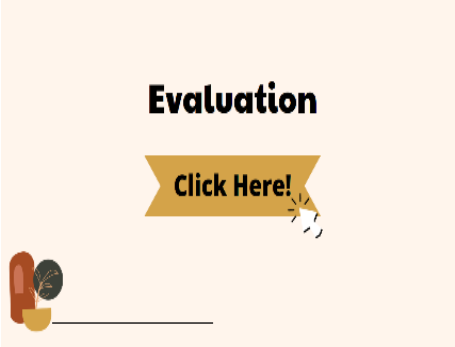
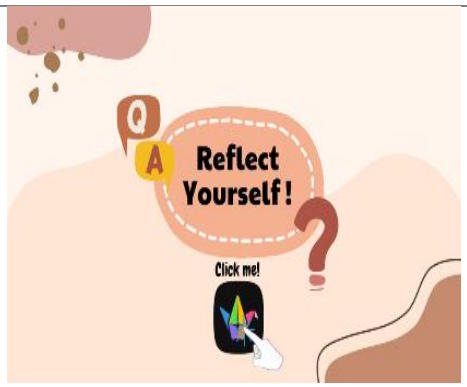
8		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	10 material pr, 6 relational attributive intensive pr, 5 clause simplex, 4 hypotactic elaboration, 2 hypotactic enhancement	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	16 declarative clauses	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	9 topical themes (unmarked), 1 topical theme (marked), 5 textual themes	None
9		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	13 material pr, 4 relational attributive intensive pr, 1 relational identifying possessive pr, 1 mental cognitive pr, 4 clause simplex, 2 hypotactic elaboration, 5 hypotactic enhancement, 1 paratactic extension	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, far distance, frontal view	19 declarative clauses	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	13 topical themes (unmarked), 4 topical themes (marked), 6 textual themes	None
10		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	4 material pr, 4 clause simplex	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	3 imperative clauses, 1 declarative clause	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	3 topical themes (marked), 1 topical theme (unmarked)	None

11		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	6 material pr, 3 paratactic extension	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, far distance, frontal view	6 imperative clauses	None
		Textual	Given-Real, segregation, text with high salience	6 topical themes (marked)	None
12		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	1 material pr, 1 clause simplex	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	1 imperative clause	None
		Textual	Centred, segregation, text with high salience	1 topical theme (marked)	None
13		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	1 mental cognitive pr, 1 material pr, 2 clause simplex	Representing action
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	2 imperative clauses	Prone (palm down) position
		Textual	Centred, segregation, text with high salience	2 topical themes (marked)	Small, rhythmic gesture pointing at the icon
14		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	1 relational identifying possessive pr, 1 clause simplex	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance, frontal view	1 interrogative clause	None
		Textual	Centred, segregation, text with high salience	Implicit theme, only rheme is shown	None

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15		Ideational	Conceptual analytical	Unanalysed	None
		Interpersonal	Offer, medium distance,	Unanalysed	None
		Textual	frontal view Centred, text with high salience	Unanalysed	None

4.1.1 Visual Mode Analysis

Firstly, in terms of ideational meaning, the visuals overwhelmingly featured Conceptual Analytical structures, observed in 14 out of 15 slides. This indicates that images were predominantly used to dissect concepts and present them 'as is' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), rather than to illustrate dynamic processes, which are found in narrative structures. For example, instead of depicting the 'process' of writing report texts through sequential visuals, the slides presented the general definition, generic structure, language features, and examples statically (Slides 5-9). The rare instance of a Conceptual Classificational structure (Slide 4) further highlighted a limited use of visuals for categorising information. The prevalence of static, analytical visuals may have constrained the potential for engaging students experientially, as narrative representations can often provide more dynamic and immersive constructions of knowledge (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021).

Secondly, regarding the interpersonal meaning, a consistent pattern across all slides was that the visuals functioned as an "offer," prominently lacking direct eye contact from any represented participants (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). Visual information was frequently presented in medium shots with spacious blank areas surrounding it, and coupled with the consistent use of a frontal view (characteristic of objective images), this conveyed a detached and impersonal stance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). Consequently, this approach might have reduced the sense of direct address and active involvement from students, which misaligned with the group's pedagogical goal of fostering strong student engagement.

Lastly, for textual meaning, the visual mode primarily organised information using the Ideal-Real structure (10 instances) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). In this configuration, overarching concepts (e.g. “Understanding Report Texts,” “Generic Structure,” “Language Features”) were presented in the upper, "ideal" position, with supporting details or practical applications in the lower, "real" section. A centred structure (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), observed in 5 slides, further drew attention to the most important information placed at the core of the layout. In conjunction with explicit "Framing" devices, such as the strategic use of text boxes to segregate and highlight information, and elements with "high salience," the visual mode contributed significantly to the overall coherence and cohesion of information, effectively guiding the viewer's attention and establishing a clear way of navigating information.

4.1.2 Verbal Mode Analysis

The investigation into the verbal mode revealed its predominant role as the primary carrier of information on the slides, establishing both content and interaction. Upon

analysing the clauses, it was found that material processes (47 instances) and relational attributive intensive processes (12 instances), alongside identifying relational processes (2 instances), were the main vessels for carrying information. Material processes describe actions and events (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), reflecting a clear focus on actions students are expected to perform (e.g., instructions for writing or reflection) and events being described within the report text content. Relational processes, particularly attributive ones, were crucial for defining and describing entities (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), thus scaffolding knowledge construction by establishing clear relationships between concepts, particularly when giving examples of report texts (e.g., "Motorcycles are a popular mode of transportation"). Conversely, the rarity of mental processes (4 instances) and verbal processes (1 instance) (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) suggests less emphasis on construing internal thoughts, perceptions, or direct quoted speech within the presented content.

Regarding the logical meanings, a strong reliance on hypotaxis (16 elaborations, 7 enhancement) and clause simplex (20 instances) appeared, indicating that information was frequently expanded through dependent clauses that elaborate or enhance meaning, or presented in simple, direct statements. The less frequent use of parataxis (7 extension) suggests a preference for subordinating rather than coordinating independent verbal ideas. Notably, most of the time, the extensive use of complex and compound sentences resulted in wordy slides, particularly evident on the 'Example' slide. This particular approach is not considered suitable considering slides that are overwhelmingly filled with information could potentially cause cognitive overload for learners (Castelló, Chavez, & Cladellas, 2020; Uzun & Kilis, 2019; Wolfe et al., 2024). The sentences on the slides should remain concise and straightforward, with only displaying phrases or short, simple sentences that can be elaborated orally by the teacher (Castelló, Chavez, & Cladellas, 2020; Gordani & Yahya, 2019). Therefore, for the input stage, the pre-service teachers could use other methods, such as displaying a video or distributing a worksheet in order to reduce the load of information.

Interpersonally, declarative moods (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) were largely employed (50 instances) for explaining the subject matter (e.g., defining report text). This frequent use of declarative statements positioned the teacher as the primary source of information, therefore shifting the focus from students to teacher as the centre of the learning process. However, imperative clauses (12 instances) (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) were strategically employed for giving direct instructions (e.g., "Reflect yourself," "Click me!"). This choice of mood positioned the pre-service teachers in a more authoritative stance, directly commanding the audience's actions. The rareness of interrogative moods (1 instance) further indicates a predominantly one-way flow of information, rather than fostering interactive dialogue. This approach suggests that the pre-service teachers were still heavily influenced by the traditional lecturing style that prioritises content delivery over provoking and exchanging students' thoughts.

For textual meaning, the verbal mode primarily relied on topical themes to organise information. A high number of unmarked topical themes (31 instances), which placed the subject at the beginning of the clause (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen,

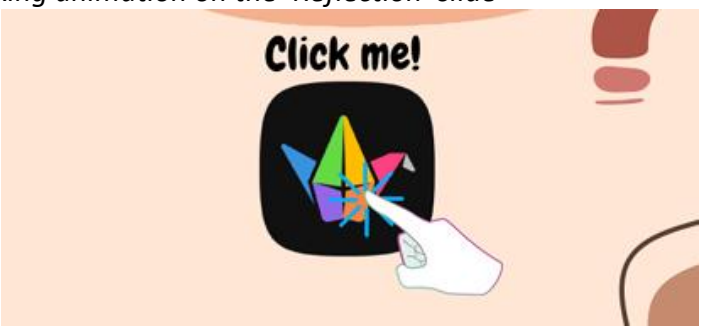
2014), ensured a straightforward and predictable presentation of content. Marked topical themes (25 instances) also occurred frequently, foregrounding specific elements for emphasis. The presence of conjunctions as textual themes (18 instances) contributed to the cohesion and flow of the verbal discourse, logically linking clauses and ideas. The overall Theme-Rheme structure ensured a clear progression of information, guiding the learners through the material in a coherent sequence (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

4.1.3 Gestural Mode Analysis

The gestural mode was strikingly limited, observed in only one instance of Representing Actions (Slide 13). This was specifically identified as "clicking gesture", which directly embodied the physical action of clicking on a Padlet icon, amplifying the message carried by the verbal mode, "Click me!" (see Figure 2). This suggests that the gestural mode primarily functioned to direct physical interaction with the slides' element, rather than to visually represent complex ideas, abstract concepts, or a broader range of experiential meanings (Lim, 2017). This finding implies a narrow utilisation of gesture's potential for knowledge construction, focusing on literal actions rather than conceptual representations.

Figure 2

Padlet icon and clicking animation on the 'Reflection' slide



Interpersonally, the animated index finger involved a prone (palm down) position to give instructions (Slide 13). This gestural orientation, particularly when associated with a pointing action, inherently carried an authoritative and directive stance of the teachers (Lim, 2017). By visually demanding a specific action from the students (i.e. clicking the Padlet icon), this gestural choice aligned with and subtly reinforced the verbal command (i.e. "Click me!").

Textually, the gestural mode was realised through specific physical cues that aided information organisation. The small, repetitive gesture pointing at the Padlet icon using the index finger served a direct textual function by visually highlighting the key interactive element on the slide. It directed the students' attention to a specific point of interaction and effectively demanded engagement (Lim, 2017).

4.2 Design Rationale

The interview data provided crucial insights into the pre-service teachers' reasoning behind their slide design choices, revealing two emerging, interconnected themes: 1) a student-centred design philosophy, and 2) unintentional design, particularly regarding multimodal integration.

4.2.1 Student-Centred Design Philosophy

A key finding from the interviews was the pre-service teachers' focus on audience engagement as a primary goal for their slide design. This aim profoundly influenced their selection of the slide template and some design elements. The group member, Satria, elaborated on the group's rationale for choosing the slide template:

> Satria: "One of our considerations was to find something that looked interesting, something eye-catching, so that maybe the students wouldn't lose their attention too easily."

Similarly, Dwi echoed the statement:

> "If I'm not mistaken, at that time we just wanted something simple. The colours weren't too striking either. But still, the elements (of the template) were plenty enough to attract the students' attention. But not too crowded either."

These statements collectively demonstrate a clear awareness of their target audience, 11th-grade EFL students, and a pedagogical goal to place students at the centre of the learning process. The group prioritised a 'simple' yet 'interesting' and 'eye-catching' design and chose a template with warm, earth-tone palettes (e.g., shades of brown, yellow, and dark red) and rounded decorative elements. According to Narayanan et al. (2025), such visuals could potentially stimulate positive emotions and foster a more welcoming learning environment for students, aligning well with the group's aim of prompting students' active participation. Moreover, this focus further highlights a good grasp of the interpersonal function of visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), recognising how visuals can draw attention and therefore establish a relationship with the students.

Beyond the aesthetic choices, the pre-service teachers also incorporated explicit strategies within the slides to foster student engagement and connect with their prior knowledge. For instance, as a lead-in to the topic of report texts, one slide posed a direct question to students: "How many types of text do you know?" Satria explained this verbal strategic choice:

> "This is, like, me testing the kids, 'Kids, how many types of text do you know?' 'Oh, there's this text, that text.' 'Okay, today we're going to discuss report text.' That's why the 'report text' font is different."

Placing students at the centre of the learning process by encouraging engagement through questioning, reflection, and the creation of report texts, constitutes an effective pedagogical strategy. When learners take responsibility for their own learning and actively evaluate their progress, they can develop creativity and critical thinking skills (Demir, 2024; Ghafar, 2023; Pastini & Lilasari, 2023; Tang, 2023). Such competencies are crucial for navigating the complexities of information in this rapidly evolving world, fostering lifelong learning, and eventually contributing as informed citizens (Ghafar, 2023).

However, unfortunately, this design philosophy was not thoroughly communicated in the actual multimodal orchestration. The following subsection will explore this theme further.

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4.2.2 Unintentional Design

Although the pre-service teachers expressed student-centred design as the goal, their actual multimodal composing practices often revealed a lack of careful adjustment and intentionality. The group's slides contained several typographical and phrasing errors. One such instance became evident during the interview when the researcher asked a participant, Dodi, about a particular wording choice on the "Generic Structure" slide. The exchange unfolded as follows:

> Researcher: "Dodi, in the Generic Structure slide, you wrote, 'General classification provides general information and introduces the topic *which will be explained in more detail in the next section*.' Could you clarify what you meant by this part? Which topic are you referring to?"
> Dodi: "Oh, it was only supposed to be '...introduces the topic.' I didn't realise I had made a mistake."

Combined with other instances of typographical errors which could be viewed on the slides, Dodi's response suggests that the slide was not carefully reviewed before submission.

Furthermore, when asked about their rationales behind specific design elements, participants frequently admitted that they "just followed the template" and hesitated to make further changes, often because they felt unsure of what to add. This reliance on a pre-existing template, rather than purposeful customisation, clearly indicates a gap in their multimodal composing skills. Dwi's explanation about the 'Evaluation' slide offers a clear example of this reliance:

> "If I remember correctly, this was what's left from the template. But it was more like... Yeah, I just wanted to highlight this evaluation section. If I added more, I'd get confused about what else to add, so I just made the 'evaluation' text bigger. So everyone can see it clearly. And the parts below are also from the template, but coincidentally, that template was just better."

This reflection demonstrates how design decisions were often driven by convenience rather than pedagogical intent. Superficial changes, such as enlarging text, were made not to enhance meaning, but simply to make content more noticeable. Dwi's remark, "I was confused about what else to add," points to a limited design repertoire and a reliance on template defaults that hindered deeper multimodal expression.

A similar pattern emerged in the design of the 'Reflection' slide, which included a Padlet hyperlink (see Figure 2). When clicked, this link directed students to a Padlet page containing four reflective questions: 1) "What have you learned?" 2) "What have you not understood yet?" 3) "Do you think the material is useful?" 4) "Is there anything that can be improved in our activities?"

The inclusion of a hyperlink raised questions about audience interaction. The slides were originally designed to be projected in front of the class, yet hyperlinks require direct interaction through students' individual devices. When asked about this inconsistency, the EFL pre-service teachers acknowledged that they had not fully considered the delivery context. However, they explained that they planned to distribute the Padlet link to students for individual reflection. The exchange below captures this reasoning:

> Researcher: "But this method requires clicking. If it's displayed in class, it would be more common to use a QR code. Why did you choose the hyperlink method instead of a QR code?"
> Satria: "I guess we didn't really think about the QR [laughs]."
> Researcher: "So, how are the students supposed to access it?"
> Satria: "The link will be sent to them."

This dialogue underscores a broader issue: a lack of strategic thinking around the affordances of digital tools and how they align with specific classroom contexts. Although the group eventually addressed the practical concern, the initial oversight points to limited multimodal orchestration, particularly in designing for actual classroom interactivity and user experience.

This tendency to rely on templates, paired with an absence of thorough consideration, had a significant impact on the pre-service teachers' agency as designers. Previous studies reported how digital tools often empower learners to exercise greater control over meaning-making (see Dahlström, 2021; Lim & Nguyen, 2022; Magnusson & Godhe, 2019; Marissa & Hamid, 2022; Veum, Siljan, & Maagerø, 2021). However, the findings in this study suggest a more complex reality. The students did make some autonomous choices, such as selecting the template and inserting certain decorative elements, but their frequent justification of "just following the template" reveals a constrained form of agency. The ease and familiarity of templates appeared to discourage more critical and purposeful semiotic decision-making.

This aligns with existing scholarship suggesting that digital fluency alone does not guarantee effective multimodal communication. Without a deeper understanding of semiotic affordances and how to orchestrate them strategically, even proficient users of technology may fall back on surface-level design choices (Tour & Barnes, 2020). In this case, the templates not only shaped the visual layout but also limited the pre-service teachers' capacity to engage in more intentional, pedagogically grounded design work.

Ultimately, this lack of intentionality directly affected the intersemiosis across modes in the presentation slides. Visual elements often fail to complement or reinforce verbal and gestural modes, resulting in a dissonant rather than cohesive multimodal message. The following section will explore specific instances of this limited intersemiosis and its implications for the students' overall multimodal competence.

4.3 Intersemiosis of Visual, Verbal, and Gestural Modes

Analysis of the entire presentation slides revealed inconsistent intersemiosis across the visual, verbal, and gestural modes. The verbal mode consistently carried the main information, explicitly stating definition, features, and examples of report texts and giving commands like 'Click me!' and 'Reflect yourself!'. The gesture of clicking, which only appeared on the 'Reflection' slide, seemed to amplify the verbal instruction, particularly the 'Click me!' command. This shows a co-contextualising relation, where the meanings align in a convergence (Lim, 2019). Regarding the intersemiotic cohesion, the verbal and gestural modes showed Intersemiotic Parallelism (Lim, 2019) by sharing the same message, which is instructing the students to click the Padlet image and complete a self-reflection task (Liu & O'Halloran, 2009).

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However, a significant re-contextualising relation (Lim, 2019) emerged between the visual mode and the verbal/gestural modes. Despite assisting in the placement, segregation, and salience of information to draw students' attention, the visual mode contributed little to the theme of reflection or to the broader lesson topic, which was meant to introduce report texts. The slide predominantly employed conceptual analytical structures, yet it lacked symbolic visuals, diagrams, or meaningful vectors that could support the abstract concepts of reflecting or report writing, therefore failing to fully align with the pre-service teachers' pedagogical goal of engaging students in deeper learning processes.

Although this student-centred design philosophy is highly crucial and relevant, their intention was not thoroughly communicated through the visual design. The group's goal was simply to introduce general information about report texts rather than explore real-life examples. This disconnection stemmed partly from the teachers' decision not to anchor the lesson in a specific topic, opting to introduce the general structure of report texts. Satria explained:

> "We just searched on Google, you know, looking for junior high learning outcomes, and then we picked report text. So, we presented the report text. It wasn't like it had to be about a specific theme. Even though it should have been, we weren't really aware at the time, so there was no theme."

Consequently, the visuals remained generic and minimally contextualised. The pre-service teachers missed the opportunity of choosing visual elements that could better align with their teaching aim; for instance, they could portray human characters with gaze and a high degree of involvement, which could change the shift from 'offering' information to 'demanding' interaction from students (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021).

This phenomenon highlights a common struggle encountered by multimodal composers, which is the integration of meaning across modes. Being an avid user of digital tools does not guarantee that pre-service teachers can communicate meanings effectively through multimodal texts (Jones et al., 2020; Tour & Barnes, 2020) because in order to do so, they need to have a good grasp on multimodal affordances and multimodal orchestration (Hafner & Ho, 2020). The pre-service teachers should understand that different modes (verbal, visual, gestural, auditory, and spatial) carry different potential for meaning-making (henceforth affordances) and therefore, contribute differently to the multimodal composing (Hafner & Ho, 2020). Furthermore, different modes can be 'strategically combined' to adhere to the text's target audience and purpose; this refers to the term 'multimodal orchestration' (Hafner & Ho, 2020). Having these two skills can be beneficial for pre-service teachers to create meaningful and effective multimodal texts. However, these skills are advanced and require strong scaffolding, which is often not fully addressed in the teacher education programmes (Tour & Barnes, 2020).

Another particularly interesting finding regards the EFL pre-service teachers' agency in designing the slides. While previous work has highlighted a positive correlation between digital tools and students' agency (Dahlström, 2021; Lim & Nguyen, 2022; Magnusson & Godhe, 2019; Marissa & Hamid, 2022; Veum, Siljan, & Maagerø, 2021), this study's findings present a contradiction. The pre-service teachers admitted they did not 'think everything thoroughly' during the design process. Although they showed agency in selecting the template and adding some decorative elements, their confession of 'I just followed the

template,' suggests that the affordances of the pre-designed template constrained their capacity for deeper, pedagogically meaningful adjustments. This implies that while templates can make the design process less time-consuming, they can unintentionally diminish purposeful multimodal orchestration.

These findings have important implications for teacher education programs. Pre-service teachers need not only theoretical exposure to multimodal discourse but also guided, reflective practice that helps them critically evaluate how modes interact and align with learning objectives (Tour & Barnes, 2020).

5. Conclusion

This study examined the multimodal composition of presentation slides created by EFL pre-service teachers through the lens of Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis. By analysing the verbal, visual, and gestural modes across selected slides, the study revealed a recurring pattern: although the verbal, visual, gestural modes appeared in the slides, the verbal mode carried the main instructional content through imperative structures, while the visual and gestural modes primarily served decorative or supportive purposes. The intersemiosis also appeared to be limited. The slides did not consistently align the resources to support the thematic or instructional goal of engaging the students. This disconnect between design intention and semiotic realisation reflects a gap in pre-service teachers' ability to apply multimodal theory in practice.

The findings underscore the importance of equipping pre-service teachers not only with theoretical knowledge of multimodal concepts but also with hands-on opportunities to apply this knowledge in authentic design tasks. This includes engaging them in the full cycle of designing, evaluating, and revising multimodal texts, where they can critically reflect on how they construct meanings across different modes. The results also highlight a pressing need for teacher education programs to develop and incorporate practical modules on digital multimodal composing, using accessible tools such as Canva, Genially, or Adobe Express. Incorporating these platforms for experimentation presents real-world constraints and affordances that pre-service teachers are likely to encounter in designing their teaching media. Through guided use of such platforms, future educators can build the ability to deliberately select and combine visual, verbal, gestural, and even other resources in ways that align with specific learning objectives, audience needs, and genre conventions.

One limitation of this study is its small sample size and focus on a single group's slides, which may not reflect broader trends among pre-service teachers. Future research could expand the dataset to identify recurring multimodal challenges. Additionally, integrating think-aloud protocols or design journaling during the slide creation process may offer deeper insights into how pre-service teachers make semiotic decisions, especially under time or platform constraints. Lastly, future studies could expand on this work by exploring multimodal teaching materials across diverse contexts and examining how reflective practice influences teachers' development as multimodal composers.

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PRAGMATICS OF BREADCRUMBING: IMPLICATURE AND MAXIM VIOLATIONS IN MANIPULATIVE COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This study examines the role of conversational implicatures and maxim violations in manipulative communication, particularly in the phenomenon of breadcrumbing. Breadcrumbing is a subtle manipulation tactic in romantic relationships characterized by ambiguous messages to maintain someone's interest without commitment. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, data were collected through an open-ended online questionnaire aimed at individuals who had experienced breadcrumbing. By applying Grice's implicature theory, this study identifies how maxim violations (quantity, quality, relation, and manner) contribute to creating ambiguity and false hope in breadcrumbing. These deliberate violations aim to maintain an emotional connection while avoiding clear intentions in the relationship, thereby preserving ambiguity within it. The findings reveal that perpetrators of breadcrumbing often use vague and unclear language as a communication manipulation strategy that creates emotional uncertainty in the victim. This study also highlights the psychological impact of breadcrumbing on victims, such as emotional uncertainty and decreased self-esteem. The work emphasizes the value of pragmatic linguistic analysis in uncovering subtle forms of emotional manipulation in romantic relationships and suggests potential strategies for awareness and prevention.

Keywords: *breadcrumbing; conversational implicature; gricean maxim; manipulative communication; pragmatics*

1. Introduction

Khattar et al. (2023) state that breadcrumbing is a subtle manipulation tactic in romantic relationships, where the perpetrator "shows love, affection, and sexual interest toward their partner at the beginning of the relationship, often pretending to be attractive, flirtatious, and charming," which eventually turns into inconsistent behavior characterized by a lack of commitment and avoidance of interaction.

In linguistics, specifically in the field of pragmatics, breadcrumbing often relies on conversational implicature. The analysis of conversational implicature emphasizes how context contributes to meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. Navarro et al. (2020) assert that breadcrumbers do not definitely stop calling but occasionally send direct messages (DMs) or text messages to keep the receiver interested, though not enough to allow the relationship to progress.

For instance, breadcrumbing messages such as *"We'll just see how it goes"* suggest interest while avoiding commitment. Pragmatically, that utterance uses implicature by leaving the meaning open to interpretation, making the recipient conclude an ongoing emotional engagement. This intentional ambiguity reflects a manipulative use of language that goes in line with the violation of Grice's maxims.

Conversational implicature, a concept introduced by H.P. Grice (1975), explains how people use language—in other words, a theory about how people communicate. According to Yule (1996, as cited in Ariyanti et al., 2020), implicature is an additional conveyed meaning. This means that meaning is derived not only from the words themselves but also from their underlying or implied meaning. Grice (1975) divided implicatures into two basic sorts: conventional implicatures and conversational implicatures, depending on whether the intended meaning requires additional information or not (Ariyanti et al., 2020).

Dewi et al. (2023) state that the ability to communicate effectively requires the use of language. According to Morreale et al. (2000, as cited in Cantikawati, et al., 2024), effective communication hinges on adherence to rules or principles of cooperation, a discipline that transcends boundaries. Cooperative principles are one of the communication principles, and they contain four maxims: maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner. However, not all conversations follow these maxims strictly. Some speakers intentionally violate these maxims, which can lead to the generation of implicatures or hidden meanings. In the context of breadcrumbing, such violations will give false hope to the recipient and may affect their perception of the relationship.

While previous studies do not specifically investigate how breadcrumbing functions as a method of conversational manipulation, this study aims to analyze the use of conversational implicature in manipulative communication, especially in breadcrumbing relationships, and also identifies how violation of maxims is used to keep someone emotionally invested in the relationship. To answer the current study's objectives, the following research questions are formulated. 1. How is conversational implicature used as a form of manipulative communication in breadcrumbing relationships? 2. How does violation of the maxim of conversation contribute to creating uncertainty and false hope in breadcrumbing?

2. Literature Review

A lot of studies have been authored that parallel the writer's topic by examining conversational implicature, violations of maxims, manipulative communication, breadcrumbing, and Grice's theory. Some notable scholars have researched this phenomenon, including Rayhona, 2025; Su and Zhang, 2025; Aditama et al., 2025; Efizahane and Afriana, 2022; Eragamreddy, 2025; Azzahra, 2024; Dewi et al., 2023; Siddik & Prihandini, 2025; Nafi et al., 2025; Reboul, 2021; Brown & Molete, 2024; Navarro et al., 2020; Navarro & Simil, 2025; and Jaspal & Lopes, 2025.

Conversational implicature is a concept that is widely chosen for research in pragmatic theory. Rayhona (2025) explores the role of humor in pragmatic theory, particularly in conversational implicature and its meaning shaped by social and cultural factors. Meanwhile, research by Su and Zhang (2025) shows that diachronic changes in conversational implicature can turn into coded meaning. Other studies on conversational implicature in the context of media such as podcasts, films, and social media have also been raised by Aditama et al. (2025) with the object *Warung Kopi Podcast on the Has Creative Youtube Channel*, Efizahane and Afriana (2022) with the topic of the function of

conversational implicature in the movie "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," and Eragamreddy's (2025) research with the specific topic of digital communication stating that people often use implicature on Reddit to communicate indirectly.

In research on conversational implicature, the topic often narrows down to maxim violation. One study that is quite closely related to the author's topic is Azzahra (2024), which examines the way people violate maxims in conversation during the courtship phase just to manage the relationship. In addition, research on maxim violation often takes characters in movies and TV shows as its object, such as Emily in the movie Emily in Paris by Dewi et al. (2023), Moana in the movie Moana 2 by Siddik & Prihandini (2025), and research by Nafi et al. (2025) on the Steve TV Show, which reviews the contribution of maxim violation to humor production in a talk show format.

Violations of maxims often create manipulative communication. For example, Reboul (2021) identifies that people use indirect or vague language to mislead others without explicitly lying. From a pragmatic point of view, such speech is considered manipulation because the speaker deliberately uses it to protect themselves while controlling how the listener understands the message. That way, if a lie is exposed, their reputation is not ruined because they can blame the interlocutor for misunderstanding. In addition, similar research on the use of manipulative language was also studied by Brown & Molete (2024) with the object of political discussion on Facebook.

Breadcrumbing is a phenomenon that is currently widely found as a subtle manipulation tactic in romantic relationships. Navarro et al. (2020) stated that people nowadays commonly experience breadcrumbing and ghosting behavior, while Navarro & Simil (2025) measured how often people in Spain experience breadcrumbing through the CEB test. Furthermore, Jaspal & Lopes (2025) highlight that these dating behaviors (breadcrumbing, ghosting, and gaslighting) can negatively affect mental health by making victims feel lonely, helpless, and less satisfied with life.

Although these studies offer significant insights, they do not specifically investigate how breadcrumbing functions as a method of conversational manipulation. This study seeks to fill that void by examining breadcrumbing through the framework of Gricean maxims, uncovering pragmatic techniques used to generate ambiguity and maintain emotional uncertainty in interpersonal interactions, including presenting the forms of maxim violation in the sentences that breadcrumbing perpetrators use towards their victims.

3. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis method to examine the phenomenon of breadcrumbing in interpersonal communication. According to Denzin and Lincoln (in Moleong, 2017, cited in Setyaningrum & Ningsih, 2023), the qualitative approach focuses on understanding phenomena in a natural setting using various existing methods. Creswell (2017) also emphasizes that qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This type of research involves emerging questions and procedures, collecting data typically in the participant's setting, analyzing data inductively by building from specific details to broader themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze linguistic data in depth based on the theory of conversational implicature and maxim violation in the principle of conversational cooperation proposed by Grice (1975).

Furthermore, content analysis is considered appropriate in this study because it enables researchers to interpret textual data such as ambiguous messages. Content analysis is used to make conclusions that are reproducible and valid while taking into account the context in which communication occurs (Bungin, 2019, as cited in Devi & Ningsih, 2025).

Data was collected through an open-ended questionnaire created in Google Forms, and it was distributed via social media platforms. The sampling technique was purposive, with the criterion that the participants were Generation Z in Indonesia who had experienced manipulative communication in the form of breadcrumbing, especially in romantic relationships. Participants ranged in age 20 to 24 years old, with the majority of questionnaire respondents being female.

The questionnaire contained three sections. The first section asked about demographic information such as age and gender. The second section focused on the participants' experiences, including whether they had ever been in a breadcrumbing relationship and what kind of things the perpetrators said. The third section explored perceptions and interpretations of them while receiving the messages, with questions such as how they felt, whether it was confusing, whether they considered it manipulative, and whether they perceived any hidden meanings behind the messages.

Data analysis was conducted by identifying forms of conversational implicature as well as maxim violations such as the maxims of quantity, relation, and manner to find out how vagueness and false expectations are formed in conversations. To ensure that the data obtained was correct and reliable, the researcher used several different but still relevant theoretical frameworks and asked for opinions from the supervisor. In addition, direct quotes from respondents were also used as evidence in the analysis. This research also adheres to ethics by keeping the identity of the participants confidential and asking their permission first before filling out the questionnaire.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the content analysis of the utterances that were submitted by the people who had been in a breadcrumbing relationship in the Google Form, the results were presented. There are eight data points indicating maximum violations, including two violations of maximum quantity, two violations of maximum quality, one violation of maximum relation, and three violations of maximum manner.

Table 1

Percentage of Maxim Violation

Types of maxim violation	Number of violation	Percentage
Quantity	2	25%
Quality	2	25%
Relation	1	12.5%
Manner	3	37.5%
Total	8	100%

From the table 1, maxim of manner are the most frequently violated, occurring three times (37.5%), followed by maxim of quantity and quality, each occurring twice (25%), while

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maxim of relation are the least frequently violated, occurring only once (12.5%). These results indicate that breadcrumbing perpetrators often use vague and unclear language. These violations function as a communication manipulation strategy that creates emotional uncertainty in the victim.

Perpetrators use implicature or implied meaning that is not explicitly stated, allowing victims to interpret the meaning behind ambiguous statements on their own. This creates false hope and emotional confusion, which are characteristic of breadcrumbing dynamics.

Additionally, violations of the maxims of quantity and quality also contribute to manipulative communication. Violations of quantity arise from providing too little or too much information, leading to ambiguity, while violations of quality involve conveying information that is dishonest or unfounded.

1. Violation of Maxim Quantity

The sentence “Aku nyaman sama kamu” violates the maxim of quantity because it provides too little information, making it very likely that the recipient of the message will be confused about what makes the speaker feel comfortable, thus creating expectations without clarity about the relationship between the two.

In contrast to the first sentence, the sentence "Aku suka banget ngobrol sama kamu... kamu beda dari yang lain… kamu bikin aku ngerasa dihargain… tapi kadang aku ragu sama diriku sendiri apalagi hubunganku yang sebelumnya berat banget…" violates the maxim of quantity because it provides too much information, yet the speaker fails to convey a clear relational meaning, thereby creating ambiguity in the conversation.

2. Violation of Maxim Quality

Statements such as "Aku suka banget chattingan sama kamu." and “Nanti klo aku seriusin kamu jgn kaget ya” violate the maxim of quality because they provide information without strong evidence and give the impression of manipulation, especially regarding exclusivity. These phrases appear playful but are somewhat ambiguous, indirectly implying future commitment while also creating emotional ambiguity. The lack of strong evidence is also evident in “*(padahal juga chat dengan banyak cewek)”* where, at the end of the relationship, the victim realizes that the exclusivity was not genuine.

3. Violation of Maxim Relation

<u>Example 1</u>
Dinda: Di roomchatku gaada apapun, makanya aku kira kamu ngilang lagi
Adit: I think we should try to sposess again.

The conversation above belongs to the violation Maxim of Relation, because it is irrelevant to Dinda’s statement which implies disappointment over Adit’s absence in the previous conversation. The implicature that emerges is that Adit is trying to avoid a serious conversation and opts for a casual activity (Spotify session), thus covering up his absence with a positive invitation. In the context of breadcrumbing, this strategy serves to maintain emotional attachment without providing clarification or commitment, creating uncertainty and false expectations.

4. Violation of Maxim Manner

<u>Example 2</u>
Gia: Menurut kamu kita bakal gimana?
Farhan: We’ll just see how it goes aja lah.

Example 3
Nada: Kamu tuh kemana aja sih?
Rizky: So busy lately, just wait for me ya.

The statements in example 2 and 3 are indicated as violating the maxim of manners because the answers given by Farhan and Rizky are very vague and unspecific. These unclear answers create uncertainty about the relationship questioned by Gia and Nada earlier.

Meanwhile, in the statement "Walaupun hubungan kita sekarang gak jelas, tapi aku cemburu kalau kamu dideketin sama cowok lain," the violation of the maxim of manner is caused by the demand for exclusivity while the status of the relationship is still unclear. This can confuse the emotional feelings of the interlocutor or victim of this breadcrumbing.

The finding is in line with the previous research by Navarro et al. (2020), which describes breadcrumbing as a form of emotional manipulation in digital relationships. In several cases, violations of maxims result in implied meanings that need to be interpreted by the interlocutor, and if not understood correctly, can trigger uncertainty or misinterpretation (Azzahra, 2024). According to Campaioli et al. (2022), in another case like ghosting, being a victim (ghosted) of an unclear relationship status also could make participants feel frustrated, angry, or stressed or even could affect their self-esteem. The ambiguity resulting from these implicatures and violations of maxims not only affects communication but also influences the emotional state of the victim. Victims tend to get trapped in uncertain expectations and find it difficult to escape the ambiguous signals continuously sent by the perpetrator (breadcrumber). Similar research by Jaspal & Lopes (2025) also shows that dating behavior such as breadcrumbing, ghosting and gaslighting can negatively affect mental health by making victims feel lonely, helpless and less satisfied with life.

Such forms of manipulation are getting harder to recognize in the context of today's online communication because they are delivered in a smooth and indirect way. Therefore, analyzing how people communicate using Grice's theory is helpful in understanding communication patterns that are seemingly normal but actually have hidden intentions and can be used to manipulate other people's emotions in a relationship.

5. Conclusion

The eight utterances identified in this study violate Grice's maxims and conversational implicatures, which are commonly used by perpetrators of "breadcrumbing" to maintain ambiguous relationship status, create false hope, and manipulate emotional feelings. The linguistic patterns are used as manipulative tools by perpetrators against victims through mutual communication. These findings highlight the importance of applying pragmatics, particularly Grice's theory, to uncover the dynamics of online romantic relationships. It is hoped that this research will help identify manipulative online behavior and, by recognizing these patterns, make online dating safer. Future research could be expanded to analyze manipulative communication such as breadcrumbing from the perspective of the perpetrator or a specific gender.

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FROM LOCAL FLAVOR TO GLOBAL APPEAL: LANGUAGE IN INDONESIAN BEAUTY BRANDING

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Abstract

This study examined the language of Indonesian beauty branding, focusing on how language choices constructed brand identity and appealed to specific social groups. The research analyzed 79 data points, including brand names, slogans, taglines, and campaigns, which were collected from homepage banners and company profiles of seven beauty brand websites, using the Linguistic Landscape (LL) and Virtual Linguistic Landscape (VLL) frameworks. The sample included both local and international labels. A qualitative descriptive method with purposive sampling was applied, and the data were categorized by language form (monolingual or bilingual) and linguistic function (informative and symbolic). The findings showed a strong preference for English in conveying prestige, modernity, and global orientation. Bahasa Indonesia was employed to emphasize national pride and ensure accessibility, while occasional Arabic or Spanish terms targeted niche audiences. The dominance of symbolic over informative functions reflected strategic branding aimed at influencing consumer perceptions and appealing to defined social groups. This research contributed to the advancement of LL and VLL scholarships by extending their application to the under-explored domain of beauty branding in Indonesia. It demonstrated how multilingual branding operated simultaneously as a marketing tool and a vehicle for ideological expression, offering a framework for understanding how language choices in emerging markets reflected and reinforced socio-cultural values.

Keywords: *brand identity; language ideology; linguistic landscape; product branding; virtual linguistic landscape.*

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, there has been a growing linguistic trend in Indonesian beauty product branding. Language, as an essential part of human life (Gorter, 2006), has become a deliberate tool in branding, which is crafted in distinct ways to attract potential buyers and encourage product purchases (Iwana & Sudarwati, 2021; Khazanah et al., 2023; Pamuji & Khristianto, 2018). Branding heavily relies on language as a communication tool for delivering meaning and shaping perceptions, memories, behaviours, and attitudes toward brands (Carnevale, Luna, & Lerman, 2017). In order to attract people's attention, mainstream Indonesian beauty product advertisements frequently embed an ideology based

on certain social groups' interests to target and attract potential buyers. This aligns with Kostić and Slavković's (2020) findings that advertisers strategically leverage customers' beliefs, knowledge, opinions, and ideologies to influence purchasing decisions.

The linguistic landscape of product branding is frequently constructed to serve specific communicative purposes. For instance, the use of English in branding is frequently perceived as a symbol of modernity, luxury, prestige, and superior quality among Indonesian society (Ardhian, Purnanto, & Yustanto, 2021; Iwana & Sudarwati, 2021; Sumarlam, Purnanto, & Ardhian, 2020). Consequently, English is used by several brands, such as *Make Over, Avoskin, and Dear Me Beauty,* which drives its dominant use in Indonesian beauty product branding (Khazanah et al., 2023). This strategy also supports expansion into international markets, where English facilitates broader consumer reach (Khazanah et al., 2023). On the other hand, *Citra* continues to maintain the use of the local language, Bahasa Indonesia, as its dominant branding language, occasionally supplemented with English. This approach aligns with findings from Khazanah et al. (2023), where most participants reported that the use of Bahasa Indonesia is preferred among buyers because it projects national pride and ensures clarity.

These two perspectives drive several Indonesian beauty brands to implement more than one language, or code mixing, in their branding (Nisa et al., 2024) and to incorporate culturally specific terms. A compelling example of this practice is the frequent use of the term "Wudu Friendly" in Indonesian beauty product branding. The phrase "Wudu Friendly" combines the religious term in Islam, *"*wudu*,"* to appeal to Muslim consumers, and the word *"*friendly,*"* which retains English's prestige value in branding. This blend reflects a strategic linguistic choice and demonstrates a strong demographic fit (Kostić & Slavković, 2020), as Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim population in the world (Sukesi & Hidayat, 2019), making it a distinctive tool to appeal to this segment (Halim & Halim, 2023). These examples illustrate how language choice in Indonesian beauty product branding positions brands to target specific social groups with diverse ideologies. The existence of diverse linguistic choices and ideologies in Indonesian beauty product branding makes the phenomenon particularly worthy of further observation.

Several previous studies have explored the linguistic landscape concept in Indonesian beauty advertising, such as the employment of hyperbole as a stylistic device to underscore key points (Halim & Halim, 2023; Pramesti & Prawoto, 2020), the use of intimate and personalized word choices (Hidayat, 2020), code mixing in local beauty brands (Nisa et al., 2024), multimodal elements in Indonesian women's magazines (Khairani, Gurning, & Zainuddin, 2019), and language characteristics of beauty product advertisements (Sembiring, Sibarani, & Sihombing, 2020). However, research specifically addressing how the linguistic landscape of beauty branding reflects and reinforces social group ideologies remains limited. This study aims to fill that gap by identifying linguistic landscape patterns in branding and analyzing their alignment with strategies targeting specific social groups. By doing so, it offers insights for copywriters into the strategic use of language to shape brand identity and enhance product appeal in diverse markets (Febriana et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Linguistic Landscape and Virtual Linguistic Landscape

The linguistic landscape (LL) is defined as a study of language used in public spaces that fulfils two primary functions, namely informative and symbolic (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The informative function delivers a practical message from the sign maker. For

instance, in beauty products, it includes the information about product details such as ingredients, halal certification, and product features. The symbolic function refers to the brand's choice of language, which indexes the ideologies of the target market from specific social groups. Language indexing is interpretative and closely tied to social, economic, political, cultural, and other interdisciplinary factors (Artawa et al., 2023). There are three factors influencing the choice of language on public signs, which are: the languages the sign maker is proficient in, the languages familiar to the intended audience, and the assumptions the sign maker holds based on how the audience is expected to interpret the message (Artawa et al., 2023; Spolsky & Cooper, 1991).

However, in the digital era, this concept has broadened beyond physical spaces. Due to the widespread use of computer mediated communication (CMC), LL now extends into the digital realm, resulting in the development of the term "virtual linguistic landscape" (VLL) pointed out by Ivković and Lotherington (2009) and further discussed by Biró (2018). The clear distinction between the physical (geographical) linguistic landscape and the virtual linguistic landscape has become increasingly significant, particularly as research has begun to examine public signage within online spaces (Biró, 2018; Ivković & Lotherington, 2009). Both physical and virtual spaces offer unique opportunities for language use, enabling individuals and groups to construct and design meaning within their respective environments creatively. These landscapes function as a web of significances where languages are used in different ways, conveying different meanings and with different aims in mind" (Gorter & Cenoz, 2014, as cited in Biró, 2018). Within this dynamic virtual linguistic landscape, multiple branding styles and strategies arise and will be further discussed in this study. By taking virtual signage into linguistic landscape studies, scholars can gain deeper insights into how language is practiced and how signage is crafted among individuals, groups, or communities (Biró, 2018; Ivković & Lotherington, 2009).

2.2 The Concept of Ideology in Discourse Analysis

The concept of landscape as a "web of significances" (Biró, 2018; Gorter & Cenoz, 2014), aligns with Jones' statement (2024) in his book "Discourse Analysis" that words are never neutral. They always carry meaning shaped by the world around us and create certain kinds of relationships with the people with whom we are communicating. As a result, any text inevitably promotes a particular ideology. Ideology, in this sense, refers to a structured set of beliefs and assumptions about what is considered right or wrong, good or bad, and normal or abnormal. These belief systems offer frameworks for how the world should function, shaping collective worldviews and shared values within certain groups. However, while ideologies can unify, they also inflict boundaries by marginalizing or excluding people, ideas, and practices that fall outside their norms. This theoretical lens is particularly relevant in analyzing the virtual linguistic landscape of beauty product branding in Indonesia, where the language choices used by brands may reflect and reinforce specific ideologies. Through this approach, it can be examined whether the linguistic strategies employed align with the brand's intended ideological stance.

2.3 Previous Studies

As mentioned above, several studies have conducted similar linguistic landscape research in the beauty branch. One such study was conducted by Halim and Halim (2023) with the title "Language Style Applied to Indonesian Beauty Products in Digital

Advertisements." This study investigated the language style employed in several Indonesian beauty product advertisements, focusing on five Indonesian local brands. From this study, it was found that online advertisements implement a variety of language styles, with exaggeration and figurative language being the most used techniques for promoting products on digital platforms. Hyperbole is used by advertisers to emphasize the features of the products as well as to highlight the overstated claims.

A second similar study was conducted by Iwana and Sudarwati (2021) with the title "A Melting Pot of Malang: Linguistic Landscape of Malang Culinary Signs." The study focuses on the linguistic landscape of culinary signage around a university area in Malang, East Java, by examining the types of language used and their communicative functions. The findings show that commonly found languages on banners and storefronts include Indonesian, English, and Javanese, along with other foreign languages such as Japanese, Korean, Arabic, and Malay, as well as regional vernaculars like Sundanese, Banjarese, and Minangnese. The language choices often reflect the nature of the store's service and the flavors they offer. Foreign languages are used to create a modern and global impression, which appeals especially to college students who embrace modernization. Meanwhile, Javanese is used as a way to preserve and express the cultural identity of the local community.

This study aims to identify the linguistic landscape in a virtual background by analyzing the brands' identity in promoting their products by carrying particular ideologies through the language used.

3. Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive design to examine how language practices and the beliefs or ideologies of Indonesian consumers were integrated into beauty product branding in Indonesia, using LL and VLL theory. A descriptive qualitative method was chosen because qualitative research emphasizes meaning rather than generalization, with the researchers serving as the primary instrument (Sugiyono, 2016). The focus of this study was exclusively on the textual elements obtained from several beauty products' official websites, which served as the primary objects of analysis.

The researchers selected the brands and elements using purposive sampling, a method involving the deliberate choice of subjects capable of providing valuable insights into a particular theme, concept, or phenomenon (Halim & Halim, 2023; Robinson, 2014). Seven beauty brands—both local and international—were selected based on their market visibility and the accessibility of information on their official websites. The primary data included brand names, slogans, taglines, and campaign materials drawn from homepage banners and company profile sections.

To collect the data, the researchers first identified the seven brands as the object of analysis. Then, the homepage banners and company profiles were manually extracted from each brand's official website through content analysis. These two elements were selected because they are the most accessible parts of a website and prominently represent the brand's image and identity, deliberately designed to attract visitors' attention.

For analysis, the collected data were organized using *Microsoft Excel.* The researchers categorized the texts by language used, identified informative and symbolic elements, and analyzed the findings using the Linguistic Landscape framework proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997), relating them to the concepts of ideology and web significance as discussed by Jones (2024), Biró (2018), and Gorter and Cenoz (2014). A second researcher

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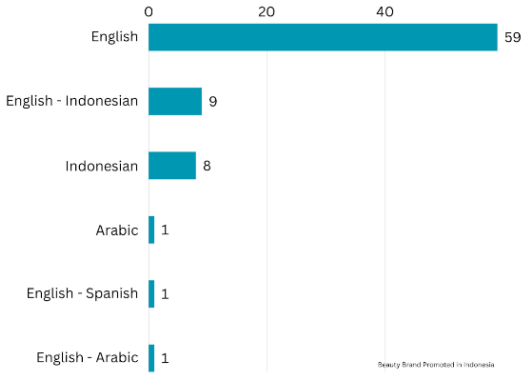
independently examined and cross-checked the coding results to guarantee reliability, and disagreements were discussed and settled until agreement was reached.

4. Results and Discussion

The data for this study were collected in mid-July 2025, and it took two days to be saturated. The researchers collected 79 data items, consisting of brand names, taglines, slogans, and campaigns. The languages used in beauty product branding marketed in Indonesia were identified as English, Indonesian, Arabic, and Spanish, as presented in *figure 1* below.

Figure 1

The Distribution of Language Used in Beauty Product Branding in the Indonesian Market

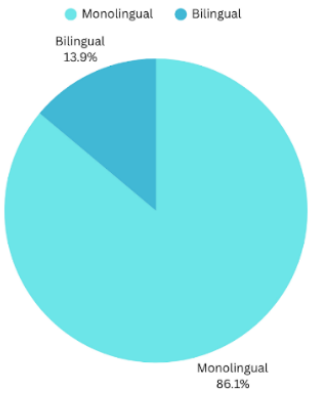


As demonstrated by the figure above, English had a dominant presence in beauty product branding. Meanwhile, Bahasa Indonesia was the second most frequently used language. Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that the language used in advertising from the beauty industry was not highly diversified, despite the presence of advertisements in languages such as Arabic and Spanish. Arabic and Spanish appeared only minimally, each represented by a single word, “halal” and “adios” respectively.

The collected data were also categorized into monolingual and bilingual, as illustrated in the second figure below:

Figure 2

The Total of Monolingual and Bilingual Beauty Product Branding

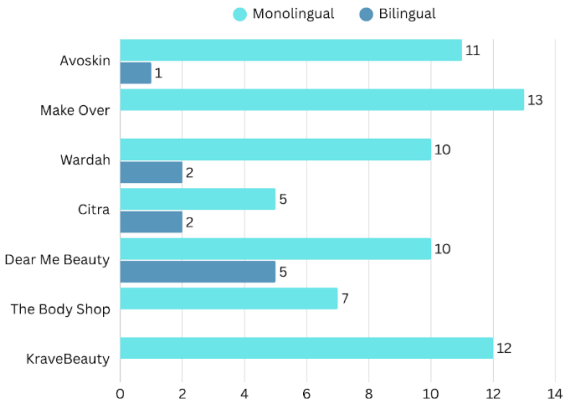


From the results above, the beauty brands promoted in Indonesia predominantly utilize a monolingual pattern (86.1%), while the bilingual approach is positioned in second

place (13.9%), revealing a significant difference of 72.2%. The findings suggest that monolingualism is more preferable over bilingualism in the field of beauty sector advertising. Precisely, the form of language used by each brand, monolingual and bilingual, is presented in the following chart:

Figure 3

The Language Form of Beauty Product Branding Per Brand



The chart showed that three out of seven brands (*Make Over. The Body Shop, KraveBeauty*) used a single language, English, across all branding elements. The remaining four brands—*Avoskin, Citra, Wardah,* and *Dear Me Beauty*—used both monolingual and bilingual approaches.

Table 1

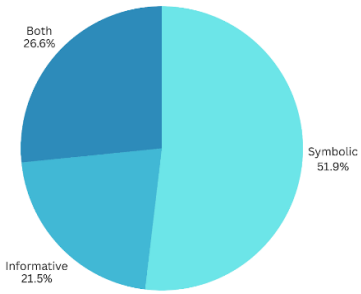
The Monolingual and Bilingual Pattern of Each Brand

Brand	Avoskin			Make Over	Wardah				Citra		Dear Me Beauty				The Body Shop	KraveBeauty
Language	Eng	Ind	Eng + Ind	English	Eng	Arab	Eng + Ind	Eng + Arab	Ind	Eng + Ind	Eng	Ind	Eng + Ind	Ind + Span	Eng	Eng
Frequency	10	1	1	13	9	1	2	1	5	2	8	2	4	1	7	12
Percentage	83,33%	8,33%	8,33%	100%	69,2%	7,7%	15,4%	7,7%	71%	29%	53,33%	13,33%	26,67%	6,67%	100%	100%

As shown in *Table 1*, *Avoskin* predominantly used English in its branding, with 10 instances in English and only 1 in Bahasa Indonesia. *Citra* used 5 instances in Bahasa Indonesia and 2 in English. *Wardah* included 9 instances in English and 1 in Arabic. *Dear Me Beauty* featured 8 in English and 2 in Bahasa Indonesia. In bilingual usage, there were 9 instances of English-Indonesian combinations across *Avoskin, Wardah, Citra*, and *Dear Me Beauty*, along with 1 instance of English-Arabic in *Wardah* and 1 instance of English-Spanish in *Dear Me Beauty*.

Figure 4

The Categorization of Branding Language Based on Linguistic Functions



The findings showed that 51.9% of the data predominantly functions as a symbolic means of constructing brand identity, with 41 instances. Meanwhile, 17 data (21.5%) were informative means of describing product or brand features, and the remaining 21 data (26.6%) combine both functions.

4.1 Symbolic Functions of Language

Rather than focusing solely on monolingual and bilingual forms, this research seeks to dive deeper into the relationship between language as both an informative and symbolic tool (Landry & Borhuis, 1997), while also demonstrating that language is never neutral and always serves diverse purposes (Biró, 2018; Gorter & Cenoz, 2014; Jones, 2024). The collected data were classified into three categories, namely informative, symbolic, and both, as presented in *figure 4*.

Symbolic is a means of constructing brand identity. The collected data showed that 5 out of 7 brands used English in their brand names, namely *Avoskin, Make Over, Dear Me Beauty, The Body Shop,* and *KraveBeauty*. This dominance can be attributed to its status as the world's dominant lingua franca (Jenkins, 2015; Khazanah et al., 2023) and its role as a universal medium for reaching consumers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This strategy is also seen as economically practical, reducing costs for translation or adaptation into multiple local languages (Khazanah et al., 2023). The remaining two brands are using different languages precisely. Bahasa Indonesia was used by *Citra,* reflecting its role as the national language and its ability to foster better understanding and evoke local pride among Indonesian consumers, while Arabic was adopted by *Wardah.* Findings from a previous study (Khazanah et al., 2023) revealed that consumers preferred the use of Bahasa Indonesia in brand naming. Hence, there was a misalignment between company strategies and consumer preferences. This indicates that brand naming is not solely based on consumer preferences, but also reflects the identity that the company aims to project through its brand name.

This perspective aligns with the assertion put forward by Sardani and Astutik (2024), which posits that a brand constitutes a product identity. A good brand is characterized by its ease of pronunciation, memorability, distinctiveness, aesthetic appeal, and its capacity to showcase the advantages of a product. Additionally, it is noteworthy for its ability to project the image of the company or to underscore the distinctions between the brand and its competitors. The aforementioned phenomenon functions as the underlying rationale behind the utilization of brand names as symbolic means for the construction of brand identity. In the VLL theory, the different languages employed are not without any consideration, but reflect specific intentions and carry various meanings. This study revealed the intention of implementing three different languages in each brand name—English, Indonesian, and Arabic—from the perspective of VLL theory, and related the findings to the concept of ideology.

Avoskin, an Indonesian brand, was chosen for its English brand name, which combines "avo" and "skin". According to Tempo Media's interview with Anugrah Pakerti, the CEO of AVO Innovation, the word "avo" is inspired by "avocado," a fruit rich in vitamin E, later used as an ingredient in *Avoskin* products. The combination reflects both the philosophy behind the words and the desire for an aesthetically appealing trademark. If translated into Indonesian, they would be "alpukat" and "kulit", the name would likely lose

aesthetic appeal and uniqueness in a competitive market. The fruit reference aligns with other branding elements such as the tagline “Inspired by Nature, Created for Nurture,” positioning the brand as natural and safe. This framing fosters the perception that products with natural ingredients are superior, aligning with Jones’s (2024) concept of ideology, where language shapes notions of what is “good” or “bad”. Moreover, according to Rustaviani (2022), in 2022, they successfully expanded to the international market. The use of the English language in brand naming simplifies recognition in the global market, which corresponds with a study conducted by Khazanah et al., 2023. This expansion is a concrete realization of its vision, as reflected in the *#FromLocaltoGlobal* campaign.

Another brand, KraveBeauty, a South Korean beauty brand that has been expanding its product line into the international market, similarly adopts English in its name and omits Korean from its official websites to enhance accessibility for global audiences. *KraveBeauty* was adopting the English words “crave” and “beauty,” which can be interpreted as “the beauty you crave.” The transition from “crave” to “krave” represents a form of orthographic variation known as graphemic modification, in which the standard letter <c> is intentionally substituted with <k>. Androutsopoulos (2000), as cited in Chen and Chan (2024), has noted that such non-standard orthographic choices do not affect pronunciation but are strategically employed to establish a distinctive visual identity. These deviations from conventional spelling are frequently utilized to establish a more robust connection with the intended audience. In the case of *KraveBeauty*, this deliberate change enhances the brand's appeal while maintaining the original word's easily recognizable quality.

Similarly, *Make Over,* an Indonesian brand aiming for global reach, also uses English. The phrase “make over” suggests change and renewal, reflecting the brand's purpose of giving women the opportunity to transform their appearance and express themselves freely. This message is reinforced through slogans such as “The world needs a Make Over and it starts from you,” “There are no rules,” and “Beauty Beyond Rules.” Likewise, the UK beauty brand—*The Body Shop*—also draws on the metaphor of a “body shop.” According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a “body shop” refers to a business that repairs the exterior of vehicles, symbolizing restoration. This concept coincides with the brand's mission, as reflected in the slogan, “We exist to fight for a fairer, more beautiful world.” The brand seeks to instill a belief in its consumers that its products contribute not only to personal care but also to creating a better world. Both cases show how brand names and slogans symbolically convey values beyond product function.

On the other hand, *Dear Me Beauty* promotes national pride through the hashtag *#LocalPride*, but its English brand name contrasts with this message. According to Khazanah et al., 2023, promoting national pride would be more preferable if the brand name were in Bahasa Indonesia. This indicates a mismatch between the brand's name and its positioning as a product that represents local pride. However, “Dear Me Beauty” aligns well with another aspect of the brand's identity, which is reflected in its slogan “Menjadi Sahabat Kecantikan Setiap Orang!” (Everyone's Beauty Friend!). The phrase “Dear Me” functions like a personal message to oneself, highlighting the importance of self-love and self-care. The slogan conveys inclusivity, self-acceptance, and emotional connection with consumers.

Moreover, the use of the Arabic word “al-ward” (الورد), which means “rose,” in the brand name *Wardah* reinforces its Islamic identity and appeals to Muslim consumers. It is in line with its positioning as a halal beauty brand. This intentional choice of language

highlights how branding can serve ideological purposes, supporting the idea that language is never neutral (Jones, 2024). *Wardah*'s commitment to halal values is also reflected in its product slogans, such as "Halal Green Beauty: Wardah's products are always halal, alcohol free, and cruelty free." Although the slogans are written in English, the terms used are closely associated with Islamic principles, clearly matching the brand with the values of its predominantly Muslim consumer base.

Citra, by contrast, uses Bahasa Indonesia in its name. According to the KBBI (the official dictionary of the Indonesian language), "citra" refers to "the public perception of an individual, company, organization, or product." Therefore, *Citra* as a brand name is not solely a label but an attempt made on purpose by the company to build public perception (*citra*). This perception is fabricated with the image—or *citra*—that the brand intends to promote. Both the brand name and its slogan reflect a consistent linguistic choice. In a globalized era, where many Indonesian brands increasingly adopt English in their advertising, *Citra* remains committed to using the local language as a core part of its identity. Data show that 5 out of 7 of *Citra*'s advertisements are entirely in Indonesian, while the remaining 2 combine Indonesian and English. This linguistic strategy conforms with the brand's values and helps position *Citra* as a beauty brand that not only promotes national pride but also embraces and celebrates the diverse beauty of Indonesian women. This message is further embraced through *Citra'*s slogans such as "Ragam Cantik Indonesiaku," "Pancarkan ragam cantik kulit Indonesia," "Bangga dengan cantikku, bangga ragam cantik Indonesiaku," and "#CantikIndonesiaku," all of which reflect the brand's deep-rooted concept of Indonesian beauty and national pride.

The aforementioned points reveal that creating a brand name is a multifaceted challenge. It must be both captivating and distinctive while accurately representing the brand's identity and ideology, and it should be easily understood by the target market. This resonates with Carnevale, Luna, and Lerman's (2017) view that branding relies heavily on language as a tool for delivering meaning and shaping perceptions. English is often used to project an international image, reflecting its symbolic value as a sign of modernity, prestige, and global orientation (Biró, 2018; Gorter & Cenoz, 2014). While this supports global market positioning, it may disadvantage domestic consumers with lower English proficiency, particularly in rural or older demographics, and could reduce national pride or weaken cultural authenticity for brands seeking to emphasize local identity. The previous examples show that brand names and slogans carry symbolic strength, constructing meaning, communicating values, and imparting ideology.

4.2 The Dual Functions of Language

The linguistic landscape also functions as an informative tool in advertising, conveying the brand messages such as ingredients and product features. In this role, language communicates the essence of the product through concise and memorable phrases, commonly known as slogans. A slogan describes a brand's value and message, emphasizing key aspects in building brand identity and increasing awareness among buyers (Simanjuntak, Pujanarko, & Hasanah, 2024). The purpose is to help audiences quickly grasp product features without reading lengthy descriptions. Therefore, language functions as a core component in crafting slogans that effectively convey the brand's message.

For example, *Dear Me Beauty*'s slogan "Dermatologically & Non-Comedogenic Tested" appeals to a specific demographic by highlighting product safety and suitability for sensitive or acne-prone skin. It indicates that the product has passed dermatological testing and is formulated not to clog pores, helping to prevent blackheads. According to Cetaphil Indonesia, non-comedogenic products are often recommended for individuals with oily or acne-prone skin due to their lighter texture and reduced oil content. By using this type of messaging, *Dear Me Beauty* not only informs consumers of product superiorities over other brands but also reveals the product features suitable for a specific group.

Similarly, KraveBeauty's "Press reset, pocket-sized" slogan communicates that the product comes in compact packaging designed for portability. This slogan reflects the brand's strategic focus on convenience, appealing to travelers, minimalists, and busy individuals who need quick touch-ups on the go. The message is clear, concise, and directly tied to a functional benefit. In addition, *Dear Me Beauty*'s "Hypergloss Lip Balm: No More Lip Dramas, Adios Cracked Lips!" informs the audience about the product type and moisturizing benefit, while also adding a playful narrative that suggests solving common lip issues.

Furthermore, *Wardah*'s "Halal Green Beauty: Wardah's products are always halal, alcohol free, and cruelty free" positions the brand clearly within the halal skincare segment, targeting the Islamic community as a primary demographic. Similarly, *Make Over*'s "Up your looks: Discover your face anatomy now" promotes both the brand's features and its service-oriented approach, encouraging consumers to enhance their appearance with the brand's expertise.

The previous examples show that some informative slogans can subtly persuade by framing product facts to match brand positioning and audience values, giving them a dual role as both informative and symbolic, which once again strengthens the concept that words are never neutral (Jones, 2024).

5. Conclusion

This study shows English to be the leading language of Indonesian beauty branding, used to convey prestige and global appeal, with Bahasa Indonesia complementing national pride and selective Arabic and Spanish targeting niche markets. Monolingual designs continue to dominate, and symbolic uses outnumber purely informational ones, emphasizing the ideological role of language in brand identity construction and consumer perception. The analysis revealed a strong alignment between brand names, identities, and the intended ideologies conveyed through language choice. However, one inconsistency emerged from one brand. Aside from this, other brands maintained consistency between their language choices and the values they aimed to promote.

These findings offer a useful model for aligning language choices with brand identity and ideological positioning. Nonetheless, the research is limited not only by the small number of brands studied, but also by the potential influence of researcher subjectivity in interpreting symbolic meanings and by the absence of consumer reception data to validate how audiences perceive these language choices. Future studies could address these gaps by incorporating consumer surveys to capture audience perspectives, expanding the sample to include a wider range of brands and product categories, and conducting cross-industry comparisons to explore whether similar linguistic patterns and ideological functions appear in other sectors.

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SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN KATY PERRY'S *TEENAGE DREAM* ALBUM

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Abstract

This study investigates the semantic construction of figurative language in Teenage Dream, the second studio album by American pop singer Katy Perry. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach, the study draws on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Semantic Field Theory (SFT) to systematically analyze all twelve original songs on the album. The analysis uncovers the strategic use of figurative language especially metaphor, simile, and personification, as a means of encoding complex emotional, psychological, and social meanings. The findings suggest the presence of dominant semantic fields, including love, nostalgia, empowerment, desire, and identity, mapped through embodied imagery such as fire, light, heartbeat, and transformation. These tropes serve not only as poetic embellishments but also as core semantic strategies that construct narrative voice and emotional depth. Furthermore, the study illustrates how figurative language enhances lyrical identity and cultural resonance, particularly in the context of women's artistic expression in popular music. By highlighting the latent depths in commercially produced lyrics, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of linguistics, gender, and pop culture. Filling this gap allows for a fuller account of female pop stardom and highlights how *Teenage Dream* complicates and extends dominant narratives of gender, sexuality, and cultural production in contemporary music studies.

Keywords: *emotional meaning; figurative language; gender identity; katy perry; metaphor; pop music; semantic analysis; teenage dream*

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving era, music functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium of cultural expression and storytelling. Songs, especially in the pop genre, function as a powerful semiotic system used by artists to convey complex emotional, psychological, and social themes. (Mukandabvute, 2022; Gardiner, 2021) use figurative language in pop songs including metaphors, similes, and personification to articulate abstract feelings, personal struggles, and broader social commentary in a way that resonates with a wide audience.

From a semantic perspective, figurative expressions are not merely aesthetic choices but serve essential meaning-making functions. As noted by Lakoff and Johnson (2003),

metaphors form the cognitive basis through which humans conceptualize abstract realities, particularly those involving emotions, identity, and relationships. Figurative language, therefore, becomes a linguistic tool for constructing not only emotional resonance but also cultural values and identity frameworks (Bouvrie. M., 2023).

Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* album is emblematic of this lyrical richness. Released in 2010, the album features commercially successful tracks such as *"Firework," "The One That Got Away,"* and *"California Gurls,"* all of which incorporate dense figurative language to explore themes of love, freedom, loss, vulnerability, and self-discovery. The songs create symbolic narratives that are emotionally charged and metaphorically layered. Yet, despite the album's cultural impact and lyrical complexity, the semantic structures within Perry's songwriting have received limited scholarly attention.

This study is motivated by the need to explore how meaning is semantically structured through figurative language in pop music, particularly in ways that reflect gendered experiences, identity construction, and emotional transformation. While other studies have focused on lyrical themes or socio-cultural contexts, few studies have applied systematic semantic analysis to a single album by a female pop artist.

Recent applied linguistics and discourse analysis research highlights the importance of analyzing song lyrics, especially popular songs. This is because song lyrics play a major role in shaping and reflecting ideologies and emotional (affective) identities that are trending in society (Tagg, 2022; Dayal & Gupta, 2023). Song lyrics are fertile ground for understanding how figurative constructions develop in our culture. In addition, song lyrics also influence collective memory, personal identification, and emotional involvement of listeners (Kovecses, 2020). In the pop music genre, this influence is even stronger. The reason is that pop music focuses on emotional appeal, memorable melodies (catchy refrains), and easy access by many people.

Additionally, studies of popular music have shown that song lyrics often present personal narratives that are reframed through a broader cultural lens. This is especially true for themes such as femininity, youth, sexuality, and empowerment (Railton & Watson, 2011; Hennefeld & Sammond, 2020). Female artists, such as Katy Perry, often use metaphorical language to navigate tensions. They attempt to balance vulnerability with agency, appeal to a wider audience with deeply personal storytelling, and commerciality with authenticity (Burns & Lafrance, 2017).

Katy Perry's lyrics serve as a platform for exploring emotional subjectivity within a commercially-charged pop aesthetic. Take "Firework," for example, where the metaphor of fireworks is transformed into a powerful symbol of self-worth and power. Conversely, in "The One That Got Away," both metaphor and metonymy are used to depict themes of loss and deep longing. These phrases not only trigger emotional engagement in the listener, but also represent broader meanings related to youth, enthusiasm, and self-reflection (Wierzbicka, 2014).

This study is unique in that it focuses in-depth on all lyrical elements in one popular album, *"Teenage Dream."* The two main linguistic frameworks used in this study are Semantic Field Theory (SFT) and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) identifies the conceptual mappings underlying lyrics, such as how the concept of love is described as a journey (LOVE IS A JOURNEY) or emotion is described as fire (EMOTION IS FIRE). On the other hand, Semantic Field Theory (SFT) helps reveal the choices

made in analysis of lyrics (Ullmann, 1973; Cruse, 2011). This method helps researchers understand the relationship of meaning between words in song lyrics.

This study aims to reveal the function of figurative language in pop song lyrics. It is considered not only a poetic element, but also an effective semantic technique to convey emotions, identities, and cultural values in the linguistic context of popular music. This intersectional study is expected to contribute to contemporary discourses in the fields of semantics, discourse studies, and popular music analysis, by showing how mainstream lyrics function as both personal and collective narratives that are influenced by, and help shape, the social and cultural contexts in which the music is present.

2. Literature Review

Figurative language in music has been studied extensively from literary, cultural, and psychological perspectives. However, there is a need for more in-depth linguistic research into its semantic dimensions. In particular, how figurative language creates meaning, evokes emotion, and shapes identity, especially in contemporary popular music. This review will focus on three areas: semantic theory and conceptual metaphor, pop music as a semantic and cultural text, empirical studies of figurative language in lyrics, and figurative language and identity in contemporary music.

2.1 Semantic Theory and Conceptual Metaphor

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), relies heavily on the analysis of figurative language conducted by this study. This theory challenges the conventional view that metaphors are merely literary decorations by asserting that metaphors are important cognitive mechanisms that influence the way humans think. Metaphors, according to CMT, relate concrete experiences rooted in the body, such as movement, spatial relationships, or light, to abstract domains, such as emotion or time. This influences our understanding of the world. The lyrics of Katy Perry's song *"Falling from cloud nine"* are very similar to the phrase "I'm falling in love," which describes love as a symbolic downward movement.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) states that emotional expressions often use figurative language. Given how difficult it is to convey feelings like joy, heartbreak, or empowerment with just direct words, metaphorical structure is essential. To further deepen the study of metaphor empirically, Steen et al. (2010) developed MIPVU. This is a powerful methodology to help us identify metaphors in everyday conversations or texts. With MIPVU, research on how often metaphors appear and how they function in various texts becomes much more reliable.

2.2 Pop Music as a Semantic and Cultural Text

Recent studies have shown that pop music is important as a medium for forming meaning (semantics) and ideology. Gardiner (2021) suggests that we view popular song lyrics as a rich "environment." Here, poetic language plays a major role in conveying emotional and social meaning. So, in this context, figurative language is not just decoration. In fact, figurative language is very important in creating emotional impact and helping listeners to feel connected (identified) with the song.

Bouvrie (2023) supports this by introducing the "self-aware soundtrack," a concept describing songs that both express emotion and contemplate the very experience of feeling. Under this framework, lyrics function as "discursive mirrors" through which audiences interpret their own lives. Consequently, figurative devices like metaphor and simile become essential semantic anchors for shaping identity and memory.

Additionally, the lyrics of female pop artists, including Katy Perry, frequently display gendered figurative patterns, using metaphors to frame femininity, autonomy, and vulnerability (Catalano & Waugh, 2020). Such patterns deserve more in-depth semantic analysis, particularly in commercially successful yet lyrically deep albums like *Teenage Dream*.

2.3 Figurative Language in Pop Lyrics: Empirical Findings

For example, empirical evidence suggests that figurative language plays a significant semantic role in pop song lyrics. Mukandabvute (2022) analyzed the style and semantics of Oliver Mtukudzi's song "Neria" and found that similes and metaphors often appear in highly emotional parts of the song. This helps listeners remember the song and provides an emotional framework for them.

Subramaniam et al. (2019) expressed similar sentiments. They emphasized how the incorporation of figurative expressions into song lyrics can enhance meaning and influence how audiences understand the message. Their study demonstrated the instructional and persuasive power of this style of language, especially in conveying themes such as identity, resilience, and themes of longing, which are very evident in Katy Perry's work.

Although the essential functions of music albums are well known, a comprehensive semantic study of music albums as a whole is still rare. Each song in the Teenage Dream album is written using conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and semantic field analysis. The purpose of this study is to find metaphorical structures that consistently unite the lyrical narrative.

2.4 Figurative Language and Identity in Contemporary Music

Especially for young people and marginalized groups, figurative language in song lyrics structures thoughts and constructs identities. Jones and Watson (2020) define pop lyrics as "linguistic performances of self-identity," allowing listeners to feel emotionally represented through metaphorical storytelling. This is evident in the album Teenage Dream, where Katy Perry uses lyrical metaphors to show how her identity evolves from adolescent optimism in "Teenage Dream" to existential uncertainty in "Who Am I Living For?".

Metaphors also play an important role in building cultural relationships between musicians and their listeners. Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) emphasize that figurative language works on both a personal and social level, shaping collective understandings of concepts such as love, rebellion, and emotional vulnerability in popular culture. Therefore, song lyrics can be understood as "semiotic meeting points" that guide listeners in navigating their life experiences through the symbolism of language.

Alharbi (2021) also shows that the use of figurative language in English pop songs reflects changes in cultural values and moral themes across generations. This strengthens the argument that semantic analysis of song lyrics is an effective tool for tracking social shifts, while also emphasizing the importance of a deeper semantic study of pop music as an art form and discursive space.

Although contemporary pop albums such as Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, Taylor Swift's *1989* and *folklore*, or Lady Gaga's *Born This Way* have generated sustained critical and scholarly engagement across fields ranging from gender studies to popular musicology, Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* (2010) has received disproportionately little attention. Despite its unprecedented commercial success, record-tying chart dominance, and influence on the sonic and visual aesthetics of early 2010s pop, the album remains largely absent from serious academic analysis. This oversight not only diminishes recognition of Perry's cultural impact but also leaves unexplored key questions about how *Teenage Dream* shaped discourses of youth, sexuality, and mainstream pop stardom at a formative moment in digital-era music.

3. Research Method

A qualitative approach was chosen over a quantitative one because the primary aim of this study is not to measure frequency or statistical patterns, but to interpret the *meanings, nuances, and cultural significance* embedded in the album *Teenage Dream.*

3.1 Research Approach

This study embraces a qualitative-descriptive semantic approach, pointing to investigate how metaphorical dialect in pop melody verses passes on meaning through allegorical and typical expressions. Subjective investigation is suitable for etymological wonders that require translation past numerical evaluation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this investigation, dialect is treated not just as a frame but as a medium of conceptualization and social encoding.

The center is on deciphering how metaphorical expressions, particularly representations, analogies, and personification, encode enthusiastic, mental, and social implications within the verses of Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* collection. The ponder does not endeavor to degree recurrence, but maybe to reveal semantic structures and conceptual designs.

3.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Two phonetic systems direct this think about:

- Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (2003): CMT asserts that metaphors are not mere rhetorical devices but cognitive tools through which we understand abstract domains in terms of more concrete ones (e.g., LOVE IS A JOURNEY, EMOTION IS Warm).
- Semantic Field Theory: This theory posits that meaning is organized in clusters or "fields" of related concepts (e.g., metaphors of light vs. obscurity, development vs. stasis). Metaphorical dialect frequently works inside such areas to bring out coherent enthusiastic or topical tones (Lehrer, 2009).

3.3 Data Source

The essential information set comprises of all 12 unique tracks from Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* collection (Capitol Records, 2010). The songs included are:

1. Teenage Dream
2. Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)

3. California Gurls
4. Firework
5. Peacock
6. Circle the Drain
7. The One That Got Away
8. E.T
9. Who Am I Living For?
10. Pearl
11. Hummingbird Heartbeat
12. Not Like the Movies

The verses were gotten from confirmed sources (e.g., official craftsman distributions and authorized verse databases). Each tune was treated as a single semantic unit for smaller scale- and macro-level examination.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Information was collected through report examination of the melody verses. The examination centered on recognizing occasions of metaphorical dialect and translating their semantic work.

Steps included:

1. Initial Reading – familiarizing with the lyrical structure and thematic flow of each song.
2. Coding – identifying figurative expressions (metaphor, simile, personification).
3. Categorization – grouping expressions into semantic fields (e.g., fire/light, nature/animal, journey/movement, transformation).
4. Mapping – matching figurative language to relevant conceptual metaphors and cognitive domains.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

The analysis process is carried out in three phases:

a) Figurative Language Identification

The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIPVU) VU Guidelines were developed by Steen et al. (2010) and aim to identify and label various expressions, both metaphorical and other figurative language styles, as a first step for a more in-depth analysis.

b) Semantic Field and Domain Mapping

After analyzing each figurative expression in terms of its semantic meaning, the next step is to classify these expressions into specific conceptual categories, such as nature, light, heat, or movement. This method is very helpful in identifying metaphorical patterns that appear consistently across the album.

c) Thematic Interpretation

In the final step, we conducted an analysis of figurative expressions to understand their contribution to the themes contained in the song lyrics. This is an analysis of how figurative language builds stories about things like love, identity, freedom, loss, and empowerment. In addition, the results of the interpretation are linked to a broader context, namely the disputes about culture, gender, and feelings that occur in modern times.

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4. Results and Discussion

This section will examine each song from Katy Perry's Teenage Dream album to find out its meaning. The main goal is to describe how personification, metaphor, and simile are used to describe emotional states, social identities, and conceptual experiences. By doing this analysis, we can see how these elements collectively form the most prominent semantic domains in the album.

4.1 Dominant Semantic Fields by Song

Song Title	Dominant Semantic Fields	Key Figurative Devices	Interpretation
Teenage Dream	Love, youth, nostalgia	Metaphor (*"you make me feel like I'm living a teenage dream"*)	Love is idealized as a return to innocence and freedom.
Last Friday Night	Recklessness, celebration	Hyperbole (*"We maxed our credit cards"*)	Exaggeration to express escapism; youth is framed as impulsive freedom.
California Gurls	Regional identity, female empowerment	Personification (*"Sun-kissed skin so hot we'll melt your popsicle"*)	Playful eroticism via embodiment of California as a sensual metaphor.
Firework	Empowerment, transformation	Metaphor (*"You're a firework"*), Personification (*"Let your colours burst"*)	Identity and potential are imagined as explosive beauty and light.
Peacock	Sexual innuendo, self-expression	Double entendre (*"Wanna see your peacock, cock, cock"*)	Bold metaphorical framing of sexuality and playfulness.
Circle the Drain	Anger, disillusionment in relationships	Metaphor (*"You fall asleep during foreplay"*)	Semantic field of abandonment and addiction; emotional burnout.
The One That Got Away	Longing, regret, idealized love	Metaphor (*"We make out in your Mustang to Radiohead"*)	Material nostalgia frames emotional loss; love lost is irreplaceable.
E.T.	Alienation, attraction, strangeness	Simile (*"You're from a whole other world"*), Metaphor (*"Kiss me, infect me with your love"*)	Love and desire imagined as otherworldly invasion.
Who Am I Living For?	Existential crisis, spiritual warfare	Biblical allusion (*"I can feel the phoenix inside of me"*)	Metaphor of rebirth through struggle; identity crisis and divine calling.
Pearl	Suppression, reawakening	Metaphor (*"She's a pearl"*)	Hidden beauty and strength; transformation of victimhood to power.

Hummingbird Heartbeat	Passion, physical attraction	Metaphor (*"You make me feel like I'm losing my virginity"*), Simile (*"Like a hummingbird heartbeat"*)	Love as vitality and rapid emotional stimulation.
Not Like the Movies	Disillusionment with idealized romance	Metaphor (*"If it's not like the movies, that's how it should be"*)	Challenges media-shaped romantic ideals; authenticity over fantasy.

4.2 Figurative Device Patterns

Across the album, metaphors, similes, and personification were the most prominent figurative devices.

a) **Metaphor**
- *"You're a firework"* → Identity as an explosion of beauty
- *"She's a pearl"* → Hidden value under pressure
- *"Teenage dream"* → Love idealized as youthful perfection

b) **Simile**
- *"Like a lightning bolt"* (E.T.) → Sudden emotional connection
- *"Like a hummingbird heartbeat"* → Love as intense, fluttering energy

c) **Personification**
- *"My heart stops when you look at me"*
- *"Let your colours burst"*

These use bodily metaphors to ground emotions in tangible sensations.

4.3 Semantic Themes and Identity Construction

The figurative language in this album contributes to thematic clusters that function across multiple songs:

Theme	Semantic Cluster Examples	Function
Love as Power/Light	Fire, colour, light, explosion (*Firework*)	Emphasizes empowerment and emotional visibility.
Youth as Freedom	Recklessness, dream, cars (*Teenage Dream*, *Last Friday Night*)	Frames youth as chaotic but liberating.
Loss as Emptiness	Regret, silence, memory (*The One That Got Away*)	Constructs longing through material nostalgia.
Desire as Force	Lightning, electricity, infection (*E.T.*, *Hummingbird Heartbeat*)	Physicalizes romantic or sexual attraction.
Identity as Hidden Strength	Pearl, phoenix, movie illusion	Frames female identity as evolving, concealed, or misread by others.

4.4 Semantic Impact

By grounding abstract emotional states (love, passion, loss, empowerment) in concrete, physical imagery, Perry's figurative language:

- Creates embodied metaphors that are easy to visualize and emotionally resonate with (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).
- Enhances listener identification, particularly for adolescent and female audiences navigating similar emotional landscapes.
- Establishes a coherent semantic world where emotional transformation is not only felt but metaphorically *seen* (color, fire, movement).

The album, therefore, is not merely a collection of songs, but a semantic network of emotional and identity-based metaphors that together form a culturally resonant narrative of growth, vulnerability, and power.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* album lyrics are a complex semantic system that uses metaphor, simile, and personification to convey themes of love, identity, empowerment, and emotional vulnerability. Based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Semantic Field Theory (SFT), this study shows that Perry's lyrics are not merely aesthetic or commercial, but a rich linguistic narrative with layered emotional and cultural meanings.

Metaphors, which transform abstract experiences such as strength and heartbreak into tangible experiences such as fire and light, are a central element of the album. The cohesive semantic field created through the use of metaphors suggests patterns of self-discovery, romantic idealism, personal transformation, and gender-based identity formation. For example, the words "You're a firework" suggest greater strength and confidence, and "She's a pearl" suggests hidden resilience.

This shows that figurative language in pop song lyrics not only serves as a visual decoration but also shapes the way emotions and identities are understood and conveyed. In popular music, this style of language becomes an important tool to attract listeners' attention, create a personal connection with the lyrics, and convey certain ideologies. Therefore, pop song lyrics can be considered as cultural texts that can reflect and change contemporary values.

In conclusion, the *Teenage Dream* album can be considered as a semantic map of emotional life that illustrates the reciprocal relationship between personal feelings and collective cultural narratives. To uncover the structure of meaning in popular music, approaches using conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and structure of feeling theory (SFT) have proven successful. Therefore, the fields of semantics, discourse studies, cultural linguistics, and musicology have relevance to this approach. To improve the understanding of language dynamics in popular culture, similar approaches can be used in other situations.

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EXPLORING LANGUAGE STYLES IN THE FILM *UGLIES* (2024): A SOCIOLINGUISTICS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of language styles in the film Uglies (released in 2024) by applying Joos' (1967) classification of language styles (frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate) and Holmes' (2013) framework of social factors influencing the choice of language styles, including participants, setting, topic, and function. Using a qualitative approach with content analysis as the research design, this study took the data from the English subtitled transcripts of the film officially released by Netflix. The findings reveal that the casual style is the most dominant, followed by the intimate and consultative styles, reflecting the film's focus on adolescent characters and peer relationships in informal and emotionally driven contexts. The formal style appears in institutional interactions, while the frozen style is notably absent, due to the lack of ceremonial or ritualistic settings in the narrative. Analyzing language in dystopian fiction is significant because it reveals how imagined societies construct power, identity, and resistance through communication. This study highlights the close relationship between language styles and social factors, demonstrating how linguistic choices reflect the dynamics of participant relationships and communicative functions in the film.

Keywords: *language style; language in films; social factors; Uglies*

1. Introduction

Language is an essential and dynamic element of human life. As inherently social beings, humans use language not only as a tool for communication but also as a medium for expressing thoughts, emotions, intentions, and identities. Through language, individuals establish and maintain relationships, construct meaning, and navigate complex social environments (Cojocaru et al., 2012). One of the most crucial aspects of language use is language style, which refers to the distinctive way individuals speak or write depending on the purpose of the interaction, the context, the relationship between participants, and the social setting (Holmes, 2013). Language style significantly affects how a message is conveyed and interpreted, as it reflects situational and interpersonal factors such as the speaker's intent, the topic of discussion, the level of formality, and the roles of the participants involved (Ali, 2022; Keraf, 2010).

Moreover, language is not used in a uniform or fixed manner by all speakers. The use of language varies according to individual choices, social norms, and the demands of the communicative situation (Fatah & Muhammed, 2025). Language style is, therefore, not merely a linguistic preference but a reflection of broader social dynamics and cultural expectations. A widely accepted approach to analyzing language style is through the formality continuum, as proposed by various scholars, including Silta et al. (2023), which ranges from highly formal to intimate or casual. For instance, people typically adopt more formal and polite language when addressing figures of authority, such as teachers or employers, while shifting to a more relaxed and informal style when conversing with friends or peers. These stylistic shifts are indicative of the speaker's awareness of social roles, power relations, and the communicative context.

The study of language style falls under the broader field of sociolinguistics, a sub-discipline of linguistics that investigates the interaction between language and society. Sociolinguists aim to understand how factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, age, and context influence language use. According to Holmes (2013) and Trudgill (2000), sociolinguistics explores how language varies and changes in different social settings and how speakers adjust their linguistic choices based on variables such as the participants, the setting, the topic, and the communicative goals. Within this framework, language style is not only a reflection of personal identity but also a socially constructed practice influenced by cultural norms and expectations (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2007).

A particularly rich and multidimensional medium for exploring language style is film. As an art form that combines visual, auditory, and narrative elements, film captures and represents human experiences, social realities, and cultural values. Films often portray a wide range of interactions between characters from different backgrounds and social statuses, making them ideal texts for linguistic and sociological analysis. As noted by Kurniawan & Firda (2023) and Ugondo (2021), film serves as a reflection of societal issues and human behavior, providing insights into how language is used to express identity, power dynamics, ideology, and emotion. Hendriks (2019) and Lu (2023) further argue that language in film not only advances the plot but also reveals characters' psychological states, social roles, and value systems. Thus, analyzing language style in films can offer valuable perspectives on how language operates in various social contexts, both realistic and imagined.

One film that offers a compelling site for such analysis is Uglies, released in 2024. Set in a dystopian future, Uglies presents a society governed by rigid beauty standards, surveillance, and systemic control. The narrative revolves around issues that resonate deeply with contemporary audiences, particularly adolescents, such as body shaming, appearance-based discrimination, conformity, and social pressure to meet idealized norms. These themes are not only central to the film's storyline but also influence the characters' linguistic choices and interactions. The diverse range of language styles used in the film reflects the characters' differing social roles, relationships, levels of resistance or conformity, and personal identities. In this sense, Uglies provides a distinctive context for examining how language style functions within a dystopian setting marked by ideological manipulation and societal stratification.

Although a number of studies have explored language style in other films using sociolinguistic theories, most of them have focused on films depicting conventional social settings such as schools, families, or workplaces. Many of these studies employ Joos' (1967) theory to identify the types of language styles (frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate) used by the film characters (Hia et al., 2025; Safitri & Pramudyawardhani, 2024; Indahsari et al., 2023; Kadek et al., 2024; Rahmi & Fanani, 2024; Sopacuaperu et al., 2024). Other research, guided by Holmes' (2013) sociolinguistic framework, has examined the social factors influencing language style, such as the identity of the speaker, the relationship with the listener, the setting, and the communicative purpose (Irwan et al., 2023; Salsabila et al., 2023).

However, to date, there has been little scholarly attention given to language style in films set in dystopian worlds, settings that amplify societal anxieties and institutional power through exaggerated or speculative narratives. Furthermore, no existing study has applied both Joos' and Holmes' frameworks to analyze the use of language styles within this genre. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated approach to examining language style within dystopian fiction. In response, the present study aims to investigate the types of language styles employed in the film Uglies using Joos' (1967) classification, while also exploring the social factors influencing these choices through Holmes' (2013) sociolinguistic model. By integrating these two perspectives, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how language style is constructed and shaped within the dystopian world of Uglies. Therefore, this study is guided by the following research question: What types of language styles are used in the film Uglies, and how are these choices influenced by social factors?

2. Literature Review

Language style is a distinctive way of conveying messages, ideas, or feelings through oral and written language. Language style not only functions as a means of communication, but also reflects the speaker's character, social relationships with the interlocutor, and the context or situation of communication (Ali, 2022; Holmes, 2013). Language style plays a vital role in sociolinguistic studies because it reflects how individuals adjust to social distribution in society (Eckert & Rickford, 2001). Thus, language style is closely related to the choice of language in communication, such as the use of formal or informal language, which is greatly influenced by the context and situation (Wardaugh & Fuller, 2015). It shows that a person's communication depends on the conditions of the ongoing interaction.

Several previous studies have examined language styles in films using Joos' (1967) theory, which categorizes language into five styles based on formality: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate (Agosta & Skolastika, 2024; Indahsari et al., 2023; Kadek et al., 2024; Rahmi & Fanani, 2024; Sopacuaperu et al., 2024; Swantara et al., 2024). These studies generally adopt a qualitative descriptive approach and analyze film dialogues to reveal how language style varies depending on social context. In addition to Joos' theory, many studies also incorporate Holmes' (2013) social factors, such as participants, settings, topics, and communication functions, to explain the reasons behind speakers' language choices (Irwan et al., 2023; Hidayati, 2022; Purba et al., 2021; Salsabila et al., 2023;

Simamora & Sherina, 2022). These studies contribute valuable insights into how language reflects relationships, emotions, and situational dynamics among characters. They serve as essential references for the present research, which adopts similar theories and methods, as will be explained in the following description.

Although many studies have explored language styles in films using Joos' theory, ranging from family-themed movies like Instant Family and Keeping Mum to military and fantasy films such as Top Gun: Maverick and Red Shoes and the Seven Dwarfs, none have specifically examined the film Uglies. Unlike previous studies, Uglies presents a dystopian setting highlighting complex social themes, including beauty standards, identity, and authoritarian societal control. Personal relationships, systemic pressures, and resistance to imposed norms shape the characters' language use. Despite the growing interest in film-based analyses, no prior study has explored language styles in dystopian young adult narratives using both Joos' and Holmes' frameworks. Therefore, this study is significant in addressing a gap in the literature by applying Joos' and Holmes' theories to a unique social and narrative context. It aims to expand the understanding of how language styles operate in dystopian narratives and how social factors influence characters' linguistic choices under extreme societal conditions.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with content analysis as its research design. This method enabled a systematic, in-depth examination of language styles in the film. Content analysis served as the primary technique for analyzing the film's dialogue, for the purpose of making valid and contextual inferences from various forms of communication (Krippendorff, 2004). By integrating a qualitative approach with content analysis, this study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of language styles and the social factors influencing their use in the film.

The data consisted of language units, including words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, which were drawn from the non-official English subtitles of *Uglies*. The film was selected for its diverse dialogue among characters from distinct social groups ("uglies," "pretties," and "rebels"), which reflect different social roles. The analysis identified five speech styles proposed by Joos (1967)—frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate—while also applying Holmes' (2013) framework to examine how social factors (participants, setting, topic, and function) shaped language choice.

A documentation method was used to collect the written materials relevant to the study's objectives. The method allowed the researchers to observe language use in its original context without alteration and facilitated a systematic analysis of stylistic variations in different communicative situations.

The data collection process involved the following steps. First, the researchers selected the film Uglies due to its diverse representation of speech among characters from distinct social groups. These groups reflect differing social roles, which are evident in their word choices and levels of formality. Then, the researchers watched it repeatedly to fully grasp the context of conversations. The subtitles were then downloaded from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TDz03_ukDELb0cgB8tpnCBhF_cA4yga7/view?usp=sharing and relevant dialogue excerpts were identified based on the presence of language style

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variation, as categorized by Joos' theory. Special attention was paid to the social context and character relationships that influence stylistic choices. Once collected, the data were organized by the character, scene, and social situation to reveal the relationships between linguistic elements and their social functions.

This study applied the interactive model of data analysis proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which involves three continuous and interrelated stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the English subtitle transcript of Uglies. The researchers selected dialogue featuring language style variations based on Joos' (1967) classification and influenced by Holmes' (2013) social factors. Focus was placed on identifying the five language styles—frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate—within specific social contexts, including participants, setting, topic, and function. Long or irrelevant dialogues were simplified without losing contextual meaning. Relevant excerpts were categorized by style and transformed into organized tables for ease of analysis.

The condensed data were presented in tables and narrative explanations. Each of Joos' five language styles was represented in a separate table, including dialogue excerpts, characters involved, and their social context. The accompanying narrative described the interaction's social dynamics, such as speaker relationships, setting, and communicative purpose. In the final stage, the researcher synthesized the findings on the types of language styles used in Uglies and the social factors influencing them. The patterns were analyzed across the characters and scenes to understand how social dynamics (participants, setting, topic, and function) shaped language choices. Verification involved cross-referencing findings with Joos' and Holmes' frameworks to ensure theoretical alignment and validity, while the conclusions were drawn from the research findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Frequency Analysis

The results of the analysis indicate that each type of language style has different linguistic characteristics and social functions, depending on the communication situation and the relationship between the characters involved in the conversation. From the entire dialogue analyzed, it was found that not all types of language styles were used. Besides, the language styles were used at different frequencies. Some types of language styles appear more often because they are influenced by the characters and atmosphere of the conversation in the film. In contrast, others only appear in certain situations. Table 1 and Figure 1 display the distribution of language styles in the Uglies.

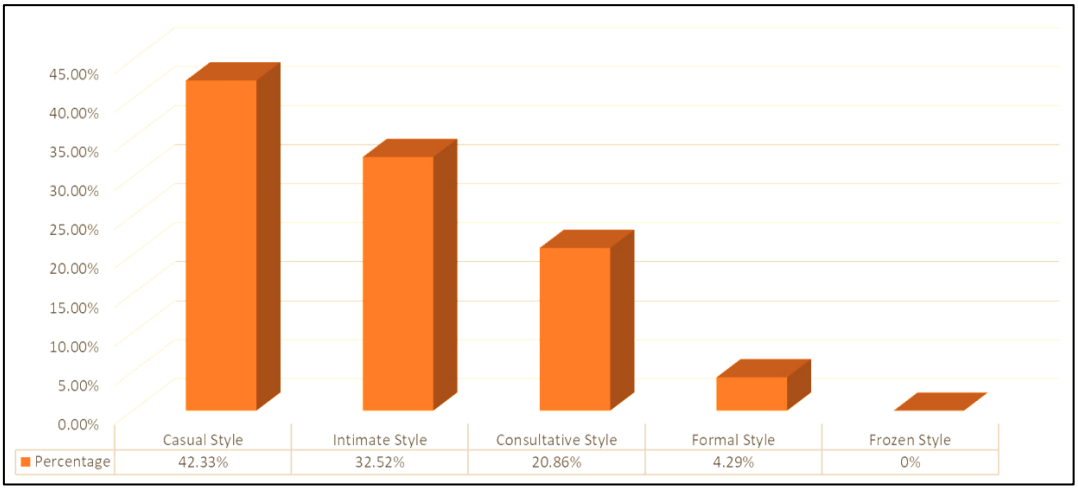
Table 1

Frequency of types of language style used in the film Uglies

No.	Types of Language Style	Frequency	Percentage
1	Casual Style	69	42.33%
2	Intimate Style	53	32.52%
3	Consultative Style	34	20.86%
4	Formal Style	7	4.29%
5	Frozen Style	0	0%
	Total	**163**	**100%**

Figure 1

Frequency of language styles in the film Uglies



As displayed in Table 1 and Figure 1, the most dominant type of language styles used by the characters in the film Uglies is the casual style, which is used in 69 data (42.33%). This type of language style is commonly used in everyday conversations between friends, with relaxed language, sometimes accompanied by abbreviations or slang words. It is appropriate for the characters, primarily teenagers, who search for their identity. The intimate style is in the second place, which is found in 53 data (32.52%), appearing in emotional and close situations. For example, the conversations between Tally and David or Shay reflect a mutually supportive relationship, which results in the frequent use of intimate style. The consultative style is used 34 times (20.86%) in more serious conversations. For example, when discussing plans or essential problems, the characters tend to use a consultative style. In comparison, the formal style only appears 7 times (4.29%), usually used by authority figures such as Dr. Cable in official situations with more structured language and maintaining distance. The frozen style was not found (0%) because this film does not show scenes with a highly formal atmosphere, such as in legal courts, religious rituals, and state ceremonies.

4.1.2 Sociolinguistic Factors

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that the characters' choice of language styles is influenced by certain social factors. In other words, social factors influence the types of language styles used by the speakers. From the entire dialogue analyzed, it was found that all social factors of language styles were used in the film with different frequencies. Table 2 and Figure 2 display the results of the analysis on the social factors of language styles used by the characters in the film Uglies.

Table 2

Social factors of language styles used in the film Uglies

No.	Social Factors of Language Style	Frequency	Percentage
1	Participant	99	60.74%
2	Topic	35	21.47%
3	Function	17	10.43%
4	Setting	12	7.36%
	Total	**163**	**100%**

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Figure 2
Distribution of social factors influencing language style in the film Uglies

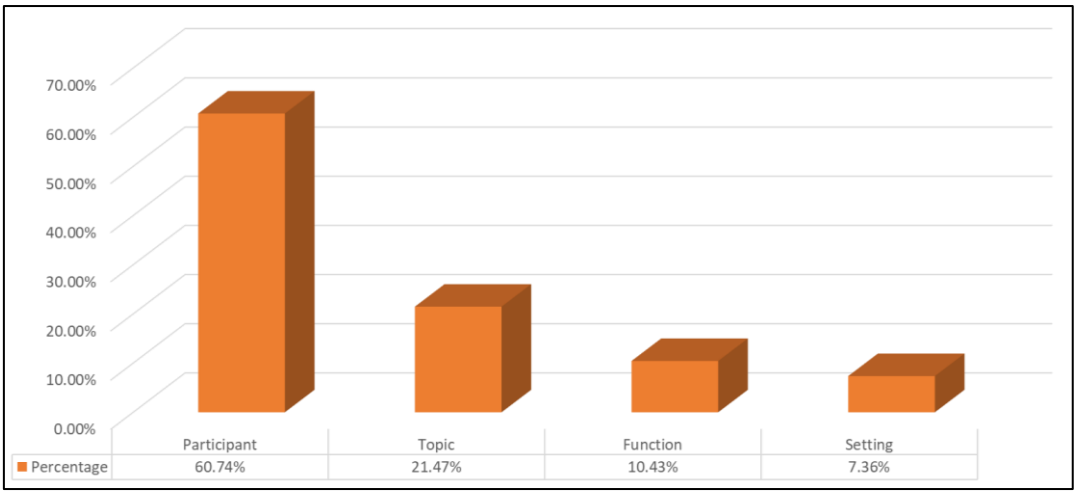

Table 2 and Figure 2 present the distribution of social factors that influence the use of language styles in the Uglies film. The most dominant social factor is participants, with 99 occurrences, accounting for 60.74% of the total. This suggests that the relationship between speakers, such as their level of intimacy, familiarity, or social role, plays a significant role in determining the type of language style used. Characters often adjust their speech based on whether they are speaking to a friend, rival, or authority figure, reflecting changes in formality and tone. The second most influential factor is topic, appearing 35 times or 21.47% of the data. This suggests that what characters are talking about also significantly influences their language styles. Serious, sensitive, or complex topics may lead to a more formal or consultative style, while casual or playful topics encourage more relaxed and informal speech. Function has 17 instances (10.43%), showing that the purpose of the conversation, whether to inform, persuade, command, or express emotion, also shapes language style. For example, giving instructions or expressing warnings may prompt the use of more directive or assertive language. Lastly, setting appears the least frequently, with only 12 instances (7.36%). This suggests that while physical or situational context (such as time and place) influences language use, its influence is smaller compared to other social factors in the film.

One of the examples of a specific type of language style and the social factor influencing its use can be seen in Extract 1.

Extract 1

Tally : “Yo, whoa… Okay…”
Shay : “Ooh. Hey. Squeeze that core.”
Tally : “Okay.”
Shay : “Yeah. You got it. Ready?”
Tally : “Okay.”

The dialogue in Extract 1 illustrates a casual language style, characterized by informal vocabulary, spontaneous expressions, and relaxed sentence structures. Phrases like “Yo,” “whoa,” and repeated uses of “okay” by Tally are typical of unplanned, emotional responses in everyday conversation. Shay’s utterances, “Ooh. Hey. Squeeze that core”, and “Yeah. You got it. Ready?”, reflect informal, directive speech that lacks formal grammar or polite

markers. The choice of "yeah" instead of "yes" and motivational phrases like "You got it" convey encouragement in a friendly, familiar tone. This casual style is further reinforced by the brevity and rhythm of the exchanges, which mirror the natural flow of informal peer interaction, especially in a physical activity setting. The phrase "Squeeze that core," for example, is an informal directive typical of familiar or peer-led training environments, lacking the formality expected in professional or hierarchical interactions.

The most obvious social factor influencing this style is the relationship between the participants. As shown in Extract 1, the closeness between Tally and Shay is evident through the absence of formal greetings, the use of colloquial expressions, and the encouraging and relaxed tone. For example, Shay's command "Squeeze that core" is given without a modal verb (e.g., "Could you…" or "Please…"), which would normally indicate politeness or social distance. Similarly, Tally's repetition of short, cooperative responses such as "Okay" indicates trust, comfort, and minimal need for clarification, illustrating typical features of communication between friends.

While the data presented in Extract 1 demonstrate the use of casual style, the data in Extract 2 illustrate the use of intimate style in the film Uglies.

Extract 2

Tally : "Do you remember when we first hacked the dorms?"
Peris: : "Then you made me do my first trick."

The short conversation in Extract 2 reflects an intimate style of language, characterized by emotionally charged, personal, and private communication. The dialogue centers on a shared memory, an experience known only to the two speakers, which immediately signals closeness and exclusivity. Tally's question ("Do you remember when we first hacked the dorms?") refers to a specific, perhaps mischievous moment from their past, inviting nostalgia and emotional reflection. Peris' answer ("Then you made me do my first trick") continues this memory with an implied tone of familiarity and affection, strengthening the bond between them. Although the sentences themselves are grammatically correct and not particularly informal, the emotional depth and shared context embedded in the conversation mark it as intimate. There is no need for formal address or explanation because both speakers fully understand the reference. The language is direct, yet warm, underlining the trust and shared history between Tally and Peris.

The social factor influencing this style of language is the topic. In this case, the topic (a shared personal memory) naturally invites intimate expressions. Topics that are emotionally significant, personal, or rooted in personal experience often lead speakers to adopt a more intimate style, as seen in Extract 2. The use of the word "we" in Tally's question and the continuation of the shared narrative in Peris' reply indicate that the interaction was not only informative, but also relational and emotionally resonant.

Then, the data illustrating the use of consultative style in the film Uglies are displayed in Extract 3.

Extract 3

Dr. Cable : "I'm glad you decided to help us, Tally. I'm going to tell you something only a handful of people know. This man, David? The Smoke? They're developing a weapon to attack us."
Tally : "Why… Why would they want to do that?"

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Dr. Cable : "They've decided their way of living is more worthy than ours. So much so, they want us gone.
Tally : "Shay is not… part of any of that."
Dr. Cable : "She is now. Don't underestimate David. He's brainwashed her. Shay is under his power now. And if she tries to leave, he will hurt her. Or worse. I need you to find The Smoke. You can get the procedure, as you've always wanted. Or you can head into the unknown. Save your friend. Save us all."

The dialogue between Dr. Cable and Tally in Extract 3 is considered consultative in style because it happens in a profound and meaningful context. Dr. Cable tries to guide Tally toward making an essential decision through explanation rather than direct command. It can be seen when Dr. Cable begins with, "I'm glad you decided to help us, Tally. I will tell you something only a handful of people know," which shows that she is opening a serious discussion by offering confidential information, not giving orders. Then, she continues with, "They plan to use this weapon to wipe out our city, to destroy our way of life," providing logical background to help Tally understand the urgency of the situation—this use of facts and reasons to influence someone is a key trait of the consultative style. When Tally responds with, "Shay is not… part of any of that," and Dr. Cable replies, "She is now. Don't underestimate David," it reflects two-way communication and clarification, another sign of the consultative, where opinions are exchanged and strengthened with arguments. The strongest evidence appears when Dr. Cable says, "You have a choice to make, Tally. You can get the procedure… Or you can head into the unknown," giving Tally clear options and leaving the decision to her, which highlights how the consultative style works by informing and persuading while still respecting the other person's ability to choose.

The social factor influencing the use of the consultative style in Extract 3 is function, especially, the speaker's purpose to inform and persuade. Dr. Cable's goal is not to socialize, command, or express solidarity; it is to convey critical information and influence Tally's decision. This is evident in statements such as "They're developing a weapon to attack us," which provides factual justification, and "Shay is under his power now," which appeals to emotion and urgency. These lines show that the language is entirely shaped by the function of persuasion, not by participant relationship, setting, or topic.

Furthermore, the data in Extract 4 demonstrate the use of formal style in the film Uglies which is motivated by setting as its social factor.

Extract 4

Dr. Cable : "Hello, Tally. I'm Dr. Cable. Please come in."
Tally : "You know who I am?"

The dialogue in Extract 4 is an obvious example of formal language style. It begins with "Hello," a standard and polite greeting used in formal communication, rather than a familiar greeting like "hey," which often appears casually. Then, Dr. Cable introduces herself by saying, "I'm Dr. Cable." The title "Dr." shows that the speaker is asserting her professional position or identity, rather than introducing herself as a friend or equal colleague. In informal communication, mentioning the name without a title is usually sufficient, but in formal style, mentioning a title is vital to show position or authority. The following sentence, "Please come in," is a polite invitation but also contains an order. The word "please" is used

to maintain the impression of politeness, but the context still shows that the person being spoken to is expected to follow the instructions. Meanwhile, although more expressive and emotional, Tally's response, "You know who I am?" falls into formal style. This sentence has the correct grammatical structure and does not use informal expressions such as "You know me, right?" or contractions. In the context of a serious and tense conversation, this sentence still maintains the formal structure and shows social distance, so it still fits the formal style.

The use of formal style in Extract 4 is strongly influenced by the social factor of setting. The conversation takes place within an institutional context, where Dr. Cable represents an official figure likely holding authority over Tally. The initial interaction resembles a professional introduction, with clear social distance and an emphasis on roles rather than personal connection. The setting, which is expressed through a controlled, likely government or medical facility, demands a tone of professionalism and hierarchy. This is reinforced by Dr. Cable's use of a title and structured language, which serve to establish dominance and formality from the outset.

4.2 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the interaction in the film is dominated by informal situations and close emotional relationships, in line with the main characters, mostly teenagers and peers. Joos' (1967) language style theory is very relevant in this study because it systematically classifies language varieties based on social context and relationships between participants in the dialogue. These results are in line with several previous studies, such as those conducted by Salsabila et al. (2023) in Hala movie, Safitri & Pramudyawardhani (2024) in Pinocchio movie, Hia et al. (2025) in Battleship movie, in Red Shoes and the Seven Dwarfs movie, and Rahmi & Fanani (2024) in Barbie movie, who also found that casual style was the most dominant type of language style.

In contrast, other studies have emphasized consultative and formal styles, especially in films featuring adult professionals or institutional settings. For example, Kadek et al. (2024) in Instant Family movie, Indahsari et al. (2023) in The Great Debaters movie, and Sopacuaperu et al. (2024) in Top Gun: Maverick movie found consultative and formal styles more prevalent, reflecting the more serious, structured, or authoritative tone of those narratives. Compared to Uglies, these films depict interactions in educational, political, or military contexts—where greater social distance or institutional formality shapes communication.

Nevertheless, frozen style did not appear in Uglies, unlike in other studies where this style was detected in specific formal or sacred settings. For example, Putri et al. (2022) in Miracle from Heaven movie identified frozen style in religious prayers and church sermons—moments marked by solemnity and ritualistic language. Likewise, Hummaira et al. (2022) in the Green Book movie found the frozen style used by Dr. Shirley during public, ceremonial, or elite social events to require formal, fixed expressions. Similarly, Nabilah and Candria (2023), in their study on Miracle from Heaven movie, identified frozen style in royal protocol expressions such as "Your Majesty," which are institutionally bound and cannot be altered. The absence of a frozen style in Uglies can be attributed to the lack of formal, ceremonial, or religious contexts. The film's focus on teenage dynamics, rebellion, and personal discovery makes this rigid language style linguistically and contextually irrelevant. Thus, Joos' language style theory has been proven to apply in analyzing language style in various types of films,

and the results of this study strengthen previous findings that social relationships and situations greatly influence the choice of language style used.

In terms of the social factors that influence the use of language styles, the findings of this study confirm Holmes' (2013) theory that interpersonal relationships, such as familiarity, hierarchy, and social distance, are the most significant determinants of language style. More recent film-based research confirms this trend (Hidayati, 2022; Salsabila et al., 2023; Simamora & Sherina, 2022). For example, a study analyzing dialogues in the Business Proposal series observed frequent style shifts (formal, casual, consultative) triggered by changes in interlocutor roles or familiarity (Simamora & Sherina, 2022). Similarly, Salsabila et al. (2023) found that the participant is the main social factor that influences the characters' choice of language style in Hala movie.

Furthermore, the results of this study also indicate that topic and function also serve as the influential factors in the characters' choice of language style. These findings align with several previous studies finding how topics drive shifts toward casual or formal registers. For example, analyses of film scripts like Papillon reveal that the purpose behind dialogue acts, whether expressive, directive, or referential, correlates with distinct types of language style (Purba et al., 2021). Although their frequencies are lower than the participant, the results indicate that function and topic are still significant to influence the choice of language styles.

Taken together, the results both confirm and extend existing theories. Joos' (1967) classification remains effective for identifying stylistic variation, but the absence of frozen style and the prominence of informal registers in the film Uglies highlight genre-specific deviations. Similarly, Holmes' (2013) model of social factors is supported, yet the dystopian framework illustrates how participants, topics, and functions not only shape stylistic choices but also carry ideological significance. This critical synthesis suggests that the study of language styles in dystopian films can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how social context and power relations are linguistically constructed in fictional worlds.

5. Conclusion

The dominance of casual and intimate styles used in the film Uglies aligns with the characters' social context, as most are teenagers and peers, making the communication more relaxed, personal, and emotionally expressive. The film also portrays emotional closeness, personal conflicts, and strong friendships, which contribute to the informal nature of the language used. These findings indicate that the relationships between participants, their social background, and the communicative goals in each interaction play a significant role in determining the language style chosen. Furthermore, it is concluded that the participant plays the most important role in influencing the characters' choice of language style in the film Uglies. In other words, the relationship between the characters in the film strongly determines the choice of language style. Nevertheless, it should also be considered that other factors, such as topic, function, and setting also have an influence on the choice of language style.

The study focuses only on one film, Uglies, which may not provide a fully comprehensive representation of language style variation across broader media or genres. As a result, the findings may be specific to the studied context, and cannot be generalized to other films, series, or real-life conversations. We recommend future studies comparing films across genres with differing narrative structures to investigate shifts in dominant language

styles. Furthermore, it is suggested that other researchers to examine how sociolinguistic factors like age, gender, or power are related to language style to provide a more holistic understanding of character interactions. Besides, a comparative study involving real-life speech or interviews could also enrich the interpretation of how language style in fiction reflects or differs from actual communication behavior.

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LANGUAGE LEARNING AS A COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY AMONG KURDISH EFL LEARNERS IN CHARMO UNIVERISTY, CHAMCHAMAL, KURDISTAN REGION, IRAQ

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Abstract

The current mixed-methods study focuses on cognitive enhancement strategies through Structured English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning among fourth-year students at Charmo University, Chamchamal, Iraq. The study considers the implications consequent to the cognitive flexible triggering of problem-solving, resilient psychologically from the translated memorized content, and acquisition of a foreign language. The study revealed quantitative results of strong positive interrelations of language learning with cognitive enhancement ($r = 0.614$, $p < 0.05$ medium effect), adaptive cognitive functioning ($r = 0.643$, $p < 0.05$) and resilience psychologically ($r = 0.597$, $p < 0.05$). The qualitative analysis on thematic analysis and semi-structured interviews illustrated the students' self-reported mental flexibility, creativity, and cultural awareness, as well as the positive adjustments from the anxiety. There are no significant differences in gender ($p > 0.05$). The study principally highlighted the cognitive advantage of advanced EFL learning, countering claims of diminished bilingual advantage over time. Integration of culturally relevant language materials into higher education curricula will serve as cognitive training, considering the scarce studies on the neuropsychological benefits of language learning within the context of developing countries.

Keywords: *brain training; cognitive flexibility; EFL learners; language acquisition; neuroplasticity; psychological resilience*

1. Introduction

Neuroplasticity occurs throughout the lifespan as well as at different levels (Hofman, 2014). The most important focus for cognitive and psychological development is the acquisition of different languages. There is a growing literature focusing on the cognitive benefits of bilingualism (Bialystok et al., 2012; Costa & Sebastián-Gallés, 2015) with very little research looking into structured English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in developing countries as a purposeful neuropsychological development tool.

When a person is learning a new language, the learning process involves more than the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar. A more complex cognitive system is involved, including aspects of memory, attention, executive functioning, and emotion regulation (Kennedy, 2006). This complex integration is what makes learning a new language a comprehensive cognitive engagement intervention, and one which is particularly

appropriate in the higher educational setting to build substantive cognitive development evidence.

Acquiring a new language involves learning new systems of communication, new cultures, and new environments of interaction (Shaddad & Jember, 2024). The learner has to acquire a new language's phonetics, grammar, expressions, language use, and culturally based pragmatics (Council of Europe, 2018). The learner has to use cognitive flexibility, which involves the ability to shift and reorganize different parameters of mental constructs, suppress distractors, and elaborate on contextual knowledge. The tasks culminate in providing a rich cognitive environment which promotes formation and strengthening of neural pathways, and brain plasticity.

Although the cognitive benefits of bilingualism have been thoroughly documented, there are still important gaps to fill. Given the predominance of research focused on simultaneous or early sequential bilingual cases, writings on adult EFL learners in academic settings are particularly scarce. Moreover, the controversial findings regarding the cognitive benefits of bilingualism on a global scale (Milczarski et al., 2024; Berggren et al., 2019) underline an important gap in the study of situational factors that might affect cognitive functions. Finally, the research on the neuropsychological aspects of language learning in Chamchamal, where English is an academic rather than a societal language, is practically non-existent.

This study attempts to merge one of the most established models of cognitive psychology, Baddeley's Working Memory Model, which associates language learning with the strengthening of phonological loops, the visuospatial sketchpad, and overall executive functions of the brain, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which posits that language serves as a tool for cognitive development through social interaction and cultural resources. From this perspective, EFL learning functions as a cognitive exercise and as a sociocultural tool for enhanced mental development.

This study assesses whether learning English as a foreign language at the advanced level improves the cognitive functions (memory, attention, problem-solving) and cognitive flexibility and psychological resilience of advanced-level EFL Kurdish university students and whether these effects vary by gender. The research answers an important theoretical question. At advanced proficiency level, does learning a foreign language systematically and cognitively strengthen the functions of the brain? From an applied perspective, the results provide an education policy language program integration as cognitive flexible training in higher education curriculum.

Building upon the theoretical foundations and existing research, this study seeks to further investigate the relationship between language learning and cognitive as well as psychological development. The inquiry is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does language learning influence cognitive abilities such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills?
2. What are the perceived effects of language acquisition on cognitive flexibility and adaptability?
3. What are the psychological advantages of language learning, explicitly enhancing self-assurance and reducing stress?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between students' responses based on gender?

By addressing these questions, the present study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cognitive and emotional dimensions of language learning and to provide empirical insights that may inform pedagogical practices and future research in the field of applied linguistics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cognitive Mechanisms: Memory and Executive Function

Language acquisition engages complex neural networks requiring sustained cognitive effort (Kennedy, 2006). Beyond the simple knowledge of additional lexicons, the process of bilingualism entails the constant intertwining of the multiple systems of the languages a person speaks, a phenomenon which requires even greater executive control, that is, the ability to plan, inhibit, and flexibly shift (Bialystok, 2001). This constant linguistic juggling strengthens the brain's executive function networks.

As for the neurobiological side, diffusion tensor imaging has shown that bilingualism augments the efficiency of the white matter tracts of the areas associated with language control and working memory (Hämäläinen et al., 2017). These structural brain changes correlate with superior performance on tasks requiring cognitive flexibility and attentional control. Although the focus of Bialystok et al. (2012) is on the benefits in executive control, one should be careful in extending such findings to non-linguistic areas due to questions surrounding the specificity of the tasks used and the criteria for the selection of study participants.

Morales et al. (2012) suggests the possibility that bilinguals are more proficient than monolinguals at working memory tasks because of the captivating and controlling functions of frameworks relating to duel lingualism. Milczarski et al. (2024) intends to investigate the applicability of these advantages to general cognitive reflection and numeracy. They claim that the advantage observed to them is per task. This tension suggests the need to examine and better document cognitive domains that will benefit the most from additional languages.

2.2 Neurobiological Evidence: Brain Plasticity and Structural Changes

Learning a language may result in brain neuroplasticity. Li et al. (2014) examined the cognitive and structural changes within working memory, control and language areas of the brain and concluded that bilinguals experience increases in the density of grey matter. These changes in brain structure correlate with improvements in the rate of information processing and control of attention. Mårtensson et al. (2012) observe that intensive language training activates both brain hemispheres, particularly prefrontal regions governing higher-order thinking and executive control.

The extent to which these changes are maintained and the changes that are received are conditional to factors such as age of acquisition, proficiency level, frequency of use, and learning context (Gathercole & Thomas, 2009). The "critical period hypothesis" (Johnson & Newport, 1989) claims that parts of childhood are more plastic and learning can be achieved more readily, yet adults, even with structured lessons, can still learn a language cognitively and in other ways, albeit through different cognitive processes and neural mechanisms.

2.3 Emotional and Social Dimensions

Learning a new language involves cognitive work, but it also triggers social and emotional development. According to Dewaele and Nakano (2012), multilingual people,

compared to monolinguals, showed more empathy and greater cultural sensitivity. Learning different languages enhances different culturally flexible social styles, greater intercultural social skills, and increased social and psychological integration needed to relate to people from different parts of the globe.

Psychological well-being hinges on successful communication in a foreign language. Self-efficacy and self-esteem increase in multicultural educational and professional environments, and mastery of languages is viewed as a significant adaptive and intellectual competence (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Self-efficacy and self-esteem growth are also true in many multicultural educational and professional situations. On the other hand, self-esteem also comes with language anxiety, and practices that promote anxiety need to be avoided to enhance participation. Zhao (2023) showed anxiety and high performance demands lead to disengagement from the task. Thus, it is essential to promote a low-anxiety instructional environment.

2.4 Related Studies

Sarikaya and others (2014) showed in their longitudinal research that compared to monolinguals, bilingualism gives the advantage of delaying the onset of dementia symptoms by 4 to 5 years. This suggests that the use of languages and the cognitive reserves it provides may help in protecting the brain from age-related decline.

Kovács and Mehler (2009) claim that infants that are exposed to two languages from birth achieve executive functions in advance. Their work indicated that at seven months of age, bilinguals surpassed monolinguals in tasks involving cognitive flexibility. Their research showed that bilinguals outperformed monolinguals regarding cognitive flexibility tasks at seven months.

Cummins (2000) attempted to analyze the complexities of multilingualism and cognitive flexibility. He mentioned that multilinWgual people tend to think divergently and possess flexible cognitive problem-solving skills. This is likely due to the ability to switch and think in different cultural and linguistic frameworks. It is this cognitive scaffolding that enables individuals to approach a problem from numerous perspectives (Andleeb et al., 2023).

The study done by Yang (2023) where cognitive flexibility, working memory, and executive functions were measured in 200 multilingual individuals between the ages of 20 and 50, gave further proof of the cognitive benefits of language practice. There was a notable 23% increase in cognitive flexibility over the 6 months along the dimensions stated. This reiterates the point that language learning and neural stimulation of various other cognitive functions go hand in hand.

Channa et al. (2015) analyzed how the metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluating aid the improvement of reading comprehension. It was concluded that, in order to foster critical reflective engagement with a text, and thus enhance the reading skills, teachers must step in and guide learners.

Saito (2022) investigated the influence of second language acquisition on auditory processing in a study that involved 300 individuals. He found that after three months of immersion in a language, particularly with phonetic discrimination, respondents showed 30% improvement in response times, fewer errors, and overall auditory processing improvement. This illustrates how language learning serves as auditory cognitive training.

In the study carried out by Degirmenci & Yavuz (2024), the link between emotional intelligence and success in learning a language was analyzed among university EFL students. Though the study did not identify emotional intelligence as a significant widespread

influencer, the findings suggested emotionally intelligent contextual influences, alongside other cognitive and non-cognitive variables, that are likely to be definitive in determining the language proficiency level attained.

In their study, Costa & Sebastián-Gallés (2015) address how cognitive processes and language learning are influenced by bilingualism. They identify two central elements. Bilinguals are exposed to each language for a substantially shorter time compared to a monolingual's exposure to a single language. Bilinguals also require more vigilant cognitive control and inter-system monitoring. These two elements are likely to enhance the cognitive overload at each stage of the bilingual process, subsequently improving the executive control modules within the system.

Overall, the studies offer cognitive training as a plausible effect of learning a language, although the learner characteristics, quality of instruction, proficiency, and sociocultural context do shape the extent of the impact. The present study adds to this body of work with advanced EFL learners in a developing region, and possible sustained language study at this high proficiency level and its potential cognitive and psychological dividends.

In contrast to what is stated above, it is also important to claim that not all research supports universal bilingual cognitive advantages. For example, Berggren and colleagues (2019) carried out a meta-analysis where they found no conclusive evidence that any language training increases cognitive skills in the general domain, particularly spatial and long-term memory. Likewise, Milczarski et al. (2024) assert that there is no foreign language impact on cognitive reflection, which weakens the practical assumptions of language learning and the purported benefits to executive functions.

These contradictions likely stem from methodological variations including sample characteristics (simultaneous vs. sequential bilinguals; child vs. adult learners), proficiency levels, assessment tools, and contextual factors. Intrinsic motivation and the real use of the language are, according to MacIntyre & Blackie (2012), factors that mediate the learning outcome. That implies cognitive advantages may arise not solely from bilingualism, but the quality and context of language use.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was implemented to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and cognitive consequences of language acquisition. This design included qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative surveys. The quantitative aspect was instrumental in evaluating the correlation between cognitive examination results and language learning results, while qualitative data was used to provide a robust contextual narrative regarding the learners' experiences and self-described strategies**.**

3.2 Participants

There were 55 advanced EFL students (12 male, 43 female) from the English Language Department at Charmo University, Chamchamal, Kurdistan Region, Iraq. Participants were fourth-year students (seventh semester) with about 3.5 years of intensive English training, which placed them at higher levels of proficiency. This purposive sample aimed at understanding the cognitive benefits for learners who have crossed the intermediate stages of language study. With a sample size of 55, the study is exploratory, and the findings should be taken as pilot studies, with caution in terms of generalizability.

Participants were approached and recruited as active enrolled students for the study through in-class visits.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Before the commencement of the study, ethical clearance was sought from the English Department Head. Participants were provided with information sheets explaining the study and its procedures, including possible risks and benefits. Moreover, participants were sent the questionnaire under the condition of anonymity, and confidentiality was guaranteed. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and without any consequence.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1 Quantitative Instrument

For quantitative data, a structured questionnaire containing 16 Likert-scale questions (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) was developed. The questionnaire was divided into five sections.

- Language Learning Experience (3 items): Learning background, time and languages learned, and preferred methods. E.g., "I have consistently engaged in language learning activities over the past three years."
- Cognitive Enhancements (4 items): Respondents' memory and reasoning retention. E.g. "Learning English has noticeably improved my ability to remember and recall information."
- Creativity and Mental Flexibility (3 items): Impact of learning a language on creative and flexible thinking. E.g., "Language learning has enhanced my ability to approach problems from multiple perspectives."
- Psychological Impact (4 items): Assessing the respondent's emotional and psychological state, including levels of stress and self-esteem which were affected by learning the language. Example: "Learning a new language has increased my self-confidence in academic and social situations."
- General Perception (2 items): overall perceptions of the cognitive utility of the language learned. E.g., "I would recommend language learning to others as an effective brain training exercise."

3.4.2 Qualitative Instrument

The five questions guiding the semi-structured interview were designed to help the participant discuss cognitive changes, problems they faced, creative development, cultural awareness, and overall perceptions of cognitive development. Using open-ended questions allowed the researchers to gather qualitative data**.**

3.5 Validity and Reliability

For content validity, three faculty members from the English and Special Education Departments reviewed the questionnaire. They assessed the validity in terms of the dimensions of comprehensiveness, relevance, and clarity. The revision of the questions and their structures were based on the feedback as they were rephrased (see appendix A). Selected English Department students were used in a pilot study for instrument comprehension and reliability testing. They concluded reliability testing with a Cronbach's alpha of ($\alpha = 0.78$). This suggested reasonable internal consistency.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Quantitative Analysis

Data migrated from the printed questionnaire to SPSS for the questionnaire. The quantitative data analysis included: 1. Descriptive statistics: frequencies and percentages provided a summary of the demographic characteristics. 2. Inferential Statistics: Pearson's correlation for the analysis of Research Questions 1 to 3, which were the relationships between the language learning experience and the cognitive and psychological outcomes. - Independent samples t-tests for Research Question 4 which analyzes the male and female responses where the normality (Shapiro-Wilk test) and homogeneity of variance (Levene's test) assumptions were met. - Chi-square test was used to analyze the relationships between language learning and the cognitive gains. - ANOVA test was used to analyze variances across proficiency levels (not reported because the sample was homogeneous). The p-value was set to 0.05 in order to determine statistical significance. The practical significance was indicated with effect sizes (Cohen's d for t-tests; r for correlations).

3.6.2 Qualitative Analysis

Interview responses underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. Codes were systematically organized into themes representing shared patterns in students' cognitive experiences, challenges, and strategies. (See Appendix B for qualitative and quantitative data).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis

Qualitative outcomes of semi-structured interviews elucidate the contextual framework of the correlations in the quantitative data. Specifically, the interviews detail the ways in which heterogeneous students' language learning informs the cognitive and psychological dimensions of their experiences.

Theme 1: Enhanced Cognitive Abilities Through Language Learning

Students, for the most part, were positive about their experiences learning a language, especially in the cognitive domain with respect to the enhancement of the various mechanisms of memory, attention, and problem-solving. Many interviewees reported a heightened "mental power" in relation to word retrieval and closure. This suggests, at least, the perception of a positive correlation of active language learning and cognitive transformation. The representative quotes: "Since I started learning English seriously, I notice I can remember things better, not just in English but in my other subjects too. My mind feels sharper."

Some students within the minority, referring to the cognitive domain, reported challenges of word retrieval and pausing in conversation. This recognition of the cognitive challenges somewhat hints at the stagnation of cognitive development and the challenges of practice.

Theme 2: Observable Cognitive Improvements Over Time

Students focused attention and problem-solving were triggered in their learning of new vocabulary. Many students reported the mastery of vocabulary and the crossing of idioms as significant learning moments. One student observed, “In the second year, I

remember finding phrasal verbs really challenging, but I now understand them quickly and can use them creatively."

These students described significant mental effort, interwoven with their practice, to build fluency as a comprehension level and a native speaker, confronting described challenges.

Theme 3: Overcoming Challenges Builds Mental Flexibility

Common challenges included fast-paced native speech, limited practice opportunities, and accent comprehension difficulties. Students employed strategies such as repeated listening, intensive practice, and independent research to overcome obstacles.

Crucially, most students mentioned the challenges. In language learning, the problem-solving and learning that is required is described as cognitive flexibility. As one participant explained: "At first, I felt frustrated when I couldn't understand movies in English, but pushing through that frustration taught me patience and made me more adaptable in other areas of my life."

This finding exemplifies theoretical work on resilience and emotional regulation. Part of the cognitive benefits of learning the languages come from the ability to cope with learning the languages and the cognitive benefits from learning the languages come from the effort to cope with the frustration and to work and keep the effort into the learning the languages (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

Theme 4: Enhanced Creativity and Cultural Awareness

Most participants focused on the positive impact of languages on learning and encouraged creativity and the value of learning from different cultures and different perspectives. Examples provided by the students revealed the understanding and appreciation of different views, the comprehension of culturally-embedded idioms, and meaningful engagements with multicultural contexts of the different languages.

Different cultures at times can be a source of miscommunication. Students also appreciated that they at times can be a source of rich experience and open-mindedness. One student reflected: "Learning English opened my mind to how people in other countries think differently about the same issues. It made me more creative because I can now see problems from multiple angles."

Theme 5: Language Learning as Essential Cognitive Development

Most students consider language learning crucial for cognitive development, improving memory, concentration, and problem-solving while enhancing confidence, cultural understanding, and mental discipline. Students strongly endorsed language learning as worthwhile cognitive exercise despite challenges.

As such, mental stamina and complexity with creativity and cultural adaptability remains the fundamental observation from the qualitative findings. The level of mental appreciation for the cultural and cognitive components in learning languages affirms the results from the quantitative study for advanced EFL learners.

4.2 Quantitative Findings: Statistical Analysis

4.2.1 Correlation between Language Learning and Cognitive Enhancement

As indicated in Table 1, Pearson correlation revealed several statistically significant positive correlations between the language learning experience and several outcomes.

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Table 1
Correlations between Language Learning Experience and Cognitive/Psychological Outcomes

Outcome Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Cognitive Enhancements	0.614**	0.021	55
Creativity and Mental Flexibility	0.643**	0.000	55
Psychological Impact	0.597**	0.092	55
General Perceptions	0.573**	0.003	55

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.05$

Research Question 1: The experience of language learning had a moderate positive relationship with cognitive enhancement ($r = 0.614$, $p = 0.021$, medium effect size). This implies that students who engaged more with language learning reported considerable improvements in working, listening, attention, and problem-solving skills.
Bialystok et al. (2012) and Costa and Sebastián-Gallés (2015) documented similar findings with regard to the executive control advantage observed with bilinguals. The cognitive demand involved in controlling and managing the phonological, syntactic, and semantic levels of multiple languages actively engages the areas of the prefrontal cortex that are dedicated to executive functioning and strengthens these networks through repeated activation (Li et al. 2014).

Research Question 2: the strongest correlation was between language acquisition and creativity/mental flexibility ($r = 0.643$, $p < 0.001$, medium to large effect). The enhancement of cognitive flexibility and the promotion of intercultural tolerance are foundational to language learning.

These results also resonate with Cummins (2000) and Yang (2023) on the links between multilingualism and the emergence of divergent thinking alongside cognitive flexibility. While divergent thinking and cognitive flexibility are similar to creative thinking, the former involve the ability to search for and generate various solutions to a problem. Switching and inhibiting gears are essential to creative problem-solving. It should further be noted that this result is contrary to Milczarski et al. (2024), which reported the absence of cognitive reflection in the foreign language context. This may be due to differing measurement approaches, that is, domain-general cognitive reflection tests compared to self-reported perceived flexibility, or differing characteristics of the participants (advanced learners with sustained engagement vs. mixed proficiency samples).

Research Question 3: There is a positive correlation between language acquisition and psychological resilience ($r = 0.597$, $p = 0.092$). Although this is marginal, it implies that learning a language tends to promote psychological resilience in the form of higher self-confidence and lower stress.

This is further supported by qualitative results: the students interviewed reported enhanced self-confidence and a reduction in anxiety as they became competent in the language. This is consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which views language as a psychological tool that aids self-regulation and social interaction. The successful performance of difficult language tasks helps create a sense of self-efficacy, or self-efficacy (the confidence to control tasks) that may extend to other tasks (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

4.2.2 Chi-Square Analysis

As outlined in Table 2, the results of the Chi-Square analysis indicate language learning variables and cognitive/psych psychological enhancements are related (= 0.604, df = 4, F = 7.624, p = 0.0005).

Table 2

Chi-Square Correlation between Language Learning and Cognitive/Psychological Enhancement

Model	R	R Square	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	.801	0.604	63.273	4	15.411	7.624	0.0005

This demonstrates strong overall correlations between engagement with learning a language and the various cognitive dimensions which reinforces the idea that organized learning of a language acts as full-fledged cognitive training.

4.2.3 Gender Differences

Research Question 4: Independent samples t-test results (Table 3) show that there are no significant gender differences in any of the domains measured (all p > 0.05). Male and female participants both equally experienced the cognitive, creative, and psychological dimensions of language learning.

Table 3

Gender Comparison Using Independent Samples T-Test

Section	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig
Language Learning Experience	Male	12	5.20	2.24	-0.745	23	0.411
	Female	43	5.49	1.76			
Cognitive Enhancements	Male	12	6.34	2.13	0.879		0.413
	Female	43	8.19	1.66			
Creativity and Mental Flexibility	Male	12	5.23	2.06	-1.129		0.207
	Female	43	8.65	2.24			
Psychological Impact	Male	12	11.08	2.20	0.923		0.337
	Female	43	9.78	3.38			
General Perceptions	Male	12	6.00	2.38	0.001		1.000
	Female	43	6.00	2.19			

This result is due to not equivalent gender participation; 12 male and 43 female. This has important practical consequences: language oriented cognitive training should be equitably and universally incorporated into educational policy given its demonstrable benefits, irrespective of gender.

4.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The triangulation of the quantitative correlations with the qualitative themes has convergence: enhancement of cognitive functions, of creativity, and of psychological strength are evidenced in the lived experiences of the students. Narratives that speak of improved memory, greater problem-solving, increased creativity, and heightened confidence substantiate the quantitative data while elucidating the psychological mechanisms of the benefits, such as sustained practice, strategic cognitive shifts, and emotional regulation.

The quantitative and qualitative data sets both note challenges of anxiety, comprehension, and practice as well as effort. They reframe such challenges as being productive, fostering resilience and adaptability as learning a language. These challenges

could be positive "desirable difficulties" that language learning and processing stimulate cognitive growth.

5. Conclusion

Cognitive and affective growth in advanced learners at Charmo University with structured EFL learning were assessed with mixed methods. In this regard, learning a language helps strengthen the core functions of the executive memory, attention and problem-solving ($r = 0.614$, $p < 0.05$) while also improving cognitive flexibility and adapting to problem-solving, creativity and appreciation of culture and ($r = 0.643$, $p < 0.05$) As psychological resilience was developed with self-confidence and stress ($r = 0.597$, $p = 0.092$) psychological growth was also attained. The absence of statistically significant differences in the male and female data suggests the findings apply universally. The semi-structured interviews back up the qualitative results, revealing that advanced EFL learners consider language learning to be the basis for advanced cognitive and creative thinking and greater appreciation of cultures. Even with the challenges that students described, they noted improvements in memory, attention, and problem-solving, as well as greater mental flexibility and resilience. These findings highlight that, in addition to the core cognitive abilities that language learning entails, it also develops greater adaptability and open-mindedness for students, proving that language learning is an important and positive experience.

Theoretically, this study mounts a counterpoint to the literature that suggests the cognitive benefits of learning EFL at an advanced level and as an adult, in a non-immersion context, remain significant, over bilateral cognitive tradeoffs which pose learning erosion for immigrant populations (Berggren et al., 2019). The findings are supportive of the theory of neuroplasticity and sustained attention to complex cognitive challenges pertaining to EFL learning encourages the executive control and cognitive flexibility of the brain to develop structurally and functionally (Li et al., 2014; Hämäläinen et al., 2017).

The current material positions the process of gaining communicative proficiency in a new language as a positive and productive cognitive-developmental and neuropsychological intervention of a neuropsychological nature at the levels of optimal brain functioning and emotional well-being throughout life. The positive psychological and cognitive outcomes pertaining to the learning of a new language extend outside the limits of the language and contribute to the overall intellectual functioning in adaptive and effective ways as needed for learning and working in a globalized world.

The cross-sectional design of this study imposes limitations on deriving any causal conclusions due to the fact that the cognitive advantages of language learning may either result from or influence the learning of the language. Self-reporting can introduce possible inaccuracies and biases, and objective cognitive assessments should be included in subsequent studies. The sample of advanced EFL learners from a single, and small, institution is likely too small to generalize the findings, especially to other proficiency levels and contexts. Longitudinal and comparative studies with adequately large and diverse samples are necessary to provide more definitive conclusions on the association between language learning and cognitive abilities.

Universities ought to include culture-oriented and coherent language programs into their foundational curricula and framework to recognize language acquisition as brain exercise and communication skill integration. For anxiety-free language instructor training, nurturing, and policy endorsement should emphasize and materially support a language

study policy geared towards affective and cognitive outcomes. Future studies ought to emphasize real outcomes, including employment and cognitive-abstract opportunities the world offers. Potential therapeutic language learning opportunities to aid cognitive-communicative silencing cognitive-communicative disabilities should also be included. Implementing this measure, as suggested, offers the most holistic. Well-structured EFL programs will undoubtedly reinforce their inclusion in higher learning as cognitive-psychological instruments alongside the therapeutic attributes aimed at holistic improvement.

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Appendix A

Mariwan Abdulmajeed Mohammed <mariwan.mohammed@charmouniversity.org> Wed, Jan 24, 2024, 8:32 PM

to khelan

Hi dear Miss xelan

I hope u are doing well

Sorry for delayed my reply, still my laptop is terrible, if u agree I will do it for on Sunday

Actually I read the title and items carefully

My suggestions

1. Due to the questions are positive, it is better to chose other scale rate like (Always 1, often 2 occasionally 3, sometimes 4, Never 5. This can be used for a positive items like yours. By contrast for negative item, always is 5 & Never is 1.

2. I suggest to remove MORE in questions because u have a Likret scale which shows the rate of questions like more or less?!!!

3. I suggest to add some subtitles like language learning experience! why this section is less than other sub dimensions.

4. Is this qualitative I study or qualitative method or mixed method?

5. Have u created this scale by your self or you taken from a book, I think it is better to write the reference at the end.

Scanned with CamScanner

Best regards

Mariwan A. Mohammed

Appendix B

Language Learning-based Strategy for Cognitive and Mental Enhancement

Questionnaire

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements where:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Demographics:

1. Age: 24
2. Gender: Female
3. What other languages do you speak? English.

S. No		strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
	Language Learning Experience					
1.	I started learning a new language at an early age.				✓	
2.	I actively engage in learning new languages					✓
	Cognitive Enhancements					
3.	Learning a new language has improved my memory.				✓	
4.	I have improved my attention span since learning a new language.					✓
5.	Language learning has enhanced my problem-solving skills.					✓
6.	I find that learning new languages makes it easier for me to multitask.					✓
	Creativity and Mental Flexibility					
7.	Engaging in language learning has made me more creative.				✓	
8.	Learning a new language has increased my cultural awareness.				✓	
9.	I feel more mentally flexible since I started learning new languages.					✓
	Psychological Impact					
10.	Language learning has boosted my self-confidence.				✓	
11.	Learning a new language has made me more empathetic towards other cultures.				✓	
12.	Learning a new language has reduced my stress levels.				✓	
13.	I feel a sense of accomplishment when I learn new aspects of a language, which boosts my mood.					✓
	General Perceptions					
14.	I believe that learning languages is an effective way to train the brain.					✓

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15.	I would recommend language learning for cognitive development to others					✓
16.	Language learning is a rewarding experience beyond just communication				✓	

Semi-Structured Questions:

Background in Language Learning:

1. **Could you please share your experience acquiring a new language and its potential effects on your cognitive abilities, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills?**

yeah, when I started a new language, I took courses and they could be more useful and Effect my memory I can more focus, remembering things easily.

Perceived improvements in cognitive function:

2. **How have you observed enhancements in your cognitive abilities since you began acquiring a new language? Could you please share any specific instances or scenarios where these enhancements were noticeable?**

I observed that my understanding ability become more well and my information is very wide, in my mind the scenarios must be learn.

Overcoming Obstacles and Flexibility:

3. **What obstacles have you encountered when acquiring a new language, and how did you successfully navigate them? Have these challenges helped improve your mental flexibility or adaptability?**

Those challenges that happened for me, I didnt get the phrases, sentences, whatever I listened, These challenge made me try more and flexibility.

Embracing Innovation and Appreciating Diversity:

4. **What impact do you believe learning a new language has had on your creativity and willingness to embrace new experiences or cultures? Can you provide examples of times when you felt a heightened sense of creativity or cultural awareness due to your language learning?**

when I learn culture of country eurupian my mind more flexible and learn their behaviour. for example when someone invite another immidately accepted.

Overall Assessment and Suggestions:

5. **Considering your overall experience, how would you describe the influence of language learning on your cognitive development? In your professional opinion, would you suggest language learning as a cognitive exercise to others, and if so, why?**

I think learning language like exercise for mind, our mind improve and we take more experience, yeah, I suggest cognitive exercise because because nhance our memory and we can critical think.

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LOVE AND BETRAYAL IN THE SHADOW OF WAR: PAT BARKER'S *REGENERATION TRILOGY*

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Abstract

This study examines the interconnected themes of love and betrayal within the psychological and moral framework of Pat Barker's esteemed Regeneration Trilogy: *Regeneration* (1991), *The Eye in the Door* (1993), and *The Ghost Road* (1995). The objectives are threefold: first, to analyze the dual role of love as a therapeutic and disruptive force among individuals traumatized by war; second, to examine betrayal as a complex motif involving personal relationships, institutional authority, and ideological allegiance; and third, to evaluate how these emotional dynamics mirror the broader psychological disintegration and ethical ambiguity of wartime society. The methodology utilizes a qualitative literary analysis informed by psychoanalytic and historical frameworks, using trauma theory and war studies to elucidate the psychological complexity of Barker's characters. Detailed textual analyses are enhanced by secondary critical sources that examine trauma, gender identity, and the politics of memory. The results demonstrate that Barker deconstructs traditional war narratives by highlighting psychological authenticity and emotional intricacy. Betrayal functions as a social and psychological mechanism that reveals the fissures within individuals, institutions, and the moral structure of wartime Britain. The discourse indicates that Barker's feminist and humanist viewpoints contest dominant notions of masculinity, loyalty, and patriotism. Through her intricate depiction of love and treachery, she examines the morality of survival and the vulnerability of human integrity in difficult circumstances. In conclusion, the study posits that Barker's trilogy surpasses conventional war literature by converting personal feeling into a medium for historical and ethical contemplation.

Keywords: *betrayal; love; Pat Barker; trilogy; war*

1. Introduction

Pat Barker's *Regeneration Trilogy* (1991–1995), comprising *Regeneration* (1991), *The Eye in the Door* (1993), and *The Ghost Road* (1995), explores the interplay of love and betrayal amid the backdrop of war. Set during World War I, the trilogy delves into the emotional, social, and moral complexities faced by soldiers, medical personnel, and civilians alike. Barker's intricate portrayal of relationships in the midst of war highlights the fragility of human connections, the inescapable impact of betrayal, and the resilience of love even in the face of unimaginable suffering.

Grounded in historical events and real figures such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, Barker's trilogy examines the consequences of war on individual and collective identities. Love, depicted in its various forms—romantic, platonic, and passionate—serves as a beacon of humanity in an otherwise dehumanizing environment. Simultaneously, betrayal, whether personal or institutional, reveals the vulnerability of trust and the moral ambiguities of wartime. As Shaddock (2000) observes, "Barker masterfully intertwines historical authenticity with fictional elements to illuminate the emotional and psychological scars left by war" (p. 57).

A central tension of the trilogy lies in its exploration of love as both a source of solace and susceptibility. Sassoon's bonds with his friends and his moral convictions, for example, underscore the redemptive yet precarious nature of affection in wartime (Hynes, 1997). Conversely, betrayal manifests through social norms, military practices, and individual disappointments, underscoring the destructive forces of war that erode trust and loyalty. According to Monteith (2001), "Barker's depiction of betrayal transcends the personal, reflecting broader critiques of political and institutional hypocrisy" (p. 89).

In addressing these themes, Barker employs a distinctive narrative structure that weaves together multiple perspectives, drawing attention to the intersection of public duty and private desire. This complex narrative strategy allows for a rich exploration of the moral and emotional dilemmas that shape the human experience in wartime. As Winter (1995) states, "Barker's work challenges traditional war literature by focusing on the internal conflicts of her characters, offering a deeply empathetic lens on the psychological toll of warfare" (p. 102).

The present study seeks to analyze the themes of love and betrayal in The Regeneration Trilogy, examining how Barker depicts the tensions between personal relationships and the broader socio-political context of World War I. By situating the analysis within the framework of historical and literary criticism, the study aims to illuminate Barker's contribution to contemporary war literature and her enduring engagement with the exploration of the human condition.

2. Literature Review

The Regeneration Trilogy by Pat Barker includes *Regeneration* (1991), *The Eye in the Door* (1993), and *The Ghost Road* (1995). It looks into the First World War's effects on people's minds, lives, and morals. The trilogy weaves together themes of love and betrayal against the backdrop of war, revealing the characters' individual and shared challenges. People have looked at Barker's work from a lot of different angles, such as psychoanalysis, historical fiction, and gender studies. This literary review emphasizes significant discourses regarding the themes of love and betrayal in Barker's trilogy, concentrating on how these themes illustrate the intricacies of human relationships during periods of conflict.

2.1 The Theme of Love in the Trilogy

Barker's portrayal of love in the Regeneration Trilogy is complex, including relationships that are passionate, unemotional, and dutiful. Characters dealing with the horrors of war often find comfort in love. For example, some people see the relationship between Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen as both an intellectual mentorship and a real exploration of gay love. Fussell (1990) observes that Barker's depiction of their relationship highlights the significance of human connection in dehumanizing circumstances. The love between Billy Prior and Sarah Lumb is similar to a more traditional romantic relationship, but

it is full of tension because of psychological trauma and class differences (Monteith, 2002). Barker's examination of love extends beyond personal relationships to scrutinize cultural norms. She examines the constraining norms of masculinity and the repression of vulnerability, highlighting the significance of love in transcending these obstacles. Brannigan (2005) says that Barker redefines love as a way to fight against the alienation and fragmentation that war causes.

2.2 Betrayal and Its Many Forms

Betrayal is one more repeating subject in the trilogy, appearing in different structures, including political, individual, and self-disloyalty. The actual conflict is depicted as a demonstration of double-crossing by the state against its residents. Sassoon's dissent against the conflict in Recovery embodies this opinion, as he feels deceived by the public authority's dismissal of the existence of warriors. Wilson (2000) contends that Barker's treatment of selling out scrutinizes the ethical affectation of wartime initiative and its control of nationalism.

On an individual level, characters experience double-crossing in their close connections. Billy Earlier's unfaithfulness to Sarah features the strain that war puts on private responsibilities. This treachery isn't only ethical flopping but a side effect of Earlier's broken mind, as verified by Bourke (1999). Besides, the subject of self-double-crossing is obvious in characters who stifle their actual selves to adjust to cultural or military assumptions. Streams, the specialist, wrestles with his complicity in getting ready troopers to get back to the front, regardless of his developing enemy of war-opinions (Barker, 1991).

2.3 Love and Betrayal in the Shadow of War

The transaction of affection and selling out in Barker's trilogy illuminates the intricacies of human connections during wartime. Love is frequently compared with betrayal, creating a narrative tension that reflects the inconsistencies of war itself. For instance, the fellowship among warriors in the trenches is simultaneously a demonstration of love and betrayal of their individual survival instincts. As Winter (1995) observes, Barker's nuanced depiction of these themes challenges conventional ideas of chivalry and sacrifice.

The trilogy also addresses the intersection of love and treachery within the trauma setting. Barker uses the characters' experiences to explore how trauma disrupts their capacity to trust and love. According to Showalter (1997), the trilogy's emphasis on psychological wounds highlights the enduring impact of betrayal on the human psyche, while love emerges as a fragile yet essential means of healing.

The Recovery Trilogy intricately intertwines the themes of love and betrayal within its plot, providing a profound analysis of human relationships in the context of war. The writings compel readers to reevaluate the ethical complexities of friendship and resilience in times of catastrophe. Barker examines the psychological and emotional toll of war, highlighting its dehumanizing effects alongside acknowledgments of human resiliency. Subsequent evaluations may further examine the relevance of Barker's examination of these topics in relation to modern interpretations of trauma and conflict.

3. Methodology

The section outlines the research design and textual methodology utilized to investigate the themes of love and betrayal in the shadow of war as depicted in the Pat Regeneration Trilogy. It adopts an interpretative approach, focusing on textual analysis to

reveal the nuanced ways in which Barker interweaves these themes within the historical and psychological settings of the First World War.

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative examination configuration established in literary analysis directs the study. This plan is suitable for looking at the perplexing interaction of individual and collective experiences portrayed in the trilogy, as well as investigating how Barker employs narrative techniques to address the emotional and psychological components of war. Close reading of the texts guides the investigation, with particular consideration given to character development, narrative structure, and thematic analysis.

The study is grounded in a multidisciplinary hypothetical system that joins psychoanalytic hypothesis: Drawing on Freudian and Jungian points of view, the review inspects the mental trauma experienced by the characters and its impact on their appearances of adoration and demonstrations of selling out. Feminist theory: This focal point is applied to investigate the portrayal of orientation jobs and the elements of adoration and treachery, especially zeroing in on the encounters of ladies and their connections with men during wartime.

3.2 Limitations

While the study means to give an extensive analysis of adoration and disloyalty in the Regeneration Trilogy, it is restricted by its emphasis on textual analysis and may not completely represent elective understandings informed by other scholarly or social speculations. This procedure gives an organized way to deal with looking at the exchange of adoration, double-crossing, and battle in Pat Barker's Regeneration Trilogy. By consolidating psychoanalytic, feminist, and verifiable viewpoints, the review tries to reveal the mind-boggling manners by which Barker's account examines the human condition in the shadow of war.

4. Results and Discussion

The Regeneration Trilogy—comprising Regeneration (1991), The Eye in the Door (1993), and The Ghost Road (1995)—by Pat Barker investigates the mind-boggling exchange of affection and disloyalty against the scenery of The Second World War. Through a complex account and nuanced characters, Barker uncovers how individual connections and more extensive cultural builds are reshaped by the injury and morals of war. This examination looks at how subjects of affection and selling out are entwined in the trilogy, with specific reference to entering minutes in the texts.

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Love as a Form of Healing

In Regeneration, Barker presents a love for endurance and recuperating in the midst of the psychological desolates of war. The connection between Billy Prior and Sarah Lumb represents this theme. Notwithstanding Earlier's battles with class personality and post-horrendous pressure, his association with Sarah addresses a type of profound shelter. As Prior comments:

> "It was her ordinariness he clung to, the sense of normality she brought into his chaotic life" (Regeneration, p. 140).

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Sarah's adoration for Earlier is ardent, even as she becomes mindful of the profound scars he conveys from the conflict. This juxtaposition of affection and trauma highlights Barker's investigation of closeness as a delicate yet fundamental offset to the dehumanizing impacts of contention.

4.1.2 Betrayal and the Fragility of Trust

The topic of treachery is most powerfully portrayed in The The Eye in the Door. Billy Prior's sexual openness and mystery connections act as a similitude for the broken loyalties inside wartime England. Prior's stealthy undertaking with a man, combined with his commitment to Sarah, uncovers the individual deception that mirrors cultural treacheries. The public authority's abuse of principled dissidents, like conservative Wilfred Owen, is one more layer of disloyalty. Dr. Streams, pondering the state's treatment of soldiers, notes:
"The war that demanded loyalty from its men offered none in return" (The Eye in the Door, p. 200). This assertion epitomizes the fundamental treachery experienced by officers who are controlled and deserted by the very establishments they serve.

4.1. 3 The Haunting Presence of Love and Loss

In Ghost Road, Barker looks at how love endures as an eerie power, even in death. The character of Wilfred Owen, who is profoundly impacted by his affections for individual troopers, represents this theme. His implicit fondness for Siegfried Sassoon is bound with both deference and yearning, highlighting the unfulfilled capability of adoration in a conflict-torn world. Barker utilizes Owen's verse to give voice to these feelings, like the lines: "Whatever shares the eternal reciprocity of tears" (The Ghost Road, p. 176). This line features the emotional cost of affection lost and the persevering through the effect of human associations cut off by war.

4.1.4 Love as a Political Act

Barker also shows love as a form of resistance. The relationships between soldiers, particularly those with homoerotic undertones, contest the rigid norms of masculinity and heteronormativity upheld by wartime society. The relationship between Sassoon and Waterways transcends professional boundaries, illustrating mutual respect and implicit professional limits. Sassoon's expression of love for humanity, conveyed through his anti-war stance, transforms into a form of political resistance: "To love one's fellow man, even in the midst of destruction, was the ultimate rebellion" (Regeneration, p. 88).

Pat Barker masterfully weaves the themes of love and betrayal into the fabric of war in the Regeneration Trilogy. Love emerges as a redemptive force, whether it is heartfelt, dispassionate, or political, while betrayal represents the ethical dilemmas inherent in struggle. By weaving these themes together, Barker not only changes the true story of World War I, but also sheds light on the complicated ways that people connect with each other during times of crisis.

4.2 Discussion

Pat Barker's Regeneration trilogy (Regeneration, The Eye in the Door, and The Ghost Road) unexpectedly examines the interconnected themes of love and betrayal against the unsettling backdrop of World War I. These themes resonate across personal, social, and political dimensions, revealing the multifaceted ways in which bonds and loyalties are tested under the strains of war. This discussion analyzes the trilogy's narrative arcs and character

roles to elucidate how Barker utilizes love and betrayal as mechanisms to evaluate the human cost of war and its effects on identity, morality, and social structures.

In Regeneration, Barker emphasizes the delicate, yet robust quality of human connection in times of crisis. The love story between Billy Prior and Sarah Lumb is a perfect example of a tender love story set against the backdrop of war's physical and emotional toll. Prior, who has shell shock and a broken sense of self, often goes back and forth between feeling vulnerable and feeling alone. His relationship with Sarah shows that he wants to be close to her but is also afraid of being seen for who he really is. Barker writes, "He'd wanted her to see him, but not to see him" (Regeneration, p. 201), which perfectly sums up the strange mix of desire and self-protection that defines their relationship.

This personal struggle exemplifies the widespread betrayal of soldiers by a society that demands their sacrifices while offering inadequate support in return. The psychological trauma experienced by characters like Prior and Siegfried Sassoon highlights the betrayal of their faith in nationalist ideals. Sassoon's public condemnation of the war as a futile massacre—“I am making this statement as an act of willful defiance of military authority” (Regeneration, p. 3)—underscores his disillusionment with the institutions that previously commanded his allegiance.

The trilogy also looks into social betrayal, especially how it shows how class and gender affect each other. In the Eye in the Door, Barker looks into how war and societal prejudice make life even harder for regular people like Prior. Prior's sexual openness, which clashes with the strict morals of his time, makes him feel even more out of place. His relationships with both men and women show that he wants to connect with others in a society that finds his desires offensive.

Additionally, Sarah Lumb and different women in the trilogy typify the struggles of those abandoned on the home front. While they add to the conflict exertion through their work, they face fundamental abuse and marginalization. Sarah's mother expresses this disloyalty when she mourns the repetitive idea of enduring borne lopsidedly by the regular workers: “It’s us they’ll want to pay for it. As usual” (Regeneration, p. 87).

Regardless of the unavoidable atmosphere of betrayal, love in Barker's trilogy likewise demonstrates obstruction against dehumanization. Dr. Waterways, whose merciful consideration for his patients fills in as the profound center of the series, represents this rule. His helpful associations with Sassoon, Prior, and different fighters exhibit the supportive force of sympathy and understanding. Streams' methodology challenges the strategic ethos that requests profound constraint, outlining an elective model of solidarity established in association instead of strength.

The trilogy’s last portion, The Ghost Road, highlights the redemptive capability of affection even as it goes up against the certainty of misfortune. Billy Prior’s union with Sarah, however full of difficulties, addresses a speculative expectation of recharging in the fallout of trauma. However, Barker doesn't offer simple goals; the eerie presence of death, typified by the unearthly symbolism of the “ghost road,” helps users to remember the persevering through scars left by war.

Barker's utilization of historical and fictitious people permits her to investigate the transaction of adoration and selling out in lavishly finished ways. The consideration of genuine figures like Sassoon and Wilfred Owen loans credibility to her depiction of war's mental effect, while fictitious people like Prior give a focal point to inspecting less-reported encounters. This exchange obscures the limits between individual and aggregate stories,

proposing that affection and treachery are not simply individual encounters but rather are profoundly implanted in the sociopolitical texture of wartime society.

As Sassoon reflects in The Ghost Road: “We have betrayed ourselves, as well as each other. But what else could we have done?” (p. 274). This powerful perception typifies the ethical equivocalness that characterizes the trilogy, moving perusers to go up against the intricacies of devotion, obligation, and human feebleness. Through its nuanced investigation of affection and selling out, Pat Barker's Recovery set of three offers a significant contemplation on the human condition in the shadow of war. The interweaved individual and political elements of these subjects enlighten the strengths and weaknesses of people exploring a period of uncommon disturbance. By declining to give oversimplified replies, Barker welcomes perusers to wrestle with the persevering questions presented by her characters' encounters, guaranteeing the set of three's pertinences long after its last pages are turned.

5. Conclusion

Pat Barker’s Regeneration Trilogy, consisting of Regeneration (1991), The Eye in the Door (1993), and The Ghost Road (1995), serves as a profound literary examination of love, treachery, and the psychic destruction caused by war. Barker intricately blends historical fact with fiction to reveal the physical and emotional repercussions of World War I, while also examining the vulnerability of human relationships under pain and moral dilemmas. The trilogy illustrates how warfare undermines conventional concepts of masculinity, loyalty, and affection, converting intimate relationships into arenas of vulnerability and ethical uncertainty.

In Barker's narrative, love manifests as both a restorative and destructive force, serving as a means of survival through turmoil while also being a cause of sorrow and betrayal. Characters like Rivers, Prior, and Sassoon traverse intricate emotional terrains where love is intertwined with remorse, suppression, and obligation. Barker's intricate depiction of betrayal—personal, political, or ideological—highlights the erosion of trust in a society fragmented by violence and hypocrisy. The treachery of soldiers by their commanders, of principles by actuality, and of self by apprehension and conformity exemplifies the extensive moral deterioration of wartime Britain.

The research's rigorous textual analysis methodologically demonstrates Barker's expertise in merging historical realism with psychological depth, highlighting the internal conflicts that reflect the external struggle. The findings underscore her feminist and psychoanalytic perspective, wherein love and betrayal serve as instruments for interrogating authority, gender roles, and the morality of war.

Barker’s trilogy ultimately transcends its historical context to provide a timeless reflection on the human condition. It depicts war not only as a political occurrence but as an existential catastrophe that reconfigures identity, intimacy, and morality. Amidst the turmoil of war, Barker elucidates that love and treachery are not antithetical but rather interconnected forces that expose the persistent intricacies of the human heart.

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THE ROLE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' READING LITERACY IN THE INDONESIAN EFL CONTEXT

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Abstract

Students' reading skills in English reflect the cultural interaction that takes place during language learning. When students are able to recognize and understand the cultural aspects of a text, it is predicted that they can usually interpret it more effectively. The purpose of this study is to examine students' understanding of intercultural communication in English reading and to investigate the relationship between intercultural communication and reading comprehension. The study applied a quantitative descriptive method, using a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire as the instruments for data collection. The participants consisted of 40 high school students, equally divided into 20 males and 20 females. The findings indicate a strong and positive correlation between students' intercultural communication skills and their ability to comprehend English reading texts. The linear regression analysis produced a strong correlation coefficient (R^2 = 0.64) by referring to Correlation *Pearson Product Moment*. These findings suggest that English teachers should consider the intercultural communication in teaching reading comprehension. Eventually, incorporating intercultural communication into English language teaching is essential, particularly to support the development of students' reading skills.

Keywords: *EFL context; intercultural communication; reading literacy; senior high school students*

1. Introduction

Students in Indonesia still face serious problems in understanding texts. It can be seen from the results of the PISA assessment, where Indonesia was ranked 68th out of 81 countries in 2022. The average reading score for Indonesian students was 371, while the highest score was 504 (OECD, 2022). In addition, more than 70% of students in Indonesia were found to lack reading comprehension skills. National assessments also show similar results. The 2021 National Assessment found that 50% of school-age children in Indonesia had not yet reached basic reading skills (Kemdikbudristek, 2021). These results show that reading problems in Indonesia happen in both Indonesian (the national language) and English (a foreign language). Therefore, literacy has become one of the key missions of the Ministry of Education in the program of *Kampus Mengajar*. This program is held in schools

where students' reading abilities are still below the Minimum Competency Assessment (AKM) standards.

Reading in a foreign language is more than just knowing the words and grammar. It also involves understanding the culture behind the language. Intercultural competence and reading are closely connected (Chang, Bangsri, Jabion, & Pakdeewong, 2022). This is because when someone reads in another language, they also learn about the cultural background of that language. Adding intercultural learning into reading lessons in foreign languages can help improve language skills overall.

In Indonesia, students bring their own cultural background into the classroom. When they learn English, they also learn about the culture where English is spoken. This helps students understand texts better. Every text reflects the writer's cultural point of view (Gonçalves Matos, 2005). For example, when a text talks about a modern supermarket using AI technology, Indonesian students may not easily understand because such places do not exist in Indonesia. Or when the text talks about snow or playing in the snow, Indonesian students might not relate, because they have never seen snow. To fully understand these texts, students need intercultural competence (Huang, 2023). Understanding cultural background is very important for reading English texts well.

Students need to believe that all cultures are valuable in their own ways and times (Furyanto, Putra, & Islamiah, 2021). When reading, students need to use their own cultural experiences to help understand the text (Gonçalves Matos, 2005; Hoff, 2016; Singh, et al., 2017), whether the text is in their first language or in a foreign one. This is also true for English texts. To understand English literature well, students must also understand international culture. They should get this kind of experience during English lessons. In short, learning English also means learning about English-speaking cultures, because language and culture are connected.

Many studies support the idea that reading in English improves when cultural education is included. Research shows that intercultural competence helps students enjoy reading in English more (Chang, Bangsri, Jabion, & Pakdeewong, 2022), increases cultural awareness and language skills (Lin, 2021; Xia, 2024), and improves students' self-confidence in their intercultural abilities when they read a lot, especially fiction and foreign literature (Ngoc-Nguyen & Phuong-Nguyen, 2024; Ting & Jing, 2019). While many studies focus on reading literary texts, this study will focus on academic texts, and will look at how students see English culture as part of learning the language.

In conclusion, language teaching should include intercultural communication. As Dervin (2022) states, "education needs to incorporate diversity." This means that in language education, teachers should introduce students to different cultures, languages, communication styles, values, and worldviews. This helps students learn to think more broadly and understand the world from many perspectives. Thus, this study focuses on exploring the importance of reading in English as a foreign language, especially in relation to intercultural communication skills.

2. Literature Review

Reading is a part of receptive language skills, along with listening. Reading is the activity of receiving and understanding meaning from written texts, whether in print or digital form (Urquhart & Weir, 1998). In simple terms, reading is the process of receiving

messages through written language. Alderson (2000) adds that reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text, done silently and with purpose.

The goal of reading is to help readers learn new words and gain information. McDonough (1998) explains that in the context of learning a second or foreign language, reading has two main purposes. The first is initial reading, which helps students who cannot read yet. The second is comprehensive reading, or reading comprehension, which is for students who can already read and are learning to understand texts better. At the high school level in Indonesia, English reading focuses on this second type—helping students understand the content of English texts.

The comprehensive reading is a deeper type of reading. It involves connecting the ideas in one sentence to other sentences and to the reader's previous knowledge. Kligner, Vaughn, and Boardman (2007) explain that comprehensive reading is an interactive process between the reader and their background knowledge, which includes the use of reading strategies. According to Ardiana (2015), comprehensive reading also includes understanding, evaluating, and using the ideas and information in the text. It is like a conversation between the writer and the reader.

To fully understand a text, readers need to develop certain skills. According to McNamara (2007), these include recognizing noun references, identifying the main idea, making assumptions, and drawing logical conclusions. This means readers must think carefully and use cognitive awareness to connect what they read with the context. The skill to connect the text into the context need a deep understanding by mastering culture of the target language.

In short, comprehensive reading means reading deeply to understand a text. It includes abilities such as identifying ideas, giving opinions, making predictions, completing information, and seeing differences in the text. These skills can only be developed if the reader has enough intercultural understanding to fully understand the author's meaning. Therefore, intercultural communication is very important when learning a foreign language.

Intercultural communication is a key skill in using any foreign language. It is not only needed for speaking and writing, but also for understanding written texts. In fact, the General Standards and Objectives of English Teaching in High Schools in Indonesia include the goal of "developing students' understanding of the relationship between language and culture" (Depdiknas RI, 2006).

Intercultural communication is how people interact with others who come from different social and cultural backgrounds (Holliday, 2021). This can happen through spoken or written language, body language, clothing style, or behavior. In the classroom, teachers can help students become more aware of how culture affects their lives. Newton (2016) suggests that teachers should help students gain the awareness and skills needed to handle cross-cultural situations and succeed in a global world where English is often used for intercultural communication.

Newton (2016) also offers three important principles for teaching intercultural communication. Students should: (1) take part in real social interactions, (2) explore culture through language, communication styles, and daily life, and (3) compare and reflect on different languages and cultures. Teachers should apply these principles to help students build their understanding of intercultural communication in the classroom.

When reading texts from other cultures, students go through different levels of understanding. This is part of Foreign Language (FL) reading. According to Hoff (2016), there are three levels. Level 1 – the student connects with the content and resources in the foreign language text. Level 2 – the student thinks about how different readers might understand the same text, and considers different meanings. Level 3 – the student compares the foreign language text with other texts from their own culture or from different time periods and genres. This level is suitable for high school students in Indonesia who are learning to read in English.

Good reading skills—whether in the first language (L1), second language (L2), or foreign language—require a strong understanding of intercultural communication. In academic reading, intercultural knowledge is very important. A student's understanding of the culture behind a text can affect how well they understand the content (Goncalves Matos, 2005). Hoff (2016) added the intercultural communicative competence should be integrated into literary reading. The same idea also suggested by Singh, et al. (2017), he revealed that multicultural competence is related to English language teaching.

3. Research Method

This study used a quantitative descriptive method. Quantitative research focuses on data in the form of numbers or data that can be changed into numbers. Descriptive research aims to describe a population, situation, or phenomenon by answering questions such as how, what, when, and where (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, quantitative descriptive research in this study was used to explain the learning situation in schools by presenting data from reading tests and questionnaires related to intercultural communication skills and students' attitudes toward English.

The research was carried out at a private high school in Langsa. The school was selected using purposeful sampling, based on the consideration that the students have above-average abilities, a good learning environment, and high-quality teachers. It was assumed that the students had already learned some intercultural knowledge before learning academic reading skills. A total of 40 students took part in the study, with 20 male and 20 female students. This study was carried out in two different classes, one after the other.

The instruments used in this research included a set of reading test and student's questionnaire. To collect data, an academic reading comprehension test using expository texts was used as the main tool. An intercultural competency test, adapted from Fenghua (2023), was used to measure students' intercultural competence. To find out the students' attitudes toward English, both a questionnaire and interviews were used, adapted from Fenghua (2023) and Furyanto, Putra, & Islamiah (2021). One English teacher and six students were interviewed to gather their opinions about intercultural communication.

The data collection process included several steps. First, students were given a reading test with 25 questions based on three texts related to the social and cultural aspects of English-speaking countries. These questions were adapted from the TOEFL standardized test. Second, students filled out a questionnaire to measure their understanding of intercultural communication and their opinions on how it is taught in the classroom. The questionnaire had 30 items using a 5-point Likert scale (0 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Disagree, 3

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= Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree). Lastly, interviews were conducted with selected students and an English teacher to learn more about their views on integrating intercultural communication into English lessons. The reading test scores were categorized into five groups: *Very High (85–100) High (69–84) Medium (53–68) Low (37–52) Very Low (20–36)* (Sugiyono, 2015). The intercultural communication questionnaire was given before the reading comprehension test. This was done to make sure that the reading test would not affect students' answers or opinions on the questionnaire. The questionnaire and reading test were given on separate days.

The main method of data analysis was quantitative. The analysis process included three steps: measurement, correlation, and interpretation. In the measurement stage, scores were calculated for both the reading test and the questionnaire. The maximum score for the reading test was 100, and for the Likert-based questionnaire, it was 150. In the correlation stage, the Pearson Product Moment (a type of linear regression) was used to see the relationship between the two main variables: reading skills and intercultural communication (Arikunto, 2003). Finally, the results were interpreted using Table 1, which presents the findings clearly.

Table 1
Correlation Pearson Product Moment

Coefficient Interval	Relationship Level
0.80—1.000	Very strong
0.60—0,799	Strong
0.40—0,599	Strong Enough
0.20—0,399	Low
0.00—0,199	Very Low

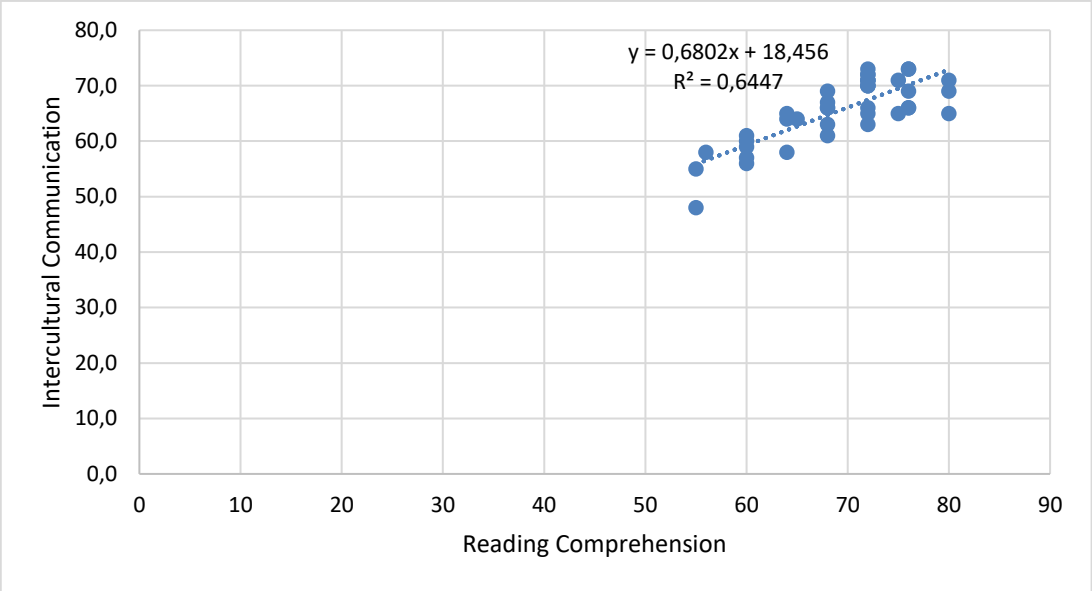
4. Results and Discussion

The results of the comprehensive reading test and the intercultural communication questionnaire showed a strong and positive relationship between students' intercultural communication skills and their ability to understand English texts. In addition, interviews with teachers showed that they understood the importance of teaching intercultural knowledge. However, in practice, teachers found it difficult to teach cultural content due to limited time and the pressure of classroom learning goals.

The results were obtained by analyzing 40 students from the total of 52 students (only 40 complete sets of reading test and questionnaire). Then the two sets of data were analyzed using a cross-sectional analysis method and the Pearson Product Moment (a type of linear regression). The results of the cross-sectional analysis showed a strong and positive correlation between the two variables (reading comprehension and intercultural communication) with a value of R^2 = 0.64 (strong relationship level based on Correlation *Pearson Product Moment*). It means that there is a significant connection between intercultural communication skills and reading comprehension. In other words, students with stronger intercultural understanding also showed better ability in reading and understanding English texts (see Table 1 for the score conversion).

Figure 1

Graph of the Relationship between Intercultural Communication and Reading Ability



Furthermore, the results also revealed that students with stronger intercultural understanding also showed better ability in reading and understanding English texts. Conversely, students with low intercultural communication skills had difficulty in understanding English texts. However, this result does not necessarily mean their reading comprehension and intercultural communication skills are at a high level. The important note is in fact both variables measured were at the average level as explained in detail below.

The detailed analysis then showed that the intercultural communication skills of the students (N = 40) were in the neutral (moderate) category, with an average score of 2.18 out of a maximum of 5. This means that students had adequate but not strong intercultural communication skills. For more information, see Table 2 below.

Table 2

Average Score of Intercultural Communication

Class Interval	Average Score	Category	Frequency	Percent
4.1-5.0	0	Very high	0	0
3.1-4.0	0	High	0	0
2.1-3.0	2.38	Currently	31	77.5
1.1-2.0	1.95	Low	9	22.5
0-1	0	Very Low	0	0
Rate Total rate	**2.27**	**Currently**	**40**	**100**

Table 2 shows that students' perception of their intercultural communication skills is in the neutral category. This means that students are not fully confident in their ability to understand the English culture they are learning. This may explain why many students struggle to understand English reading texts—because they lack knowledge about the cultural background often found in those texts.

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Meanwhile, the reading comprehension ability of the high school students (N = 40) was at a slightly high level, but very close to the medium category. The average score was 69.12 out of 100. The details of the reading test results can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Average Comprehensive Reading Ability Score

Class Interval	Average Score	Category	Frequency	Percent
85-100	0	Very high	0	0
69-84	74.27	High	22	55
53-68	62.83	Currently	18	45
37-52	0	Low	0	0
20-36	0	Very Low	0	0
$\sum$	**69.12**	**High**	**40**	**100**

From Table 3, it can be seen that none of the students scored in the very high category. The average reading score was only slightly above the limit for the moderate category. This shows that many students still struggle with comprehensive reading in English.

Overall, the results of this study show a strong and positive relationship between intercultural communication skills and students' ability to understand English reading texts. However, interviews with students and teachers revealed that intercultural communication skills are not clearly included in curriculum documents such as the syllabus, lesson plans, or teaching materials. Students also said that these skills were rarely taught directly in class. According to the students, teachers only explained cultural terms when students had difficulty understanding the meaning of the text. Most of the time, teachers used a traditional method by translating the text into Indonesian and focusing only on helping students answer questions, rather than teaching the cultural context of the text.

The results of this study show a strong relationship between intercultural communication skills and students' ability to understand English texts, especially as a foreign language. This supports the findings of previous studies by Gonçalves Matos (2005), Hoff (2016), Short (2009), and Huang (2023), which all concluded that to fully understand texts in a foreign language, students must also understand the culture behind the language. These studies also suggest that foreign language teachers should teach intercultural knowledge as part of language learning.

In addition, this study found that teachers are aware of the importance of teaching intercultural communication, but they face difficulties when trying to include it in the classroom. These findings are in line with Chau and Truong (2019), who also found that teachers understand the value of intercultural learning but rarely use intercultural activities in their teaching.

From the interviews, teachers explained that the main reason they do not include intercultural communication skills in their lessons is because of time limits and the pressure to meet learning goals in the classroom.

> *I often run out of time if I talk too much about the context of a text in its real-life context in England. I get around this by simply telling something that interests the students or that students ask about the story behind the text.*

Furthermore, intercultural communication skills are not explicitly addressed in curriculum documents (syllabi, lesson plans/teaching modules, or general teaching materials). This makes it even more difficult for teachers to integrate learning time into formally discussing English culture within texts.

> *I hope these intercultural communication skills can be explicitly included in the curriculum documents. This way, as teachers, we have clear guidelines for their implementation. Furthermore, perhaps the duration of English lessons could be extended so we have sufficient time to familiarize students with the cultural differences between Indonesia and England.*

In addition to the teachers' views, students also felt that intercultural communication skills were rarely taught directly. They noticed that teachers only explained cultural terms when students had trouble understanding the text or when they asked specific questions. Because of this, students often found it difficult to fully understand the reading, which made it harder for them to answer the questions correctly. Students said they would like teachers to give a more complete explanation of the text, especially about the context in the culture of the country, such as England.

The findings of this study also highlight the importance of including intercultural knowledge in English reading activities. One way to do this is by choosing reading materials that include different cultural elements. For example, teachers can help students get used to reading foreign fiction or literature (Ngoc-Nguyen & Phuong-Nguyen, 2024; Ting & Jing, 2019).

In brief, this study supports the idea of adding cultural learning to the English curriculum at the secondary school level, as suggested in Xia's (2024) research. Doing so may help improve students' positive attitudes toward reading in English (see Chang, Bangsri, Jabion, & Pakdeewong, 2022).

5. Conclusion

Intercultural communication is very important in language teaching, especially for understanding English reading texts. At the very least, students should be introduced to the culture of English-speaking countries, especially England, as the origin of the language. More broadly, teachers should also explain the cultural background of the topic in the text. For example, if a text is written in English but tells a story about the North Pole, the teacher should explain how people live in that region. This helps students gain a deeper understanding of the text.

This study found a strong link between intercultural communication skills and the ability to understand English texts. The research showed that students' reading ability was at an average level, and their understanding of intercultural communication was also moderate. Many students still felt unsure about discussing foreign cultures, including English culture, which is part of the language they are learning. Therefore, teachers can design intercultural reading modules based on authentic texts written by native English for reading.

The findings of this research are expected to help teachers recognize the value of integrating cultural sources and contexts into teaching English texts. Such insights may encourage more deliberate lesson planning that incorporates cross-cultural knowledge. One way to do this is by giving students authentic reading materials, such as short stories, novels, or magazines that show life in England or other English-speaking cultures. Additionally,

teachers can assign reading tasks related to foreign cultures to broaden students' perspectives.

For students, the findings can be a reflective medium to take the initiative to learn independently by reading books or watching films and videos set in English-speaking countries, which will help them better understand the cultural context of the language. Meanwhile, policymakers should consider officially incorporating intercultural communication into curriculum documents. This inclusion would encourage teachers to integrate cultural learning into their lessons more consistently. Such changes could be made by updating syllabi, teaching guidelines, and lesson plan formats to support intercultural learning effectively.

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A MORPHO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF COMPOUND NOUNS IN A. D. MALEDU'S SEPEDI DOCTORAL THESIS

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Abstract

Noun compounding is a linguistic process involving the combination of two or more lexical items to form a single noun. This method of word formation is effectively demonstrated in the translated Sepedi Bible as well as in translations of other African languages. This article seeks to critically assess the innovative use of compound nouns as observed in A.D. Maledu's doctoral thesis, which is written in Sepedi—one of South Africa's twelve official languages. Maledu's body of scholarly work is recognised for its prolific and distinctive use of compound nouns, showcasing a rare form of linguistic creativity in African-language scholarship. The article intensively assesses these compound nouns and explores their potential utility for Sepedi language custodians. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study primarily used document review as the data collection method. Out of the pool of compound nouns used in the thesis, only thirty-four (34) were purposively sampled for discussion. The findings were analysed thematically, thereby situating the study within a thematic framework. The analysis reveals that most of the compound nouns applied in the thesis are endocentric and copulative compounds, with minimal exocentric examples. Ultimately, the article commends the thesis author's inventive contribution to the development of compound nouns, thus enriches the corpus of Sepedi applied linguistics in the digital era and beyond.

Keywords: *compound noun; copulative; endocentric; exocentric; morphology; Sepedi; terminology development*

1. Introduction

Sepedi, also referred to as Sesotho sa Leboa, is one of South Africa's twelve official languages, spoken by residents in Limpopo, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga provinces. With more than 27 dialects (Mokgokong, 1966; Mojela, 2018; Rakgogo & Zungu, 2022), the language has its linguistic rules set and bound to be followed as a formal language for teaching and learning. Because of its linguistic history, Sepedi has developed a rich corpus of compound nouns for easier written and oral communication. According to Christianto (2020), compounding is one of the word-formation processes by combining one lexical item with another and thus produces a new word with a new meaning. Similarly, Maboa (2022) defines compounding as a term that combines the meanings of two different words. A compound noun can also be a word formation that involves joining two or more independent roots to form a single word (Ndimele, 1999). Like other global languages,

Sepedi is bound to compounding as a language that develops daily. Because of the constant expansion of everyday vocabulary, word formation is imminent and imperative (Tembane, 2025:2). Okolocha (2021) further states that word formation is a key component of the grammar of any language. Sepedi is not an exception to Okolocha's view mentioned above. Compounding as part of word formation forms a critical role in the development of terminology in the language. Overall, this article seeks to assess the use of compound nouns as observed in Maledu's (2020) Sepedi doctoral thesis. Utilising the Construction Morphology as a theoretical framework, the purpose of this article is therefore to analyse the morpho-semantic structure of the compound nouns as utilised in Maledu's thesis.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews previous studies on the three subtopics, namely giving an overview of the purpose of compounding, addressing the lack of compound noun studies in the Sepedi language, and briefly explaining key concepts revolving around compounding.

2.1 An Overview of Compounding

Mlambo and Matfunjwa (2025a) note that compounding plays a vital role in language, aiding language richness, vocabulary evolution and effective communication. The above three purposes of compounding apply to every language. The language becomes rich in vocabulary, and speakers and writers never run short of words with compounding in application. Ajiboye (2014) states that the processes that are involved in producing compounds are both morphological and syntactic. However, it appears that compounding is more of a morphological process, as it is the study of how words are formed and related to other words to create a language (Yule, 2020). Therefore, it can be contended that compounding plays a significant role in creating, developing, sustaining, and preserving languages.

Francis (1994) presents three ways to represent compounds, namely open, hyphenated and solid. In many cases, Sepedi applies the latter two, hyphenated and solid. There are no open compound nouns in Sepedi, that is, leaving the space between the stems of the two joined words. The findings of this article will prove this claim.

2.2 Compound Noun Studies in Sepedi

Compounding is a fundamental linguistic feature present in every global language. Notably, compound nouns—while relatively rare—are particularly vital in digitally evolving languages. In the digital age, language evolves rapidly, and African languages such as Sepedi are no exception. Given that nouns are among the most frequently used parts of speech, their formation through compounding is increasingly significant. Okolocha (2021) reinforces this perspective by asserting that word formation processes help keep a language dynamic and relevant, regardless of societal changes. While this view is widely accepted, what remains lacking in the case of Sepedi is sufficient research on compounding. Beyond Maboa's (2022) mini-dissertation, the most comprehensive study of compound nouns in Sepedi was conducted by Mphasha (2006). Recently, Tembane (2025) investigated the multivarious word formation techniques used to name Northern Sotho plants, focusing on affixation, compounding, reduplication and semantic extensions. This article thus seeks to address the gap in compounding studies within Sepedi, intending to encourage further research in this area.

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2.3 Understanding Key Compound Terms

Noun classes refer to a particular category of nouns (Prinsloo & Gilles-Maurice de Schryver, 1999). For instance, the noun *motho* (person) in Sepedi falls under noun class 1 due to its nominal prefix *mo*-. Endocentric is when the basic meaning of a compound noun is determined by the categorical part, that is, one of the two constituents carries the main meaning while the other serves as the modifier (Mdoe & Lusekelo, 2024). The main constituent serves as the head. Exocentric is a case where the basic meaning cannot be transparently guessed from the constituent parts (Nóbrega & Panagiotidis, 2020). Therefore, these are the headless compounds. Copulative refers to the types of compound nouns wherein both constituents carry equal meaning (William, 1982). Both members usually function collaboratively.

3. Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, given the nature of its inquiry. It analyses written words without the inclusion of numerical data. As noted by Polkinghorne (2005), qualitative research focuses on analysing data derived from written or spoken language, rather than numerical data. Accordingly, this article examines the use of compound nouns within an African language study. A purposive sampling technique was considered appropriate for this type of research. Maledu's (2020) body of scholarly work was purposively selected due to its extensive and relevant use of compound nouns. These compounds contribute to the enrichment of vocabulary for future scholars conducting research in the Sepedi language, particularly in developing appropriate research terminology—especially methodological terms. The primary data collection tool employed in this study was document review. Morgan (2022) describes document review as a method for analysing various forms of documentation, including books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles, and institutional reports. The researcher conducted a thorough and critical reading of the thesis, focusing on the identification of compound nouns due to their morphological structure. The data were analysed thematically by categorising the different types of compound nouns identified in the thesis. The researcher followed all six steps of thematic analysis: being familiar with data, generating relevant data, searching for themes (types of compounds in this case), reviewing themes, defining and naming the types of compounds, and ultimately writing up the analysis. These compound nouns were classified morphologically and syntactically according to their component parts of speech. In terms of ethics, this is a desktop linguistic research that looks at a language structure without the involvement of human beings or animals.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the compound nouns identified in Maledu's doctoral thesis, along with their translation equivalents and corresponding page numbers. The results are organised according to the morphological constructions employed by the author, beginning with the Noun + Noun → Noun (N + N → N) combination.

4.1 Noun + Noun Compounds

These compound nouns consist of a noun + noun combination that results in the formation of a new noun with a distinct meaning. The following examples adhere to the N + N → N morphological construction:

Compound	Noun 1	Noun 2	Translation
Dikošatšhaba (pg.iv)	koša	setšhaba	Folksongs

The bound morpheme "di-" is added as a nominal prefix to the noun -*koša.* The right-hand part consists of another noun, *tšhaba*, with the original prefix se- being omitted. Therefore, the writer employs two nouns to form an endocentric compound noun, *dikošatšhaba* (meaning "folksongs"). It is endocentric because the first constituent, *dikoša* (songs), carries the basic meaning, with *setšhaba* (nation) representing to whom the songs belong.

Compound	Noun 1	Noun 2	Translation
Lehlakanoka (pg.71)	Lehlaka	noka	River reed

In *Lehlakanoka*, it appears that two nouns are merged to form a single noun. The noun *lehlaka* (reed) takes the nominal prefix *'le-'* of noun class 5 in the singular. The right-hand component is *noka* (river), a noun for noun class 9. This is the type of copulative compound noun because both *lehlaka-* and -*noka* contribute equally towards the semantic content of this compound.

Compound	Noun 1	Noun 2	Translation
Kgapampshikela (pg.30)	kgapa	mpshikela	guru

In the copulative compound *Kgapampshikela*, both constituents contribute equally to the overall meaning. The left-hand component, *kgapa*, is derived from noun class 9, marked by a null morpheme (n-), with *kgapa* functioning as a free morpheme. The right-hand component, *mpshikela*, originates from noun class 3 and comprises the prefix *mo-* and the stem *fshikela*. In this instance, an assimilation process occurs: the bilabial nasal /m/ influences the fricative /f/, resulting in the bilabial plosive /p/, while the vowel -*o-* is elided.

Compound	Noun 1	Noun 2	Translation
Dinonwanekošana (pg.116)	dinonwane	košana	tale songs

The compound *Dinonwanekošana* is formed through the combination of two nouns: *nonwane* (tale) and *košana* (short song). The left-hand component, *dinonwane*, features the nominal prefix *di-*, classifying the noun under class 10, while -*nonwane* serves as the free morpheme. The right-hand component, *košana*, is derived from the traditional noun *dikošana*, where the diminutive suffix -*ana* is attached to indicate the shortness of the song. The root -*koš-* functions as the free morpheme. It is a copulative compound as both *nonwane* and *koša* contribute equally to the semantic content of the whole word.

Compound	Noun 1	Noun 2	Translation
Borakgolokhukhu (pg.116)	rakgolo	khukhu	Great grand-fathers

The first constituent includes the nominal prefix bo- of noun class 2a, followed by the noun -*rakgolo* (grandfather), while the second constituent is the noun -*khukhu* (great-grand). The primary lexical items contributing to meaning are *rakgolo* and *khukhu*. This is classified as an endocentric compound noun, with *rakgolo* as head and *khukhu* as modifier.

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4.2 Verb + Verb Compounds

The compound nouns in this category follow the Verb + Verb → Noun (V + V → N) morphological construction. Most of these are derivational nouns, meaning they are derived from verbs—also referred to as deverbatives. The following examples illustrate this construction:

Compound	Verb 1	Verb 2	Translation
Kahlaahlongwalwa (pg.8)	ahlaahla	ngwala	written discussion

The nominal compound *Kahlaahlongwalwa* consists of two verbal roots: *ahlaahl-* (to discuss) and *ngwal-* (to write), each typically taking the verbal suffix *-a*. The nominal prefix /k/, a voiceless plosive, is introduced in the noun formation process, placing the word in noun class 9, which is marked by a null morpheme (n-). Additionally, the causative extension *-w-* is inserted in the right-hand element *ngwal-* to facilitate nominalisation, thereby contributing to the compound's function as a noun.

Compound	Verb 1	Verb 2	Translation
Segatišatiragatšo (pg.12)	gatiša	diragatša	Performance recorder

The nominal prefix *se-* of noun class 7 is added to the verbal root *-gatiš-* along with the suffix *-a* to form the first constituent. The right-hand component derives from the verbal stem *diragatša*, which transforms into *tiragatšo* through the substitution of the initial plosive /d/ with /t/, converting it into a noun. Additionally, the verbal suffix *-a* changes to *-o*. Thus, the components *segatiša* (recorder) and *tiragatšo* (performance) combine to form the final compound noun.

Compound	Verb 1	Verb 2	Translation
Peakanyonyakišišo (pg.8)	beakanya	nyakišiša	Research design

In the above compound, two verbal stems—*beakanya* (to design) and *nyakišiša* (to research)—combine to form the final noun. The initial plosive /p/ replaces the bilabial /b/ in *beakanya* to classify the word under noun class 9, while the final vowel *-a* changes to *-o*, producing the deverbative *peakanyo*. In the right-hand component, only the final vowel *-a* is replaced by *-o* to create the deverbative *nyakišišo*.

Compound	Verb 1	Verb 2	Translation
Poeletšothalo (pg.117)	boeletša	thala	Line repetition

In the poetically well-formed compound *Poeletšothalo*, the thesis writer combines the verbal stems *boeletša* (to repeat) and *thalo* (line). In the first component, the bilabial /b/ is replaced by the plosive /p/, and the verbal ending *-a* is replaced by the suffix *-o*, forming the deverbative *poeletšo*. The left-hand component is derived from the verbal stem *thala*, where the final vowel *-a* is also replaced by *-o*, creating the deverbative *thalo*. The resulting compound *poeletšothalo* is classified as an exocentric compound, as its meaning, "line repetition", refers to the poetic line being repeated in the subsequent line rather than directly to either constituent.

Compound	Verb 1	Verb 2	Translation
Borabokgobammino (pg.18)	kgoba	bina	Music compilers

The complex compound *Borabokgobammino* contains multiple nominal prefixes. The initial prefix *bo-* belongs to noun class 2a, indicating a plural reference to many music compilers. The second prefix *ra-* in Sepedi carries the semantic feature [male], as noted by Mojapelo (2009). The third prefix *bo-*, from noun class 14, does not determine the lexical category of the noun, similar to *ra-*. Among these prefixes, only the *bo-* of class 2a contributes to the lexical categorisation of the compound. Within the left-hand constituent, the verbal stem *-kgoba* (to compile) is derived from the root *kgob-* plus the verbal ending *-a*. The right-hand constituent is the deverbative *mmino*, which originates from the verbal stem *-bina* (to dance). Here, the bilabial /b/ assimilates to the bilabial /m/ due to proximity, illustrating an assimilation process. In summary, this compound is formed from two verbal stems: *go kgoba* (to compile) and *go bina* (to dance).

Compound	Verb 1	Verb 2	Translation
Baruti-ba-thomo (pg.18)	ruta	roma	Missionary reverends

The above hyphenated compound consists of two meaningful constituents: *baruti* (reverends) and *thomo* (sent). Both are deverbatives. *Baruti* is formed from the nominal prefix *ba-* of noun class 2, the verbal root *-rut-* (to teach), and the verbal ending *-a*, which ultimately transforms into the suffix *-i* to nominalise the verb. The morpheme *-ba-*, positioned in the middle of the compound, functions as a bound morpheme linking the two core elements. The second part, *thomo*, originates from the verbal stem *roma* (to send), where *rom-* is the root and *-a* the original ending. In the process of forming *thomo*, the plosive /th/ replaces the original /r/, and the final vowel /a/ is replaced by /o/, resulting in the deverbative *thomo*.

4.3 Noun + Verb Compounds

The following compound nouns follow the Noun + Verb → Noun (N + V → N) morphological construction.

Compound	Noun	Verb	Translation
Mokgwanyakišišo (pg.37)	mokgwa	nyakišiša	Research method

The noun *mokgwa* (method) is combined with the deverbative *nyakišišo* (research). The left-hand component *mokgwa* consists of the nominal prefix *mo-* from noun class 3 in singular form, with the stem *-kgwa*, which also functions as a free morpheme. The right-hand component *nyakišišo* is derived from the verbal root *-nyak-* (to seek/search), with the applicative extension *-išiš-* and the nominalising suffix *-o*.

Compound	Noun	Verb	Translation
Mongmošomo (pg.155)	mong	šoma	employer

The compound *Mongmošomo* is derived from the noun *mong* (owner) and the deverbative *mošomo* (job). The prefix *mo-* on the left-hand side functions as the nominal prefix for noun class 1. On the right-hand side, *mo-* also appears as a nominal prefix but does not influence the headedness of the compound nor determine its noun class. The right-hand component is formed from the verbal root *šom-* (to work) with the verbal ending *-a*, which changes to *-o* in the nominalisation process, resulting in the deverbative *mošomo*. This compound is classified as endocentric, as the semantic head of the compound lies in the right-hand constituent (*mošomo*), with (*mong*) indicating who owns the job.

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Compound	Noun	Verb	Translation
Mekgwatlhaolo (pg.10)	mekgwa	hlaola	Sampling methods

In the compound *Mekgwatlhaolo*, the first constituent is *mekgwa* (methods), which carries the nominal prefix *me-* from noun class 4, indicating plurality. The second constituent is derived from the verbal stem *hlaola* (to sample). In the process of forming the compound, the voiceless fricative /h/ is replaced by the plosive /t/, and the verbal ending *-a* is substituted with *-o*, resulting in the deverbative *tlhaolo*. The final nominal compound, *mekgwatlhaolo*, is written as a solid word.

Compound	Noun	Verb	Translation
Mokgwakgonagalo (pg.10)	Mokgwa	kgonagala	Probability sampling

The compound *Mokgwakgonagalo* follows the same morphological process as the previous example. The noun *mokgwa* (method) is in the singular form and belongs to noun class 3, marked by the nominal prefix *mo-*. The second constituent, *kgonagalo* (probability), is a deverbative derived from the verbal stem *kgonagala* (to become possible). In the nominalisation process, the verbal ending *-a* is replaced by the deverbative suffix *-o.*

Compound	Noun	Verb	Translation
Mokgwatebanyi (pg.11)	mokgwa	lebanya	Convenience sampling

The above compound consists of two constituents: the noun *mokgwa* and the deverbative *tebanyi*. The first component includes the nominal prefix *mo-* of noun class 3 and the free morpheme *-kgwa*. The second component, *tebanyi*, is a deverbative derived from the verbal stem *lebanya*. In the derivational process, the lateral /l/ is replaced by the plosive /t/, and the verbal ending *-a* is substituted with the nominal suffix *-i*, forming *tebanyi*. This compound is classified as endocentric, as it refers specifically to a type of research methodology, with the left-hand constituent *mokgwa* functioning as the semantic head of the compound.

4.4 Verb + Noun Compounds

The thesis writer also employed the Verb + Noun → Noun (V + N → N) morphological construction. Most compounds formed in this way are endocentric, with the dominant meaning carried by the right-hand constituent. Consider the following example:

Compound	Verb	Noun	Translation
Kgatelelontšu (pg.31)	gatelela	lentšu	Voice emphasis

The first constituent is derived from the verbal stem *gatelela* (to emphasise), with the plosive /k/ prefixed as a null-bound morpheme to classify the word under noun class 9. The second constituent is the noun *-ntšu*, with its nominal prefix *le-* omitted during compounding. The resulting compound, *Kgatelelontšu*, is classified as an endocentric compound, as the dominant semantic meaning lies in the right-hand constituent *lentšu*, while the deverbative *kgatelelo* (emphasis) functions as a modifier. The compound, therefore, denotes a specific type of voice; namely, one that is emphatic in nature.

Compound	Verb	Noun	Translation
Dikanegelotšhaba (pg.3)	anega	setšhaba	Folk narratives

In the compound *Dikanegelotšhaba* the left-hand constituent consists of the nominal prefix di- from noun class 10 and the deverbative *kanegelo*, which is derived from the verbal root *aneg-*, the applicative extension *-el-*, and the verbal ending *-a*. Additionally, the plosive -k- is inserted after the nominal prefix to facilitate nominalisation. The right-hand constituent is the traditional noun *tšhaba* (nation/people), with its original prefix *se-* omitted in the compounding process. The final compound, *Dikanegelotšhaba*, is classified as endocentric, as the dominant semantic element lies in the left-hand constituent *dikanegelo* (narratives), which is qualified by the right-hand element *tšhaba* (of the people), thus denoting narratives that belong to or originate from the people.

Compound	Verb	Noun	Translation
Tlhabošontšu (pg.15)	hlaboša	lentšu	Voice-raising

In *Tlhabošontšu*, the compound consists of a verb-derived noun and a traditional noun. The left-hand constituent is the deverbative *tlhabošo* (raising), which originates from the verbal root *hlaboš-* combined with the verbal ending *-a*. In Sepedi, the fricative cluster /hl/ regularly shifts to the plosive /tlh/ during the process of deverbative formation—this phonological change is evident in the transformation to *tlhabošo*. The right-hand constituent is the noun *ntšu* (voice), derived from *lentšu*, with the nominal prefix *le-* omitted in the compounding process. This compound is classified as endocentric, since the dominant semantic component is the right-hand noun *lentšu* (voice), while the left-hand deverbative *tlhabošo* (raising) functions as a modifier, specifying the nature of the voice being referred to.

Compound	Verb	Noun	Translation
Matsentšhagae (pg.34)	tsentša	gae	Opening line/introduction

The compound *Matsentšhagae* is formed by combining *matsentša* and *gae*. The left-hand component consists of the nominal prefix *ma-* from noun class 6, the verbal root *-tsen-* (to enter), the verbal extension *-tšh-* (intensive/causative), and the verbal ending *-a*, resulting in the deverbative *matsentša*. The right-hand component is the noun *gae* (home).

Compound	Verb	Noun	Translation
Batšwabodikela (pg.18)	tšwa	bodikela	Westerners

In the above example, the compound is formed from two components: *batšwa* and *bodikela*. The first part, *batšwa*, consists of the nominal prefix *ba-* from noun class 2 and the verbal stem *-tšwa* (to come from), referring to people. The second part, *bodikela*, is a locative noun denoting "the west." Since the compound refers to people originating from the west, and this meaning is not explicitly stated by either constituent alone, the compound is thus classified as exocentric.

4.5 Noun + Adjective Compounds

Maledu (2020) makes use of compound nouns following the Noun + Adjective → Noun (N + Adj → N) construction in her thesis. These compounds are generally classified as endocentric, as the dominant semantic meaning consistently derives from the left-hand constituent (the noun). For instance, in the following combinations:

Compound	Noun	Adjective	Translation
Bathobagolo (pg.11)	batho	bagolo	Elders/adults

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In this example, the left-hand constituent consists of the traditional noun *batho* (people), where the bound morpheme *ba-* functions as the nominal prefix of noun class 2, and *-tho* serves as the stem. The right-hand constituent is *bagolo* (elders), where *ba-* is the nominal prefix and *-golo* is the adjectival root meaning "elder." This compound is classified as endocentric because the dominant semantic element lies in the left-hand noun *batho*, while the right-hand element *bagolo* functions as a modifier, specifying the kind of people being referred to—elders.

Compound	Noun	Adjective	Translation
Dikarolokgolo (pg.26)	karolo	kgolo	Larger parts

The first constituent comprises the nominal prefix *di-* of noun class 10 and the deverbative *karolo*, which is derived from the root *-arol-* (to divide or separate) and the verbal ending *-a*. The second constituent is the adjective *kgolo* (large), which originates from the adjectival root *-golo*. This compound is classified as endocentric, as the left-hand component *dikarolo* (parts) serves as the semantic head, while the right-hand adjective *kgolo* modifies it to specify the size.

4.6 Verb + Adjective Compounds

Compound	Verb	Adjective	Translation
Moswananoši	swana	noši	uniqueness

In the above compound *Moswananoši*, the first constituent is the deverbative *moswana*, derived from the verbal root *swan-* (resemble) and the verbal ending *-a*. The nominal prefix *mo-* is attached, marking either noun class 1 or 3, depending on context. The second constituent is the adjective *noši* (distinctive), which conveys the notion of “oneness”. Together, the compound expresses the idea of uniqueness.

Compound	Verb	Adjective	Translation
Batšweletšibagolo (pg.56)	tšweletša	bagolo	Senior producers

The endocentric compound *Batšweletšibagolo* is formed by combining the deverbative *batšweletši* (producers) with the adjective *bagolo* (seniors). The left-hand component, *batšweletši*, consists of the nominal prefix *ba-* from noun class 2, the verbal root *-tšw-* (to produce), and the applied extensions *-el-* and *-tš-*, with the suffix *-i* replacing the verbal ending *-a* to form the deverbative noun. The right-hand component, *bagolo*, is composed of the prefix *ba-* (also of noun class 2) and the adjectival root *-golo* (senior).

4.7 Verb + Adverb Compounds

Compound	Verb	Adverb	Translation
Phatadiganong (pg.11)	fata	ganong	Interviews

In *Phatadiganong*, the first component is *phata* (to dig/interrogate), derived from the verbal stem *fata*. The fricative /f/ changes to the plosive /ph/ due to phonological assimilation during noun formation. The second component consists of the plural prefix *di-* and the adverbial locative *-ganong* (in the mouth), which is formed from *legano* (mouth) combined with the locative suffix *-ng*. Since the overall meaning of the compound refers to

the act of questioning or interrogating someone, it is classified as endocentric, with the dominant semantic element found in the left-hand component *phata*.

Compound	Verb	Adverb	Translation
Kamegompe (pg.3)	ama	mpe	Negative affection

In *Kamegompe*, the left-hand constituent *kamego* originates from the verbal stem -*ama*- (to affect). The plosive /k/ is added to nominalise the form, along with the extension -*g*- and the suffix -*o*, resulting in the noun *kamego*. The right-hand constituent is the adverb of manner *mpe* (badly), which describes the nature of the affection. The adverb *mpe* derives from the root be-, with the bilabial /m/ prefixed, which proximally influences the bilabial /b/ to shift into the plosive /p/ through assimilation. This compound is classified as endocentric, as the primary semantic focus lies in *kamego* (affection), while *mpe* modifies it by indicating the negative quality of the affect.

Compound	Verb	Adverb	Translation
Sekhutamoyeng (pg.31)	khuta	moyeng	Suffocation

In the compound noun *Sekhutamoyeng*, the two constituents are the deverbative *sekhuta* and the adverbial noun *moyeng*. The first part consists of the nominal prefix *se*- from noun class 7 and the verbal stem -*khuta* (to choke/suffocate), forming the deverbative *sekhuta*. The second part is the noun *moya* (air) combined with the locative suffix -*ng*, resulting in *moyeng* (in the air). The compound as a whole conveys the idea of being choked or suffocated in the air, and is structurally an endocentric compound.

4.8 Noun + Adverb Compounds

Compound	Noun	Adverb	Translation
Dinagamabapi (pg.158)	naga	mabapi	Neighbouring countries
Dinagantle (pg.158)	naga	ntle	Outside countries

In the compounded words *Dinagamabapi* and *Dinagantle*, the same morphological process is employed. Both compounds begin with the plural noun *dinaga*, where *di*- serves as the nominal prefix for noun class 10 and -*naga* functions as the free morpheme meaning "country." The second components, *mabapi* (nearby/adjacent) and *ntle* (outside), function as adverbial place expressions and also act as free morphemes in the compound structure. These are classified as endocentric compound nouns, as the head noun *dinaga* (countries) carries the dominant meaning, while the second constituent specifies the type or spatial relation of the countries being referred to.

Compound	Noun	Adverb	Translation
Dinaga-selegae (pg.42)	naga	selegae	Rural villages

The above morphological construction is also applied in forming the compound noun *Dinaga-selegae*, with a hyphen inserted in this instance. The plural noun *dinaga* (villages), consisting of the nominal prefix *di*- from noun class 10 and the free morpheme -*naga*, is combined with the adverbial place *selegae* (rural) to form the endocentric compound *dinaga-selegae*. The dominant semantic meaning lies in the left-hand constituent *dinaga*, while *selegae* specifies the type of village being referred to.

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Similarly, the compound nouns *Sebopegontle* and *Sebopegogare* (meaning "external structure" and "internal structure," respectively) [pg. 115] follow the same morphological process. The left-hand constituent in both is the deverbative *sebopego* (structure), which consists of the nominal prefix *se-* from noun class 7, the verbal root *-bop-*, the applied extension *-eg-*, and the verbal ending *-a*, which changes to the nominal suffix *-o*. The right-hand constituents, *ntle* (outside) and *gare* (inside), are adverbs that specify the spatial orientation of the structure. These compounds are both classified as endocentric, as the main semantic element resides in *sebopego* (structure), while the adverbial modifiers refine its type or location.

4.9 Adjective + Noun Compounds

There is only a single compound noun in the thesis that follows the Adjective + Noun → Noun (Adj + N → N) morphological construction. An example is the following:

Compound	Adjective	Noun	Translation
Lesome-lekgolong (pg.9)	lesome	lekgolong	Ten percent

In the compound *Lesome-lekgolong*, the thesis writer uses a hyphen to demarcate the two constituents: the adjective *lesome* (ten) and the locative noun *lekgolong* (to/into a hundred). The first part comprises the nominal prefix *le-* from noun class 5 and the stem *-some*. The second part consists of the nominal prefix *le-*, the stem *-kgolo-* (hundred), and the locative suffix *-ng*. This compound exemplifies an Adjective + Noun → Noun construction and is classified as a copulative compound noun, as both constituents—*lesome* and *lekgolo*—contribute equally to the overall semantic meaning of the noun.

Drawing from the results presented above, it is evident that the majority of compound nouns used in the thesis are endocentric and copulative, with minimal use of exocentric compounds. In Sepedi, copulative compounds appear to be contextually appropriate; however, they do not align neatly with the principles of Construction Morphology, as the second constituent does not govern or determine the properties of the first. Instead, both constituents function as co-heads, contributing equally to the semantic and grammatical interpretation of the compound noun (Maboa, 2022).

Mphasha (2006) observes that compounds in Sepedi are predominantly nominal in nature, implying that the outcomes of morphological constructions typically result in nouns rather than other parts of speech. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the influence of the nominal prefix on the first morpheme (Maboa, 2022). The findings of this article support Mphasha's claim: all compound formations identified in the thesis are nominal in structure. The semantic extensions, as techniques of extending the literal meaning of a word (Mrizay & Lusekelo, 2023:2), also play a great role in forming compounds in Sepedi, as demonstrated in the results.

Okolocha (2021) maintains that compound words across languages tend to behave as single lexical items. Regardless of the individual meanings of their components, the resulting compounds acquire a unified, often idiomatic, meaning. The analysis presented here aligns with this view. With the exception of three hyphenated forms, the compound nouns found in the thesis are written as single words. This suggests that Maledu has largely adhered to Rule 82 as outlined in *Melao ya Mongwalo* le *Mopeleto ya Sesotho sa Leboa* (2019), which prescribes that compound nouns in Sepedi should be written as single, unified lexical items.

While Fabb (1984) argues that some compounds may not undergo derivational processes, this does not hold true in the present analysis. All of the compounds examined

underwent derivational morphology, with many appearing as deverbatives—nouns derived from verbs. Notably, a significant number of them follow the V + V → N morphological construction.

A remarkable historical example of compound formation in Sepedi appears in D.N. Moloto's *Tšhipu e rile ke lebelo…*(nd.), where he constructs the longest recorded hyphenated compound noun: *samphapha-sa-maeba-sa-ngwana-kgwale-a-fofa-o-bone*. This complex compound consists of the nouns *samphapha* (volery), *maeba* (doves), *ngwana* (fledgling), *kgwale* (partridge), and the verbs *fofa* (fly) and *bone* (see). The additional hyphenated elements are bound morphemes that serve concordial agreement functions. It is a rare type of exocentric compound because the semantic content of this word cannot be guessed from either of the six constituent sections. This compound follows the morphological pattern N + N + N + N + V + V → N.

5. Conclusion

According to Mojapelo (2018), Sepedi lacks an adequate and comprehensive body of terminology. Mlambo, Matfunjwa & Skosana (2025b) and Marhanele (2017) further allude to the same problem in Xitsonga. This article affirms that claim. The extensive use of compound nouns in Maledu's thesis raises a critical question: does Sepedi possess sufficient terminological resources to support advanced academic and intellectual discourse? The answer, as evidenced by the thesis, is a clear no. Compounding emerges as one of the most effective strategies through which language users can expand the lexicon and develop terminology. This is crucial for enabling diverse discourses in any given language—Sepedi, in this case. The findings of this article demonstrate that, in the context of the rapid expansion of global languages driven by digital technologies, compounding—alongside neologism—is essential for linguistic growth. The digitisation and standardisation of newly coined words, particularly in African indigenous languages, is therefore an urgent and strategic imperative. In this regard, the thesis writer sets a progressive precedent for linguistic innovation and terminological development in Sepedi. Future studies should systematically document and digitise compound formations to ensure sustainable terminological development in Sepedi.

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POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES ON MALAY BATU BARA ORAL NARRATIVES: INSIGHTS FROM ENGLISH LITERARY THEORY

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Abstract

This study investigates how Malay Batu Bara oral narratives express cultural identity, morality, and resistance through the analytical lens of English postcolonial theory. Addressing the lack of research applying postcolonial literary frameworks to Indonesian oral traditions, the study aims to reinterpret local oral texts using key concepts from Bhabha (hybridity, mimicry) and Spivak (subaltern voice) to understand how these narratives negotiate cultural power. A qualitative comparative design was employed, drawing on twelve Batu Bara oral texts including *pantun*, *gurindam*, *ritual* verses, and folktale fragments supplemented by interviews with five cultural informants. These were compared with selected English literary works exhibiting parallel moral themes. Data were analyzed using thematic coding and cultural semiotics to identify symbolic patterns and interpret how postcolonial concepts function within the local narratives. Findings indicate four specific moral and cultural patterns recurring across the oral texts: ecological harmony, respect for social hierarchy, communal ethics, and moral sincerity. These values are articulated through metaphor, performance, and collective expression, revealing how Batu Bara narratives function as moral counter-discourses that embody subaltern agency and cultural resilience. The cross-analysis demonstrates a form of "moral hybridity," where local ethical worldviews intersect with and reinterpret English postcolonial concepts. The study contributes theoretically by positioning Malay oral literature as an active epistemological space within postcolonial discourse and practically by offering a model for integrating indigenous oral traditions into comparative literary pedagogy.

Keywords: *comparative literature; cultural morality; hybridity; Malay Batu Bara oral literature; moral hybridity; postcolonial theory; subaltern voice.*

1. Introduction

English literary studies have long been concerned with how literature represents power, culture, and identity. Within this tradition, postcolonial theory has emerged as a vital framework for interpreting the cultural consequences of colonialism and its ongoing influence on identity formation. As Purwarno and Efrizah (2025) note, the evolution of English literary thought from Shakespearean humanism to postmodern pluralism provides

an essential intellectual background for understanding how postcolonial perspectives extend and challenge canonical interpretations of culture and identity. Pioneered by figures such as Edward Said (2020), Homi K. Bhabha (2019), and Gayatri Spivak (2021), postcolonial perspectives from English literature reveal how colonized societies negotiate domination, hybridity, and resistance through narrative expression. However, while postcolonial theory has been widely applied to English and colonial texts, its potential for interpreting local oral traditions remains underexplored. This gap provides the starting point for the present study.

The Malay Batu Bara community in North Sumatra, Indonesia, preserves a rich corpus of oral narratives, including folktales, *hikayat* (classical narrative chronicles), and *pantun* (quatrain-based oral poetry), that encapsulate values such as *budi* (moral character), *maruah* (honor/dignity), and *gotong royong* (communal cooperation). These oral traditions serve as cultural texts that transmit ethical principles, collective memory, and identity. Yet, despite their richness, such traditions have rarely been analyzed through literary-theoretical approaches, particularly within postcolonial frameworks derived from English studies. Consequently, there remains a gap in how these indigenous narratives are understood within the global framework of literary and postcolonial discourse.

Previous studies have offered valuable yet limited insights into Malay oral literature. Yusuf (2019) investigated moral education in Malay folktales, while Hasanah and Rahman (2021) examined oral storytelling as a medium for preserving local wisdom. Mahyuddin (2022) explored symbolic meanings within the *tepung tawar ritual* (a Malay blessing ceremony), and Rahim (2023) analyzed the narrative motifs in Sumatran oral traditions. Although these studies contribute to cultural understanding, they have not addressed how such oral narratives negotiate identity and resistance through the lens of postcolonial literary theory. This absence defines the research gap that the present study seeks to fill.

This study aims to analyze how identity, morality, and resistance are represented in Malay Batu Bara oral narratives through the application of English postcolonial perspectives. By engaging with the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and resistance (Bhabha, 2019) and the notion of the subaltern voice (Spivak, 2021), the study explores how these oral narratives negotiate between indigenous identity and external cultural influences. The analysis focuses on narrative structures, character representations, and symbolic expressions that reflect the community's negotiation of cultural power and continuity.

The novelty of this research lies in its cross-cultural application of English postcolonial theory to indigenous oral literature. Whereas most postcolonial analyses center on written English texts or colonial-era narratives, this study extends the framework to an oral cultural tradition, thereby bridging literary theory and local cultural practice. It highlights the universality of postcolonial ideas while validating local narratives as legitimate literary texts worthy of critical interpretation. Accordingly, this study specifically asks: how do English postcolonial literary concepts particularly hybridity, mimicry, and the subaltern voice reinterpret the representations of cultural identity and resistance in Malay Batu Bara oral narratives?

This research is significant both theoretically and culturally. Theoretically, it demonstrates the adaptability of English literary criticism in examining oral traditions beyond the Western canon. Culturally, it contributes to preserving and recontextualizing the Malay Batu Bara heritage by positioning it within a global conversation on postcolonial identity. The following sections present the theoretical framework, data and method, comparative analysis, and interpretive discussion, leading to the study's implications and conclusion. Ultimately, the study underscores the idea that English literary theory can serve

not only to interpret Western texts but also to amplify non-Western voices that resist cultural marginalization.

2. Literature Review

Postcolonial literary theory, rooted in the English literary tradition, offers a powerful framework for analyzing the intersections of culture, identity, and resistance in formerly colonized societies. Initially grounded in the works of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, it critiques how imperial discourse constructs the colonized subject. In recent developments, postcolonial studies have expanded beyond English texts to encompass oral, indigenous, and performative traditions (Postcolonial Studies, 2023; Umar, 2024). This shift reflects an ongoing decolonial turn in literary scholarship, emphasizing the necessity of interpreting non-Western cultural texts through theoretical lenses that challenge Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge (Masood & Aqeel, 2025).

Bhabha's (2019) concepts of hybridity and the "third space" are particularly relevant in this context. Bhabha argues that cultural identity is not fixed but continually negotiated within spaces of contact between the colonizer and the colonized. Hybridity produces new, syncretic identities that both resist and reinterpret dominant cultural narratives. Recent scholarship reaffirms hybridity as a dynamic site of creativity and resistance, especially within postcolonial societies that experience cultural overlap and adaptation (Umar, 2024). In the context of Malay Batu Bara oral narratives, hybridity manifests through the blending of Islamic, Malay, and local animistic traditions, revealing how oral storytelling becomes a medium for negotiating cultural continuity amid change.

Gayatri Spivak's notion of the subaltern further deepens this analysis by questioning who is permitted to speak and whose voices are marginalized within dominant narratives. Spivak (2021) and later scholars such as Dhari (2024) highlight the ethical challenges of representing subaltern subjects in both academic and literary discourses. In Malay Batu Bara oral traditions, subaltern perspectives often emerge through the voices of commoners, women, or mythical figures who articulate moral critique against authority or social inequality. Such instances demonstrate how local voices function as counter-discourses to social hierarchy, extending Spivak's theoretical concern into lived cultural practice.

Equally significant is the narrative and performative dimension of oral traditions. Scholars in oral literature studies emphasize that oral storytelling functions as both an artistic and sociocultural act, carrying collective memory and moral values (Oral Tradition, 2023; Cochrane, 2023). In Malay Batu Bara culture, oral narratives such as folktales, *pantun*, and *ritual* stories do more than entertain, they preserve philosophical notions of *budi* (moral character), *maruah* (honor/dignity), and communal ethics. While these studies affirm the social role of oral texts, they often stop short of theorizing their literary significance within global frameworks, a gap that this study aims to address. Furthermore, as Efrizah (2023) notes, linguistic elements such as accent and tone play a crucial role in shaping communicative identity among Batu Bara Malays, reinforcing how oral performance embodies cultural values. Complementing this, Efrizah et al. (2025) demonstrate that address systems and politeness strategies in Batu Bara Malay interactions mirror the community's social hierarchy and moral ethics, both of which also inform the narrative and performative dimensions of their oral literature.

The integration of postcolonial theory with oral literature analysis has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Masood and Aqeel (2025) demonstrate that indigenous storytelling traditions across Asia and Africa often encode resistance to cultural

domination through symbolic and narrative strategies. Similarly, local studies in Indonesia such as Hasanah and Rahman (2021), Mahyuddin (2022), Rahim (2023), and Efrizah et al. (2025) show that Malay oral traditions are crucial for maintaining cultural continuity and expressing identity, yet these studies rarely employ theoretical perspectives from English literature. These works provide valuable cultural insights but remain descriptive; none explicitly bridges English literary theory with local oral practices. This study fills that gap by employing postcolonial analytical tools to reinterpret Malay oral ethics and identity.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives establish the foundation for the present study. Postcolonial theory provides the critical framework for examining how cultural identity and resistance are articulated; hybridity explains the fluid and transformative nature of cultural expression; subaltern theory foregrounds marginalized voices within narrative structures; and oral literature theory situates storytelling as both a cultural and literary act. By synthesizing these frameworks, this study positions Malay Batu Bara oral narratives as postcolonial texts that reveal complex negotiations of identity, power, and heritage. Accordingly, these theories collectively guide the study's analytical lens, shaping how Batu Bara oral texts are read, interpreted, and contextualized within English postcolonial discourse.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative comparative literary approach within the scope of cultural literary studies, a branch of comparative humanities that interprets literature as a cultural system of meaning. The aim was to explore how Malay Batu Bara cultural values are represented, interpreted, and recontextualized through English literary perspectives, particularly by examining the intersection between local oral traditions and global literary interpretations. A comparative qualitative design was chosen because it enables systematic analysis of similarities and differences across two distinct cultural-literary systems while preserving the contextual integrity of each tradition.

3.1 Research Design

The research adopted a comparative qualitative design within postcolonial literary hermeneutics, integrating cultural hermeneutics and literary semiotics as analytical frameworks. This approach was selected because the study seeks to interpret moral and identity constructions across two narrative traditions oral and written which requires cross-cultural comparison rather than isolated textual analysis. It allows for interpretative exploration of meaning within texts, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), where the researcher serves as the primary instrument in analyzing cultural and textual representations.

The comparative aspect was used to examine the similarities and contrasts between the cultural values embedded in Batu Bara Malay oral literature and their resonances or reinterpretations in selected English literary texts that reflect parallel moral or philosophical ideas. Within this framework, the postcolonial hermeneutic approach enabled the researcher to interpret the texts through critical awareness of cultural hybridity, subaltern voices, and decolonial resistance, as articulated by Bhabha (2019) and Spivak (2021).

In this process, the researcher maintained reflexivity, acknowledging her position as both an interpreter and cultural outsider familiar with English literary theory. Reflexive notes were used to monitor interpretive bias and ensure cultural respect in analyzing Batu Bara oral expressions.

3.2 Data Sources

The data consisted of two main types:

1. Primary Data – Selected *Batu Bara Malay oral narratives*, traditional poetry, and cultural expressions (such as *pantun*, *gurindam* (moral couplets), and symbolic rituals). These were collected through documented transcriptions, local literature archives, and ethnographic notes. Approximately twelve oral texts were purposively chosen based on thematic relevance (identity, morality, resistance), linguistic authenticity, and accessibility through Batu Bara cultural archives and community storytellers.
2. Comparative Texts – Selected English literary works (novels, poems, or essays) that contain parallel cultural or moral themes, such as respect for nature, social harmony, and communal ethics. Works by authors such as Rudyard Kipling, William Wordsworth, and postcolonial writers like Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie were analyzed for comparative cultural insight. These authors were chosen because their texts articulate moral or postcolonial concerns colonial contact (Kipling), moral harmony with nature (Wordsworth), postcolonial resistance (Achebe), and cultural hybridity (Rushdie) which align with the thematic concerns of Batu Bara oral traditions.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were gathered through library research, document analysis, and interviews with cultural informants and local Malay scholars. The library research covered journals, literary anthologies, and ethnographic documentation. Five local informants (aged 45–70), recognized as storytellers or cultural custodians, were interviewed using purposive sampling to ensure depth of cultural interpretation. The interviews provided cultural interpretations and contextual understanding of Batu Bara Malay values, particularly symbolic elements and moral teachings embedded in oral expressions.

Documented transcriptions were obtained from regional cultural centers and family-held manuscripts, while ethnographic notes were produced during local cultural performances and community gatherings. Ethical approval was sought informally from community elders through consent statements prior to recording or transcription.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis applied qualitative textual analysis and cultural semiotic interpretation. Following the model of Barthes (1977) and Hall (1997), the analysis focused on the symbolic and representational meanings within both sets of texts. The process followed several steps: (1) data familiarization through repeated reading; (2) thematic coding to identify recurring moral and identity motifs; (3) cross-textual comparison of symbolic structures between English and Malay texts; and (4) interpretation through postcolonial and semiotic frameworks.

Thematic coding was employed to identify recurring cultural motifs, moral lessons, and aesthetic expressions. Key themes included communal morality, resistance, identity negotiation, and hybridity. These were then interpreted through the lens of comparative cultural literary criticism, highlighting how English literary perspectives can illuminate or contrast with Batu Bara Malay worldviews.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance, acknowledging that interpretive insights were shaped by an academic background in English literary theory and intercultural studies. This reflexivity ensured awareness of positionality and interpretive bias in analyzing cross-cultural texts.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Validity

To ensure the credibility of interpretation, this study employed triangulation by combining textual, cultural, and theoretical validation. Textual triangulation involved cross-verifying oral and written texts; cultural triangulation included consulting multiple informants; and theoretical triangulation entailed comparing interpretations across postcolonial, semiotic, and hermeneutic lenses. Member checking was conducted with local cultural experts to confirm interpretations of the Malay texts. Feedback from these experts was incorporated into revised thematic coding to improve cultural accuracy.

Theoretical triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing findings with existing frameworks in cultural literary studies and postcolonial criticism. The interpretations were also validated through intertextual analysis across English and Malay sources to maintain academic rigor and objectivity.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All cultural data, including oral narratives and rituals, were cited respectfully, ensuring that cultural heritage and local intellectual property were acknowledged. The research followed ethical standards of cultural sensitivity and informed consent, especially when dealing with living traditions and community informants. Institutional ethical clearance was not required because no vulnerable participants were involved; however, written and verbal consent was obtained before documentation, consistent with research ethics in qualitative cultural studies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of Findings

The comparative interpretation between Batu Bara Malay oral literature and selected English literary texts revealed four overarching moral and cultural values recurring across traditions: harmony with nature, respect for hierarchy, moral sincerity, and communal ethics. These values, though universal, are shaped differently within each literary system: collectivist, performative, and symbolic in Malay oral tradition; individualist, introspective, and textual in English literature.

In Batu Bara oral forms such as *pantun nasihat* (advisory *pantun*), *gurindam* (moral couplets), and *ritual* verses from *tepung tawar* (blessing ceremony), moral values are transmitted through metaphor and repetition, shaping social ethics within a communal worldview. For instance, the *pantun* line "*Air tenang jangan disangka tiada buaya*" (Do not think still waters have no crocodiles) functions both as cautionary wisdom and as a moral signifier of humility and awareness.

In contrast, English literary texts by Wordsworth, Achebe, Rushdie, and Kipling articulate moral awareness through narrative conflict and character reflection. Wordsworth's *Lines Written in Early Spring* (1798) conveys the human moral failure to coexist harmoniously with nature, while Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (2016) portrays the tragic consequences of colonial disruption on communal ethics.

Thus, findings demonstrate that both literatures encode morality through symbolic systems, Malay oral art externalizes ethics via collective metaphor, whereas English texts internalize it through personal experience and moral reasoning. Together, they form a dialogic bridge of cultural interpretation consistent with Bhabha's (2019) notion of the *third space*, where moral meanings are hybridized across traditions.

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4.2 Representation of Harmony with Nature

In Batu Bara Malay oral expression, nature is personified as both teacher and mirror of morality. The verse "*Kalau padi makin berisi, makin tunduk ke bumi*" (The fuller the rice, the lower it bows) exemplifies how humility and wisdom are drawn from natural metaphor. Such proverbs and *gurindam* (moral couplets) not only convey ecological awareness but also spiritual humility, connecting human behavior with natural balance.

Field interviews with Batu Bara elders revealed that natural imagery in *pantun* often arises from agricultural life like rivers, rice fields, and sea winds symbolizing patience, perseverance, and respect for divine order. This worldview aligns with an ethics of sustainability and gratitude, encoded within poetic brevity.

In English Romantic literature, Wordsworth similarly elevates nature as a moral force. In *Tintern Abbey* (1798), he writes:

"A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,

This illustrates nature as a moral and spiritual guide, echoing the same humility expressed in Malay oral verses. Yet the difference lies in subjectivity: for the Batu Bara community, morality is socially enacted; for Wordsworth, it is individually contemplated.

From a semiotic lens (Barthes, 1977; Hall, 1997), both literatures transform natural signs into moral signifiers. In the Batu Bara context, rice, river, and tree symbolize patience, endurance, and gratitude; in English Romanticism, daffodils and rivers mirror the self's moral awakening. These overlapping symbols demonstrate how ecological imagery becomes a shared ethical language, one rooted in collective ecology, the other in introspective spirituality.

Therefore, this study interprets "harmony with nature" as both a local moral code and a transnational ethical metaphor revealing how indigenous environmental ethics can enrich postcolonial readings of English literature.

4.3 Social Hierarchy and Respect in Communication

Respect for hierarchy and social harmony forms the ethical backbone of Batu Bara oral tradition. The saying like "*Yang tua dihormati, yang muda disayangi*" (Respect the elders, cherish the young) reflect not mere politeness but the moral architecture of social order. These utterances encode intergenerational responsibility and communal obedience to elders as spiritual guardians.

Ethnographic data collected from ritual performances such as *tepung tawar* (blessing ceremony) confirm that respect is enacted symbolically through gesture, as sprinkling water and rice flour signifies purification and social blessing. This ritual semiotics reinforces cultural authority and communal unity, showing how oral ethics function as social governance.

In contrast, English literature treats hierarchy through moral allegory. Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (2019), though colonial in tone, presents moral lessons on loyalty, duty, and leadership through the animal kingdom. Mowgli's respect for Baloo and Bagheera reflects obedience to moral order, while defiance toward Shere Khan represents rebellion against corrupt authority. This allegory parallels the Malay notion that respect maintains harmony but also invites critical negotiation when authority loses moral legitimacy. Through Hall's (1997) framework of representation, both systems can be read as semiotic codes of social ethics: in Batu Bara oral art, authority derives from lineage and sacred wisdom; in English texts, it is tied to governance, individual conscience, and moral choice.

The comparison reveals a dual understanding of respect as communal devotion and as moral reflection, each operating within its sociocultural epistemology.

4.4 Moral and Communal Ethics: A Comparative and Theoretical Synthesis

Batu Bara oral tradition foregrounds communal ethics as the moral center of life. The saying *"Berat sama dipikul, ringan sama dijinjing"* (We share burdens, whether heavy or light) encapsulates empathy, cooperation, and mutual aid. In oral performance, such verses are sung collectively, creating what Turner (1982) calls *"communitas,"* a performative unity where ethics and emotion merge. This collective mode of moral expression reflects the community's worldview that virtue is realized through togetherness rather than individual achievement.

In contrast, English literary works often portray morality as an internal and individual struggle. For instance, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the disintegration of the Igbo moral order under colonial influence mirrors the collective fragility of Batu Bara ethics in facing modernity. Similarly, Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* (2019) reinterprets exile as moral dislocation, where identity and ethics are negotiated between belonging and estrangement. These parallel experiences show that both traditions grapple with the tension between moral rootedness and cultural change.

Through Bhabha's (2019) concept of the *third space*, these moral worlds intersect, forming a hybrid ethical imagination. The rhythmic pantun of Batu Bara and the introspective narrative voice in English literature function as dialogic media where ethical awareness takes shape through cross-cultural reflection. In this sense, Malay oral ethics are not merely localized moral codes but dynamic interpretive systems that converse with global literary moralities.

From a semiotic perspective (Barthes, 1977), the Malay verse relies on indexical signs such as nature, kinship, and ritual as moral referents, while English texts employ symbolic narrative forms such as character, conflict, and irony. Together, they reveal that moral understanding operates through different semiotic systems but shares the same universal pursuit of ethical balance.

This comparative reading thus reframes morality not as a dichotomy between East and West but as a dialogic continuum, an intercultural conversation between collective and individual ethics that enriches postcolonial moral aesthetics.

To illustrate this dynamic, a conceptual diagram (see Figure 1) may be inserted, mapping how Batu Bara oral ethics (communal, performative, metaphorical) interact with English literary ethics (individual, introspective, symbolic) within the shared interpretive field of postcolonial hybridity.

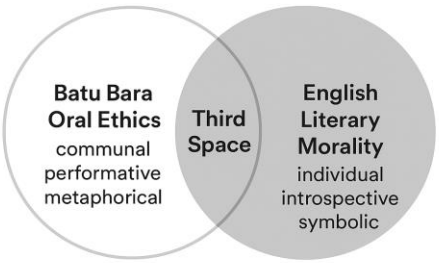

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Cross-Cultural Literary Ethics

4.5 Cultural Interpretation through English Literary Lens

Applying English literary theory to Malay oral narratives opens a productive interpretive exchange. Concepts such as character archetype, narrative symbolism, and moral allegory help articulate latent meanings within pantun and ritual speech. For instance, the *pantun:*

"Bunga cempaka di tepi kali, (Magnolia blossoms by the riverbank)
Harum baunya sepanjang masa; (Its fragrance lingers through all time)
Baik budi tidakkan mati, (Good character will never perish)
Walau jasad kembali ke asa," (Even when the body returns to its origin)

Embodies the moral permanence of virtue, akin to Wordsworth's reflection on moral immortality in *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* (1807).

By situating Malay oral ethics within English moral frameworks, the study reveals the dialogic potential of cross-literary interpretation how Western concepts like allegory or hybridity can illuminate, but not dominate, indigenous wisdom. Spivak's (2021) *subaltern voice* provides further insight, showing that oral poetry acts as a decolonial voice resisting epistemic marginalization. In Batu Bara, every oral performance asserts identity and agency, turning poetic recitation into moral resistance. This reading transforms English literary tools into cross-cultural instruments, expanding their interpretive reach beyond canonical boundaries. Likewise, Malay oral tradition challenges English literary theory to reimagine morality as communal and performative rather than purely textual.

Thus, the English lens becomes a bridge, not a filter, transforming intercultural reading into a form of ethical translation where meaning is constantly negotiated, hybridized, and re-signified within Bhabha's third space.

4.6 Analytical and Cultural Implications

The findings reveal that moral hybridity emerges as the central insight of this study, where the dialogic encounter between Batu Bara oral ethics and English literary thought produces a new intercultural moral discourse. Rather than positioning Malay oral wisdom as the object of Western interpretation, this study reframes it as a coequal epistemology, one that speaks back to global literary theory through lived ethical experience.

First, this analytical model demonstrates that indigenous oral traditions possess conceptual and philosophical depth equivalent to canonical English literature, thereby challenging the Eurocentric hierarchy of knowledge. The comparative framework between pantun ethics and postcolonial narrative introspection establishes a balanced interpretive exchange, proving that both oral and written forms articulate human moral consciousness through different semiotic systems.

Second, the study contributes theoretically to postcolonial hermeneutics by advancing the idea of "moral hybridity", a synthesis where collective ethics and individual conscience intersect in the third space (Bhabha, 2019). This hybrid zone allows local moral codes to be re-signified within global literary theory, producing a plural yet coherent understanding of virtue, resistance, and identity.

Third, the findings offer practical significance for literary pedagogy and intercultural literacy. By integrating Batu Bara oral narratives into English literary analysis, students and scholars can explore ethical universality through plural traditions, recognizing that decolonial knowledge is not oppositional but dialogic. Such engagement encourages critical empathy,

fostering awareness that morality, like culture itself, thrives through translation and negotiation.

Ultimately, this research affirms that postcolonial literary study must move beyond textual critique toward moral dialogue, where the spoken and the written, the local and the global, coexist as mutual interpreters of human ethics. The hybrid moral imagination revealed in this study redefines postcolonial literature not as a geography of difference but as a shared space of ethical creativity.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that Malay Batu Bara oral narratives and English literary traditions converge within a shared moral imagination while retaining distinct aesthetic and historical forms. Reaffirming its objectives, the research examined how postcolonial literary perspectives particularly Bhabha's hybridity, mimicry, and Spivak's subaltern voice reinterpret the moral and cultural representations in Malay oral narratives. The analysis newly demonstrates that moral hybridity serves as the key interpretive outcome, where collective oral ethics and individual literary introspection intersect in a dialogic moral continuum. Through Bhabha's notion of the *third space*, this study shows that intercultural meaning emerges not from domination but negotiation: the Batu Bara oral tradition re-signifies English moral tropes through performative empathy and communal ethics. For instance, the *pantun*'s collective moral rhythm contrasts yet converses with the solitary ethical conflict found in English narratives such as *Things Fall Apart* and *Imaginary Homelands*.

Theoretically, this research extends postcolonial literary studies by positioning indigenous oral traditions as coequal epistemologies rather than passive cultural data. It challenges the Eurocentric hierarchy of textual authority by proving that oral performance embodies complex moral philosophy and symbolic sophistication. Methodologically, the qualitative comparative and semiotic approach proved effective in tracing intercultural correspondences, though it also faced interpretive limits due to the performative nature of oral data. Practically, the findings offer a pedagogical model for integrating local oral traditions into English literature and cultural studies curricula. Teachers may adapt the comparative moral framework to design intercultural literature modules that emphasize dialogue between Western and indigenous worldviews. Similarly, future researchers can extend this model to digital storytelling, performative archives, or comparative ethics across Southeast Asian oral heritages.

In sum, this study contributes to decolonial literary scholarship by bridging English postcolonial theory and indigenous oral heritage, redefining world literature as a shared moral dialogue and a platform for intercultural education.

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EXPLORING A TAILORED TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) MODEL FOR ENHANCING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN MATURE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Language teachers employ a range of approaches, both direct and indirect, to support effective language learning. Among these, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) stands out as a learner-centred, indirect method that fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and learner autonomy. Mature students in higher education, however, encounter distinctive challenges related to balancing multiple responsibilities, managing academic anxiety, addressing financial constraints, and overcoming limited language proficiency, often resulting from an extended gap in formal study. This paper proposes a tailored TBLT model comprising four components: constructivist principles, TBLT phases, cooperative learning principles, and contextually relevant teaching–learning activities. The model aims to enhance mature students' language competence and bridge proficiency gaps with their younger peers through authentic tasks such as event planning, community debates, report writing, and formal email preparation. By drawing upon their professional and life experiences in these collaborative and authentic contexts, learners engage with real-world language use, leading to measurable improvements in linguistic performance. Implemented over a twelve-week intervention with 21 mature students at a private university, the model demonstrated significant gains in reading, writing, and speaking proficiency. The study thus presents an empirically validated framework integrating constructivist, task-based, and cooperative learning approaches to meet the specific needs of mature language learners.

Keywords: *constructivist learning; language proficiency; second language acquisition; student-centred approach; Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)*

1. Introduction

An instructional model is a framework that guides educators in planning, delivering, and evaluating teaching (Marzano, 2019). These models can be categorised into direct, teacher-centred approaches and indirect, student-centred approaches. Direct models, such as the lecture method and whole-class instruction, emphasize teacher authority and knowledge transmission. They involve clear, systematic delivery of content, with the teacher as the central figure and students as passive recipients (Slavin, 2018; Ornstein & Hunkins,

2017). While effective for conveying information, these models may limit student participation and critical thinking.

In contrast, indirect models prioritise student autonomy and active engagement. Approaches such as project-based learning, concept mapping, and flipped classrooms encourage exploration, collaboration, and problem-solving, thereby fostering critical thinking and deeper understanding (Guo et al., 2020; Tomashevska, 2024; Al-Samarraie, Shamsuddin, & Alzahrani, 2020). These models support student-centred learning by promoting hands-on experiences and interactive environments.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is also an indirect instructional model that emphasises the use of meaningful, real-world tasks to promote language learning. Unlike direct instructional models that focus primarily on linguistic forms and teacher-led explanations, TBLT engages students in practical language use through tasks that reflect real-life situations (Ahmad & Sutabri, 2024). This approach fosters communicative competence by immersing learners in authentic language activities, which encourages them to use the target language for practical purposes such as problem-solving and communication (Rahman, 2024).

One of the key advantages of TBLT is its ability to promote learner autonomy and contextualised language practice. By participating in tasks that mimic real-world interactions, students develop essential language skills in a relevant and engaging context, leading to improved fluency and confidence in using the language (Long, 2015). Additionally, TBLT supports the development of cognitive and communicative skills, which are crucial for effective language use (Hu, 2024)

Despite its benefits, TBLT presents some challenges. Implementing TBLT requires substantial teacher preparation to design and adapt tasks that meet diverse learner needs and proficiency levels (Gou, 2024). Managing a classroom with varying language abilities can be demanding, and achieving a balance between fluency and accuracy remains a challenge (Kim, 2024). Nevertheless, with appropriate training and support, TBLT can be a highly effective approach for creating dynamic and meaningful language learning experiences.

Universities and higher education institutions around the world employ diverse admission criteria for enrolling students into their programmes. While most undergraduate programs admit students based on high school grades or diplomas, others, including mature students, are admitted through alternative pathways. Mature-age students, who are typically older than traditional students, are admitted based on their life experience and are often required to take a mature entrance examination. This process is designed for individuals who may have taken a break from formal education and are now seeking to pursue higher education. Institutions have different protocols for admitting such students, which often include a combination of factors like relevant work experience, a minimum age requirement (usually 30 years or older), and any previous educational certifications. For example, in Ghana, the minimum age for mature students is 25 years, as stipulated by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) (www.gtec.edu.gh). These students are also referred to as adult learners, or non-traditional students or learners.

Research indicates that mature students face distinct challenges in higher education. Andrade et al. (2024) highlight issues related to managing multiple roles, which include family, work and studies, while Perera and Thanthirige (2024) note that mature students face challenges such as fear of re-adapting to the learning environment and age-related stigma. Additionally, Dawborn-Gundlach and Margetts (2018) identify challenges such as academic anxiety, social dislocation, and unrealistic expectations among mature students in

Australia. These challenges underscore the necessity for an instructional approach tailored to their specific needs.

This paper proposes a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model designed specifically for mature students. TBLT, as already indicated, is an instructional model that focuses on using meaningful tasks to facilitate language learning by engaging students in authentic language use. The rationale for developing a tailored TBLT model for mature students is rooted in the need to enhance their language proficiency, particularly in writing and reading. Research by Adjei-Mensah (2023) and Adjei-Mensah et al. (2022) suggests that a tailored approach can address the unique challenges faced by mature students and improve their language skills. The shift from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to TBLT emphasises task-based approaches that provide students with practical opportunities for language use relevant to their needs and interests (East, 2024). By incorporating a personalised TBLT model, this paper aims to make the language learning process more meaningful and effective for mature learners, ultimately enhancing their academic performance and engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a prominent approach in language education, emphasising the use of meaningful tasks to promote language learning. TBLT is grounded in the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritise real-life communication and the practical use of language. Central to TBLT is the notion that language learning is most effective when learners are engaged in tasks that require them to use the target language to achieve specific outcomes (Azmy & Nanda, 2024; Li, 2023; Duo, 2021).

2.2 Applications of TBLT

TBLT has been widely adopted in various educational contexts, demonstrating its flexibility and effectiveness across different age groups and proficiency levels. Research has shown that TBLT can enhance learners' communicative competence, fluency, and overall language proficiency (Azmy & Nanda, 2024; Rahman, 2024; Kim, 2024; Gou, 2024; Gregersen & Nielsen, 2022). This approach encourages active learning, where students are not merely passive recipients of information but active participants in the learning process (Xu & Fan, 2022; Ismail et al., 2023).

Various task types, such as information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap activities, are employed in TBLT to create opportunities for meaningful interaction and authentic language use (Hu, 2024). These tasks are designed to simulate real-world scenarios, enabling learners to practice language skills in contexts that mirror everyday communication (Li, 2023).

2.3 TBLT and Mature Students

While TBLT has been extensively studied and implemented in general language teaching contexts, there is limited research focusing specifically on its application for mature students. Mature students, often defined as those who return to education after an extended period, bring unique experiences, motivations, and challenges to the learning environment (Adu-Yeboah & Forde, 2011). These learners typically have diverse multiple

responsibilities, such as work and family commitments, which can impact their learning process and outcomes (Dawborn-Gundlach & Margetts, 2018).

One key challenge mature students face is balancing their educational pursuits with other life responsibilities. This group of learners often requires flexible and adaptive learning approaches that cater to their specific needs and schedules (Perera & Thanthirige, 2024). Moreover, mature students may experience anxiety and self-doubt, particularly when re-engaging with academic writing and speaking (Harjali, 2019). These factors underscore the need for tailored instructional models that address the distinct characteristics and requirements of mature learners.

2.4 Gaps in Existing Models

Existing TBLT models, while effective in promoting language proficiency, may not fully address the unique needs of mature students. Traditional TBLT approaches often assume a level of language proficiency and cognitive readiness that may not align with the experiences of mature learners (Bialystok, 2021). For instance, mature students may benefit from additional scaffolding and support to build confidence and competence in language use (Damanhouri, 2021).

Additionally, the existing literature highlights a gap in the integration of constructivist principles within TBLT models for mature students. Constructivist theory, which emphasises the active construction of knowledge through experiences and reflection, aligns well with the cognitive and experiential profiles of mature learners (Jumaah, 2024). Incorporating constructivist strategies, such as reflective journals, case studies, and group interactions, can enhance the effectiveness of TBLT for mature students by leveraging their prior knowledge and experiences (Venkadeswaran & Ramanathan, 2024).

2.5 Addressing the Gaps

The existing literature highlights several gaps in the application of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for mature students. While TBLT has proven effective in various educational contexts, it often assumes a younger, more traditional learner profile**. T**here is a notable absence of models tailored to address the unique needs of mature learners, as already indicated (balancing educational pursuits with personal responsibilities, diverse learning styles, and varying levels of prior knowledge and experience).

To address these challenges, this paper proposes a tailored TBLT model designed to better support mature students. This model introduces an additional preparatory phase preceding the traditional pre-task, task, and post-task phases. The preparatory phase aims to create a supportive learning environment to meet mature learners' psychological and emotional needs, foster rapport, and reduce anxiety. This approach ensures mature learners are motivated and prepared for the tasks ahead, which responds to the gap in current TBLT models that overlook the socio-emotional readiness of adult learners**.**

Furthermore, the pre-task phase includes clearly structured materials and explicit instructions to support learners who may struggle with academic re-entry or lack recent study habits. The task phase emphasises collaborative and real-life problem-solving tasks, designed to respect mature learners' experiential knowledge and promote engagement. Finally, the post-task phase integrates detailed feedback and reflection opportunities, which cater to mature students' need for guided self-assessment and peer learning**.** Activities such as role-playing, information-gap tasks, and problem-solving exercises are integrated to foster collaboration, critical thinking, and application of knowledge.

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By addressing these specific needs and incorporating targeted activities, the proposed model aims to provide a more comprehensive and effective approach to language teaching for mature students. This tailored model seeks to bridge the gap in existing TBLT applications and offer a framework that better supports mature learners in their educational journey.

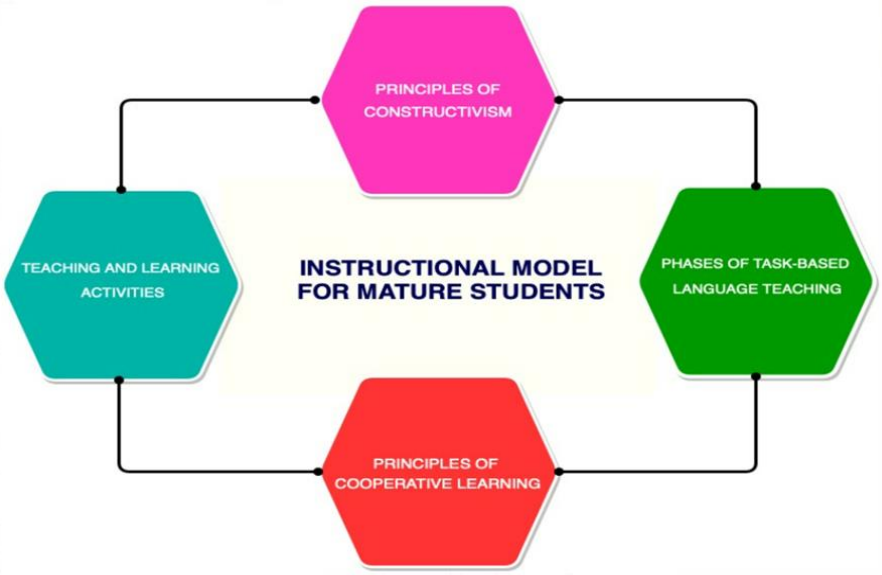
2.6 The Task-based Language Teaching Instructional Model for Mature Students

This model is designed to support the effective instruction of English as a second language to mature students, incorporating essential principles, strategies, activities, skills, and knowledge to foster their language proficiency. This instructional model is designed to enhance the language abilities of mature students, focusing on the four essential skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The model consists of four interconnected components (See Fig. 1) that work harmoniously to produce a comprehensive and cohesive approach, ultimately leading to significant improvements in students' overall language proficiency. The model's first component draws on constructivist principles (Oanh & Nhung, 2022), emphasising learner-centred and experiential learning. The second component incorporates task-based language teaching phases (Ellis, 2009), tailored to mature students' needs. The third component integrates cooperative learning principles (Johnson et al., 2024), fostering collaborative learning environments. The fourth component incorporates teaching and learning activities from Prabhu (1987), Richards (2005) and Norton (2018). Additionally, the model considers experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2020) to create a comprehensive approach. Each component is crucial in effectively teaching and learning L2 among mature students.

The proposed instructional model was piloted with 21 first-year mature undergraduate students at a private university in Ghana. The implementation took place over twelve weeks (one semester), allowing for practical observation of its effectiveness in enhancing language proficiency.

Figure 1

Instructional model for mature students (Adjei-Mensah, 2022)



2.7 Constructivism Principles

Constructivism is a learning theory based on the principle that learners actively construct their own understanding and knowledge through experiential learning and

reflective practices. Unlike traditional educational approaches that view learners as passive receivers of information, constructivist principles see learners as active participants in their educational journey. They engage with new material by integrating it with their pre-existing cognitive frameworks and life experiences to build new knowledge (Bramley & Xu, 2023; Nadeem & Eddy, 2020). This approach is particularly relevant for mature students, who bring a wealth of personal and professional experiences to the learning environment. By leveraging these experiences, mature learners can forge meaningful connections with new content, enhancing the learning process and ensuring that the new knowledge is deeply integrated and applicable (Harjali, 2019).

Constructivist theory, rooted in the idea that knowledge is constructed through experiences and reflection, aligns well with the learning needs of mature students (Halid, 2024; Jumaah, 2024; Venkadeswaran & Ramanathan, 2024). Mature students, with their rich backgrounds of prior experiences, benefit from a learning approach that engages them in real-life, applied learning experiences. Activities such as reflective journals, case studies, and group interactions enable these learners to build new knowledge upon their existing mental frameworks. This constructivist approach not only fosters creativity, confidence, and leadership skills but also promotes meaningful and authentic activities that enhance problem-solving abilities (Mueller, 2012). By applying constructivist principles, educators can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that caters to the unique needs and experiences of mature students, leading to improved learning outcomes. Such engagements, according to Ruwaidah et al. (2025), create a sense of security and emotional support.

2.8 Four Phases of TBLT

Central to the model is Task-Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT), which typically consists of three phases: pre-task, task, and post-task (Ellis, 2019). However, this adapted model includes a fourth phase, the preparatory phase, which precedes the pre-task phase. This initial phase focuses on creating a conducive learning environment, arranging seating in groups, and scheduling classes at optimal times to meet students' basic psychological needs (Maslow, 1943). The lecturer arrives early to interact with students, identify their needs, and motivate them for the task ahead, allowing time for discussion of social and academic issues and setting personal goals. (Ambrose et al., 2010).

The task phase is where students perform the task, plan their presentation, and present their work orally or in writing, with options for time allotment, input data, and access to relevant information (Bhandari, 2020). Students are encouraged to take risks, use vocabulary freely, and communicate in groups, guided by principles of adult learning (Loeng, 2020), effective teaching (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010), experiential learning (Anggreni, 2020), and non-defensive learning (Khalid, 2015). The task phase incorporates strategies such as focus-on-form, information exchange, planning, and task solutions (Rodríguez-Peñarroja, 2022) and considers students' existing language repertoire and experience (Bialystok, 2019). The teacher observes and provides guidance when needed, and students are allowed to share their thoughts and ideas freely, promoting a respectful and supportive learning environment (Mat & Jamaludin, 2024)

The post-task phase involves providing feedback on the completed task, analysing and discussing the language used during the task phase (Nunan, 2022). This phase applies the "consolidate" principle of effective teaching (Fernandez et al., 2024), where constructive feedback enables students to enhance their work. The lesson is also summarised, allowing students to correct mistakes made during the presentation stage (Jonida et al., 2022; Lin,

2007; 2020). Students use self and peer evaluation to assess their performance, fostering a reflective and collaborative learning environment (Boud & Bearman, 2024). If time is limited, students can work outside class to complete corrections and report back in the next lesson, promoting autonomous learning and accountability (Rupinis et al., 2024)

2.9 Principles of Collaborative Learning

Another crucial element of this model is the principles of collaborative learning, which prioritise student-centred instruction over teacher-centred approaches (Johnson et al., 2024). By engaging in group or paired activities, students can learn from one another and benefit from their peers' knowledge and skills (Gillies, 2023). During lessons, students are seated in pairs or groups, facing each other rather than the teacher, to facilitate peer-to-peer learning (Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020). This arrangement enables students to share knowledge and skills, which is particularly essential for mature students at university, who bring diverse experiences and perspectives to the learning environment (Hanson, 2020).

Effective collaborative learning is built on six essential principles (Johnson et al., 2024). First, positive interdependence ensures that group members rely on each other to achieve shared goals (Gillies, 2023). Second, individual accountability requires each student to take responsibility for their contribution to the group's work and demonstrate their knowledge through individual assessments (Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020). Third, face-to-face promotive interaction fosters communication and social skills through group discussions and activities (Johnson et al., 2024). Fourth, developing appropriate collaborative skills such as trust-building, leadership, decision-making, communication, and conflict management is crucial (Gillies, 2023). Fifth, group processing involves regular reflection and evaluation of the group's process to improve effectiveness (Hanson, 2020). Finally, forming heterogeneous groups that capitalise on individual differences and strengths ensures a diverse and inclusive learning environment (Johnson et al., 2024).

The principles of collaborative learning are particularly beneficial for adult or mature learners, who bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the learning environment (Rose et al., 2023; Hanson, 2020). By promoting positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, and appropriate collaborative skills, adult learners can leverage their diverse perspectives and strengths to achieve shared goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Gillies, 2023). Group processing and heterogeneous groups also enable adult learners to reflect on their learning, identify areas for improvement, and develop a sense of community and belonging (Wlodkowski, 2017; Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020). Moreover, collaborative learning accommodates different learning styles and preferences, which is essential for adult learners who may have varied educational backgrounds and learning needs (King, 2017; Johnson et al., 2024). By fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment, educators can support the unique needs and goals of adult learners, leading to increased motivation, engagement, and academic success (Rose et al., 2022; Hanson & Florestano, 2020).

2.10 The Teaching and Learning Activities

The teaching and learning activities component of the model encompasses a range of strategies to facilitate effective instruction and learning for mature students. They involve tasks that promote collaborative learning, critical thinking, and effective communication, which foster effective language acquisition. Cooperative learning approaches, such as group work, are utilised to promote collaborative learning (Johnson et al., 2024). Various activities

are employed, including jigsaw reading, voting, think-pair-share, role-playing, information-gap tasks, problem-solving exercises, task-completion activities, opinion-sharing exercises, team-building exercises, and class-building exercises (Willis & Willis, 2016). Jigsaw activities facilitate comprehension of larger texts, allowing mature students to engage deeply with content and collaborate effectively with peers, drawing on their diverse experiences (Calkins & Rivnay, 2022; Suwartono & Romdona, 2024). Voting activities encourage mature learners to take a stance on various topics, fostering critical thinking and providing a platform for diverse viewpoints (Payne, 2021). Think-pair-share activities help reduce anxiety and promote active participation, creating a supportive environment where mature students can reflect on their ideas and engage in dialogue. Role-playing activities enable mature students to assume different roles and perspectives, enhancing their ability to understand complex scenarios and apply knowledge in practical contexts.

Additionally, information-gap tasks and problem-solving exercises are essential for mature students, as they encourage active engagement and critical thinking, aligning with their prior knowledge and real-life experiences. Task-completion activities and opinion-sharing exercises support collaborative learning by leveraging mature students' diverse backgrounds, thus enriching the learning process. Team-building and class-building exercises strengthen social interactions and foster a sense of community, which is crucial for mature students who may benefit from enhanced peer support from their interactions (Topping et al., 2017; Bourgeois, 2011).

3. Research Method

This paper presents a conceptual instructional model tailored to the needs of mature language learners, grounded in constructivist theory, cooperative learning principles, and the phases of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The model was informed by classroom experience and pilot implementation with mature students, as well as insights from earlier studies conducted by the author (Adjei-Mensah, 2022)

The model was piloted with 21 first-year mature students enrolled in an Academic Writing cours**e** at a private university in Ghana**.** The pilot was conducted over one semester and aimed to develop students' academic language proficiency, including reading, writing, and speaking, within the structure of the proposed TBLT model.

Although this paper does not present a full empirical analysis of the pilot, the implementation informed the development and refinement of the model. One sample lesson is described in the section *"Model Implementation and Reflections"* to illustrate how the model was operationalised in practice.

To assess the model's effectiveness, a combination of pre- and post-tests, student feedback, and classroom observation was used. Results from the pilot studies showed a significant improvement in students' language proficiency, particularly in writing and reading (Adjei-Mensah, 2022), bringing their performance on par with non-mature students in the same course. Student feedback highlighted increased confidence, appreciation for the cooperative learning approach, and comfort within the supportive learning environment (Adjei-Mensah, 2024).

3.1 Model Implementation and Reflections

To illustrate the practical application of the tailored TBLT model, a detailed account of one lesson provides valuable insights. This lesson, focused on the use of punctuation in writing, was conducted over two hours and exemplifies the model's phases in action.

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Lesson Overview:

- **Duration:** 2 hours
- **Topic:** Punctuation
- **Expected Outcome:** Students will be able to effectively use punctuation marks in narrative writing.

Preparatory Phase

In this phase, the lecturer prepared the learning environment by arranging chairs and tables to facilitate group work and interaction. Arriving early, the lecturer engaged in informal conversations with students to check on their well-being and address any challenges they had faced, particularly with registration. This initial engagement aimed to create a supportive atmosphere conducive to learning (Zajda, 2021; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Maslow, 1943).

Pre-Task Phase

Students were provided with a printed text containing various punctuation marks. This activity was designed to introduce them to punctuation usage and serve as a foundation for the subsequent tasks. The pre-task phase lasted 30 minutes, allowing students to familiarise themselves with the concept before moving on to practical application (Willis, 2016; Nair, 2018).

Task Cycle

- **Task:** Students were tasked with writing their own stories, which they then shared with a partner. They were asked to write a story about an incident that helped them grow up. They compared the punctuation used in each other's stories, sorted the most commonly used punctuation marks from the least used, and ordered them accordingly. This task involved active engagement with the material and collaboration with peers. The task phase lasted for 20 minutes.
- **Planning:** Students planned how to report their findings to the class, which took 10 minutes.
- **Reporting:** One student from each pair presented their work to the class. This reporting phase lasted for 20 minutes and allowed for peer-to-peer learning and feedback.

Post-Task Phase:

- **Analysis:** The lecturer provided feedback on the students' reports, addressing any errors and discussing language needs. This analysis lasted for 40 minutes and was crucial for reinforcing the correct usage of punctuation marks.
- **Practice:** Students then revised their stories with a focus on correct punctuation, reinforcing the lesson's objectives and promoting independent practice.

This lesson demonstrates how the tailored TBLT model's phases, thus, preparatory, pre-task, task, and post-task, can be effectively implemented in a real classroom setting. By integrating these phases, the lesson aimed to enhance students' understanding of punctuation through collaborative activities and practical application, thus addressing the specific needs of mature students and supporting their learning outcomes.

While this lesson is one among several implemented during the pilot, it illustrates the model's flexibility and learner-centred design. Observations throughout the piloting process

suggested increased student engagement, confidence, and autonomy, which are core outcomes the model was designed to support. Although this paper does not present a full dataset from the implementation, the reflective insights shared here underscore the model's practical relevance for mature learners in similar educational settings.

4. Discussion

4.1 Benefits

The tailored Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model offers several potential benefits, particularly in enhancing language proficiency among mature students. The successful piloting of the model with 21 mature students demonstrates its practical relevance and potential for broader application among mature learners in similar educational contexts.

This model specifically addresses the unique language needs of mature learners, significantly improving their writing, reading, and speaking skills. This is essential for students who may have been away from formal education for an extended period (Adjei-Mensah, 2023; Adjei-Mensah et al., 2022). By focusing on meaningful tasks and real-world applications, the model increases motivation and engagement. Mature students often find more relevance and enjoyment in tasks that mirror real-life situations, thus making the learning process more effective (Willis & Willis, 2007).

Moreover, the model encourages autonomy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills by involving students in active, student-centred learning experiences. This aligns well with the preferences of mature learners, who often value independent learning and practical problem-solving (Hoidn & Reusser, 2020). Additionally, the model accommodates diverse learning styles and experiences, leveraging the rich backgrounds of mature students. By integrating personal and professional experiences into the learning process, the tailored TBLT model enhances understanding and retention (Harjali, 2019; Mueller, 2012).

4.2 Challenges

However, implementing this tailored TBLT model also presents several challenges. Extensive preparation is required from teachers to adapt and prepare tasks, which can be particularly demanding in resource-constrained environments (Long, 2015). Furthermore, managing diverse proficiency levels within a classroom poses significant challenges. Ensuring that all students are adequately supported and challenged necessitates careful planning and execution (Nunan, 2004). Another challenge is balancing the focus between language forms and meaningful communication and fluency. Teachers must navigate this balance carefully to ensure comprehensive language development (Pica, 2005). Additionally, there may be resistance from both teachers and students who are accustomed to traditional instructional methods. Transitioning to a task-based approach requires a change in mindset and teaching strategies, which can be difficult to implement (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

4.3 Comparison with Traditional Models

When comparing this tailored TBLT model with existing approaches, it is evident that it stands in contrast to traditional direct instructional methods. While traditional methods focus on knowledge transmission and passive learning, the TBLT model emphasises meaningful tasks and real-world applications. This shift towards active, student-centred learning proves to be more effective for mature students, who benefit significantly from practical and relevant learning experiences (Ellis, 2019). The tailored TBLT model also aligns

well with constructivist principles and adult learning theories, making it particularly effective for mature students. Traditional methods often fail to engage mature learners, whereas the TBLT model leverages their existing knowledge and experiences, facilitating better learning outcomes (Bramley & Xu, 2023; Nadeem & Eddy, 2020; Harjali, 2019).

4.4 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of the tailored TBLT model are significant. By embodying constructivist principles, the model encourages learners to construct knowledge through experiential learning and reflective practices. This approach is crucial for mature students, who benefit from integrating new knowledge with their existing cognitive frameworks (Gupta, 2011; Mueller, 2012). Additionally, the model aligns with adult learning theories, emphasising the importance of practical, relevant learning experiences for mature students. This alignment ensures that the learning process is meaningful and applicable, leading to enhanced engagement and retention (Uddin, 2023; Merriam & Bierema, 2013). The tailored model also contributes to the broader TBLT framework by providing insights into its application and effectiveness in diverse educational contexts. This contribution is valuable for further research and practice in language teaching, particularly for mature learners (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015).

In conclusion, the tailored TBLT model offers a promising approach to language teaching for mature students, addressing their unique needs and leveraging their rich life experiences to enhance learning outcomes. Despite the challenges in implementation, the potential benefits make it a valuable instructional model worthy of further exploration and application.

4. Conclusion

This paper introduces a tailored Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model designed specifically to address the needs of mature language learners. The model integrates four interconnected components to create a comprehensive and cohesive approach to language instruction. The first component is rooted in constructivist principles (Bramley & Xu, 2023), which emphasise learner-centred and experiential learning to ensure that mature students engage deeply with new material. This theoretical foundation allows learners to build new knowledge based on their existing cognitive frameworks and life experiences. Secondly, it incorporates TBLT phases (Ellis, 2019), adapted to accommodate the unique characteristics and learning needs of mature students. Thirdly, the model integrates cooperative learning principles (Johnson et al., 2024), fostering a collaborative learning environment that enhances peer interactions and mutual support for enhanced learning outcomes. Lastly, it incorporates modern activities and methodologies (Calkins & Rivnay, 2022; Suwartono & Romdona, 2024), as well as considerations for experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2020) to create a holistic and effective approach, ensuring the practical application of language skills in varied contexts.

The tailored TBLT model contributes meaningfully to the field of language teaching by addressing limitations in traditional task-based approaches, particularly for mature learners. By enhancing engagement, fostering motivation, and aligning with the cognitive and experiential realities of older students, the model supports improved proficiency in key language skills.

Educators working with mature learners can adapt this model by incorporating a preparatory phase that builds rapport and addresses learners' emotional and academic

readiness. Lessons should include collaborative tasks, real-world language use, and clear feedback mechanisms to support learner autonomy and confidence. Additionally, creating a classroom environment that encourages peer interaction and reflection can be particularly beneficial for students returning to formal education after a gap.

Looking ahead, further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of the model and assess its effectiveness in varied educational contexts. Future studies could investigate how contextual factors such as program structure, institutional support, or learner background affect the model's adaptability and outcomes.

In conclusion, while this paper is primarily conceptual, the tailored TBLT model offers practical, research-informed strategies that educators can use to improve language instruction for mature students. Its flexible, student-centred framework makes it a promising approach for addressing the diverse needs of adult learners in higher education and beyond. Importantly, the successful piloting of the model demonstrates its practical relevance and highlights its potential for broader application among mature learners in similar educational contexts.

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REVISITING SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS: A QUEER-FORMAL READING OF GENDER IDENTITY

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Abstract

This study aims to review the construction of gender identity in Shakespeare's sonnets in the context of contemporary gender theory and queer reading. A descriptive qualitative method is applied with a Formalism approach combined with queer theory (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990) and Marxist feminism (Federici, 2012). The primary data consists of five selected sonnets, Sonnet 20, 57, 62, 18, and 55, which are analyzed using close reading techniques, textual interpretation, and contextual analysis. The research steps include: (1) selecting sonnet texts based on the relevance of gender themes, (2) identifying formal elements (diction, structure, symbols), (3) analyzing meaning and power relations in the discourse of love and identity, and (4) drawing conclusions based on the theory used. The results of the study show five main findings. First, Sonnet 20 displays an ambiguous representation of gender, showing the shifting roles between masculine and feminine. Second, Sonnet 18 and Sonnet 87 depict homoerotic desire and power relations that transcend heteronormative norms. Third, Sonnet 57 shows the emotional ambiguity and identity of the poet as a passive subject and admirer. Fourth, Sonnet 62 reveals Time, Mortality, and the Search for Eternal Identity, while fifth, Sonnet 55 shows language, symbols, and performativity as spaces for identity formation. This study concludes that Shakespeare views identity as a fluid social and linguistic construction, and makes poetry a space for negotiation between love, time, and human existence.

Keywords: *formalism; gender ambiguity; gender identity; performativity; queer theory; Shakespeare's sonnets.*

1. Introduction

Literary works have always served as a mirror of the complexity of human experience, including the search for identity, the meaning of love, and the individual's position within the social order (Semayeva, 2025). Among the world's literary heritage, William Shakespeare's Sonnets hold a particularly important place, offering profound reflections on the relationship between language, desire, and identity. Although written in the 16th century, Shakespeare's sonnets convey ideas that feel strikingly modern, particularly in their representation of gender and the poet's ambiguity of identity.

During the Renaissance, constructions of gender and sexuality were constrained by rigid social norms, in which male and female roles were positioned within a hierarchical patriarchal structure (Najm, 2025; Shelnutt-Beam, 2024). In the Sonnets, Shakespeare instead presents a language of affection and admiration for a young man, which is rife with homoerotic symbols, tenderness, and emotional vulnerability. This phenomenon opens up a new reading space that is more in line with contemporary theories and thinking on gender identity. On this basis, this study aims to review Shakespeare's sonnets using a modern literary theory approach in order to obtain a fresher and more relevant understanding of the discourse on gender identity.

This title was chosen because Shakespeare's Sonnets hold great potential for rereading through the perspective of gender identity. Shakespeare is not only a poet of love, but also a keen observer of human complexity (Akter, 2024). He depicts a male figure using language usually used to praise women and this shows both aesthetic and ideological courage in challenging the binary boundaries of masculine-feminine. Furthermore, reading the theme of gender identity in the Sonnets has high relevance to the development of 21st-century literary theory that highlights the issues of gender performativity, homoerotic desire, and the social construction of identity (Iloanwusi, 2025). Through this research, Shakespeare is not only seen as a classical poet, but also as a pioneer of modern discourse on the fluidity of human identity (Paterson, 2020; Sun, 2023).

Previous studies on Shakespeare and gender have largely focused on biographical readings or historical contextualization of sexuality, often separating textual analysis from theoretical engagement. Few have explored how the linguistic structure of the sonnets themselves participates in constructing gender identity through the performative power of language. This research fills that gap by integrating a close formalist reading of poetic form: rhyme, imagery, and metaphor with queer theoretical perspectives that interrogate how desire and identity are enacted through discourse. This synthesis allows for a more holistic understanding of how textual form and ideological content mutually shape the gendered subject in the sonnets.

The main approaches are the Formalism Approach and Queer Reading (Stanley Wells, 2020 and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1990). The rationale for combining these two approaches lies in their complementary strengths: while Formalism focuses on the autonomy and structure of the text, revealing how aesthetic devices generate meaning, Queer Theory provides the ideological and interpretive framework to uncover how those very structures encode desire, power, and identity. By uniting both perspectives, this study situates Shakespeare's poetic language as not only a site of artistic innovation but also of subversive gender performance.

In addition to these two main approaches, this research also uses supporting interdisciplinary theories, namely: Gender Performativity Theory - Judith Butler (1990); *Queer and Homosocial Desire* - Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990); *Marxist Feminism and Reproductive Labor* – Federici S. (2012) and *Cultural Identity Theory* - Hall, S., & du Gay, P. (Eds.). (1996). By combining these theories, this research not only dissects the structure of poetic language but also explores the ideological dimensions behind the representation of gender and identity. The primary source for this research is William Shakespeare's sonnets:

Sonnet 18, Sonnet 20, Sonnet 57, Sonnet 62, and Sonnet 55 (Edmonson & Wells, 2020). These five sonnets were selected based on their relevance to issues of gender and identity:

a. Sonnet 20 depicts a "master-mistress" figure who challenges gender boundaries.

b. Sonnet 57 demonstrates the poet's power relations and emotional devotion.
c. Sonnet 62 presents self-reflection and the conflict between ego and love.
d. Sonnet 18 explores symbols of beauty and eternity.
e. Sonnet 55 emphasizes the power of language and symbols over the transience of time.

Secondary sources include recent related texts that discuss the Formalism and Queer Reading approaches to Shakespeare's works. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, aiming to describe and interpret the text's meaning in depth. This method allows for a comprehensive reading of the linguistic, social, and ideological dimensions of the text without becoming trapped in quantitative generalizations.

This study focuses on five main points of analysis directly related to the construction of gender identity in the Sonnets: Gender Representation in the Sonnets; Homoerotic Desire and Power Relations; Emotional Ambiguity and the Poet's Identity; Time, Transience, and the Quest for Immortality; Identity and Language; Symbols and Performativity in Identity Formation. The goal is to reinterpret Shakespeare's work through the lens of contemporary theories of gender and identity; uncover the ideological meanings behind the language structure and form of the sonnets; and demonstrate the relevance of the Sonnets to modern discourses on the fluidity of identity and power relations. The benefits include enriching literary studies with an interdisciplinary perspective, connecting the classical heritage with modern critical theories, and demonstrating that Shakespeare's work remains alive and contextual in reading contemporary humanitarian issues.

2. Literature Review

Revisiting Shakespeare's Sonnets: A Queer-Formal Reading of Gender Identity: this title indicates that the focus of this research is not simply reading the sonnet as a literary work, but also examining how gender, identity, and power relations are constructed and displayed in the text. To this end, the research combines the Formalism and Queer Reading approaches, highlighting gender ambiguity and homoerotic relations, each developed by its respective authors:

1. **The Formalism Approach**, pioneered by Edmondson, P., & Wells, S. (2020), emphasizes the analysis of the text and structure of the poem as both an aesthetic and ideological medium. Using the Formalism Approach, the researcher examines how Shakespeare's sonnets function as spaces for subverting the meanings of gender and identity.
2. **Queer Reading**, pioneered by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), highlights gender ambiguity, emotional relations, and homoeroticism disguised under patriarchal norms. In this research, Queer Reading is used to analyze the relationship between the poet and the Fair Youth, as well as the gender performativity displayed in the sonnet.

In addition to these two main approaches, this research also utilizes supporting interdisciplinary theories, namely:

1. **Gender Performativity Theory** – Judith Butler (1990). Butler asserts that gender is the result of repeated social actions and performances, not a fixed biological identity. This theory helps interpret gender ambiguity in Shakespeare's sonnets (Kakoliris, 2025; Scheibmayr, 2024).
2. **Queer and Homosocial Desire** – Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990). Besides being an approach, Sedgwick's theory emphasizes the often-obscured emotional relationships

between men, making it relevant for reading the dynamics of homoerotic affection in the sonnet (Crnic, S. (2025).

3. **Marxist Feminism and Reproductive Labor** – Silvia Federici (2012). Federici explains that affective and emotional labors are also forms of reproductive labor. This theory is used to analyze the power relations and emotional devotion of the poet in the sonnets (Akhter, 2025).
4. **Cultural Identity Theory** – Hall, S., & du Gay, P. (1996). This provides an in-depth exploration of questions surrounding cultural identity, including how identity is formed and questioned in contemporary social and cultural contexts. Hall and other contributors address various dimensions of the identity crisis and offer theoretical and substantive insights into its contemporary manifestations (Reichert, E. (2021; Platonov, 2024).

This research then makes novel contributions in three main aspects: 1) It combines Formalism and Queer Reading approaches with interdisciplinary gender and identity theory. 2) It reads Shakespeare's Sonnets as a performative text that shapes identity, not simply represents it, 3) It offers a reading that is more relevant to the social context and gender discourse of the 21st century.

Various previous studies have emphasized the importance of reading Shakespeare's Sonnets from a gender and queer perspective. Some studies highlight the gender ambiguity in the sonnets, where the poet's persona displays both masculine and feminine characteristics, thus challenging patriarchal constructions of the Elizabethan period. Other studies highlight homoerotic desire, particularly the poet's relationship with the Fair Youth, which is subtly conveyed through poetic language.

Studies of Formalism emphasize the importance of the sonnet's form and structure as a medium for ideological expression, functioning not only as an aesthetic but also as a space for subversively negotiating the meaning of gender and identity.

Most research remains limited to a single approach, either Formalism or queer, thus failing to capture the interdisciplinary dimension that unites form, meaning, and social performance. This study attempts to fill this gap by combining Formalism, Queer Reading, and interdisciplinary theory.

A critical gap still persists: previous studies have rarely explored how poetic form and gender performativity interact dynamically to construct identity through linguistic repetition and structural ambiguity. Furthermore, earlier works often focus on textual aesthetics or symbolic readings, without situating them within broader socio-political and cultural frameworks of identity performance. This study, therefore, advances a new critical synthesis by bridging textual formality and performative gender discourse, reinterpreting Shakespeare's sonnets as sites of ideological negotiation rather than static literary artifacts.

This can be seen in other related works.

1. **Abonyi, C. (2022),** *Women and Nature*: Image and Imaginary Hybridization in Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Abonyi's research analyzes the symbolic relationship between women and nature in Shakespeare's Sonnets, specifically sonnets 18 and 104, using an ecofeminist approach. Abonyi assumes that women and nature are often represented in parallel, both positioned as objects of beauty and exploitation by masculine power. The ecofeminist theory used is inspired by Val Plumwood (2002) and Carolyn Merchant (1995), who highlight the connection between patriarchal domination of women and exploitation of nature. The results of the study reveal an ambiguity: on the one hand, Shakespeare's poetry glorifies the

beauty of women and nature, but on the other, it also reproduces patriarchal views that place both in subordinate positions.

The relevance of Abonyi's research to this study lies in its foundational reading of gender representations in the sonnets. This study extends this analysis to the realm of gender identity, highlighting how feminine and masculine representations reflect social constructions. Furthermore, this study adds the dimensions of gender performativity and discursivity through Judith Butler's theory, thus going beyond symbolic or aesthetic readings to understanding gender identity as the result of repeated social actions and expressions.

2. Knecht, R. (2021). *Shakespeare's Sonnets as Reproductive Labor*.

Knecht reads Shakespeare's sonnets with a focus on the theme of procreation, particularly the Procreation Sonnets (1–17). She views these texts not simply as advice about procreation, but as reflections on the cultural, social, and artistic work of reproduction. Her approach combines Marxist and feminist approaches, incorporating Federi'i's (2012) concept of reproductive labor, which positions reproductive work including women's roles within the family as a form of social labor that is often overlooked. The results show that these sonnets reproduce patriarchal ideology by positioning women as the medium for the continuity of the lineage and the poet's aesthetic immortality.

The relevance of Knecht's research to this study lies in uncovering the power dimension within gender relations in the texts. This study expands on these findings by highlighting how gender representations relate not only to social or reproductive functions but also to the poet's identity and self-expression, transcending heteronormative boundaries. The similarities lie in the attention to gender relations and power, while the differences lie in the focus on gender as performativity and identity as linguistic construction, placing this research within a contemporary post structural and cultural framework.

3. Wells, S. (2022). *Shakespeare and Sonnet Form*.

Wells examines the form and structure of Shakespeare's sonnet, including the quatrain, couplet, and iambic pentameter, and their role in revealing affective and gender ambiguity in the poem. This formal analysis demonstrates that poetic form is not a neutral vessel, but contributes to the shaping of meaning and the expression of the poet's identity. The approach used is a combination of Formalism and queer reading, with reference to structural theory and homoerotic discourse in the Sonnets (Barthes, 1966; Butler, 1990). The results show that the sonnet form allows Shakespeare to both disguise and express ambiguous affection for the young male figure, which can be read as a manifestation of gender identity and non-normative affection.

The relevance of Wells's research to this study lies in its foundational reading of form and language as performative means of gender. This study utilizes this idea by examining how the choice of diction, imagery, and poetic structure serve as a means of shaping the poet's identity. The similarity lies in the attention to gender and identity, while the difference is that this study combines form analysis with Butler's performativity theory and Hall's cultural identity theory, thus expanding it to the social and ideological realm, not just the formalistic one.

From the three studies above, it is concluded that studies of Shakespeare's Sonnets in the past five years have highlighted issues of gender, aesthetics, and identity from diverse perspectives: ecofeminism, Marxism, formalism, race studies, and queer theory. However,

no study has comprehensively combined the Formalism approach (Wells, 2022) with the Queer Reading approach (Sedgwick, 1990) to read Shakespeare's sonnets in a contemporary manner.

By this, this research makes novel contributions in three main aspects:

1. It combines Formalism and Queer Reading approaches with interdisciplinary gender and identity theory.
2. It reads Shakespeare's Sonnets as a performative text that shapes identity, not simply represents it.
3. It offers a reading that is more relevant to the social context and gender discourse of the 21st century.

To strengthen the international scope of this study, recent works such as Li (2025) *The Reinvention of Gender Identity in As You Like It from the Perspective of Gender* and Hamamra (2019) *Performative Utterances and Gender Performance in Shakespeare's Richard III* are incorporated. These studies reaffirm the growing relevance of queer-formal approaches in global Shakespeare scholarship and further support the novelty of integrating textual form with gender performativity in literary analysis. Li's (2025) study demonstrates how Shakespeare's plays destabilize binary notions of gender by transforming performative identity into a site of creative resistance, where linguistic play and disguise reveal the instability of fixed subject positions. Similarly, Hamamra (2019) exposes how speech acts in *Richard III* operate as performative tools that construct and deconstruct gendered authority, emphasizing the fluid intersection between language, power, and identity. Both works underscore the dialogic nature of Shakespearean language; how poetic and dramatic form not only reflects but actively produces gendered meanings. In this context, the present study extends their insights by moving beyond dramatic texts to the sonnet form, arguing that Shakespeare's lyric voice also performs identity through linguistic rhythm, metaphor, and structural ambiguity, thereby connecting the aesthetics of form to the politics of self-representation.

3. Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an orientation toward contemporary literary studies and gender identity theory, aiming to explore the meaning, representation, and construction of gender identity in Shakespeare's Sonnets. The primary data for this study are five Shakespearean sonnets: Sonnets 20, 57, 62, 18, and 55, chosen because they showcase the complex themes of love, identity, and gender expression.

These particular sonnets were selected based on their explicit linguistic and thematic engagement with gender fluidity, homoerotic affection, and the poetic negotiation of selfhood. Sonnet 20, for instance, directly addresses a gender-ambiguous master-mistress; Sonnet 57 highlights devotion and subservience that destabilize power hierarchies; Sonnet 62 centers on self-love and narcissistic reflection; Sonnet 18 idealizes beauty beyond gender boundaries; and Sonnet 55 affirms poetic immortality as a means of identity preservation. Together, they represent the most cohesive corpus within the Shakespearean sonnets that problematizes binary notions of masculinity and femininity, making them especially relevant to the study of gender performativity.

Secondary data include books, journals, scholarly articles, and critical writings on sonnets, gender theory, and contemporary literature, with primary references being Judith Butler's gender performativity and post-structural and feminist literary theories. Data

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collection was conducted through literature review, encompassing text identification, close reading, classification of symbols, diction, and meaning, and contextualization with relevant theories (Creswell & Poth, 2022; Elliott & Timulak, 2021).

Data were analyzed descriptively and interpretively in several stages: thematic analysis that identifies five main themes: Gender Representation in Sonnets; Homoerotic Desire and Power Relations; Emotional Ambiguity and Poet's Identity; Time, Transience, and the Search for Identity Eternity; and Language, Symbols, and Performativity in Identity Formation and interpretation of the meaning of the language, imagery, and structure of the sonnets, the application of Butler's theory and other contemporary thoughts, and drawing conclusions. With this procedure, the research not only examines the text formally, but also reveals how Shakespeare's Sonnets represents the dynamics of identity that are fluid, performative, and continuously negotiated through love, time, and language.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

An analysis of five sonnets by William Shakespeare (Edmonson & Wells, 2020): Sonnets 20, 57, 62, 18, 55 shows how the poet displays a complex and fluid construction of gender identity. This study emphasizes five main themes: Gender Representation in Sonnets; Homoerotic Desire and Power Relations;
Emotional Ambiguity and the Poet's Identity; Time, Transience, and the Quest for Immortality; Identity and Language; Symbols and Performativity in Identity Formation.

1. Gender Representation in Sonnets

Shakespeare's Sonnet 20 is one of the most important texts in discussing gender ambiguity in the Sonnet. In this sonnet, the poet describes the young man he admires as femininely beautiful, yet retaining masculine traits.

"A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted, / Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion." (Sonnet 20, ll. 1–2)

"Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure." (l. 14) (Edmonson & Wells, 2020).

The opening lines depict a young man with a "female" face, yet the poet refers to him as "master-mistress," a fusion of two gender identities. This expression signifies the fluidity of the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, which, according to Butler (1990), is the result of social performativity, not biological innateness.

The phrase "Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure" suggests a compromise between homoerotic desire and heterosexual norms, as Sedgwick (1985) explains in the concept of male homosocial desire. Shakespeare negotiates the space between emotional love between men and the socio-moral boundaries of his time.

Formally, this sonnet displays a play on diction and sound that emphasizes dual meanings: masculine–feminine, spiritual–physical, and public–private. Here, Shakespeare utilizes the sonnet form to explore fluid gender identities and the limitations of representing love within patriarchal norms.

Sonnet 20 showcases unstable gender constructions and opens up space for queer readings of Shakespeare's work. The poet not only worships beauty, but also questions the social structures that determine how love and desire are "allowed" to be expressed.

2. Homoerotic Desire and Power Relations

Shakespeare not only displays gender ambiguity in the Sonnet, but also highlights the power and desire relationship between the poet and the young man he praises. This

relationship reflects the poet's position as an admiring and idealizing subject, while the young man is in a dominant position both socially and emotionally.
One sonnet that powerfully represents this is Sonnet 57.

"Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?" (Sonnet 57, ll. 1–2)
"Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
When you have bid your servant once adieu." (ll. 5–6)
(Edmonson & Wells, 2020).

The opening lines explicitly position the poet as "your slave," a sign of subordination within a power relationship rife with devotion and emotional dependence. This image can be read through the lens of gender performativity theory (Butler, 1990), in which the poet "acts out" a passive and submissive identity within a social framework typically associated with the feminine.

The phrase "tend upon the hours and times of your desire" suggests that the poet awaits and adapts to the young man's desires, emphasizing the imbalance between active and passive roles. In the context of queer reading (Sedgwick, 1990), this relationship is not merely romantic but also contains social tensions between love, submission, and positions of power unconventional for male-male relationships during the Elizabethan period.

The Formalist approach (Jakobson, 1960) also reveals that the dictionaries "slave," "servant," and "desire" function as repetitive motifs that reinforce the thematic structure of sacrifice and the inequality of desire. The soft rhyme and rhythmic structure at the beginning of the quatrain shifts to a more assertive one at the end, signaling an emotional transition from submission to an awareness of the social distance between the poet and the young man.

Sonnet 57 demonstrates how Shakespeare uses metaphors of slavery and service to depict complex power relations. The poet is portrayed not only as a lover but also as a subject shackled by social status and emotions. In the context of queer theory, this suggests that love and desire in the Sonnets often transcend gender norms and social hierarchies, forming an identity that is both fluid and shackled by power.

3. Emotional Ambiguity and the Poet's Identity

Besides depicting gender ambiguity and power inequality, this sonnet also highlights the poet's emotional conflict and inner identity. Shakespeare depicts a love fraught with contradictions between admiration and guilt, between longing and rejection. This struggle marks the poet's identity crisis as a subject who loves outside of social norms.
The sonnet that best represents this aspect is Sonnet 62.

"Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,
And all my soul, and all my every part." (Sonnet 62, ll. 1–2)
"'Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days." (ll. 13–14)
(Edmonson & Wells, 2020).

The opening lines imply that the poet acknowledges the sin of narcissism, the "sin of self-love." In the final lines, he realizes that his love for the young man is actually a reflection of his love for himself: "'Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise." This statement illustrates

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the poet's identity, torn between "I" as the subject and "thou" as the ideal reflection of the idealized self.

From the perspective of the theory of subjectivity and performativity (Butler, 1990), this expression reflects how identity is formed through the repetition of desire, a repetition of desire that negotiates feelings of love, shame, and the need for social recognition. The poet not only reveals love but also struggles to understand who he is in a socially forbidden relationship.

According to Sedgwick (1990) in Epistemology of the Closet, this ambiguity is a characteristic of closed desire, a desire hidden behind poetic language. Shakespeare writes from an ambivalent space between recognition and concealment. The symmetrical and structured form of the sonnet serves as a means of "organizing" inner turmoil, indicating that the poem's structure functions as a control mechanism for emotions and identity.

From a formalist perspective (Jakobson, 1960), the three repetitions of the word "myself" in the first two lines serve to emphasize the vortex of identity trapped in self-reflection, demonstrating that the linguistic structure supports a complex psychological theme.

Sonnet 62 presents the poet's identity conflict, colored by emotional ambiguity between love for a young man and love for oneself. Desire here becomes a means of exploring existence and subjectivity. By reading this sonnet through the theories of (Butler, 1990) and Sedgwick (1990), we understand that Shakespeare wrote not only about love, but also about the search for self-identity amidst the pressures of social and gender norms.

4. Time, Transience, and the Quest for Immortality

Shakespeare wrote not only about love and beauty, but also about time as a force that destroys identity. Time is depicted as a destructive agent that erodes the body, beauty, and memories. Through this theme, the poet attempts to immortalize the young man's identity and himself through language and poetry.

One of the most representative sonnets on this theme is *Sonnet 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?")*.

"Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date." (Sonnet 18, ll. 3–4)
"But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." (ll. 9–14)
(Edmonson & Wells, 2020).

The first two lines demonstrate an awareness of the transience of time: "summer's lease hath all too short a date," emphasizing that all physical beauty and human life are transient. In the final two quatrains and the couplet, the poet expresses resistance to this destruction by stating that "thy eternal summer shall not fade."

From a formalist perspective (Jakobson, 1960), the play with the image of summer becoming eternal is a form of defamiliarization: time, which usually signifies destruction, is reinterpreted as a means of immortality through poetry. The sonnet form, with its strict and rhythmic structure, becomes a medium for "preserving" meaning and identity.

Through Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, the statement "this gives life to thee" can be read as a performative act: the poet creates a new identity for the young man

she loves through language. This identity is not biological, but rather a cultural construction that lives within the text. In this case, poetry becomes a space of resistance to mortality. Meanwhile, from Sedgwick's (1990) perspective, the declaration of love in Sonnet 18 retains a social ambiguity: the poet affirms the youth's immortality not through physical intimacy, but through literary intimacy, an intimacy secure in the realm of language, not social space. This suggests that immortality in this sonnet is not merely aesthetic, but also a form of sublimation of desire that cannot be expressed openly.

Sonnet 18 presents a paradox between transience and eternity. Time, usually the enemy of humanity, is subdued through poetic language. Shakespeare asserts that the identities of both poet and youth can live eternally in the text, not in the body. Thus, this sonnet transforms poetry into a memorial, a means of resistance to destruction, and a way to affirm an identity that is constantly changing but never disappearing.

5. Identity and Language; Symbols and Performativity in Identity Formation.

Beyond themes of love, time, and gender, Shakespeare also constructs the identity of the poet and his beloved through language and symbolism. In the Sonnets, words, metaphors, and poetic structure function not only as tools of expression but also as performative acts, language creating reality.

The sonnet that most clearly demonstrates this function is Sonnet 55. *("Not marble, nor the gilded monuments")*.

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme." (Sonnet 55, ll. 1–2)
"'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity." (ll. 9–12) (Edmonson & Wells, 2020).

The first two lines open the sonnet with a sharp contrast between matter (marble, monument) and language (rhyme). Shakespeare asserts that the power of poetic language can transcend the eternity of physical objects. In this context, language becomes a tool for shaping identity and existence, not simply a descriptive medium.

According to Butler (1990), linguistic actions that create the effect of reality are called performative acts: words not only describe but also do something. The phrase "this powerful rhyme" is a form of performative act; by writing, the poet brings to life the figure of his beloved. The identity of the young man in this sonnet is alive not because of his body, but because of the language that is continually repeated and read.

Meanwhile, Sedgwick (1990) sees the relationship between language and desire in Shakespeare's work as a form of textual intimacy, an emotional closeness that can only exist through text. The phrase "your praise shall still find room" reveals a symbolic space where identity and love can continue to exist despite the changing physical world. From a formalist perspective (Jakobson, 1960), the rhyme structure ABAB CDCD EFEF GG reinforces the function of "repetition" as a form of stabilizing meaning. The consistent rhythmic pattern makes poetic language a verbal ritual; each reading rekindles a constructed identity. Thus, Shakespeare uses poetic form as a means of linguistic immortality.

Sonnet 55 demonstrates that language is not merely a tool of representation, but a medium for the creation of identity. Through poetic performativity, the poet challenges mortality and creates symbolic immortality for the figure he admires. In the context of Butler's theory, the act of writing becomes a form of performance that affirms existence;

while in Sedgwick's framework, the poem becomes a safe space where love and identity can continue to exist without being bound by the body or time.

An analysis of Sonnets 20, 57, 62, 18, and 55 shows that Shakespeare presents a fluid and non-binary concept of identity. He rejects the masculine-feminine dichotomy and presents gender as a performative spectrum that constantly shifts according to social and emotional context.

In Sonnet 20, "the master-mistress of my passion," he demonstrates gender ambiguity and the tension between desire and social norms. Sonnets 18 and 87 depict subtle homoerotic relationships, expanding the understanding of love beyond heteronormative boundaries. Meanwhile, Sonnets 55, 57, and 62 emphasize that love, time, and language become spaces for the negotiation of identity and power.

Through these sonnets, Shakespeare demonstrates that identity is not fixed, but rather a social, emotional, and linguistic construct that is constantly being negotiated. For him, poetry becomes a space where love, time, and language intertwine, forming new meanings about humanity and existence.

Shakespeare’s Sonnets not only express the beauty of love, but also function as an ideological and aesthetic experiment that challenges gender boundaries and opens up space for a more inclusive and progressive discourse on identity in contemporary literary studies.

4.2 Discussion

The results of the analysis show that Shakespeare's Sonnets present a fluid and multifaceted gender identity, rejecting the masculine-feminine dichotomy and emphasizing gender as a performative spectrum. Gender ambiguity, power relations, emotional conflict, the transience of time, and the performativity of language intertwine to form a space for ideological and aesthetic experimentation for the poet.

The approaches of formalism, queer reading, and cultural identity help reveal how sonnets are not merely an aesthetic medium but also a means of identity negotiation within the Elizabethan social context. By linking these findings to the theories of Butler (1990), Sedgwick (1990), Federici (2012), and Hall & du Gay (1996), it is clear that Shakespeare wrote not only about love or beauty, but also about self-formation, resistance to social norms, and the ever-evolving construction of identity.

Thus, Shakespeare's sonnets can be read as a space for dialogue between gender representation, power relations, time, and language, as well as a laboratory for understanding the complexity of human identity in the contemporary context.

5. Conclusion

This study revisits Shakespeare's Sonnets from a contemporary perspective on gender identity, utilizing the approaches of Formalism (Wells, 2022) and Queer Reading (Sedgwick, 1990), as well as the support of interdisciplinary theories, including Butler (1990), Sedgwick (1990), Federici (2012), and Hall & du Gay (1996). The analysis of Sonnets 20, 57, 62, 18, and 55 shows that Shakespeare presents gender identity as a fluid, performative, and continually negotiated construction through language, symbols, and emotional relationships.

The results of the study confirm five main aspects of discussion in the selected sonnets: (1) *gender representation* in the Sonnets, which demonstrates gender ambiguity and fluidity; (2) *homoerotic desire* and *power relations*, which reveals the tension between love, subordination, and dominance in the poet's relationship with the object of praise; (3) *emotional ambiguity* and the Poet's Identity, which represents the inner conflict between

love, narcissism, and the need for social recognition; (4) *time, transience*, and the *search for identity immortality*, in which poetic language is used to confront transience and perpetuate identity through literary works; and (5) *identity and language, symbols, and performativity* in *identity formation*, which asserts that the words, metaphors, and structure of the sonnet function as performative acts that create and affirm a fluid and continually negotiated identity.

Shakespeare's Sonnets is not simply a literary work about love, but also an ideological and aesthetic experiment that challenges the boundaries of patriarchy, opens up space for more inclusive reflections on identity, and is relevant to 21st-century gender discourse.

This research makes novel contributions in three aspects: (1) *combining formalism* and *queer reading* approaches with interdisciplinary gender and identity theory; (2) *Reading Shakespeare's* Sonnets as a performative text that shapes identity, not just represents it; and (3) Offering a reading that is relevant to contemporary social contexts and gender discourses.

In practical terms, this study enriches Shakespearean scholarship by providing a model for integrating close formal analysis with the politics of identity, demonstrating how poetic structure itself performs ideological work. It also contributes to modern identity studies by showing that early modern texts can still inform current debates about gender fluidity, performativity, and the social construction of the self. Furthermore, the findings offer pedagogical and critical implications for how Shakespeare's works are taught and interpreted in multicultural and postcolonial contexts, emphasizing inclusivity and cross-cultural dialogue.

Future research could expand this interdisciplinary framework through comparative analysis, linking Shakespeare's discourse on gender and performativity to non-Western or Southeast Asian poetic traditions. Such comparative studies would highlight the universality of identity negotiation in literature while revealing the unique cultural ways in which gender and language interact across literary canons.

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THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL HUMANITIES (DH) IN BANGLADESHI LIBRARIES: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Digital Humanities (DH) in the libraries of Bangladesh, with a focus on integrating digital technologies, staff training, and enhancing the accessibility of digital resources. Given the rapid advancement of digital tools in academic environments, this research aims to assess DH implementation in libraries, identify key challenges, and suggest strategies to enhance their effectiveness and inclusivity. The study adopts both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected through two primary methods: Google Forms and interviews, with a sample size of 103 respondents. The data collected were analyzed utilizing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The study finds a mixed adoption of digital humanities (DH) tools across libraries in Bangladesh, as the use of new technology required to fully digitalize them is still uneven. While urban academic libraries have made substantial progress in digitalizing resources and offering DH-based services, rural libraries continue to face significant barriers due to limited ICT infrastructure, the digital divide, and digital literacy gaps among staff and users. The analysis reveals that the lack of structured training for librarians and insufficient funding for infrastructure development pose significant obstacles. The study also highlights that integrating DH into libraries in Bangladesh is inevitable, as it can transform libraries into digital hubs for knowledge production and dissemination. The study recommends enhancing library ICT infrastructure, reducing the digital divide to make resources accessible to all, and offering digital literacy programs for both staff and library users.

Keywords: *Bangladesh; digital divide; digital literacy; digital humanities (DH); digital resources; ICT infrastructure; librarian training; libraries.*

1. Introduction

Digital Humanities (DH) represents a transformative shift in the way libraries interact with information, research, and scholarship. In Bangladesh, this transformation is particularly crucial as the country grapples with the challenges of digitalization and access to technology. The integration of DH into libraries presents a unique opportunity to enrich academic research, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and bridge the digital divide that persists across Bangladesh. The role of libraries in this digital transformation is pivotal, especially as

they serve as key access points for both digital resources and technological expertise (Soltani & Nikou, 2020; Jaillant, 2022).

Libraries in Bangladesh have begun to embrace DH tools and methodologies, but the extent of their integration remains under active exploration and evaluation. Public libraries have shown resilience in adapting to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many turning to digital platforms to continue serving their communities (Begum et al., 2022). However, despite these advancements, significant barriers remain to fully implementing DH, including gaps in ICT infrastructure, digital literacy, and resource allocation (Islam & Roy, 2021). Additionally, the evolving needs of library users and the rapid pace of technological advancements present both opportunities and challenges for library management (Farid et al., 2023). As Bangladesh continues to digitalize, the future of DH in libraries is bright but requires a concerted effort from policymakers, librarians, and academic institutions to overcome the obstacles and capitalize on the potential of digital tools in the libraries (Rahman et al., 2024). Academic libraries are beginning to experiment with DH tools to support research, teaching, and learning (Zhang et al., 2021). However, the lack of a comprehensive strategy for integrating DH within the library's broader mission often hampers the full potential of these initiatives (Caffrey et al., 2023). In Bangladesh, the focus on digital information security, as well as the need for specialized training in DH skills for library professionals, remains critical to ensuring the sustainability of these efforts (Farid et al., 2023; Mourer, 2020). The digital divide in Bangladesh, exacerbated by socioeconomic disparities and infrastructural challenges, also affects access to DH resources in the libraries. While urban libraries may experience more rapid technological advancements, rural areas often lag, limiting the reach and effectiveness of digital tools (Aziz, 2020; Shohel et al., 2021). This divide underscores the necessity for libraries to not only adopt digital technologies but also ensure that these technologies are accessible and usable for all members of society, regardless of their location or socioeconomic status (Islam & Inan, 2021).

This article aims to evaluate the role of DH in libraries in Bangladesh by examining the current state of DH integration, identifying challenges, and proposing solutions for enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of DH initiatives. By examining various aspects of DH implementation, including infrastructure, staff training, and user accessibility, this evaluation offers a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by libraries in Bangladesh. It aims to demonstrate how libraries can utilize digital humanities (DH) to promote research, education, and preservation, while addressing the country's pressing digital inclusion challenges (Rahman et al., 2024).

More specifically, the objective of this study is to assess the current state of ICT infrastructure in libraries in Bangladesh that supports digital humanities. The study evaluates the effectiveness of librarian training programs in digital humanities (DH) tools and identifies areas for improvement. It also aims to analyze the accessibility of digital resources and barriers to equitable access in Bangladeshi libraries, examine the scope of interdisciplinary collaboration in digital humanities (DH) initiatives between libraries and scholars and finally propose strategies for the successful integration of digital humanities in libraries.

Hypothesis

H1: Increased investment in ICT infrastructure positively impacts the successful integration of digital humanities in libraries. **H2:** Enhanced training programs for librarians in DH tools significantly contribute to the successful integration of digital humanities in libraries. **H3:** Improved accessibility to digital resources leads to a higher degree of successful

integration of digital humanities in libraries. **H4:** Greater interdisciplinary collaboration between libraries and digital humanities scholars positively influences the successful integration of digital humanities into libraries.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Practices and Trends of Digital Humanities and Libraries

Digital humanities (DH) has emerged as a transformative field, reshaping traditional practices within libraries worldwide. The integration of DH methodologies into libraries has allowed for innovative approaches to knowledge organization, access, and research support. This section examines global practices and trends by focusing on specific studies that highlight the dynamic relationship between libraries and digital humanities, underscoring their objectives, methodologies, findings, and actionable recommendations.

One significant study in this context is by Currier, Mirza, and Downing (2020), which delves into the potential of librarians' project management skills in supporting DH projects. Their research aimed to investigate the effective use of these competencies in managing the inherent complexities of digital humanities (DH) initiatives. To achieve this, they employed a case study methodology and analyzed various academic libraries that have implemented DH projects. Their findings revealed that librarians possess valuable project management skills, such as organization, collaboration, and resource allocation, which are essential for handling the multifaceted nature of DH projects. However, the study also identified a significant gap: the lack of interdisciplinary training among librarians. Because DH projects often require collaboration across diverse academic disciplines, librarians need specialized training to navigate these intersections effectively. The authors recommended the development of interdisciplinary training programs to equip librarians with the necessary skills to manage and contribute meaningfully to digital humanities (DH) projects. Such programs would not only enhance the capacity of librarians but also ensure the sustainability and success of digital humanities (DH) initiatives.

Building on the theme of librarians' roles in digital humanities (DH), Mourer (2020) examined the pedagogical contributions of subject librarians in this field. The objective of this research was to investigate how subject librarians engage in teaching and supporting digital humanities (DH) tools and methodologies. Mourer conducted a narrative review of librarian practices, focusing on their involvement in educational initiatives within academic institutions. The findings of this study highlighted the crucial role that subject librarians play in disseminating DH knowledge since DH tools often involve specialized software, data visualization techniques, and coding languages, where librarians act as facilitators, bridging the gap between technical expertise and scholarly inquiry. Despite their significant contributions, the study highlighted that librarians frequently face challenges due to a lack of formal training in digital humanities (DH). This gap hinders their ability to provide comprehensive support to students and researchers. As a solution, Mourer recommended incorporating digital humanities (DH) competencies into library science curricula. Incorporating digital humanities (DH) competencies into library science curricula would equip future librarians with the necessary skills to effectively support and advance digital humanities (DH) projects.

While the role of librarians is central to the successful implementation of digital humanities (DH) projects, the tools and methodologies themselves also warrant critical evaluation. Boyd Davis, Vane, and Kräutli (2021) focused on one such tool—data visualization—and its impact on humanities research. They conducted their study to evaluate

the potential of data visualization in DH to improve research results. The methodology involved a detailed analysis of visualization tools used in various DH projects, evaluating their strengths and limitations. The findings revealed that data visualization serves as a powerful tool in humanities research because it enables scholars to uncover patterns, relationships, and insights that might not be evident through traditional methods. However, the study also identified a significant challenge: issues of trust and transparency in data visualization. Because these tools often involve complex algorithms and graphical representations, they can obscure the underlying data, leading to potential misinterpretations. This lack of transparency can undermine the credibility of research findings, particularly in a field like the humanities, where interpretation and context are paramount. To address this issue, the authors recommended enhancing the transparency of data visualization tools by incorporating clear documentation, open-source coding, and user-friendly interfaces. These measures would ensure that researchers and librarians alike can use these tools with greater confidence and accountability.

The studies by Currier et al. (2020), Mourer (2020), and Boyd Davis et al. (2021) collectively highlight key global trends in the integration of digital humanities (DH) into library practices. They highlight the critical roles librarians play as project managers, educators, and facilitators in digital humanities (DH) projects. At the same time, they draw attention to the challenges posed by a lack of interdisciplinary training and issues of transparency in digital humanities (DH) tools. These challenges necessitate targeted interventions, such as developing training programs, revising library science curricula, and enhancing the usability of digital humanities (DH) tools to ensure that libraries remain at the forefront of DH innovation.

Moreover, the interconnected themes in these studies emphasize the evolving nature of libraries in the digital age. Libraries are no longer mere repositories of knowledge; they are dynamic spaces where technology, scholarship, and interdisciplinary collaboration converge. For instance, the emphasis on interdisciplinary training for librarians reflects the broader shift toward collaborative research models in academia. For libraries to continue serving as hubs for innovation, they must adapt to these changing paradigms by investing in both human capital and technological infrastructure.

Another significant insight from these studies is the emphasis on bridging the gap between technical expertise and scholarly inquiry. These studies highlight the unique position of librarians in bridging this gap due to their dual expertise in information science and academic disciplines. This duality enables them to support researchers in navigating the complexities of DH tools while maintaining the scholarly rigor that is central to the humanities. However, as the findings of Mourer (2020) and Currier et al. (2020) suggest, this potential remains underutilized in many contexts due to gaps in training and resources. Therefore, addressing these gaps is not just a matter of professional development but also a strategic imperative for libraries seeking to remain relevant in the digital age.

2.2 Digital Humanities and Libraries: Bangladesh Background

Bangladeshi libraries are facing both unique opportunities and multiple challenges as they strive to integrate digital humanities (DH) into their operations. This section discusses studies examining the role of libraries in Bangladesh. These studies primarily examine how public libraries addressed the pandemic, the quality of library services, and the broader challenges that arise when implementing national digital policies. All of these studies

demonstrate how digital transformation, infrastructure development, and service provision collectively contribute to the library field in Bangladesh.

Begum, Roknuzzaman, and Shobhanee (2022) conducted a fascinating study on how public libraries in Bangladesh responded to the COVID-19 outbreak. The primary goal of their study was to examine how these libraries addressed the significant challenges posed by the global health crisis. The study employed qualitative interviews with library workers to reveal that libraries in Bangladesh faced significant challenges in transitioning to digital services during the pandemic. Many libraries lacked the necessary ICT infrastructure and digital tools, which made it difficult for them to meet user needs. The lack of adequate training for library staff to handle the technology demands of digital service delivery exacerbated the problem. This case highlights the importance of investing in libraries' ICT infrastructure to enable them to better handle similar problems in the future. The writers advocated for prioritizing employee training programs that emphasize digital skills. Providing library staff with the necessary skills would enhance the quality and accessibility of digital library materials, given their crucial role in service delivery.

The results of Begum et al. (2022) also highlighted a larger issue in Bangladeshi libraries: the digital divide. This divide is evident not only in the lack of technological tools but also in the fact that both library staff and users struggle to use technology effectively. In the digital age, closing these gaps is essential to ensure that everyone has equal access to information and understanding. Libraries can help close this gap in a special way because they are places where people can learn about and use technology. Therefore, significant investments in technology and human resources are necessary to achieve this goal.

In an academic setting, Alam (2021) examined the Eastern University Library's service quality and its impact on user satisfaction. In this study, the goal was to identify the factors that contribute to a positive library user experience, particularly in a school setting. The study employed a survey method to gather feedback from library users regarding their perceptions of service quality. The results showed a strong correlation between the quality of library services and user satisfaction. In particular, the study revealed that users desire quick access to digital tools, intuitive interfaces, and prompt assistance from library staff. However, the study also identified areas for improvement, including the need for improved digital tools and more personalized services. Alam suggested using digital technologies to improve customer-focused services. For example, incorporating AI-powered tools for resource discovery and virtual assistance could significantly enhance the user experience.

In the digital-first world, Alam's study highlighted the importance of ensuring that library services adapt to users' evolving needs. Academic libraries, in particular, need to take the initiative to provide better services by always improving their digital tools. Libraries should invest in technologies that facilitate access to knowledge and resources, ensuring their relevance and competitiveness. Also, tactics that focus on the user, like personalized suggestions and virtual consultations, can help libraries get to know their customers better. It is essential for college libraries in Bangladesh to consider these improvements, as they directly impact user satisfaction with the services they receive.

Aziz (2020) examined the connections between the challenges of digital transformation in Bangladesh's library sector and the broader issues of digital inclusion. This study, focusing on digital inclusion, examined the challenges in implementing the National ICT Policy in Bangladesh. The study employed a policy analysis approach to identify several significant issues, including inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy, and income disparities. Aziz discovered that these systemic issues impede the implementation of the National ICT Policy, despite its ambitious goals of digitizing the country. For example, many rural areas in Bangladesh lack the basic infrastructure necessary for a stable internet connection. This makes it more difficult to access digital tools. Similarly, the fact that most

people lack proficiency in using technology effectively makes it challenging to utilize digital tools and websites effectively.

To address these issues, Aziz suggested that policymakers should prioritize equal internet access. This entails constructing additional infrastructure in underserved areas, advocating for technology education programs, and ensuring that regulations encompass underrepresented groups. This necessitates a comprehensive approach to digital inclusion that enables libraries to thrive in the digital world. By addressing infrastructure and literacy issues, the government can equip libraries with the necessary tools to become digital change agents, facilitating access to information and knowledge for everyone in the country.

The research by Begum et al. (2022), Alam (2021), and Aziz (2020) provided a more comprehensive understanding of the digital arts and libraries in Bangladesh. They demonstrated the interconnectedness of issues related to digital adaptation, service quality, and inclusion, and offered recommendations to address these challenges. These results are crucial for the future of libraries in Bangladesh, particularly as they strive to adapt to the digital world.

One important lesson from these studies is the need to implement comprehensive changes when transitioning to digital. Libraries can't work on their own; their success relies on the infrastructure, policies, and participation of other users. Libraries require assistance from both the public and private sectors to effectively integrate digital humanities into their operations. This entails investing in technology, developing user-focused services, and establishing regulations that promote digital inclusion for all.

Additionally, it's impossible to overstate the importance of librarians in the digital age. The results of Begum et al. (2022) and Alam (2021) clearly indicated that library staff should continue learning to keep pace with the rapidly changing demands of a digital world. To build a staff that can lead the future of libraries in Bangladesh, it is important to have training programs that focus on digital skills, customer service, and new technologies.

3. Research Method

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data for this study. A total of 103 respondents participated in the survey. The participants included university teachers, students, librarians, library staff members, and experts in digital technology from three universities in Bangladesh. A simple random technique was used to select the participants, who were selected randomly, and their participation was on a voluntary basis.

Data were collected through Google Forms and interviews. Quantitative data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire survey, and qualitative data were gathered through one-on-one interviews. A structured questionnaire was developed based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" for the quantitative method.

Variable	Questions	Source
ICT Infrastructure Investment (III)	Libraries have sufficient ICT infrastructure to support digital humanities initiatives.	Begum, R., & Shobhanee (2022)
	High-speed internet access is consistently available in my library for DH projects.	Habiba & Ahmed (2020)
	Libraries receive adequate funding for the maintenance and upgrading of digital infrastructure.	Alam, H., & Ogawa (2023)
	Collaborative partnerships enhance ICT infrastructure in libraries.	Aziz (2020)
	ICT infrastructure in libraries has significantly improved during the last five years.	Shohel et al. (2021)
Librarian Training	Librarians in my institution are well-trained in	Mourer (2020)

in DH Tools (LTDT)	using digital humanities tools.	
	Regular workshops are held to improve librarians' skills in DH methodologies.	Currier, Mirza, & Downing (2020)
	Librarians are confident in curating and managing digital data using DH tools.	Caffrey et al. (2023)
	Training programs in DH tools adequately meet current technological demands.	Zhang, Su, & Hubschman (2021)
	DH training has positively impacted the quality of library services.	Farid, Warraich, & Iftikhar (2023)
Digital Resource Accessibility (DRA)	All users can easily access digital resources provided by the library.	Soltani & Nikou (2020)
	Libraries provide equitable access to digital resources for rural and urban users alike.	Islam & Inan (2021)
	User-friendly platforms are available to facilitate access to digital resources.	Rodríguez & Pulido-Montes (2022)
	Digital resources meet the academic and research needs of users.	Alam (2021)
	Efforts are made to ensure users are aware of available digital resources.	Rouf et al. (2024)
Interdisciplinary Collaboration (IC)	Libraries collaborate with scholars from multiple disciplines on DH projects.	Jaillant (2022)
	Collaborative projects between libraries and academic departments are common.	Das & Banerjee (2021)
	Libraries provide platforms for interdisciplinary research and DH tool usage.	Ikenwe & Udem (2022)
	Interdisciplinary collaboration enhances the overall impact of library research services.	Farid, W., & Iftikhar (2023)
	Libraries host events that encourage cross-disciplinary engagement in DH initiatives.	Deja, Rak, & Bell (2021)
Successful Integration of DH (SIDHL)	My library effectively integrates digital humanities into its core services.	Boyd Davis, Vane, & Kräutli (2021)
	Users are satisfied with the library's digital humanities services.	Alam (2021)
	DH integration in libraries enhances users' academic research experiences.	Caffrey et al. (2023)
	The integration of DH has increased the library's overall usage.	Shohel et al. (2021)
	The library's DH integration is recognised as successful by institutional stakeholders.	Alam, H., & Ogawa (2023)

3.1 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Smart PLS 4 for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM was chosen to analyze the relationships between the dependent variable (Successful Integration of Digital Humanities in Libraries (SIDHL)) and the four independent variables (ICT Infrastructure Investment (III), Librarian Training in DH Tools (LTDT), Digital Resource Accessibility (DRA), and Interdisciplinary Collaboration (IC). This method enabled the examination of the direct and indirect effects of these variables on the integration of DH in libraries.

Table 1
Factors Loading with Communality and Redundancy, Convergent Validity and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Communality	Redundancy (P-value)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
SIDHL					0.86
	SIDHL1	0.72	0.65	0.02	
	SIDHL2	0.86	0.65	0.05	
	SIDHL3	0.78	0.69	0.01	
	SIDHL4	0.89	0.69	0.03	
	SIDHL5	0.86	0.62	0.02	
IC					0.71
	IC1	0.82	0.57	0.00	
	IC2	0.78	0.69	0.00	
	IC3	0.89	0.56	0.00	
	IC4	0.84	0.63	0.00	
	IC5	0.76	0.65	0.00	
DRA					0.70
	DRA1	0.74	0.65	0.00	
	DRA2	0.85	0.58	0.00	
	DRA3	0.84	0.53	0.00	
	DRA4	0.89	0.63	0.00	
	DRA5	0.80	0.65	0.00	
LTDT					0.82
	LTDT1	0.78	0.68	0.00	
	LTDT5	0.82	0.59	0.00	
	LTDT3	0.78	0.69	0.00	
	LTDT4	0.78	0.57	0.00	
	LTDT5	0.73	0.63	0.00	
III					0.78
	III1	0.81	0.54	0.00	
	III2	0.78	0.63	0.00	
	III3	0.74	0.65	0.00	
	III4	0.81	0.54	0.01	
	III5	0.79	0.63	0.01	

- Communality values above 0.5 indicate inclusion in factor analysis. All values exceed 0.5.
- Factor loadings >0.7 indicate sufficient variance extraction. All factor loading scores are >0.7.
- P-values <0.05 indicate statistical significance. All p-values are <0.05.
- AVE scores >0.5 ensure adequate convergence. All AVE scores exceed 0.5.

Table 2
Reliability and Convergent Validity

Item	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability rho(A)	Composite Reliability rho(C)	VIF
SIDHL	0.75	0.74	0.81	1.91
IC	0.71	0.76	0.83	1.46
DRA	0.73	0.83	0.75	1.09

LTDT	0.78	0.85	0.76	1.21
III	0.86	0.74	0.77	1.9
Optimum Values	>.7	>.7	>.7	<5

Table 2 shows that all variables meet the criteria: Cronbach's α, Composite Reliability rho(A), and rho(C) are all >0.7, and VIF is less than 5. VIF values below 5 indicate no significant multicollinearity.

Table 3
Outer Model –Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion: Correlation matrix of Constructs and Square Root of AVE (in Bold)

	SIDHL	IC	DRA	LTDT	III
SIDHL	**0.78**	-	-		
IC	0.68	**0.78**	-		
DRA	0.34	0.38	**0.78**		
LTDT	0.52	0.61	0.21	**0.75**	
III	0.36	0.41	0.28	0.18	**0.58**

The Fornell-Larcker criterion checks discriminant validity by ensuring the square root of a construct's average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than its correlation with any other construct. In this study, all constructs meet this criterion, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 4
Cross-loading Analysis

	SIDHL	IC	DRA	LTDT	III
SIDHL1	0.76	0.58	0.08	0.03	0.08
SIDHL2	0.76	0.59	0.08	0.13	0.32
SIDHL3	0.81	0.58	0.12	0.23	0.16
SIDHL4	0.65	0.49	0.32	0.16	0.15
SIDHL5	0.62	0.32	0.13	0.18	0.41
IC1	0.59	0.89	0.25	0.25	0.23
IC2	0.46	0.74	0.04	0.35	0.14
IC3	0.52	0.80	0.01	0.45	0.23
IC4	0.40	0.68	0.01	0.30	0.32
IC5	0.36	0.75	0.03	0.19	0.54
DRA1	0.25	0.49	0.62	0.20	0.20
DRA2	0.14	0.57	0.74	0.13	0.16
DRA3	0.07	0.04	0.71	0.31	0.00
DRA4	0.07	0.04	0.88	0.24	0.11
DRA5	0.09	0.06	0.83	0.30	0.48
LTDT1	0.03	0.05	0.56	0.65	0.32
LTDT5	0.04	0.03	0.22	0.84	0.17
LTDT3	0.31	0.45	0.21	0.74	0.30
LTDT4	0.23	0.41	0.22	0.76	0.17
LTDT5	0.35	0.32	0.33	0.89	0.23
III1	0.15	0.32	0.02	0.45	0.86
III2	0.21	0.56	0.05	0.32	0.78
III3	0.16	0.34	0.31	0.01	0.69
III4	0.25	0.10	0.27	0.30	0.60
III5	0.34	0.30	0.14	0.17	0.80

Gefen and Straub (2005) state that discriminant validity is achieved when items correlate weakly with other constructs, except their own. Reflective relationships, known as loadings, should be high within the same construct and low across different constructs. Table 3 confirms high within-construct loadings and weak cross-construct correlations, validating the outer model for cross-loading analysis.

Table 5
Outer Model –Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio), Threshold: HTMT<0.9

	SIDHL	IC	DRA	LTDT	III
SIDHL				-	-
IC	0.56				-
DRA	0.05	0.53			
LTDT	0.14	0.18	0.47		
III	0.11	0.14	0.65	0.20	

According to Franke & Sarstedt (2019), if the HTMT value is significantly below the critical value of 0.9, it establishes discriminant validity. Here we can see that the value is below 0.9. So, the model is valid and established.

Table 6
Inner Model; Path Coefficients of the Tested Model & Hypothesis Testing and Structural Model Evaluation

Hyp	Relationship	B	Mean	Std. Dev	R2	Q2	f2	t-statistic	sig.
H	IC→SIDHL	0.31	0.41	0.1	0.54	0.00	0.74	0.72	0.02**
H2	DRA→SIDHL	0.21	0.65	0.05	0.55	0.03	0.68	0.82	0.00**
H3	LTDT→SIDHL	0.24	0.47	0.01	0.54	0.02	0.57	0.76	0.00**
H4	III→SIDHL	0.28	0.73	0.02	0.54	0.00	0.36	0.75	0.00***

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; n.s= not significant; (two-tailed test). R = Rejected; (A) = Accepted.

- Beta coefficients (B) estimate path relationships in the structural model, indicating consistency across items. The cutoff value for B is >0.20, and all values in Table 6 meet this threshold.
- R Square (R2) explains variance in endogenous variables due to exogenous variables. Values of 0.42, 0.51, 0.535, and 0.537 are moderate, aligning with Cohen's and Chin's benchmarks.
- Q-square (Q2) measures predictive relevance, with all values above zero indicating good model fit.
- F-Square (f2) assesses the effect size when removing an exogenous variable. Values of 0.74, 0.68, 0.57, and 0.369 indicate a significant effect, per Cohen's benchmarks.

Table 7
Goodness-of-fit Indicators

Fit indices	Structural model value	Recommended value	References
Gfi	0.94	> .90	Hair et al. (2010)
Agfi	0.96	> .80	Hu and Bentler (1999)
Nfi	0.94	> .90	Hu and Bentler (1999)
Cfi	0.97	> .90	Bentler and Bonett (1980)
Rmsea	0.02	< .08	Hu and Bentler (1999)
Srmr	0.06	< .07	Hu and Bentler'(1999)

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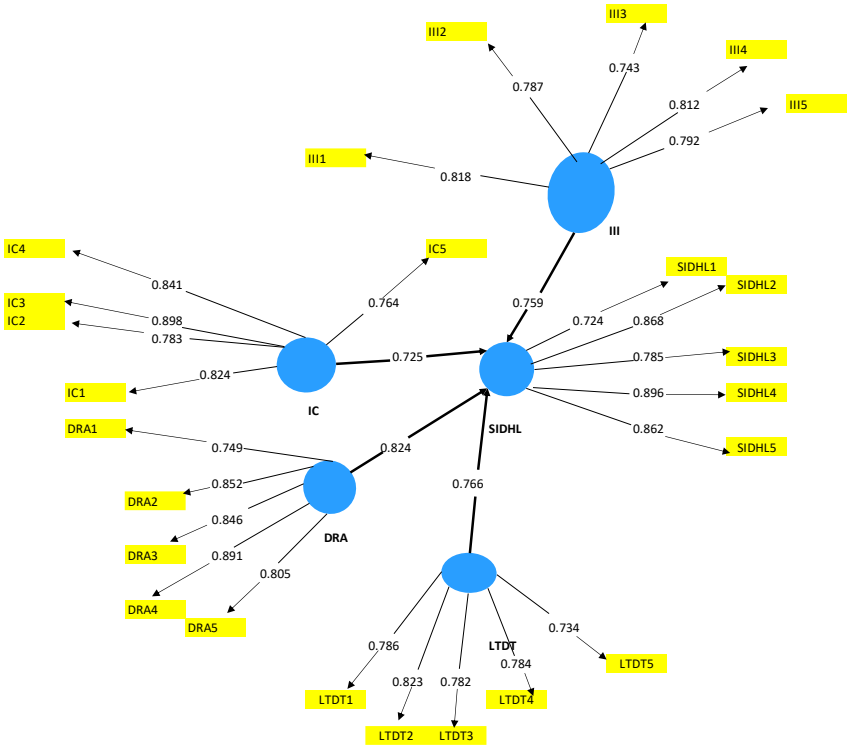
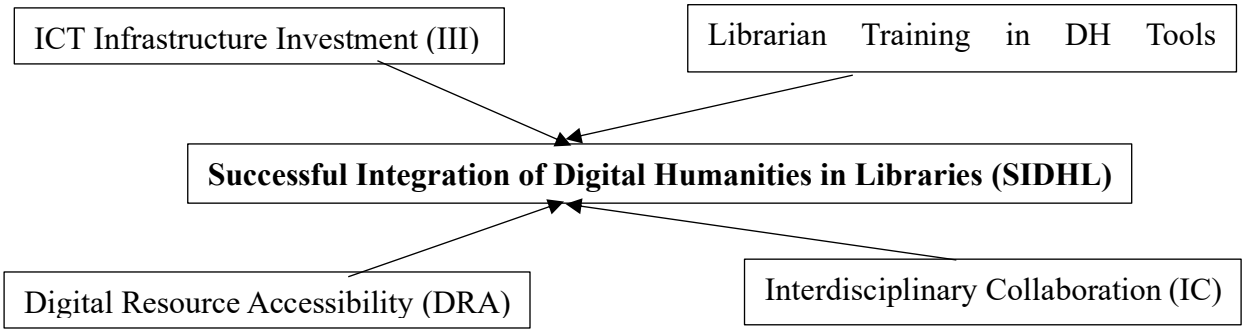
- Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI): The Value 0.949, which is higher than the suggested value of 0.90, indicates a strong fit between the model and observed data.
- Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) Value 0.967 is higher than the suggested value of 0.80, which reflects a good fit, considering adjustments for the number of parameters.
- Normed Fit Index (NFI) Value 0.964 shows a value Higher than the suggested value of 0.943, indicating a high level of fit between the model and data.
- The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) Value is 0.975, which is greater than the recommended value of 0.90, suggesting a reasonable fit between the model and the observed data.
- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) Value 0.021 is under the advised value of 0.08, demonstrating a satisfactory match between the model and data.
- Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) Value is 0.066, clearly meets the suggested value of 0.07, and indicates a good fit for the structural model.

Figure 2
Bootstrap model



3.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



3.2.1 ICT Infrastructure Investment (III)

The crucial role of ICT infrastructure in advancing digital humanities underscores its importance in library settings. As libraries strive to meet modern digital demands, it has become evident that without reliable ICT systems, their capacity to innovate is severely limited. The findings of Begum et al. (2022) highlight that the challenges faced during the pandemic were largely due to these infrastructural deficiencies, further reinforcing the need for targeted investments in technology to facilitate successful digital integration.

3.2.2 Librarian Training in DH Tools (LTDT)

Specialized training programs for librarians are crucial to enhance their capabilities in digital humanities (DH) projects. Although librarians generally possess solid project management skills, a lack of proficiency in digital humanities (DH) tools can hinder their contributions (Currier, Mirza, & Downing, 2020). By implementing targeted training initiatives, libraries can better support DH endeavors and empower their staff to take on more significant roles within these projects (Currier et al., 2020).

3.2.3 Digital Resource Accessibility (DRA)

Access to digital resources is crucial for reducing digital inequalities and enabling libraries to participate in digital humanities (DH) initiatives. Aziz (2020) highlighted barriers, including infrastructure gaps and digital literacy, which limit equitable access. Ensuring accessibility promotes inclusivity and strengthens the overall success of DH integration.

4.2.4 Interdisciplinary Collaboration (IC)

Interdisciplinary collaboration significantly enhances the integration of digital humanities (DH) methodologies in academic libraries. This partnership not only fosters innovation but also leads to the development of more effective digital information management policies (Farid et al., 2023). As noted by Farid, Warraich, and Iftikhar, such collaborations are crucial for establishing sustainable practices within academic institutions, underscoring the need for ongoing dialogue between libraries and digital humanities (DH) scholars (Farid et al., 2023).

4.2.5 Successful Integration of Digital Humanities in Libraries (SIDHL)

The successful integration of digital humanities in libraries highlights the importance of infrastructure, training, accessibility, and collaboration. Boyd Davis et al. (2021) indicated that the effectiveness of digital humanities depends on transparency, trust, and skilled tool use, emphasising its reliance on various independent factors.

4. Discussions

4.1 ICT Infrastructure Investment (ICT)

Libraries in Bangladesh are still not well-equipped with digital technology, which is one of the main challenges, though they serve their communities by embracing new technologies that truly enrich the user experience. With a robust ICT infrastructure, they enable enhanced accessibility to digital archives, interactive resources, and powerful data analytics tools. Investing in up-to-date infrastructure is crucial, as it enables libraries to meet the diverse needs of all their users, making information more accessible and engaging than ever. Policymakers should prioritize investment in modern ICT infrastructure, which serves as the backbone for any DH initiative (Habiba & Ahmed, 2020). Libraries need high-speed

internet, servers, and advanced computing tools to support the management and accessibility of digital resources (Begum et al., 2022). Given that Bangladesh faces a digital divide, it is essential to ensure equitable access to these technologies across libraries, especially in rural and underserved areas (Islam & Roy, 2021).

4.2. Librarian Training in DH Tools (LTDT)

In the current scenario, Librarians, staff, and users are still digital immigrants and digital naïve. Librarians are at the heart of making digital humanities more engaging and effective. By attending specialized training programs, they can gain the skills they need to navigate various digital tools confidently. This not only empowers them to assist others in their digital research journeys but also helps in curating meaningful collections that spark curiosity. With their expertise, librarians can create a vibrant space for digital scholarship that enriches everyone involved. A key administrative task is to ensure that library staff, particularly librarians, receive adequate training in the tools and methodologies of digital humanities (DH). Librarians are not only responsible for managing collections but also for fostering new research approaches (Currier et al., 2020). Training programs on digital literacy, data management, and project management specific to DH are essential (Zhang et al., 2021). This enables them to guide users effectively and maintain the quality of digital resources (Hossain, 2021).

4.3. Digital Resource Accessibility (DRA)

Librarians play a pivotal role in fostering an engaging environment for digital scholarship, benefiting all participants. Most libraries in Bangladesh lack digital resources due to budget constraints. On the other hand, Access to digital resources is crucial for the success of digital humanities initiatives. Libraries must tackle challenges that hinder access, such as inconsistent internet services, complex digital tools, and the need for diverse language options, so that everyone, especially those from underrepresented communities, can fully engage with these valuable resources. Ensuring that digital resources are accessible to all users, including those with limited digital literacy or restricted internet access, is crucial for the success of DH projects (Farid et al., 2023). Libraries should adopt user-centric designs for digital platforms to facilitate simple navigation (Rahman et al., 2024). Moreover, efforts to make digital resources available in local languages can overcome linguistic barriers and promote inclusivity (Aziz, 2020).

4.4. Interdisciplinary Collaboration (IC)

It's essential for everyone, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, to have the chance to engage with invaluable resources. Libraries play a crucial role in this endeavor by bringing together different academic disciplines. By partnering with researchers, technologists, and policymakers, libraries can initiate interdisciplinary projects that challenge conventional humanities research. These collaborations not only enhance the research environment but also pave the way for exciting innovations in Bangladesh. DH thrives in an interdisciplinary environment. The administration should foster collaborations among library staff, academic researchers, and technology experts to enhance research capabilities and broaden the scope of DH initiatives (Alam, 2021). Such collaborations can lead to the creation of innovative digital platforms that serve both educational and research needs (Jaillant, 2022). Furthermore, partnerships with international institutions can help local libraries stay current with global digital humanities (DH) trends (Deja et al., 2021).

4.5. Successful Integration of Digital Humanities in Libraries (SIDHL)

When libraries effectively weave digital humanities into their fabric, they create vibrant spaces that foster creativity and collaboration. This synergy not only enhances user engagement with digital materials but also creates opportunities for groundbreaking research. Therefore, to implement DH in Libraries of Bangladesh, the concerned authorities and policymakers should ensure that libraries are well equipped with technology, staff are digitally literate, and updated digital resources are available.

4.6. Administrative Implications

Integrating Digital Humanities into libraries in Bangladesh can significantly transform the landscape for both academic and public institutions. For administrators, looking to make this shift successful and sustainable, it's important to focus on a few key factors. They should consider digitizing and digitalizing the library with tech tools and resources, training staff to make them digitally literate, engaging with the community, and continuously evaluating the impact of these initiatives to create a vibrant and relevant learning environment. Balancing innovation with tradition will be essential for thriving in this new digital landscape.

4.7. Sustainability of DH Programs

Sustainability remains a key concern for the long-term success of digital humanities (DH) programs in libraries. Authorities should secure continuous funding and institutional support for DH projects (Soltani & Nikou, 2020). This could involve lobbying for government support, seeking donor funding, or establishing partnerships with the private sector (Caffrey et al., 2023). Furthermore, library managers should continuously assess the evolving needs of users to ensure that digital services remain relevant and effective (Mourer, 2020).

5. Conclusion

Integrating Digital Humanities (DH) into libraries in Bangladesh can significantly transform the current library landscape for students, academics, and researchers, and can serve as a hub for knowledge production and dissemination. However, the study reveals that the path to a successful DH integration in Bangladeshi libraries is complex but achievable. The role of DH in libraries across Bangladesh is both critical and transformative, and its implementation faces numerous challenges. Successful integration requires a robust ICT infrastructure, skilled librarians, collaborative efforts across disciplines, and inclusive access to digital resources. As Bangladesh transitions to a more digital society, libraries must continue to evolve to meet the growing demands of digital scholarship. To be fully digitised, it is imperative to ensure that libraries are equipped, supported, and responsive to the changing landscape of information and technology. The study focuses on creating a holistic, well-supported ecosystem for DH that considers both technological and human aspects of transformation (Rahman et al., 2024). A strategic approach to investment, training, collaboration, and sustainability will position Bangladeshi libraries as leading institutions in the global digital humanities movement (Shohel et al., 2021; Hossain, 2021). By addressing these issues, libraries in Bangladesh can navigate the challenges of digital transformation and foster environments that promote innovation, inclusivity, and scholarly advancement (Farid et al., 2023). The collaborative efforts of library staff, policymakers, academic researchers, and technology experts will be key to ensuring the sustained growth of Digital Humanities in the libraries of Bangladesh.

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LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS IN THE *BASARANG* RITUAL: A CULTURAL-LINGUISTIC STUDY OF MINANGKABAU ORAL TRADITION

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Abstract

Language serves as a vital medium in oral traditions—not only for communication but also as a vehicle for transmitting values and reinforcing collective identity. The *Basarang* ritual in Nagari Kasang, Minangkabau, is a traditional ceremony performed to commemorate the birth of *kembar sumbang* (twins of opposite sex) and to restore social and cultural harmony within the community. Despite its cultural richness, linguistic studies on *Basarang* remain scarce compared to other Minangkabau traditions. This research investigates the functions of language in the *Basarang* ritual through Roman Jakobson's (1960) model of language functions, employing a qualitative framework and an ethnography of communication approach (Spradley, 1997; Duranti, 1997). Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of ritual utterances, *mamang* (chants), *pantun* (poetic verses), and prayers. The analysis categorizes linguistic expressions according to Jakobson's six language functions—referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic—allowing systematic interpretation of their realization in ritual discourse. Findings reveal that language in *Basarang* functions not merely as a communicative tool but as a symbolic medium that legitimizes customary law, nurtures social solidarity, and transmits moral and cultural values. This study extends Jakobson's framework by embedding it within the ethnolinguistic context of Minangkabau ritual discourse, offering contributions to both linguistic theory and cultural preservation.

Keywords: *anthropolinguistics; Basarang; language functions; Minangkabau oral tradition; ritual discourse*

1. Introduction

Language plays a pivotal role in human life, functioning not only as a tool of communication but also as a medium for transmitting values and reinforcing collective identity within a community (Olateju et al. 2024). Through language, knowledge systems, norms, and beliefs are transmitted across generations, fostering social cohesion and cultural continuity. In many societies, language serves as more than a vehicle for conveying messages; it operates as a symbolic resource that binds individuals and sustains social

structures. Thus, every cultural tradition can be viewed as a patterned form of communication embedded with symbolic and moral meanings (Syahbana, 2024).

In the oral tradition of the Minangkabau, language occupies a central position as the principal medium through which customary law and social values are expressed. Forms of verbal art such as pantun (poetic verses), pepatah-petitih (proverbs), mamang (ritual chants), prayers, and ritual speeches serve not merely as aesthetic expressions but also as instruments of moral education and cultural transmission. These oral genres function as channels for conveying customary values, reinforcing kinship solidarity, and affirming collective identity (Hasanuddin, Emidar, & Zulfadhli, 2021). Consequently, oral tradition is not simply linguistic performance but a manifestation of living cultural knowledge.

The interconnectedness between ritual practice, social symbolism, and linguistic performance is particularly evident in Minangkabau ceremonial life (Awan, Ayu, & Syamsir. (2023). Each ritual stage is infused with utterances that serve both communicative and legitimizing functions. Through ritual language, ethical principles, social norms, and spiritual values are continually reproduced and reaffirmed. As such, Minangkabau rituals constitute communicative arenas in which language fulfills a dual role: mediating interpersonal relationships and reinforcing collective norms.

One such ritual is *Basarang*, practiced in Nagari Kasang, a ceremony performed in response to the birth of *kembar sumbang*—twins of opposite sexes. Within local belief, such a birth carries symbolic implications requiring ritual purification to restore social and spiritual balance. As Karmila & Sari (2021) note, extraordinary births in Minangkabau are often accompanied by ritualized speech acts, as language is perceived to hold symbolic power capable of reestablishing equilibrium between individuals, society, and the divine.

Etymologically, *Basarang* refers to a ritual encounter between the *induk bako* (maternal relatives) and the mother's family to conduct a customary purification ceremony. The ritual involves the performance of prayers, *mamang*, *pantun*, and *pepatah-petitih*, each imbued with metaphorical meaning. These utterances not only serve ceremonial purposes but also reaffirm moral order and cultural identity. As Duranti (1997) argues, linguistic practices within oral traditions mirror the social and moral systems of the communities that produce them. Hence, *Basarang* functions simultaneously as a spiritual medium for resolving *sumbang* status and as a social mechanism that reinforces kinship solidarity and cultural cohesion.

The symbolic and sociocultural significance of *Basarang* is deeply embedded in its ritual language, which is rich in metaphors, proverbs, and customary symbols. These forms of expression articulate Minangkabau worldviews regarding human relationships with God, nature, and society. As Althafullayya & Akbar (2023)emphasizes, ritual speech in Minangkabau ceremonies serves as a pedagogical instrument for moral and cultural education, transmitting ethical and religious values to younger generations. Accordingly, *Basarang* operates both as a vehicle of cultural transmission and as a mechanism for maintaining social harmony.

Within the broader framework of Minangkabau customary law, *Basarang* plays an essential role in resolving the *sumbang* status. Neglecting this ritual is believed to disturb social and spiritual balance within the kinship network. Hence, *Basarang* serves as a symbolic act of customary legitimation intended to restore harmony and uphold familial honor. As Karmila & Sari (2021) assert, "Minangkabau rituals function not merely as ceremonial performances but as symbolic systems that sustain social order." This

demonstrates how Minangkabau culture integrates moral, social, and spiritual dimensions into a cohesive worldview.

While extensive studies have examined language functions in major Minangkabau rituals—such as *batagak panghulu* (chieftain installation), *malam bainai* (pre-wedding purification), and wedding ceremonies Nurmailisa et al. (2024) research specifically focusing on *Basarang* remains scarce. Scholarly documentation of this ritual, particularly its linguistic dimension encompassing *pantun*, *mamang*, prayers, and *pepatah-petitih*, is still limited. Yet these utterances are linguistically rich and symbolically profound, offering valuable insight into the communicative and semiotic dimensions of Minangkabau ritual language.

This paucity of research leaves a significant gap in the anthropolinguistic understanding of Minangkabau ritual discourse. As Duranti (1997) emphasize, linguistic practices in specific ritual contexts reveal culturally distinctive communicative functions that resist generalization. Therefore, an in-depth study of the *Basarang* ritual through the lens of Roman Jakobson's (1960) theory of language functions is crucial for elucidating how language operates as both a communicative and symbolic force in ritual life. By applying Jakobson's framework, this study seeks to demonstrate that the linguistic forms employed in *Basarang* simultaneously encode referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions—each contributing to the maintenance of cultural order and the preservation of Minangkabau heritage in a modernizing world.

2. Literature Review

The theory of language functions proposed by Jakobson (1960) provides a comprehensive foundation for analyzing human communication in both everyday and ritual contexts. Jakobson identifies six functions of language: the referential function, which conveys information about context or reality; the emotive function, which expresses the speaker's feelings or attitudes; the conative function, which is directed toward the addressee to influence or persuade; the phatic function, which serves to establish and maintain communicative channels; the metalingual function, which clarifies the meaning or use of language itself; and the poetic function, which foregrounds the aesthetic and formal aspects of speech. These six functions operate simultaneously in communicative acts, creating a multifaceted interaction between message, context, and participants. As (Yule, 2017) notes, linguistic exchanges rarely exhibit a single function in isolation, as multiple communicative purposes often overlap within one utterance.

In line with this perspective, Duranti (1997) emphasizes that language, when situated in cultural practice, functions not merely as a tool of communication but also as a symbolic system that maintains social identity, hierarchy, and collective cohesion. This aligns with Jakobson's notion that linguistic functions intertwine to perform both informational and symbolic roles, particularly in oral and ritual discourse. More recent scholarship further supports this idea (Kádár & House, 2020), in Language & Communication, highlight that ritual communication is characterized by performative mimesis and framing processes that sustain collective participation and shared symbolic meaning. Their findings reinforce the applicability of Jakobson's multifunctional model to ritual contexts, where language operates as both performative action and cultural signifier.

Within the Minangkabau cultural setting, the relevance of this theoretical framework becomes evident. Oral traditions such as *pepatah-petitih* (proverbs), *pantun* (poetic verses),

mamang (ritual chants), prayers, and ritual speeches not only convey messages but also encode customary values and moral teachings. Sibarani (2012) asserts that oral tradition serves as an effective means of transmitting cultural knowledge across generations, while Santana et al., (2025) identifies it as a vital component of the customary system that maintains social equilibrium. Similarly, Karmila & Sari (2021) show that ritual utterances in the *Malam Bainai* ceremony embody communicative, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions that reinforce collective identity.

By applying Jakobson's framework, the present study examines how the six language functions are realized in the *Basarang* ritual, a traditional Minangkabau ceremony addressing the birth of kembar sumbang (twins of opposite sexes). This theoretical model enables a systematic analysis of how language operates not only as a communicative medium but also as a cultural mechanism that legitimizes custom, strengthens kinship solidarity, and transmits moral and spiritual values within Minangkabau society.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with a linguistic ethnographic perspective, as the focus of analysis lies in understanding language use within its cultural and ritual context. According to Spradley (1979) ethnographic research aims to uncover the meanings of behavior, language, and interaction as understood by members of a specific cultural community. In a similar vein, Duranti (1997) emphasizes that linguistic ethnography positions language as the primary gateway to comprehending the social and symbolic structures of a community.

The research was conducted between January and June 2025 in Nagari Kasang, Pariaman Regency, West Sumatra, a region where the *Basarang* ritual is still actively performed to maintain customary balance (keseimbangan adat). The primary data consisted of ritual utterances in the form of pantun (poetic verses), mamang (ritual chants), prayers, and pepatah-petitih (proverbs) performed during the *Basarang* ceremony. The secondary data included ethnographic field notes, audio recordings, photographs, and written documentation from local customary archives.

The study involved ten informants who were selected purposively based on their active participation and cultural knowledge of the ritual. These participants included two traditional leaders (*tua adat*), two *ninik mamak* (clan leaders), two *induk bako* (maternal relatives), and four community members who regularly engage in the Basarang ceremony. Data collection employed several complementary qualitative techniques. Participant observation allowed the researcher to attend the Basarang ceremony directly and record speech events in their natural contexts Spradley (1979). n-depth interviews were conducted with key cultural figures to explore the symbolic and pragmatic meanings underlying ritual language use. Meanwhile, audio recordings and verbatim transcriptions ensured accurate documentation of the linguistic forms and interactional sequences within the ceremony. Data saturation was reached when no new linguistic or thematic patterns emerged from additional observations and interviews.

Data were analyzed using Jakobson's (1960) model of language functions, which includes referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions. The analytical process consisted of three sequential stages: identification of ritual utterances and classification into linguistic units such as clauses, lines, and stanzas; coding of each utterance according to Jakobson's six functions using a coding matrix, in which multiple coders were

involved to ensure inter-coder reliability that reached an agreement level above 85%; and interpretation of each function's cultural meaning within the socio-ritual framework of Minangkabau society, supported by contextual ethnographic data.

To ensure credibility and dependability, the study applied both data triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing observations, interviews, and recordings from different occasions and perspectives Moleong (2002). Confirmability was enhanced through peer debriefing and coder validation, ensuring analytical transparency. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process, with informed consent obtained from all participants, and cultural sensitivity maintained by consulting local customary authorities before conducting documentation and dissemination.

4. Results and Discussion

The *Basarang* tradition of the Minangkabau community, particularly in Nagari Kasang, represents a culturally embedded communicative system in which language functions as both a symbolic and social medium. The ritual is characterized by a rich use of adat utterances, pantun (poetic verses), mamang (ritual chants), and prayers that collectively construct a coherent ritual discourse. Based on the data collected, all six of Jakobson's language functions were identified, each interacting dynamically to create meaning within the ritual. These functions (referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic) do not appear in isolation but overlap in performance, reflecting the multilayered nature of ritual communication (Duranti, 1997).

4.1 Referential Function

According to Jakobson (1960), the referential function centers on the delivery of factual or descriptive information. In *Basarang*, this function emerges in utterances that introduce identities, clarify intentions, or explain the ritual's background.

> "Kami datang dari pihak bako, ka manjapuik batino nan malaian anak kamba."
> *We come as the maternal relatives, to bring the mother who has given birth to twins.*

This statement from the *induak bako* (maternal relatives) establishes identity and purpose, grounding the interaction in social context. Another utterance extends this function by embedding cultural meaning:

> "Anak nan duo, ciek kilaki ciek padusi… Kalahiran sumbang, kaba nan sampai, kaba nan barasiah."
> *Two children, one male and one female… A taboo birth, yet the news delivered purified news.*

Here, language conveys not only factual information but also the symbolic reinterpretation of *kembar sumbang* (mixed-gender twins), transforming what is culturally taboo into an event of restored harmony. Thus, the referential function in *Basarang* acts as an ethnolinguistic mechanism for transmitting socio-cultural knowledge and legitimizing communal understanding Karmila & Sari (2021).

4.2 Emotive Function

The emotive function emphasizes the speaker's attitudes, feelings, and emotional stance. In *Basarang*, emotive utterances establish sincerity, solidarity, and moral legitimacy. For instance:

> "Kami tibo mambaok doa, mambaok harapan, mambaok raso jo hati nan ikhlas."
> *We arrive bearing prayers, hopes, and a sincerity of heart and feeling.*

Through repetition (*mambaok* / bringing), the utterance conveys both rhetorical emphasis and emotional sincerity. Another example illustrates receptivity and respect:

> "Kami terimo ka nia nan suci, ka maksud nan basilang kayu. Ka siriah kami sambut, ka batino kami tampuang. *Basarang*lah awak kini, manantang marwah, mamulihkan nan barumuih. Anak nan duo, alah jadi anak nagari, anak mamak, anak bako, dipangku adat, ditarimo Allah."
> *We receive this sacred intention, with purposes intertwined like crossing wood. With betel leaves we extend our welcome, with our daughters we offer acceptance. Now the Basarang ritual begins, affirming honor and restoring what has been stained. These two children are henceforth acknowledged as children of the nagari, of the maternal uncles, and of the maternal lineage, embraced by adat and accepted by God.*

This emotionally charged expression highlights the ritual's role in reestablishing moral order and communal empathy, embodying the Minangkabau ideal of *budi nan luhur* (noble character). As Althafullayya & Akbar (2023) argues, the emotive function personalizes symbolic acts, enabling participants to internalize the spiritual and social significance of the event.

4.3 Conative Function

The conative function focuses on influencing the addressee's behavior through requests, invitations, or permissions. In *Basarang*, this function is expressed in polite and respectful language. For example:

> *"Sila, urang tuo, ka dalam."*
> Please, elders, come inside.

This invitation reflects social deference, while another utterance displays closure etiquette:

> "Kami minta izin, manuju ka rumah, mambaliak badantiang."
> *We request permission to return home, to turn back to our place.*

Such utterances perform both pragmatic and cultural work, ensuring interaction aligns with *tata krama* (customary decorum). This resonates with Minangkabau communicative ethics, where linguistic politeness signifies social Karmila & Sari (2021)

4.4 Phatic Function

The phatic function maintains or reaffirms the communicative channel. In *Basarang*, greetings, responses, and closing *pantun* are crucial in sustaining harmony:

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"Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh."
"Wa'alaikum salam warahmatullah."

This exchange signals the formal opening of interaction. At the conclusion, a *pantun* serves as both farewell and apology:

"Kalau adoh padi nan indak basabuik… Kami pulang basamo angin, ka kampuang nan kami datang."
If there is rice not mentioned, if words have caused offense… We return with the wind, to the village from which we came.

Closing serves as both apology and reaffirmation of social bonds. In anthropolinguistic terms, the phatic function reinforces group cohesion and prevents communicative rupture Karmila & Sari (2021).

4.5 Metalingual Function

The metalingual function clarifies concepts or terminologies, ensuring mutual understanding. In *Basarang*, it appears when cultural concepts require explanation:

"Pado urang awak sumbang, pado Allah awak elok."
Considered taboo by people, but good in the sight of God.

This utterance clarifies a core cultural paradox: while *kembar sumbang* may be socially stigmatized, it holds spiritual neutrality. Metalingual explanations like this prevent misunderstanding and serve as tools for cultural reinterpretation, transferring indigenous wisdom to younger generations (Althafullayya & Akbar, 2023)

4.6 Poetic Function

Finally, the poetic function highlights the aesthetic qualities of language. In *Basarang*, this function manifests in metaphor, rhythm, and parallelism:

"Angin pai ka barek, angin baliak ka timua, Akaik indak ka babungo, janji indak ka bali."
The wind goes west, the wind returns east, a branch will not blossom, a promise will not be broken.

This poetic device strengthens memorability and softens the articulation of sensitive themes such as *kembar sumbang*. As Wierzbicka (2019) notes, aesthetic language in ritual contexts encapsulates emotion and identity simultaneously, serving as a linguistic embodiment of shared morality.

4.7 Interaction of Functions and Anthropolinguistic Implications

Across the *Basarang* ritual, the six functions operate interactively rather than independently. Referential utterances often merge with poetic or emotive elements, while conative and phatic expressions reinforce hierarchical respect and kinship ties. This multifunctionality aligns with Jakobson's (1960) claim that communicative acts are never monofunctional.

From an anthropolinguistic perspective, these overlapping functions demonstrate how *Basarang* language performs both communicative and cosmological roles—it maintains the social fabric while reaffirming moral and spiritual order. When compared to *Malam Bainai* Karmila & Sari (2021) or *Batagak Panghulu* Althafullayya & Akbar (2023) *Basarang* displays a more reconciliatory linguistic tone, aimed at restoring balance rather than asserting authority.

Consequently, this study expands Jakobson's model into the ritual-communicative domain, illustrating how language in Minangkabau oral traditions functions as a living system of ethics, emotion, and identity preservation.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that language occupies a central and multifunctional role within the *Basarang* tradition of Nagari Kasang, Minangkabau. Ritual utterances articulated through *pantun* (poetic verses), *mamang* (ritual chants), proverbs, prayers, and ceremonial dialogues function not merely as communicative media but as instruments for transmitting values, reinforcing collective identity, and sustaining social cohesion. Thus, language in the *Basarang* ritual extends beyond the linguistic domain to encompass broader socio-cultural and spiritual dimensions of Minangkabau life.

Drawing upon Roman Jakobson's (1960) theory of language functions, the analysis reveals the simultaneous presence of all six functions within *Basarang* discourse. The referential function conveys information on the meaning and procedures of the ceremony; the emotive function expresses feelings, prayers, and hopes; the conative function manifests through exhortations and instructions; the phatic function maintains social connection among participants; the metalingual function clarifies symbolic terms and concepts for mutual understanding; and the poetic function enriches the aesthetic and mnemonic quality of the ritual language. Collectively, these functions illustrate that *Basarang* is not merely a purification rite for *kembar sumbang* (taboo twins), but a symbolic and linguistic system that embodies the worldview of Minangkabau culture.

Through these interrelated functions, the *Basarang* ritual demonstrates how language acts as a mechanism of customary legitimization, moral instruction, and intergenerational value transmission. The utterances within the ritual perform not only communicative but also sociocultural and ideological roles, preserving harmony, honoring kinship, and reaffirming communal identity.

In addition, this study underscores an academic gap in the limited documentation and analysis of *Basarang* compared with other Minangkabau rituals such as *batagak panghulu* or *malam bainai*. Therefore, this research contributes to the preservation of oral traditions and offers valuable insights for future studies in anthropological linguistics. Future research could explore comparative analyses across regions or investigate intergenerational transmission of ritual language to understand its continuity amid social change.

Practically, the findings may inform cultural preservation and educational initiatives that integrate local oral traditions into learning contexts, supporting cultural sustainability and identity reinforcement among younger generations.

Theoretically, this study suggests that Jakobson's model of language functions can be recontextualized within ritual discourse analysis, not merely as a linguistic framework, but as an interpretive tool that illuminates how communicative acts operate simultaneously as cultural, moral, and symbolic systems in traditional societies.

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CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' MULTIMODAL TEXTS INTEGRATING LOCAL WISDOM IN THE DIGITAL LITERACY ERA

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze university students' multimodal texts that integrate local wisdom values through the lens of Jean Piaget's constructivist perspective. The study connects constructivist theory with digital literacy practices rooted in local culture, an area that remains underexplored in Indonesian language education. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on the process of students' knowledge construction in producing multimodal texts based on local wisdom. The participants were third-semester students of the Indonesian Language, Literature, and Regional Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Mathla'ul Anwar University, Banten. The primary data consisted of multimodal text products themed around the local wisdom of Pandeglang, while supporting data were obtained through direct classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The research instruments included observation sheets, interview guides, and students' reflection journals. The data analysis process was guided by Piaget's constructivist framework, which examined the processes of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration in students' cognitive development. Data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with triangulation employed to ensure data credibility. The findings reveal that students actively assimilated local wisdom knowledge with academic theory, adjusted their ways of thinking and presenting cultural values in multimodal texts, and achieved a balance between cultural preservation and the demands of digital literacy. The process of creating multimodal texts also demonstrated experiential learning (learning by doing) and self-reflection, while variations in visual and narrative styles reflected each student's individual knowledge construction.

Keywords: *constructivism; digital literacy; local wisdom; Indonesian language learning; multimodal texts.*

1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has transformed the way university students learn and express their knowledge. In the digital literacy era, students no longer produce linear written texts but are capable of creating multimodal

products that combine text, images, audio, video, and interactive elements. These products serve not only as indicators of digital literacy skills but also as means for students to communicate ideas, values, and thoughts creatively. This phenomenon requires students to master not only conventional reading and writing skills but also the ability to comprehend and produce texts that integrate multiple modes of communication. This aligns with the development of information and communication technology that shapes how students access and convey information.

Multimodality has become a widely discussed concept among linguists, semioticians, educators, and technologists in recent years. This growing attention is due to the increasing recognition that meaning-making does not rely solely on linguistic aspects but involves multiple semiotic resources. Unfortunately, the concept of multimodal-based learning has not been widely implemented in Indonesian educational practice, even though multimodality represents an essential learning concept for developing 21st-century skills (Abidin, 2022). Integrating multimodal approaches into language education can help students better connect cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions of learning, which are crucial in preparing them to become active and reflective learners.

Although technology provides various tools, many students still face challenges in producing high-quality multimodal texts. Several studies indicate that students often struggle to integrate multimodal elements effectively, structure coherent texts, and convey ideas and values deeply. At times, students become confused about which information should be presented through written text and which would be more effectively communicated through visuals, graphics, or tables. As a result, their work often becomes too lengthy or less informative. In addition, students tend to find it difficult to connect different components, for instance, combining rigid academic text with concise and communicative visuals. This indicates that, although students are familiar with digital devices, their ability to construct knowledge actively and meaningfully through writing still requires deeper examination. This aligns with Al Fajri (2018), who explains that students often use technology for entertainment rather than educational purposes. Consequently, when they are asked to engage with academic texts, they struggle to interpret and internalize the meanings conveyed in the readings. This gap demonstrates the importance of guiding students to utilize digital technology for constructive, creative, and reflective learning.

From a language learning perspective, writing ability is a core skill that involves not only linguistic proficiency but also critical, creative, and reflective thinking. Writing is also the most complex of all language skills. According to Tarigan (2008), writing is an activity of expressing ideas, thoughts, or feelings in the form of written symbols that can be read and understood by others. Similarly, Dalman (2014) defines writing as a process of revealing thoughts, ideas, and emotions through written symbols as a form of indirect communication. Therefore, students are required to develop their knowledge actively so that they can express their ideas meaningfully. Writing, in this sense, becomes both a cognitive and social act that reflects how students internalize and reconstruct knowledge through interaction and reflection.

According to Piaget's constructivist theory, learning is an active process of knowledge construction by individuals through interaction with their environment and information sources. This aligns with Trianto (2010), who asserts that knowledge is not a set of ready-made facts, concepts, or rules to be memorized but must be constructed and interpreted through real experiences. Teaching based on constructivism assumes that students actively

participate in creating meaning and knowledge. Simply put, constructivist instruction allows students to learn freely while developing motivation and critical thinking. Constructivism has a significant influence on education. Teaching is no longer viewed as the transmission of fixed knowledge but as an active process in which students build their own understanding, skills, and attitudes. Students search for meaning from what they learn by comparing prior knowledge with new experiences and contexts (Nerita et al., 2023). Furthermore, constructivist learning shifts classroom orientation from teacher-centered to student-centered. Students are no longer regarded as empty vessels to be filled with information but as active participants responsible for their own learning. In this framework, the teacher's role evolves into that of a facilitator who provides opportunities for exploration, encourages reflection, and supports students in achieving cognitive equilibrium through continuous interaction and adaptation.

In the context of multimodal text production, students do not merely copy information but process, interpret, and express it according to their experiences and perspectives. These multimodal products can serve as reflections of students' knowledge construction processes and indicate the extent to which they can internalize concepts and express understanding creatively. Furthermore, digital literacy has become an inseparable part of modern education. Scholars emphasize that digital literacy encompasses not only technical skills but also the ability to understand, evaluate, and communicate information meaningfully through various digital media. In Indonesian language learning practice, students' ability to produce multimodal texts serves as an indicator of both digital literacy and academic creativity. By analyzing students' multimodal products, educators can gain insights into students' actual learning processes how they construct knowledge, articulate ideas, and develop humanistic and creative potential.

Within the digital literacy framework, students are required not only to understand texts deeply but also to integrate various multimodal elements to express ideas and information effectively. One significant element that can be integrated into multimodal texts is local wisdom. Incorporating local wisdom into digital-based texts is particularly valuable because it connects traditional cultural knowledge with modern technological expression. This process helps students to not only preserve cultural heritage but also reinterpret it within the context of contemporary communication and digital creativity. To integrate local wisdom into multimodal texts, students need critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to reflect on their experiences and prior knowledge. Therefore, it is important to analyze how students' multimodal text products reflect their knowledge construction processes based on the constructivist perspective in conveying ideas about local wisdom.

So far, studies examining university students' multimodal text products as reflections of their knowledge construction remain limited particularly those that integrate local wisdom and link constructivist theory with digital literacy. Hence, this study is significant as it provides a holistic understanding of the quality of students' multimodal products, the integration of multimodal elements, language use, depth of ideas and values, and the knowledge construction process that occurs during learning. By situating this research within Piaget's constructivist framework, the study not only contributes to the theoretical development of multimodal learning in the Indonesian context but also offers practical insights into designing innovative, culturally grounded, and digitally adaptive learning models. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for developing Indonesian

language learning strategies that are more creative, innovative, and responsive to the demands of digital literacy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Piaget's Constructivist Theory

In the learning process, teachers must understand both students' learning strategies and their learning styles. As Dahar (2011) states, learning according to Piaget occurs through the processes of assimilation and accommodation, which continue until cognitive equilibrium is achieved. Similarly, Suparno (1997) explains that Piaget's constructivist learning framework consists of three main stages assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration, assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. Assimilation refers to the process in which learners integrate new experiences into existing cognitive structures or schemas, while accommodation involves modifying these existing schemas to fit new experiences that do not align with prior knowledge. Equilibration, in turn, represents the balancing process between assimilation and accommodation, leading to cognitive growth.

Therefore, in order to foster meaningful learning (*meaningful learning*), teachers need to adopt appropriate instructional strategies that align with students' cognitive stages and characteristics (Dahar, 2011). In the context of multimodal-based learning, the principles of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration can be observed in how university students engage with digital and cultural elements. For instance, assimilation occurs when students integrate familiar cultural symbols into their digital presentations; accommodation arises when they adapt traditional expressions to modern digital forms; and equilibration emerges when they achieve harmony between local cultural values and contemporary modes of expression.

This demonstrates that Piaget's theory not only explains individual cognitive processes but also offers a useful framework for understanding how learners construct knowledge and meaning through creative and reflective multimodal learning activities. Hence, in this study, Piaget's constructivism provides the theoretical foundation to analyze how students actively construct meaning and knowledge in producing multimodal texts that embody local wisdom values.

2.2 Multimodal Texts

Multimodal texts are forms of communication that combine written or spoken language with visual or animated elements. These texts go beyond verbal language alone, integrating linguistic, visual, auditory, and spatial resources into a unified message. Kayati (2022), defines multimodal texts as those that combine language with other semiotic modes such as visual, sound, and oral features—presented simultaneously. Similarly, Chen (2010) conceptualizes *multimodality* as a methodological approach to understanding verbal language through the integration of different dialogic and representational levels.

Readers, therefore, do not construct meaning from words alone but also from the interaction among various semiotic elements that support the message. These include verbal (spoken or written language), visual (images, colors, typography), gestural (body movements, facial expressions), audio (intonation, music, sound effects), and spatial (layout, positioning of text and images).

In the context of higher education, multimodal literacy requires students to manage multiple modes of communication textual, visual, auditory, and gestural coherently and

critically. Kress & van Leeuwen, (2021) explain that each mode of communication possesses its own visual grammar that must be understood to ensure that messages convey complete meaning. This aligns with the findings of Lim & Tan (2018), who note that university students often struggle to integrate visual and verbal elements harmoniously when producing digital-based assignments. These challenges indicate that multimodal literacy is not merely a technical ability to use different media but also a conceptual skill to coordinate various semiotic resources in order to construct cohesive meaning.

Furthermore, digital-based learning that integrates experimentation with multiple modes of communication has been shown to enhance students' multimodal literacy competence. In such pedagogical settings, students are encouraged to experiment with diverse forms of representation such as infographics, reflective videos, and digital narratives. As a result, they demonstrate improvements in critical, collaborative, and reflective thinking skills, as they learn to construct meaning according to their cultural and personal contexts. These findings resonate with the insights of (Jewitt et al., 2016), who argue that multimodality enables learners to construct meaning through the interplay of language, image, and social experience.

2.3 Local Wisdom

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Offline Version), local wisdom refers to knowledge and intelligence rooted in local traditions and practices. Wibowo (2015) defines local wisdom as the cultural identity of a nation that enables it to absorb and transform external cultural influences into its own distinct character and capability. More broadly, local wisdom forms an inseparable part of language, tradition, and belief systems that are passed down across generations. It should therefore be preserved and revitalized as a key element of Indonesia's multicultural heritage.

In educational settings, local wisdom functions not merely as cultural content but also as a medium of value-based learning. It fosters moral reasoning, empathy, and social harmony. By integrating local values such as mutual cooperation, respect, and community harmony into learning activities, educators help students internalize ethical and cultural sensibilities. In multimodal learning contexts, these values can be represented through visual symbols, narratives, or digital storytelling that embody local traditions.

Mutmainah (2023) discovered that integrating local wisdom values into digital learning strengthens students' cultural identity and reflective thinking. This finding supports the argument that local wisdom provides a meaningful context for developing digital literacy while grounding it in cultural awareness. Local traditions, when reinterpreted through digital and multimodal media, become sources of both creative expression and ethical reflection.

In relation to the present study, the incorporation of local wisdom into multimodal text creation enables students to engage in cognitive processes that mirror Piaget's stages of assimilation and accommodation absorbing cultural elements and transforming them into new digital representations. Through this process, students not only construct knowledge but also negotiate their cultural identity in a digital space. Thus, local wisdom serves as both the content and the epistemological foundation for developing culturally grounded digital literacy.

3. Research Method

The research method refers to a systematic and deliberate way of solving research problems to obtain facts and conclusions that can be used to understand, explain, predict, and control a phenomenon. This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method (Syamsuddin & Vismaia, 2006). This approach was chosen because the research focuses on understanding meaning and the process of knowledge construction experienced by the participants within specific social and cultural contexts. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in depth rather than merely measuring numbers or frequencies.

More specifically, this study focuses on the learning process of university students in producing multimodal texts that incorporate elements of local wisdom. The descriptive method was used to provide a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of students' multimodal text products and to analyze them using Piaget's constructivist framework. The participants of this study were third-semester students of the Indonesian Language, Literature, and Regional Education Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Mathla'ul Anwar University, Banten. The primary data consisted of digital multimodal text products containing representations of local wisdom. Supporting data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and direct observation during the learning process. This aligns with Moleong (2017) view that data sources in qualitative research may include words, actions, and documents.

The instruments used for data collection included observation sheets, interview guides, and students' reflective journals. Observations were used to record learning activities and interactions during the creation of multimodal texts, while interviews explored students' understanding of local wisdom values and their experiences integrating these values into digital formats. The collected data were analyzed using Piaget's constructivist theoretical framework, which involves the processes of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration to understand how students construct knowledge through the experience of creating multimodal texts. The analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data credibility, triangulation was conducted across multiple data sources.

Thus, this methodological design provides a comprehensive understanding of how students construct knowledge through digital literacy practices grounded in multimodality and local wisdom.

4. Results and Discussion

According to Jean Piaget, knowledge is actively constructed by individuals through the processes of assimilation (connecting new knowledge with existing cognitive structures) and accommodation (adjusting cognitive structures to understand new information). In the context of student learners, students do not merely receive information; they construct meaning based on experience, observation, and reflection. Products such as multimodal texts (digital presentations, videos, infographics, etc.) serve as tangible evidence of constructive thinking, as students select, interpret, and reorganize knowledge into multimodal forms.

Below, the researcher presents an example of a student's multimodal text along with an explanation.

Data M1

1. General Description of the Multimodal Text Product

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The multimodal text analyzed is a digital presentation themed on Local Wisdom of Pandeglang. The presentation consists of 21 slides combining verbal elements (written text) and nonverbal elements (color schemes, typography, digital layout, and illustrations of local culture). The main objective of the work is to introduce various forms of local wisdom, such as rampak bedug, debus, kue jojorong, ruwat laut, and kue balok menes, while also highlighting the challenges and strategies for preserving cultural values amid the forces of modernization.

Figure 1

Multimodal Texts on the Local Wisdom of Pandeglang

The text is structured systematically in the following order: (a) definitions of local wisdom according to experts, (b) types of local wisdom in Pandeglang, (c) explanations of each tradition, (d) challenges in preserving traditions in the era of globalization, and (e) strategies for teaching the values of local wisdom to students. This arrangement demonstrates the students' awareness of scientific thinking structures within the context of Indonesian language learning, as well as their ability to organize information digitally and multimodally.

2. Analysis Based on Piaget's Constructivism

Piaget's constructivism emphasizes that knowledge is not passively transferred from teacher to student, but is actively constructed by individuals through the processes of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. This knowledge construction process can be observed in the stages students undergo while developing their multimodal texts.

a) Assimilation (Integrating Prior Knowledge with New Knowledge)

Assimilation occurs when students connect their prior knowledge of local culture with the academic concepts learned in the Indonesian language course. In this product, students present several definitions of local wisdom from experts such as Koentjaraningrat, Geertz, and Syarifuddin, and then relate them to concrete cultural practices in Pandeglang, as shown in slides 2–3: "Koentjaraningrat describes local wisdom as the wisdom that grows

and develops within a community and serves as a guideline for communal life… Geertz refers to it as local knowledge, or the way a community understands its environment."

The inclusion of these definitions indicates that students have engaged in conceptual assimilation, linking scientific concepts learned in class with cultural phenomena familiar to them since childhood. They do not merely memorize theories but actively use them to explain local contexts.

b) Accommodation (Adjusting Knowledge Structures)

Accommodation occurs when students adapt their traditional ways of thinking to meet the demands of digital literacy and new methods of presenting information. The text is not arranged in a conventional essay format but as a multimodal digital presentation, which requires technological, aesthetic, and semiotic skills. Students use slide formats with concise bullet points, contrasting background colors, and visual terms such as *"Rampak Bedug," "Ruwat Laut,"* and *"Balok Menes"*, accompanied by brief descriptions of their symbolic meanings.

The choice to present local culture through digital media demonstrates cognitive accommodation, in which students adjust both their knowledge and modes of presentation to remain relevant in a modern context. Students shift from merely "telling about culture" to visualizing culture, in line with the characteristics of multimodal literacy in the digital era. This is illustrated in slides 5 to 8.

c) Equilibration (Cognitive Balance)

According to Piaget, cognitive equilibration is the result of the interaction between assimilation and accommodation. In this context, students achieve equilibrium when they realize that traditional values do not need to be abandoned in the digital era but can instead be conveyed through technology. This is demonstrated in slides 9 to 11, where: In the Challenges of Local Wisdom section, students write: "The rapid flow of modernization causes the younger generation to perceive local culture as outdated. A lack of education results in the erosion of noble values." In the Learning Strategies section, students propose solutions such as: "A contextual learning approach that connects the material to real-life experiences and involves the local community."

This demonstrates students' ability to achieve equilibrium between traditional and modern thinking, reflecting their capacity for reflective thinking and finding a balance between cultural preservation and digital-based learning innovation.

d) Meaningful and Reflective Learning Activities

Piaget emphasizes that effective learning occurs through direct activities and self-reflection (learning by doing). The process of creating multimodal texts requires students to:

1) Collect data from various sources (literature, the internet, local experiences);
2) Filter and select relevant information:
3) Design a communicative digital layout;
4) Organize narratives using standardized and systematic language.

In slides 13–17, students describe the participation of indigenous communities in cultural preservation, as well as ways teachers can incorporate these values into learning. This demonstrates social reflection: students understand that cultural preservation is not solely the responsibility of the government but also of society and the educational sector.

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These activities show that students are not passive recipients of information but actively construct meaning through exploration, experience, and personal reflection. This is the essence of Piaget's constructivism, which positions students as active learning subjects.

e) Individual Knowledge Construction and Creativity

According to Piaget, each individual has a unique way of constructing cognitive schemas. In this multimodal product, M1 displays personal characteristics through: Consistent color choices and layout designs, use of formal yet communicative diction, selection of cultural themes drawn from their local environment (Pandeglang). These features indicate students' agency, i.e., their ability to determine independently the form and direction of meaning-making. The product is not only informative but also reflects cultural identity and personal interpretation of local values.

Data M2

1. General Description of the Multimodal Text Product

The multimodal text produced by M2 is a digital presentation featuring the theme of Local Wisdom in Pandeglang, Banten. The work consists of 15 slides, containing text, illustrative images, and simple yet communicative color and typography elements. The presentation structure is informative, progressing from theoretical concepts to practical applications in the context of learning. The content is organized as follows:

a. Definitions of local wisdom according to experts.
b. Types of local wisdom in Pandeglang (*debus, rampak bedug, dogdog lojor, seren taun, babacakan*).
c. Social and spiritual values contained in these traditions.
d. Challenges in preserving culture in the modern era.
e. Strategies for teaching Indonesian language based on local wisdom.

This structure demonstrates students' systematic understanding of scientific text organization, as well as their ability to present information visually and multimodally. The product is educational and reflective, aligning with the objectives of Indonesian language learning, which emphasize cultural appreciation and digital literacy skills.

2. Analysis Based on Piaget's Constructivism

a) Assimilation (Integrating Prior Knowledge with New Knowledge)

Within Piaget's framework, assimilation is the process of integrating existing experiences and knowledge with newly acquired information. The student connects personal experiences and local cultural knowledge familiar since childhood with academic theories learned in class. For instance, the student writes definitions of local wisdom according to Koentjaraningrat and Geertz and adds concrete examples from Pandeglang culture, such as *debus* and *rampak bedug*.

This demonstrates the student's ability to link theoretical concepts with local cultural realities. The student does not merely copy theories but assimilates scientific concepts into the framework of personal cultural experience. This process reflects active cognitive development, in line with Piaget's principle that knowledge is constructed through the connection of prior and new experiences.

b) Accommodation (Adjusting Knowledge Structures)

Accommodation occurs when students adjust their thinking and understanding to incorporate new information. M2 demonstrates accommodation by presenting traditional culture using a digital and academic approach. In slides 5–7, M2 explains that the art of *debus* is not merely entertainment but also embodies spiritual meaning and mental resilience values. The student also notes that this tradition is now integrated into character education in schools.

This indicates that the student has transformed traditional cognitive schemas into new, more contextual and academic understandings. Additionally, the choice of a multimodal digital presentation demonstrates accommodation to the demands of digital literacy in the modern era, as students learn to adapt their methods of knowledge dissemination to media relevant to their generation.

c) Equilibration (Cognitive Balance)

Piaget explains that ideal learning occurs when individuals achieve equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation. M2 reaches this balance when they are able to integrate traditional values with the demands of the digital era without discarding either. In slide 8, M2 writes "The flow of globalization has caused the younger generation to begin forgetting local culture. Therefore, it is important for education to introduce local wisdom so that its values are not lost."

This statement reflects the student's reflective and balanced thinking, demonstrating awareness of modernization challenges while recognizing the importance of adapting to ensure cultural continuity. Thus, M2 achieves cognitive balance between preserving tradition and adopting technological advancements as a means of cultural preservation.

d) Meaningful and Reflective Learning Activities

Piaget emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs through active engagement, exploration, and personal reflection. M2 clearly demonstrates this in their multimodal text product. The student not only gathers information but also processes, interprets, and reorganizes it into a communicative visual form. In slide 10, the student closes the presentation with a reflective message: "Preserving local culture is a shared responsibility of the younger generation."

The text creation process involves direct learning activities, including data collection, design planning, narrative construction, and visual editing. This exemplifies the principle of learning by doing, showing that students learn not merely by listening, but by creating and constructing meaning.

e) Individual Knowledge Construction and Creativity

From Piaget's perspective, each learner constructs knowledge uniquely based on their experiences and social environment. M2 demonstrates independent thinking (agency) by selecting Pandeglang cultural topics and interpreting them personally. Evidence includes the use of soft colors, organized layouts, and formal yet communicative language. The selection of traditions such as *jojorong* and *rampak bedug* reflects the student's emotional connection to local culture.

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This shows that the student constructs cultural meaning independently, rather than merely copying information from external sources. This characteristic aligns with Piaget's view that learners are active constructors of knowledge, not passive recipients.

Figure 2

Multimodal Texts on the Types of Local Wisdom in Pandeglang

Data M3

1. General Description of the Multimodal Text Product

The multimodal text produced by M3 is a digital presentation (PowerPoint slides) with the theme "Local Wisdom of Pandeglang." The work is structured in an informative and descriptive format, containing text, key points, and several simple visual elements such as color, layout, and inspirational quotes in the closing section. The presentation content includes:

a. Definitions of local wisdom according to experts (Keraf, Sibarani).
b. Types of local wisdom in Pandeglang (*pencak silat, seren taun, ngukus, anyaman, debus*).
c. History and cultural meaning of each tradition.
d. Ways to preserve local wisdom.
e. Challenges in the modern era.
f. Indonesian language teaching strategies based on local wisdom.

This structure demonstrates that the student understands the flow of scientific and educational thinking, progressing from theoretical concepts to practical applications. The presentation also shows awareness of linking local cultural values with modern teaching strategies, aligning with digital literacy goals and contextual learning in Indonesian language education.

2. Analysis Based on Piaget's Constructivism

a) Assimilation (Integrating Prior Knowledge with New Knowledge)

In Piaget's theory, assimilation occurs when individuals connect prior knowledge with new concepts without altering the underlying cognitive structure. The student assimilates local experiences and knowledge of Pandeglang culture with academic theories learned in

class. Evidence from slide 2 includes "Keraf (2010): Local wisdom is all forms of knowledge, beliefs, understandings, or customary practices that guide human behavior in society." "Sibarani (2012): Local wisdom is the indigenous knowledge of a community derived from noble cultural values to regulate social life."

The student does not merely cite theories but relates them to the cultural realities of Pandeglang. For example, when explaining *pencak silat* as a representation of moral values and resilience in local society, the student demonstrates the ability to integrate academic concepts with social realities they have understood since childhood. This process reflects assimilation between empirical/cultural experience and theoretical knowledge.

b) Accommodation (Adjusting Knowledge Structures)

In Piagetian terms, accommodation involves adjusting or changing cognitive structures to incorporate new information. The student demonstrates accommodation by presenting traditional local wisdom in a digital and modern format. Evidence from slides 6–9: the student explains the history and values of *pencak silat, seren taun, ngukus, anyaman,* and *debus*, linking them to concepts of cultural preservation and 21st-century education. For example, in the section on cultural preservation, the student writes "Conduct youth training, innovate products according to market demands, organize debus performances as part of cultural tourism."

This shows that the student not only understands culture as a tradition but also adapts their thinking to make it relevant to modern society and education. This process illustrates cognitive accommodation, as the student adjusts their knowledge schema to integrate cultural values within the context of technology and contemporary education.

c) Equilibration (Cognitive Balance)

Piaget emphasizes that optimal learning occurs when learners achieve equilibration, a balance between assimilation and accommodation. The student demonstrates cognitive balance by treating traditional culture and technological advancement as complementary elements. Evidence from slides 10–11 "Globalization and modernization cause the younger generation to be more interested in foreign cultures. Therefore, it is necessary to provide education and cultural activities to ensure the younger generation remains familiar with their traditions." The student recognizes that modern challenges do not require rejecting technology, but rather integrating local cultural values into contextual, project-based, and digital learning. This balance reflects reflective thinking maturity, in accordance with Piagetian principles.

d) Meaningful and Reflective Learning Activities

Piaget emphasizes that genuine learning occurs through direct activity, exploration, and self-reflection. M3 clearly demonstrates this process in their multimodal product. The student conducts literature research, information selection, content organization, and presentation design. Evidence from slides 12–14 the student presents strategies for teaching local wisdom to students using Project-Based Learning, Contextual Teaching and Learning, and Experiential Learning.

By selecting and describing these strategies, the student demonstrates deep understanding of active and constructive learning concepts. They not only describe culture

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but also construct new ideas on how cultural values can be integrated into Indonesian language learning. This reflects Piaget's principle of learning by doing.

Figure 3

Multimodal Texts on the Teaching Strategies of Local Wisdom

d) Individual Knowledge Construction and Creativity

From Piaget's perspective, each individual constructs knowledge uniquely through personal experience and reflection. M3 demonstrates independent thinking and personal identity in the presentation of their work. Visual and narrative evidence includes the use of a motivational quote at the end of the slides:

"Strength lies in differences, not in similarities." Stephen Covey. Selection of distinct Pandeglang cultural examples, accompanied by historical context and spiritual values. Neat slide layout, formal language style, and a logical flow from theory to practice.

These elements indicate that the student does not merely produce an academic report, but also expresses cognitive identity and personal values. This process aligns with Piaget's concept that learning is the result of individual knowledge construction, which grows through social and cultural experiences as well as self-reflection.

Data M4

1. General Description of the Multimodal Text Product

The multimodal text produced by M4 is a digital presentation (PowerPoint slides) entitled "Local Wisdom of Pandeglang." The work features a combination of text, illustrative images, and digital links that enrich the information presented.

The structure of the presentation includes:

a. Definitions of local wisdom according to experts (Keraf, Sartini, Koentjaraningrat, Sumarmi).
b. Explanation and history of several forms of local wisdom in Pandeglang, such as *Rampak Bedug, Ritual Mapag Sri, Debus, Ruat Laut,* and *Batik Motif Badak*.
c. Efforts to preserve culture through education, digitalization, and economic empowerment.
d. Challenges in preserving local wisdom in the era of globalization.

e. Teaching strategies for integrating local cultural values into Indonesian language learning.

This structure demonstrates the student's understanding of a logical, scientific, and conceptual flow, moving from theory, cultural practice, to educational solutions. The presentation also shows integration of multimodal elements, such as text, digital links (source references), and visuals of Pandeglang culture, indicating a strong level of digital literacy.

2. Analysis Based on Piaget's Constructivism

a) Assimilation (Integrating Prior Knowledge with New Knowledge)

In Piagetian constructivism, assimilation is the process of integrating new knowledge into existing cognitive schemas. M4 connects their understanding of local culture with academic theories acquired during Indonesian language learning. Evidence from slide 2: "Keraf (2010): Local wisdom is the cultural identity of a nation that enables it to absorb and even adapt foreign cultures according to its own character and capabilities." "Koentjaraningrat (2015): Local wisdom is a system of cultural values that functions to regulate the social order of the community."

The student assimilates these theories with Pandeglang cultural phenomena, such as *Rampak Bedug* and *Ritual Mapag Sri*, demonstrating the ability to connect scientific theory with local social realities. This assimilation shows that the student has successfully linked academic conceptual frameworks with empirical experiences acquired as part of the local community.

b) Accommodation (Adjusting Knowledge Structures)

Accommodation occurs when individuals adjust or modify existing knowledge to fit new contexts. In M4's work, accommodation is evident in how the student understands and presents traditional local wisdom within a modern and digital framework. Evidence from slides 14–18 "Preservation through digitalization: documenting customary activities, collaborating with local media, creating e-books and articles on Pandeglang local wisdom."

Through these ideas, the student adapts traditional cultural perspectives to a modern, technology-based approach. They also view cultural preservation not merely as ritual, but as an educational and productive process through digitalization and economic empowerment "preservation through economic empowerment". This reflects cognitive accommodation, modifying thinking to meet the demands of the digital literacy era.

c) Equilibration (Cognitive Balance)

Piaget defines equilibration as the process of achieving balance between assimilation and accommodation. In this work, the student attains cognitive balance between preserving traditional values and embracing modern innovation. Evidence from slide 20 "Globalization, declining interest among youth, commercialization of culture, limited documentation, and insufficient financial support." However, in the following slide on teaching strategies, the student proposes solutions "Integration into the curriculum, contextual learning (cultural visits), hands-on practice (e.g., Rampak Bedug), digital media (student creative content), collaboration with local cultural figures."

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This balance demonstrates the student's ability to reach cognitive equilibrium, resolving conflicts between globalization challenges and cultural preservation needs through education- and technology-based solutions. This reflects intellectual maturity, as the student demonstrates reflective and solution-oriented thinking according to Piaget.

d) Meaningful Learning Activities (Learning by Doing)

Piaget emphasizes that genuine learning occurs through direct activity and reflection on experience. M4 demonstrates meaningful learning through source exploration, cultural description writing, and project-based preservation strategy development. Examples include "Preservation through Education: integrating local wisdom into local curriculum, organizing cultural art extracurriculars, visits to customary sites." "Preservation through Digitalization: publishing customary activities and collaborating with local media."

These activities reflect reflective and applied thinking, where the student not only understands theory but constructs understanding through experience, discovery, and creative action. This embodies the learning by doing principle, learning through creation rather than mere reception.

e) Individual Knowledge Construction

Piaget views each individual as an active subject in constructing knowledge based on personal experience. M4 demonstrates thinking identity and personal knowledge construction through presentation style, topic selection, and emphasis on specific values. Visual and textual evidence:

a. Use of Pandeglang cultural visuals (bedug, batik, laut) emphasizes local identity.
b. Selection of diverse sub-themes (Rampak Bedug, Mapag Sri, Ruat Laut, Batik Badak) shows broad cultural exploration.
c. Systematic presentation with digital sources demonstrates scientific and modern orientation.

These elements indicate that the student does not merely replicate sources, but reinterpretes culture with a personal and contextual perspective. This is a clear manifestation of individual knowledge construction, which is central to Piaget's theory.

Figure 4

Multimodal Texts on the Rhinoceros Patterned Batik Typical of Pandeglang

Data M5

1. General Description of the Multimodal Text Product

The multimodal text produced by M5 is a digital presentation (PowerPoint slides) entitled "Local Wisdom of Pandeglang." The work contains informative text combined with visual elements, including colored layouts, clear typography, and illustrative images of local culture. The structure of the presentation includes:

a. Definitions of local wisdom according to several experts.
b. Types of local wisdom in Pandeglang (debus, rampak bedug, seren taun, dogdog lojor, and angklung).
c. Cultural values embedded in local wisdom.
d. Challenges in preservation in the era of globalization.
e. Teaching strategies based on local wisdom.

This structure demonstrates the student's ability to organize academic texts systematically from conceptual to contextual aspects. The work is educational and multimodal, combining academic text, cultural visuals, and a communicative digital presentation style.

2. Analysis Based on Piaget's Constructivism

a) Assimilation (Integrating Prior Knowledge with New Knowledge)

In Piaget's view, assimilation is the process of relating prior experiences to new knowledge gained through learning. M5 assimilates their prior knowledge of local culture, which they have known since childhood, with academic theories learned in Indonesian language courses. The student cites experts such as Koentjaraningrat and Keraf and connects their definitions with Pandeglang traditions like debus and rampak bedug as manifestations of local values.

This demonstrates that the student is able to link scientific concepts (local wisdom according to scholars) with empirically experienced cultural realities. This process reflects cognitive assimilation, where the student enriches their understanding of local culture with new academic perspectives without losing the original meaning.

b) Accommodation (Adjusting Knowledge Structures)

Accommodation occurs when individuals adjust or modify prior understanding to incorporate new information or contexts. M5 demonstrates accommodation by presenting Pandeglang traditional culture in a modern digital format while linking it to 21st-century learning. Evidence from slides 6–9: The student explains that rampak bedug is not merely entertainment but also represents "a form of togetherness, spirit, and identity of the Pandeglang community, which can be taught as character education values."

By framing local tradition as a medium for character education, the student demonstrates adjustment from traditional thinking to a modern educational framework. Additionally, the use of a digital presentation reflects accommodation to the demands of digital literacy in the era of globalization.

c) Equilibration (Cognitive Balance)

Piaget emphasizes that optimal learning occurs when equilibrium is achieved between assimilation and accommodation. M5 demonstrates cognitive balance by

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integrating cultural preservation with modern adaptation. Evidence from the slides "The flow of globalization threatens the preservation of local culture. Innovation, education, and youth participation are required to preserve Pandeglang culture."

This shows the student's awareness that traditional values should not be abandoned but must be adapted and revitalized to remain relevant in the digital era. The balance between maintaining old values and accommodating new ones reflects cognitive equilibration, in line with Piaget's theory.

d) Meaningful Learning Activities (Learning by Doing)

Piaget views knowledge as constructed through direct experience and reflective activity. M5 demonstrates learning by doing through cultural exploration and creating a digital multimodal product. Examples from the slides "Linking materials with students' environment (contextual learning), conducting cultural visits, and creating digital projects about local traditions." These activities indicate that the student understands learning is not just about receiving theory, but also involves creating, interacting, and interpreting. The process of data collection, information processing, and presentation preparation demonstrates active and reflective engagement in constructing new knowledge.

e) Individual Knowledge Construction

Piaget emphasizes that each individual constructs knowledge uniquely based on personal experience and reflection. M5 shows personal identity and creativity through topic choice, language, and visual presentation.
Visual and textual evidence:

a. Use of soft, consistent colours on slides;
b. Selection of local cultural topics familiar to the student (debus, seren taun);
c. Formal, structured language demonstrating academic thinking.

This shows that the student does not merely repeat information, but constructs their own understanding of local cultural values in a modern context. The work demonstrates intellectual independence and personal characteristics as an active and reflective learner.

Figure 5.
Multimodal Texts on the Types of Local Wisdom in Pandeglang

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the creation of multimodal texts by university students themed around local wisdom in the digital literacy era demonstrates a learning process aligned with Jean Piaget's constructivist theory. First, in the assimilation stage, students connected their prior knowledge of local culture with the theories learned in their coursework. They successfully integrated personal experiences and academic knowledge into their multimodal works. Second, in the accommodation stage, students adjusted their ways of thinking and presented local cultural values in digital formats that were engaging and easy to understand. This form of presentation reflected students' ability to adapt to technological developments and the demands of modern times. Third, in the equilibration stage, students balanced the preservation of traditional values with the needs of modernization. They did not abandon local culture; rather, they utilized it as a creative and contextual learning resource.

The process of producing multimodal texts also demonstrated the principle of *learning by doing*, in which students learned directly through activities of creating, researching, and presenting their work. Moreover, each student's multimodal product exhibited distinct visual and narrative styles, indicating individual knowledge construction and unique cognitive patterns. Overall, the study shows that Indonesian language learning through a constructivist approach and the use of multimodal media can help students to become more active and creative in the learning process, develop critical and reflective thinking skills, and foster pride in their own local culture.

In other words, the creation of multimodal texts not only enhances students' academic competence but also shapes their character, creativity, and cultural awareness in today's digital era.

This study, however, has several limitations that should be noted. First, the scope of the research was limited to students from a single study program at one university namely, the Indonesian Language, Literature, and Regional Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Mathla'ul Anwar University, Banten. Consequently, the findings cannot yet be generalized to other higher education contexts that may have different student characteristics, resources, and local cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the study's focus on the local wisdom of Pandeglang provided contextual depth but limited exploration of other regional cultural forms across Indonesia that may display different patterns of multimodal practice and knowledge construction.

Another limitation lies in the methods of data collection and analysis. This study relied solely on multimodal text products and observation of the creation process, without including in-depth interviews or written reflections to further explore the cognitive and affective dimensions of students' constructivist learning processes. As a result, interpretations of students' thinking processes and the meanings they constructed remain descriptive and do not fully capture the internal dynamics of knowledge construction. Future studies are recommended to adopt more triangulated approaches for example, by incorporating interviews, multimodal discourse analysis, or comparative regional studies to obtain more comprehensive insights and strengthen both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of constructivist and multimodal-based learning in Indonesian language education.

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TRAUMA REPRESENTATION IN AGUK IRAWAN'S *KIDUNG RINDU DI TAPAL BATAS*: A SIGMUND FREUD'S PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This research aims to describe the representation of two forms of trauma, namely psychological trauma and neurosis trauma, in the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan MN. This study integrates the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach to interpret the psychological dynamics of the characters through three structures of personality: id, ego, and superego. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method through reading techniques and recording data in the form of dialogue, narration, and descriptions that show symptoms of trauma. The analysis is carried out by classifying the types of trauma and interpreting the characters' psychological responses to inner stress and traumatic experiences. The research results show that psychological trauma and neurosis are represented through inner conflict, fear, loss, and guilt experienced by the characters. The dynamics between the id, ego, and superego show how the ego acts as a mediator between instinctual drives and moral control in the face of traumatic stress. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of literary psychology by confirming that literary works function as a reflection of human psychological conditions and a medium for understanding the dynamics of trauma in the context of Indonesian literature.

Keywords: *Aguk Irawan; Freud's psychoanalysis; kidung rindu di tapal batas; psychological trauma; traumatic neurosis.*

1. Introduction

Literary works are artistic creations, as they arise from imaginative processes and objective reality. The characteristics of literary works evoke various thoughts and conclusions from readers or enthusiasts regarding a literary piece (Sumadi, 2020). Literature is the result of an individual's creative thinking, born from their observations of the surrounding social environment, and is expressed through the use of beautiful language (Vardani, 2020). Literature also plays a crucial role as a cultural bridge between the writer and the reader.

Through literary works, readers can explore perspectives and experiences that may differ from their own (Aliyyuana et al., 2024). The benefits of literary works emerge because they stem from real-life processes, leading to the idea that good literature can reflect the essence of life, both in meaning and structure. Literature presents a comprehensive portrayal of life experiences—encompassing emotions, intellect, individual and social

aspects, as well as the world that forms the core of its discourse (Vardani, 2018).

A novel is one form of prose literary work, categorized as a type of new prose. New prose continually evolves alongside the development of the times and changes in accordance with societal progress, where it is generally known who the original author is. Prose is a literary product in the form of free storytelling (Lintang, 2015:437). One form of literary work that reflects or depicts human life in the context of social interaction is the novel (Vardani, E., 2021).

With its lengthy and flexible structure, a novel not only presents events but also the inner processes that underlie the characters' actions. This allows readers to understand humanity in its entirety, both externally and internally (Burhan Nurgiyantoro, 2019). The fictional tales within novels generally originate from the author's various fantasies or imaginations (Suaedi et al., 2023).

The main issue of this research arises from the limited studies of Indonesian literature that comprehensively examine the representation of psychological trauma and neurosis trauma through Freud's psychoanalytic approach. Previous studies have focused more on the emotional aspects of the characters without linking Freud's theory to contemporary trauma theory. This gap is important to fill to deepen and direct the understanding of the inner dynamics and psychological conditions of the characters in Indonesian literary works.

The object of this research is the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan, which depicts the internal struggles of the main character in facing social pressure, loss, and psychological suffering. The conflicts experienced by the character reflect the tension between instinctual drives (id), social reality (ego), and moral values (superego). This makes the novel relevant for examination using Freud's psychoanalytic theory and the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih.

Awwad & Afriani (2021) state that trauma is an abnormal state of mind or behavior that arises from emotional stress or physical injury caused by highly disturbing experiences that are difficult to forget. Trauma is one of the most dangerous psychological wounds for society, especially for adolescents, as it can diminish intellectual capacity, disrupt emotional balance, and affect behavior. Typically, trauma occurs when an individual frequently experiences traumatic events in their life, such as violence, rape, personal threats, or even mass events like armed conflict and natural disasters such as tsunamis. Trauma can affect anyone, regardless of race, age, or time (Hatta, 2020).

According to Freud (in Endraswara, 2011), human personality consists of three main structures: id, ego, and superego. The id contains subconscious drives, the ego functions to adjust to reality, while the superego represents moral values and the conscience. The tension among these three can lead to trauma that manifests in the actions and dialogues of characters. Meanwhile, the traumatic theory (Fatmah & Ningsih, 2021) emphasizes trauma as a psychological disorder resulting from extreme experiences that are difficult to control and can lead to both psychological trauma and neurosis. The integration of these two theories forms a distinctive methodological characteristic of this research.

The urgency of this research lies in its contribution to enriching the study of literary psychology in Indonesia. This study expands the understanding of the relationship between traumatic experiences, consciousness, and literary expression as a reflection of human psychological conditions. The uniqueness of this research is found in its focus on the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan, which addresses the theme of human inner suffering in border regions. This novel not only presents individual trauma but also

integrates it with a strong social context. The distinctiveness of the research emerges from the combination of Freud's psychoanalytic theory and the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih, enabling a deep analysis of the forms of trauma and their relation to the characters' personality structures. The particularity of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach between literature and psychology, where literary works are viewed not only as aesthetic texts but also as therapeutic media for understanding human psychological conditions. The interest of the research is evident in the exploration of the inner conflicts of the main character, which are rich in emotion and reflective value. The substantive excellence of this research is its ability to explain the dynamics of interaction among the id, ego, and superego as a process of healing trauma through the language and actions of the characters.

Several other studies relevant to this research are as follows. The first study, titled "Representation of Women's Trauma in the Novel *Rapuh* by Onlymeilanii" (Imamah & Ahmadi, 2025), uses John Bowlby's attachment theory and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis to analyze the behavior of the main character who experiences trauma due to familial and romantic relationships. The findings indicate that the character's trauma is largely influenced by instinctual drives (id). This study is relevant as it also employs Freud's approach, though it differs in focus and object, as it examines two forms of trauma: psychological trauma and neurosis trauma within a more complex social context. The second study, "Trauma of Loss and Anjani's Defense Mechanism in the Novel *Laut Bercerita* by Leila S. Chudori" (Ningrum et al., 2025), also utilizes Freud's psychoanalysis to depict loss and the ego's defense mechanisms against political and social trauma. In contrast, this research analyzes the representation of trauma comprehensively by combining the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih with Freud's theories regarding the id, ego, and superego.

Based on this description, this research aims to describe the representation of psychological trauma and neurosis in the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach and the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih. This research is expected to enrich the study of literary psychology by highlighting the influence of inner conflict, social pressure, and traumatic experiences on the behavior of characters in Indonesian literature

2. Literature Review

Trauma is a psychological disorder that arises from extraordinary experiences that induce fear, a loss of control, and deep emotional distress. According to Fatmah & Ningsih (2021), trauma is divided into two main forms: psychological trauma and neurotic trauma.

Psychological trauma occurs as a result of sudden and uncontrollable extraordinary events. This type of trauma can disrupt overall mental balance, affecting both physical and psychological well-being. Meanwhile, neurosis trauma is a disorder that affects the central nervous system due to severe impacts or extreme stress on the brain. Its effects can include motor dysfunction, nerve irritation, and psychosomatic symptoms that hinder an individual's psychological and social functions.

Thus, psychological trauma is rooted in emotional experiences and an individual's loss of control over certain events, while neurosis trauma is related to physiological disorders resulting from stress or impacts that disrupt the nervous system. This distinction is important for understanding the forms of trauma experienced by characters in both psychological and biological contexts.

To gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of trauma, this study employs Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which divides personality structure into three main components: id, ego, and superego. The id functions as the subconscious instinctual drive to seek pleasure and avoid pain; the ego's role is to adapt these drives to reality; and the superego acts as a moral regulator that assesses the morality of an individual's actions. In the context of trauma, the conflict among these three structures gives rise to psychological symptoms: the id prompts spontaneous reactions, the ego strives to balance reality, and the superego induces feelings of guilt or moral pressure.

In line with the view of Calinescu (2023), literary works serve as a symbolic space for processing traumatic experiences through language and narrative. Additionally, Sandbæk (2021) emphasizes that psychoanalysis helps understand how subconscious drives and feelings of guilt are reflected in the behavior of literary characters.

Through the framework of Freud's theory and the concept of trauma from Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih, the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan is represented as a reflection of human inner suffering. This novel depicts how past wounds, social pressures, and moral conflicts shape the behavior and psychological conditions of its characters. This combined approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between subconscious drives, inner conflicts, and the forms of trauma experienced by the characters.

Several previous studies are relevant to this topic. Research by Imamah and Ahmadi (2025) examines women's trauma in the novel Rapuh by Onlymeilanii through Freud's psychoanalytic theory, while research by Ningrum et al. (2025) investigates the defense mechanisms of the character Anjani in Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori. Both studies highlight trauma from a psychological perspective, but have not combined Freud's theory with the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih as this research does.

3. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Siswantoro (2020), the descriptive method is used to describe the condition of the research object based on real facts and in accordance with the actual situation. The approach used is Sigmund Freud's psychological approach, as it is interpretative and relevant to qualitative analysis that emphasizes the meaning of the psychological symptoms of characters. Freud explains that human personality is composed of three main structures: the id, the ego, and the superego, which interact with each other to control subconscious drives. This approach is considered suitable for analyzing the inner conflicts of characters and the representation of trauma in literary works. The focus of this research is to describe the representation of two forms of trauma in the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan, namely psychological trauma and neurosis trauma, by interpreting the psychological dynamics of the characters through Freud's theory.

The object of this research is the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan. This novel was chosen because, thematically, it depicts inner suffering, loss, and psychological conflicts rooted in the traumatic experiences of individuals in border regions, making it relevant to the focus of the study. The data sources in this research consist of two types: primary and secondary sources.

The primary source is the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan, while the secondary sources include Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih, as well as several relevant previous studies. The

research data consists of sentences, narratives, inner monologues, and dialogues of characters that reflect the symptoms of psychological trauma and neurosis trauma.

Data collection techniques are conducted through comprehensive reading and text annotation. The researcher reads the novel thoroughly to understand the context and situations that indicate trauma symptoms, then notes relevant sections using a data collection sheet. The collected data is classified based on the types of trauma: psychological and neurosis, and related to Freud's three structures of personality: id, ego, and superego. Subsequently, data reduction is performed to ensure that only relevant data is used in the analysis.

Data analysis is conducted descriptively with the following steps: (1) grouping data based on trauma categories; (2) classifying based on the manifestations of id, ego, and superego; (3) interpreting the relationship between trauma symptoms and the characters' personality dynamics; and (4) describing the deeper meanings of each data point while considering the narrative and emotional context of the characters.

To ensure the validity of the data, this research applies triangulation of theories and repeated readings. The verification process is carried out by matching the results of the interpretations with Freud's theory and trauma theory, as well as validating meanings through re-reading the text to maintain consistency and credibility in the analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this research manifest as forms of psychological trauma representation found in the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan. The types of trauma experienced include psychological trauma and neurosis trauma. Both forms of psychological trauma identified will be discussed in detail in the following section, referencing psychoanalytic theory to reveal the psychological dynamics of the characters as they confront their traumatic experiences.

4.1 Psychological Trauma

The results of this research manifest as forms of psychological trauma representation found in the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan. The types of trauma experienced include psychological trauma and neurosis trauma. Both forms of psychological trauma identified will be discussed in detail in the following section, referencing psychoanalytic theory to reveal the psychological dynamics of the characters as they confront their traumatic experiences. Trauma is an emotional condition that develops after an unpleasant, sad, frightening, distressing, or irritating traumatic event, such as incidents of rape, combat, physical violence, accidents, natural disasters, and certain events that cause psychological distress, such as a student not passing the National Examination.

Psychological trauma is the result of an extraordinary event or experience that occurs spontaneously (suddenly) in an individual, leaving them unable to control it (loss of control and helplessness) and damaging the individual’s overall mental resilience. The effects of this type of trauma can impact the individual both physically and psychologically (Fatmah & Ningsih, 2021).

Neurosis trauma is a mental disorder that arises due to physical injury or severe shock to the nervous system and brain, usually accompanied by temporary loss of consciousness, seizures, or other bodily function disturbances. This trauma occurs due to a hard impact or extreme experience that disrupts the nervous system and leads to long-term

psychological effects, such as anxiety, fear, and emotional tension that is difficult to control. 15 data points represent neurosis trauma, as follows:

Data 1

Psychological Trauma	**Id**
"Her face was so pale, and blood kept dripping from her right calf. When she felt strong enough to stand and a terrible fear struck her chest, she ran hesitantly and practiced, then hid among the trees." (TP.KRDTB :25)	The instinctive urge to save himself appears when the main character runs wild and hides among the trees. This spontaneous action is a manifestation of the id, which is driven by the instinct to defend life due to intense fear

Data 1 shows the condition of psychological trauma experienced by the character through intense fear. The weak physical state, dripping blood, and the act of running aimlessly reflect the body's response to extreme mental stress after an event that threatens safety. This indicates a traumatic experience that dominates the character's consciousness until a reflex reaction arises.

It can be seen from the character's instinctive urge to save himself without thinking. The id operates based on the principle of pleasure and survival instincts, so that the actions of hiding and running are a form of spontaneous reaction that arises from the subconscious in order to avoid pain and threats.

Data 2

Psychological Trauma	**Id**
"Before he could breathe a sigh of relief, the sound of a dog barking, filtering, squealing. The man's face turned as white as cotton again." *(TP.KRDTB :27)*	The subconscious urge to defend oneself reappears at the sound of a dog barking. The instinct of fear and the threat of danger trigger an automatic reaction in the character's body; his face turns white as cotton. This suggests the id operates on the pleasure principle and the unconscious, seeking to avoid pain and threats by generating spontaneous physical reactions.

Data 2 Data 2 shows that psychological trauma is reflected in the deep fear reaction when the character hears the sound of a dog barking. The traumatic memory retriggers the fear it previously tried to control, making its body react automatically with a pale face. This is a symptom of fear resulting from a traumatic experience that has not yet been recovered.

The id appears from the body's spontaneous reactions without conscious control. The id controls the character's behavior, causing paleness and panic because of the self-defense mechanism that works instinctively. The id encourages individuals to immediately avoid situations that cause pain or threats to themselves

Data 3

Psychological Trauma	**Id**
"Even the lips were tight in such tension." *(TP.KRDTB :31)*	The spontaneous reaction of fear arises without logical control, showing humans' subconscious urge to protect themselves from the threat of danger.

Data 3 shows that the phrase "Even the lips were tight in such tension." indicates psychological trauma in the form of anxiety and extreme tension. The body reacts by

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freezing as a sign of deep fear. This condition demonstrates that the character is unable to control emotional reactions due to strong psychological pressure.

The id is evident through the subconscious impulse that causes the character to freeze. This unthinking reaction is part of the survival instinct rooted in the subconscious system. The id triggers reflexive behavior to avoid threats and protect oneself from perceived danger.

Data 4

Psychological Trauma	**Id**
"No answer." *(TP.KRDTB :34)*	Silence becomes a subconscious expression of psychological pressure; fear takes over the body and mind.

Data 4 shows that the phrase "No answer." indicates psychological trauma in the form of fear and emotional suppression. The character's silence reflects an inability to respond due to intense psychological pressure. This condition portrays a defensive reaction to trauma, where fear dominates the mind and paralyzes verbal expression.

The id is evident through the instinctive impulse that leads the character to remain silent. This reaction arises unconsciously as a form of self-protection against perceived danger or emotional threat. The id governs the reflex to withdraw and avoid confrontation, manifesting the character's inner struggle between fear and the instinct to survive.

Data 5

Psychological Trauma	**Ego**
" Hasyim's ears heard the sound of a dog barking in the distance. His chest was pounding, a very bad image immediately crossed his mind." *(TP.KRDTB:54)*	The bad images that flashed through Hashim's mind showed that his mind was trying to interpret a threatening situation. The ego plays a mediating role between the fear of the id and the reality of what might happen, so that awareness arises that the dog's voice can carry a real threat.

Data 6 illustrates psychological trauma in the form of anticipatory anxiety when Hasyim hears the sound of a dog. The negative imagery that immediately arises in his mind indicates the presence of unresolved emotional wounds, where traumatic memories resurface solely through auditory stimuli.

Ego is evident when Hasyim's thoughts attempt to interpret the sound rationally. The ego plays a role in mediating between the panic-driven impulses of the id and the reality it faces. He does not act impulsively but tries to assess the threat logically, demonstrating a degree of conscious control amid inner turmoil.

Data 7

Psychological Trauma	**Ego**
"Hasyim couldn't say anything at all. First, fear still enveloped him." *(TP.KRDTB :56)*	Ego played a role when Hasyim did not speak and chose silence as a form of control over his fear. He realizes that speaking in that situation might be risky, so the ego mediates the id's impulse (wanting to scream/release tension) with the frightening reality around him.

Data 7 illustrates psychological trauma in the form of fear that dominates the body and hinders the ability to speak. The character is unable to articulate words because their mind is still overwhelmed by deep anxiety after experiencing a dangerous situation. This indicates trauma that affects psychological functions.

Ego is evident when the character restrains themselves from speaking. The ego mediates between the id's impulse to express fear and the reality of the risky situation. They choose to remain silent to ensure safety, demonstrating conscious control over subconscious impulses.

Data 8

Psychological Trauma	**Ego**
"They waited a few seconds very carefully." *(TP.KRDTB :32)*	Characters control emotions and choose rational attitudes; he weighs the dangers and acts carefully to save himself.

Data 8 shows that the sentence "They waited a few seconds very carefully." indicates psychological trauma in the form of extreme vigilance after a tense event. The characters restrain themselves and do not act rashly, a sign that fear still dominates their consciousness.

Ego is evident in this careful action. The ego functions to regulate actions according to reality, restraining the id's impulse to flee or attack immediately. Thus, the ego demonstrates a balance between fear and rational consideration to remain safe.

Data 9

Psychological Trauma	**Ego**
"Cornelius watched the man intently, but his mouth was silent." *(TP.KRDTB :33)*	The silent reaction is a form of self-control; Cornelius tried not to be careless so as not to make the situation worse.

Data 9 illustrates psychological trauma in the form of tension that causes the character to become mute. Cornelius observes but does not speak, indicating that he is suppressing his emotional reactions to avoid worsening the situation.

Ego is evident in Cornelius's ability to control himself. He chooses to remain silent to adapt to the risky situation, demonstrating the role of the ego as a balance between subconscious fears and the demands of reality.

Data 10

Psychological Trauma	**Ego**
"Nanji, Mamut, and the young men were sneaking behind a tree." *(TP.KRDTB :33)*	They strategize to survive; this action is not the result of an instinctive impulse, but a conscious decision to face a risky situation.

Data 10 shows psychological trauma reflected in the actions of the character who moves stealthily behind a tree. The fear resulting from traumatic experiences makes the character cautious in every movement to avoid detection by the enemy. This attitude illustrates an inner condition still enveloped in anxiety and heightened vigilance toward threats.

From the perspective of Freud's psychoanalytic approach, this behavior reflects the role of the ego, which works to balance the id's impulse to flee with the reality of the situation. The character strives to control his fear and acts rationally to ensure safety,

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demonstrating that the ego functions to maintain stability between fear and the need for survival.

4.2 Traumatic Neurosis

Trauma is a disorder that occurs in the central nervous system (the brain) of an individual due to impacts from hard objects or blows to the head. The implications include bleeding, irritation, and other conditions affecting the brain. Patients experiencing this trauma are usually unconscious or unresponsive at the time of the incident, which is typically temporary (Fatmah and Ningsih, 2021).

Traumatic Neurosis is a disorder that occurs in the central nervous system (the brain) as a result of impacts from hard objects or blows to the head. This condition can lead to bleeding, irritation, or other disruptions in brain function. Patients typically experience temporary loss of consciousness or unresponsiveness. This trauma not only has physical effects but also causes psychological consequences such as emotional disturbances, tension, and excessive anxiety. In the context of Freud's psychology, Traumatic Neurosis indicates a disruption in the relationship between consciousness and the subconscious, triggering uncontrollable psychological reactions. There are 15 data points representing Traumatic Neurosis, as follows:

Data 11

Traumatic Neurosis	**Id**
"The pain was so sudden. A bullet was still lodged beneath his bone. It was excruciating." *(TN.KRDTB :27*)	The instinctive drive to survive arises from the intense pain of a gunshot wound. The id works through body reflexes to endure pain and stay alive.

Data 11 Indicates Traumatic Neurosis, which arises as a result of severe physical injury. The excruciating pain of a bullet lodged beneath the bone represents nerve trauma resulting from physical violence. The body responds with extreme pain, exhibiting suffering that is not only physical but also shakes the mental state.

The id appears from the instinctive drive to survive in the midst of pain. The id works reflexively without considering logic, giving rise to spontaneous efforts to endure pain and stay alive. This reaction originates from the subconscious, which focuses on the principle of maintaining one's existence.

Data 12

Traumatic Neurosis	**Id**
"The man was increasingly frantic. His breath was labored. He fell repeatedly, crashing into trees and falling into the bushes." *(TN.KRDTB :28)*	The instinctive urge to save himself made him continue running aimlessly even though his body was exhausted.

Data 12 Indicates Traumatic Neurosis due to extreme fatigue and panic. The character's body experiences a loss of control, falls, and crashes into trees, indicating that his nervous system is shaken violently due to combined physical and mental stress.

The id is apparent because the act of running without direction occurs impulsively. The subconscious urge to save oneself completely dominates the character, depicting a self-defense mechanism that is driven purely by instinct without involving rational consciousness.

Data 13

Traumatic Neurosis	**Id**
"The man's face turned as pale as cotton again." *(TN.KRDTB :27)*	The subconscious fear of death made his body react through facial pallor.

Data 13 shows the sentence "The man's face turned as pale as cotton again." shows Traumatic Neurosis in the form of a physical reaction to deep fear. Facial pallor is a sign that the body is losing control due to a nervous response to a perceived threat.

The id works dominantly because the body's reactions occur without awareness. The id produces spontaneous physiological effects when the individual feels threatened, indicating an instinctive mechanism to protect oneself from danger that evokes traumatic memories.

Data 14

Traumatic Neurosis	**id**
"The man was lying down, his body covered in mud and blood." *(TN.KRDTB :32)*	Physical pain and suffering give rise to subconscious reactions; the body responds to nerve trauma resulting from severe injury.

Data 14 "The man was lying down, his body covered in mud and blood." (TN.KRDTB:32) shows Traumatic Neurosis through physical suffering due to severe injuries. This condition triggers psychological stress and intense nervous reactions in the characters.

These reactions originate from the id, where subconscious drives give rise to automatic responses to pain and danger. The body responds spontaneously without conscious control, indicating the direct impact of nerve trauma resulting from injury.

Data 15

Traumatic Neurosis	**id**
"The bullet is still in his leg.." *(TN.KRDTB :33)*	Extreme pain indicates a nervous breakdown due to physical impact; the character loses control of his body due to trauma.

Data 15 showing the quote "The bullet is still in his leg.." shows Traumatic Neurosis in the form of extreme pain that affects physical and mental conditions. These injuries cause nervous disorders that cause temporary loss of body control.

The id appears when pain triggers an automatic reaction to survive. The id works in the form of a bodily reflex that tries to avoid further suffering, even though rational consciousness is unable to function optimally

Data 16

Traumatic Neurosis	**id**
"Nanji, Mamut, and the youths shivered silently." *(TN.KRDTB :33)*	Their bodies trembled due to mental stress and intense fear; the nervous system reacts to dangerous conditions.

Data 16 "Nanji, Mamut, and the youths shivered silently." (TN-KRDTB:33) illustrates Traumatic Neurosis through the body's reaction to fear and heavy mental pressure. The trembling bodies and nerve tension reflect a physiological response to sudden danger, indicating the psychological impact of the traumatic situation they are experiencing.

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From the perspective of the id, this reaction arises as a subconscious impulse that triggers an automatic response. Their bodies tremble and freeze without conscious consideration, demonstrating the natural defense mechanism against threats, where the instinct for safety operates faster than rational thought.

Data 17

Traumatic Neurosis	**Ego**
"It was the pain that now gripped his body, dizzying his head, and making his eyes flicker." *(TN.KRDTB :27)*	The ego tries to balance consciousness so as not to lose control, even though the body experiences disturbances.

Data 17 "It was the pain that now gripped his body, dizzying his head, and making his eyes flicker." (TN.KRDTB:27) shows Traumatic Neurosis which appears from physical and psychological reactions due to intense pain. This condition describes a nervous breakdown and mental stress that almost makes the character lose consciousness.

In the ego aspect, the character tries to maintain self-control amidst severe physical suffering. The ego balances consciousness so that it is not controlled by pain and panic, so that the character is still able to survive even though his body is shaken by trauma.

Data 18

Traumatic Neurosis	**Ego**
"His vision grew increasingly blurry. Just as he was about to be overcome with despair, he vaguely saw a vast expanse of space before his eyes." *(TN.KRDTB :29)*	The ego holds back consciousness from completely disappearing and tries to find hope to survive.

Data 18 "His vision grew increasingly blurry. Just as he was about to be overcome with despair, he vaguely saw a vast expanse of space before his eyes." (TN.KRDTB:29) illustrates Traumatic Neurosis through the physical and psychological symptoms resulting from heavy pressure. The condition of dizziness and near despair indicates that his body and mind are on the brink of exhaustion.

In this case, the ego plays a crucial role in maintaining consciousness so that the character does not completely lose control. He continues to strive for a glimmer of hope for survival. The ego serves as the rational force that keeps the character aware and fighting against the urge to give up.

Data 19

Traumatic Neurosis	**Ego**
"His injured right calf was drowning in a sea of mud." *(TN.KRDTB : 30)*	The ego adapts to the reality of suffering; The character tries to keep moving so as not to give in to the situation.

Data 19 "His injured right calf was drowning in a sea of mud."" (TN.KRDTB:30) illustrates Traumatic Neurosis through the physical pain and psychological pressure resulting from the character's injury. This condition reflects a suffering that affects both the body and the mind simultaneously.

In terms of the ego, the character strives to adapt to the reality of this suffering. He endures the pain and continues to fight to avoid falling into despair. The ego functions to suppress the surrendering impulses from the id and maintain awareness for survival in difficult situations.

Data 20

Traumatic Neurosis	**ego**
"Cornelius immediately checked the man's pulse." (*TN.KRDTB :34)*	Conscious actions demonstrate self-control; Cornelius suppressed panic and thought logically to determine the victim's condition.

Data 20 "Cornelius immediately checked the man's pulse." (TN.KRDTB:34) indicates the presence of Traumatic Neurosis in the form of a quick reaction to a tense situation. Despite being under pressure, Cornelius strives to remain calm and acts logically to assess the victim's condition. This suggests a nerve tension arising from traumatic experiences, yet it remains controllable.

Cornelius's ego is clearly evident when he chooses to check the victim's pulse rather than panic or flee. The ego plays a role in controlling the emotional impulses and fear that arise from the id. Cornelius uses logic and awareness to act according to the real situation. This means that the ego works to maintain a balance between subconscious drives and the demands of reality, allowing him to stay calm and rational under pressure.

The results of this research show that the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan represents psychological trauma and Traumatic Neurosis through the inner struggles of the main character, triggered by social conflict, violence, and loss. Through the psychological approach of Sigmund Freud and the traumatic theory of Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih, it was found that psychological trauma manifests as feelings of fear, anxiety, and a loss of self-control, while Traumatic Neurosis is evident through behaviors such as daydreaming, delusions, and the repression of past emotions.

The representation of trauma in this novel illustrates the psychological process of a character caught between instinctual drives (id), moral control (superego), and reality (ego) that conflict with one another. This depiction presents a complex psychological dynamic, showcasing how traumatic experiences can shape a person's mindset and actions.

Unlike previous studies that focused more on trauma in the context of war or physical violence, this research concentrates on inner trauma resulting from social conflict and existential loss within a local cultural context. This enriches the study of literary psychology by demonstrating that trauma can arise not only from major events but also from struggles with identity and strained social relations.

The implications of these findings are significant for the development of literary studies and character education. Through an understanding of trauma representation in literary works, readers can learn about inner resilience, empathy, and psychological healing. This novel can serve as teaching material that helps students comprehend human psychological conditions while fostering social sensitivity toward suffering and humanity.

Compared to previous research, the findings of this study reinforce that literature can be an effective medium for understanding the dynamics of trauma and its healing. The psychological approach applied shows that literary works not only present stories but also capture the complexities of the human mind in facing life pressures and socio-cultural conflicts.

5. Conclusion

This research shows that the novel *Kidung Rindu di Tapal Batas* by Aguk Irawan MN represents trauma as a complex inner experience that arises through the psychological conflicts of the characters. The two forms of trauma found are psychological trauma and

Traumatic Neurosis. Psychological trauma manifests through emotional symptoms such as fear, loss, and deep guilt, while Traumatic Neurosis manifests in nervous distress, physical suffering, and mental tension due to past traumatic experiences.

Using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach, this research reveals that the dynamics between the id, ego and superego play an important role in determining a character's response to trauma. Unconscious drives (id) encourage spontaneous reactions, the ego attempts to adapt to reality, and the superego generates feelings of guilt or oppressive morality. The integration of Freud's theory with Fatmah K. and Diah Retno Ningsih's traumatic theory produces a more comprehensive understanding, because Freud's theory explains the inner mechanisms behind trauma, while Fatmah & Ningsih's theory systematically classifies the types and manifestations of trauma.

The results of this research affirm that trauma in literary works is not merely a depiction of suffering but also a form of psychological struggle to restore self-balance. The novel illustrates how characters navigate their inner wounds through moral conflicts, feelings of guilt, and self-awareness arising from the tension between the id, ego, and superego.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of literary psychology, particularly in analyzing the representation of trauma using a combined psychoanalytic and traumatic theory approach. Practically, the findings of this research can serve as a reference in literature education to understand the relationship between the psychological conditions of characters and human life experiences, and are relevant to mental health studies, as they depict defense mechanisms and the process of inner healing through literary narratives.

Future research is encouraged to expand the study of trauma representation by utilizing other psychoanalytic theories, such as those of Carl Gustav Jung, to explore characters' aspects of the collective unconscious, or Jacques Lacan's theory to analyze the relationship between language and trauma. Additionally, research can be developed with sociological or cultural approaches, particularly to examine the border context as a social space that shapes characters' identities and traumatic experiences. Subsequent studies may also explore the pedagogical aspects of this novel, especially in its use as a medium for teaching character development and empathy in Indonesian literature education.

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AN EXPLORATION OF ORTHOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES AMONG SEPEDI GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN ESSAY WRITING

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Abstract

Writing is a language skill that every Sepedi language custodian should master. Learners seem to encounter multiple orthographic challenges in their formal writing activities, thereby deviating from standard spelling rules in the language. This study aims to critically explore orthographic errors made by Sepedi learners in their essay writing. It is a qualitative study which seeks to assess the quality of language usage in Grade 10 classrooms. Four learners and two Sepedi educators were purposively sampled for this study. Learners' formal activity scripts were utilized while teachers were interviewed to gather data, thereby employing document review and semi-structured interviews as data collection tools. Data were analysed thematically to identify and critically examine spelling challenges. Findings from this study indicate that learners face significant orthographic challenges, including differentiating between conjunctive and disjunctive writing systems, incorporating colloquial language into formal writing, and handling the insertion and omission of certain letters and vowels, as well as punctuation issues, among other issues. The study is expected to contribute to addressing overall orthographic challenges among Sepedi learners, as well as being handy to Sepedi language educators on how to instruct grammar lessons.

Keywords: *essay writing; formal writing; learners; orthography; spelling errors; teachers; writing proficiency*

1. Introduction

Orthography competence appears to be an enormous challenge to learners learning African languages. Writing serves as a basic skill across global languages. Plenty of Grade 10 learners encounter general orthography problems in their essays written in Sepedi, even though they are native language speakers and can demonstrate proficiency when speaking. All language skills are critical to effective communication, and spelling is a fundamental component of written language, which is essential to academic achievement as it enables students to express their ideas. Nondabula N. (2020) emphasizes that writing is an important element of language acquisition and serves as an important assessment tool in primary and secondary education worldwide. The problem concerning the present study is the alarming orthographic errors committed by Sepedi learners in their essays. Mokgolobotho M. J (2024) used qualitative data to reflect on the spelling challenges experienced by Sepedi learners in a

Grade 9 classroom. The spelling issues seem to apply to many African languages, with Tshivenda and isiXhosa learners found to have similar challenges (Mugwabana T. C., 2024; Daries & Probert, 2020).

Furthermore, Esther (2015) points out that spelling errors pose a major challenge in essays, as it becomes difficult for one to read them. Learners who make spelling mistakes without punctuation make it difficult for the marker to mark their essays correctly, and this will make it difficult for teachers to understand what the learner wants to say. Modipane (2018) argues that it is important that government officials continue to establish libraries in rural schools, a proposal that holds great value as it would give students access to a variety of literature, thus enhancing their reading skills and understanding of language usage.

Nondabula N. (2020) emphasizes the importance of developing writing skills among students as a means of enhancing their knowledge acquisition and creativity. By instructing students in the classroom on proper writing techniques and teaching pronunciation, teachers can help improve their spelling and make them aware of the difference in how words are written. For example, Sepedi learners evidently fail to distinguish between the graphemes /hl/ and /tlh/, and this may lead to grammatical mistakes such as writing "hlakahlakano" instead of "tlhakahlakano". Modiba and Chokoe (2024a) identify this as an orthographic dilemma for the language's literate speakers. As a result, teaching students to write can significantly reduce spelling errors. Writing is an important part of learning, as it enables learners to access knowledge and express their ideas across different subjects within the curriculum (Ngubane N, 2021).

Although Grade 10 learners are native Sepedi speakers, they often experience spelling problems in their schoolwork. This challenge negatively affects their overall educational outcomes, especially in the case of Sepedi. This study aims to address the issue of widespread spelling errors, to seek to know what causes them, and to suggest possible strategies for enhancing student achievement. According to Gee (2005), literacy includes both reading and writing skills. However, teachers often do not pay much attention to the rules or conventions of writing, which contributes to the difficulty of Sepedi Home Language learners in writing. The alarming growth of spelling errors by Sepedi learners in formal activities led to the imperative undertaking of this study. While the purpose of this article is to explore some common orthographic errors committed by Sepedi learners, it also sheds light on language instructors on where emphasis should be put during grammar lessons.

2. Literature Review

This section commences by consulting global scholars regarding the importance of writing skills and their implications, concluding with Sepedi scholars who provide insightful ideas regarding common orthographic challenges in the language. Across the four macro-skills for learners, writing appears to be the skill facing multivarious challenges (Labicane & Oliva, 2022). Writing skills are the most important of the four language skills. Writing is sometimes a difficult skill for a teacher. This is especially evident as many teachers experience challenges in teaching writing (Bulqiyah, Mahbub, & Nugraheni, 2021). Hyland (2019) maintains that students often have varying levels of writing proficiency, making it difficult to design a course that caters to all students. One student may already have strong writing skills, while another may struggle with building basic sentences. On this note, Rahman, Ismail and Ismail (2024) point out that teaching grammar remains an enduring challenge for educators. This is due to poor instructional approaches employed by

educators. Challenging students may need one-on-one support, which is difficult to provide in classrooms, the reason being that many of our classrooms are overcrowded.

Bhandari (2024) emphasizes that students often face difficulties in organizing their thinking and constructing a coherent text, which may reduce their motivation to become writers. Likewise, Ramaoka and Chauke (2024) state that learners' ability to generate and organise ideas is also compromised by grammatical inadequacies, as they have trouble in transforming conceptualised information into written ideas. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions, which build learners' foundational skills and enhance writing experiences.

West and Meier (2020) argue that it is not easy for teachers to give individual feedback on each student's work. Providing effective feedback is critical to writing development, but teachers often face constraints in terms of time and resources. According to Segabutla and Evans (2019), the effectiveness of Sepedi writing depends on teachers being able to communicate with students orally, as good teaching may not be possible if teachers do not have Sepedi language skills. The problems associated with the teaching and acquisition of writing skills in South Africa need to be addressed urgently. Students often experience the challenge of writing words when those they write lack meaning and are full of errors (Condy, 2024). In addition, students often do not adhere to the components of writing prescribed in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS, 2011), while teachers face challenges in effectively integrating learning with students' real-life experiences.

The problems of teaching writing in the home language stem from the inadequate supply of materials from the Ministry of Education. Bracewell (2020) suggests that it is important for learners to acquire reading skills before developing writing skills. Reading enhances students' vocabulary and introduces them to the formal language needed for instructional design. As a result, students become more familiar with the writing styles of the languages they attend, enabling them to write in those languages. The shortage of reading materials in the Home Language, coupled with the limitations imposed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), indicates that students lack the critical support needed to improve their writing skills in the Home Language.

The Department of Education (2011) has created the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as a guide to assist teachers and students in teaching and learning essay writing. According to CAPS (2011:30), students should be taught to write using a process-based approach. Through an active process of meaning-making, the process approach helps students improve their writing skills. The writing phase is a strategy that integrates writing skills from the beginning of the learning process (Gezmis, 2020:565).

Songxaba and Sincuba (2019) suggest that platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook have a significant impact on students' writing skills. It is shown that social media is ingrained in our lives and has become a standard form of instant communication. However, while it provides benefits and entertainment, it can also negatively affect children's education. Students may carry slang or abbreviations in their formal writing, which raises issues with their academic work. Over-reliance on instant digital sentences can reduce grammar and proofreading (Stoilova, Livingstone, & Khazbak, 2021).

Having said that, it is imperative to consult literature on the studies of Sepedi language orthography. In their study, Maledu et al. (2023) reveal that spelling remains a huge problem for Sepedi students at higher learning spaces. In their analysis they found that

most errors, such as incorrect usage of passive voice and pronouns, omissions, interference of pronunciation, and punctuation issues, are a greater challenge to Sepedi students. The above issues are no exception to the present investigation. Modiba (2024b) conducted an in-depth qualitative study on the orthographic challenges faced by Sepedi university students. She cites multiple metalinguistic aspects that seem to be an alarming challenge to Sepedi learners and students. Orthographic aspects such as conjunctive and disjunctive writing, incorrect passive and deverbatives, separating compound nouns, and loanword nativisation were noted by Modiba as problematic to both Sepedi learners and students. Furthermore, Modiba and Chokoe (2024a) speak to the challenge of differentiating the graphemes /hl/ and /tlh/ in Sepedi writing. Their results prove that some learners and teachers seem to have limited knowledge of when to apply the two graphemes. The above issues raised by Maledu and colleagues (2023), Modiba (2024a) and Modiba & Chokoe (2024b) are purely parallel to this study. The present study makes a further demonstration of how spelling remains a major challenge to Sepedi language custodians, with specific reference to learners in a Grade 10 essay writing.

3. Research Method

To gain insights that could help address the major and minor questions of this study, a qualitative approach was adopted. According to Mrabti and Alaoui (2024), the qualitative method refers to the technique used to collect qualitative information. This method consists of collecting and organizing non-statistical information (Matanda & Mawere, 2022). The purpose of using this method is to understand the difficulties learners face in Sepedi orthography by looking at the experiences of learners and teachers. According to Tracy S. J. (2013), the qualitative method helps to gather accurate information, enables stakeholders to share their feelings and experiences. The qualitative method helped the researchers to discover the detailed information that is important to validate the open-ended questions: why do these challenges persist, and how can we mitigate them? A collection of key methodological information ends up answering research questions effectively. Using this approach enabled researchers to present empirical evidence about the problem that motivated them to conduct this study.

This research involves a population from Mapela Circuit in the Mogalakwena District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The school in which the study takes part has a total of 615 pupils and 19 teachers, among whom three are teachers of Sepedi as a Home Language. According to Mannan and Afni (2020), information should be collected so that the researcher can analyze it, as that will help him in the research to meet his needs. This study purposefully sampled four learners and two educators involved in the Sepedi learning and teaching process. These learners were selected based on their scripts reflecting the desired data for the purpose of this study, while the two teachers are involved in the teaching and marking of FET phase essays.

Data were collected through document review and semi-structured interviews. Document review was performed by assessing learners' classwork books and examination papers, particularly Paper 3 formal activities. The interview method was chosen to enable researchers to engage in direct conversations with teachers, through which they can honestly express their opinions. Researchers were able to use these procedures to assess whether the methods used to instruct writing skills had an impact on the difficulties experienced by students in writing essays in Sepedi Home Language. Thematic methods

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were adopted to perform data analysis; thus, orthographic elements were categorized into themes such as letter omissions, incorrect vowels, division and combination of words, among others. In terms of ethical considerations, clearance was applied for, and the study was granted clearance with project number TREC/936/2025/PG.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings and analysis of the information gathered from the stakeholders. The main purpose of this study is to explore the challenges that Grade 10 learners experience when writing an essay in the Sepedi Home Language at a school in the Mapela learning area in the Mogalakwena District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Learners were given an essay task while teachers were individually interviewed. The section starts with what is found (the results) and therefore wraps with the analysis (discussion).

4.1 The Results

4.1.1 Document analysis from learners' scripts

In the form of learners' essay scripts, they were analyzed and carefully arranged to find the answer to the research problem. The pupils were given the task of writing a reflective essay on "A day I will never forget".

Learner 1:

In the second paragraph, the learner connects words that should not be connected, failing to know when to separate them. See the word below:

Sale > Sa le (still)

The word *sa le* should not be connected because when it is connected, it no longer describes what the learner wants to say. The learner also struggles with the writing of raising-vowels, such as in the example below:

*Itukiša > It**o**kiša* (preparing oneself)

Here, the mid-vowel /o/ is pronounced the same as the high vowel /u/ due to the influence of the prefix / i-/. However, Sepedi language users should note that while the mid-vowels are sometimes pronounced the same as the high ones, they should remain written as the mid-vowels in paper. Sounds are not always written as pronounced.

Learner 1 further did not make use of an important asterisk "š" in Sepedi, rather they dwelled only on "s". The sound /š/ is a palatal sound, while /s/ is articulated between the tip of the tongue and the upper teeth- a fricative sound. Consider this:

Letsatsi > Letšatši (A day)

Learner 2:

Researchers found that learner 2 on the mind map made a spelling mistake. The learner wrote "mele" when he should have written "mmele" (body), omitting the letter "m". The first paragraph is not cluttered, the learner is staying on the topic, and it really indicates that the learner is making a conjecture, as this paragraph is full of errors. Consider these:

Mošopologo > Mošupologo (Monday)
*Kudukud > Kudukud**u*** (Emphasis)
Di phautšing > Diphapošeng (in the classrooms)
Di puku > Dipuku (books)

The learner's essay indicates that he or she has a spelling challenge because he or she is connecting words that should not be connected and separating words that should not be separated, thus resulting in his/her essay losing its meaning. The omission of the vowel "u" in the first two words was also incorrect.

The table below demonstrates some errors made by learners 3 and 4:

Table 1

Data from learners 3 & 4

Learners' misspelled words	Researchers' corrections
Mokgotše	Mokgotse (friend)
Nayona	Naye (be with him/her)
Sefelo	Se fele (does not end)
Matla	Maatla (strength)
Lenwe	Lengwe (other day)
Gage	Gagwe (his/her…)
Magonte	Makgonthe (Valid)
Thokofala	Hlokofala (to die)
Pello	Pelo (heart)
Bothoko	Bohloko (pain)
Le golo	Legolo (huge)
Jatše	Bjale (now)
Bo phelong	Bophelong (in life)
Baka	Bja ka (mine)

The above table demonstrates numerous orthographic errors that learners have committed in their essay writing. An in-depth analysis of this is found under discussion.

4.1.2 Teacher Interviews

To enhance the maximum understanding of the problem, two Sepedi Home Language educators were interviewed in regard to orthographic issues encountered by their learners.

Research Question 1: *What challenges do you encounter when teaching the essay?*

Teacher 1 : "Generally, our learners cannot write. They struggle to spell words correctly".

Teacher 2 : "Limited vocabulary; learners are unable to express ideas because they lack the right words".

The above answers speak to the lack of writing skills. Failure to write is a challenge because if a learner fails to write, his or her essay may not be valid. Lack of vocabulary is really a curse for learners because they are unable to express their ideas.

Research Question 2: *What orthographic challenges do you think learners usually struggle with?*

Teacher 1 : "Our learners normally struggle with using punctuation marks, the disjunctive and conjunctive writing. In most cases, you find them separating words that are not supposed to be and vice versa".

Teacher 2 : "Almost all aspects of orthography seem to be of a greater challenge to our

> Sepedi learners. When I mark their scripts, I usually rectify them on the misuse of social media language, punctuation problems, dividing words, incorrect vowels, and omitting some letters".

The two teachers are putting an emphasis on the general orthographic challenges faced by their learners. They put more focus on the punctuation marks. A text cannot be readable with incorrect usage of punctuation marks. The other issue raised is the inclusion of social media language in academic writing. As demonstrated in the previous analysis of learners' scripts, it seems the colloquial language adopted by learners into formal writing is a huge challenge. This poses a major task for language teachers.

4.2 Discussion

According to the data reading from learners 1 & 2, it is noticed that there are some similar orthographic mistakes committed by these learners. For instance, the issue of conjunctive and disjunctive writing systems, not knowing where and when to divide words and combine them. Wilkes A. (1985) states that there is inconsistency in the writing systems of the Nguni and Sotho languages, leading to orthographic problems for the writers. However, Sepedi, categorized under the Sotho language group, uses the disjunctive writing system. All Sepedi orthography guides have been consistent and explicit about this system. Even so, some learners continue to inaccurately employ conjunctive writing as shown in the data. Verbal words such as "*na le*" (to have) should always be written as such, rather not conjunctively. The other common mistake noticed is the usage and omission of vowels. Learners seem to confuse the mid-vowels and the high vowels, while in other instances, they just omit them.

The data in Table 1 reflect various orthographic challenges that learners seem to struggle with. Mostly, they omit letters where they are not supposed to. For instance, the letter "a" was omitted on the word *maatla*, the letter "w" was omitted on the word *gagwe*, while the letters "k" and "h" were omitted on the word *makgonthe*. Learners also make an addition of unwanted letters, such as on the *pelo*, wherein "L" was mistakenly added.
Separating words such as on *legolo* and *bophelong* seems to be a challenge for them. On the other hand, joining words together, such as on the corrected *se fele* and *bja ka,* is not allowed in Sepedi. The conjunctive writing and disjunctive writing systems are a mammoth nightmare to Sepedi learners.

Comparably, data heard from teacher interviews indicate that they struggle with several orthography elements whenever marking learners' essays. Most challenges they raised are parallel to those found in learners' data.

5. Conclusion

As demonstrated by the above findings, it appears that orthography challenges pose a huge problem for learner performance in the Sepedi language. The standard orthography is the cornerstone of writing proficiency. While we focused only on Grade 10, it may be worth noting that this problem commences at low grades. Learners should be critically engaged with the spelling patterns from the lower classes, as it will be difficult to grasp them at higher grades. As a matter of fact, among others, we suggest the following to resolve, or rather to minimise spelling nightmares among learners:

- Learners should practice reading a variety of books to develop spelling skills.

- Learners should spend more time being taught the difference between written and spoken language.
- Learners should have their marks deducted where they have made a writing and spelling mistake. This will encourage them to pay attention to writing and spelling.
- Teachers should not be reluctant to engage their learners in various spelling competitions, varying from classroom to competitions organised by the Department of Basic Education.

Grammar skills remain a huge problem for learners at lower and higher educational levels. This study demonstrates that as long as there is a lack of explicit approaches during grammar lessons, writing proficiency shall always be compromised. While a text-based approach is recommended to teaching grammar in the South African context, other methods such as teaching plain grammar may be considered by Sepedi instructors to improve learners' spelling proficiency. Future studies should focus on the possible rethinking of approaches to grammar teaching and instructional methods.

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THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF MASCULINE POWER IN *CANTIK ITU LUKA* BY EKA KURNIAWAN: AN EXISTENTIALIST FEMINIST STUDY

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Abstract

This study analyzes the representation of women as victims of masculine power in *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism. The novel was chosen for its intricate portrayal of women's suffering and social positioning within Indonesia's patriarchal structure, marked by violence, sexuality, and moral oppression. While earlier research has explored themes of women and patriarchy in Kurniawan's works, studies explicitly connecting *Cantik Itu Luka* to Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory remain scarce. This study therefore contributes to a deeper understanding of women's freedom and existence in Indonesian literature. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research draws on the text of *Cantik Itu Luka* as the primary data source. Analysis is conducted through close reading of narrative elements, symbols, and character actions, framed by Beauvoir's concepts of freedom, oppression, and woman as the "Other." The findings reveal that masculine power in the novel manifests through physical violence, sexual exploitation, and moral or social control over women's bodies. The protagonist, Dewi Ayu, together with other female characters such as Alamanda and Maya Dewi, embodies the subjugation of women under patriarchy. Yet, amid this suffering emerges an existential awareness that urges women to assert freedom and autonomy as self-determining subjects. Through his use of magical realism, Kurniawan captures the tension between oppression and resistance, illuminating women's search for meaning and agency. Ultimately, this study enriches feminist literary criticism in Indonesia by showing how literature reflects women's existential struggles toward liberation and self-sovereignty.

Keywords: *cantik itu luka; Eka Kurniawan; existentialist feminism; masculine power; representation of women.*

1. Introduction

Literary works are a complex reflection of human life, processed through a medium of aesthetic and meaningful language. They are not merely entertainment or expressions of imagination; rather, they serve as a social representation that captures the realities, ideologies, and cultural values of a society. According to Rahmawati et al. (2024), literature is a form of artistic work that contains a wealth of language styles and imagination in

expressing ideas and social conditions in society with the aim of attracting readers' interest and awareness. Meanwhile, according to Yupianto et al. (2022), literature is an expression of the human personality in the form of experiences, thoughts, enthusiasm, and beliefs in the form of concrete images that arouse fascination with the tools of language and the embodiment of life as a result of the writer's observations of the life around them.

Through literary works, especially novels, authors attempt to present complex human experiences, including suffering, inequality, and power relations in the form of vivid and meaningful stories. According to Fals et al. (2023), a novel is a literary work that can describe the problems of human life, which are expressed deeply and subtly through monologues and dialogues carried out by the characters in the story. Novels as a literary genre are unique in depicting the journey of human life through dynamic characters, conflicts, and plots.

In the context of modern Indonesian literature, novels are often used as a space to express social tensions between individuals and the social system that restrains them. According to Pramudita et al. (2025), *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan is one of the monumental works that displays this complexity. First published in 2002, this novel combines magical realism style with Indonesian historical narrative, unfolding a story filled with violence, colonialism, politics, and deep psychological wounds. One work that strongly reflects this complexity is Eka Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*. This work centers on the figure of Dewi Ayu, an Indonesian woman who has become a symbol of women's suffering in a patriarchal society. In her narrative, Dewi Ayu is depicted as a victim of a social system that places women's bodies as commodities. According to Beauvoir (1949), she became a prostitute not because of her free will, but because of life's compulsion and oppressive social structures. Through this character, Eka Kurniawan not only tells the story of a woman, but also reveals the social reality of how women are often reduced to objects of male desire and symbols of family or national honor.

According to Gaviota (2021) in her book ABC Feminisme, Simone de Beauvoir's analysis focuses on the social construction of women as the other. Beauvoir identifies this concept as the basis for the oppression of women, where historically women have been seen as deviant and abnormal, while men are regarded as the universal ideal standard. Therefore, Beauvoir asserts that this view must be set aside for feminism to progress towards freedom and existential equality. According to Lubis (2021), in *Cantik Itu Luka*, this idea is reflected through female characters such as Dewi Ayu, Alamanda, and Maya Dewi, who struggle to define themselves amidst the constraints of patriarchal power. The masculine power depicted by Eka Kurniawan manifests in various forms: physical violence, sexual oppression, and moral and social control. Men are portrayed as the rulers of public space and women's bodies, while women are placed in subordinate positions. According to Wikanditha (2024), characters like Komandan Kamp and Ma Gedik represent the patriarchal authority that controls women's bodies and wills, making them victims within a systemic power circle. Fazalani (2021) also emphasizes that the oppression of women is not only individual but also structural, as part of the social mechanisms that sustain male dominance. Moreover, the historical backdrop in the novel reinforces this depiction of masculine power. The colonial period, Japanese occupation, and post-independence periods served as a stage for violence legitimized by political and military structures. In this context, women's bodies become symbols of power and national honor that are often exploited. Eka Kurniawan employs magical realism to expand the meaning of suffering: seemingly irrational events become metaphors for the social and spiritual chaos resulting from masculine hegemony.

Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist theory posits that men are named "the self," while women are "the other." If the other is a threat to the self, then women are a threat to men. Therefore, if men wish to remain free, they must subordinate women to themselves (Tong, 2019). Due to societal stigma, women develop a mindset that men are useful figures, while women are seen otherwise.

The subjectivity of female characters in the novel Zeina encompasses differences in identity, resilience, and self-formation, internal and external conflicts, as well as the struggle for emancipation and freedom. This study asserts that women can empower themselves even within a patriarchal environment. Empowerment through education, employment, and psychological support is crucial as a foundation for women's roles as agents of change (Nur'aini & Basid, 2025). We found that novels written from a male perspective systematically objectify female characters, while novels written from a female perspective do not show significant objectification towards either gender (Luo et al., 2024).

This research employs a feminist approach as a basis for analyzing the representation of women in Eka Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*. This approach is chosen because it highlights gender inequality, patriarchal systems, and women's struggles to assert their existence amidst male dominance. Through a feminist perspective, literature is understood not only as an aesthetic form, but also as a medium reflecting the social realities and ideologies that influence women's lives.

Recent research by Pramudita et al. (2025) focuses on the dynamics of internal and external conflicts within the narrative structure of the novel, asserting that *Cantik Itu Luka* presents social and psychological conflicts rooted in power relations. However, these studies have not fully uncovered how the representation of women is constructed as victims of masculine power and how their struggles are interpreted through the lens of existential feminism. According to Pertiwi et al. (2023), this research examines forms of gender injustice in *Cantik Itu Luka* using a feminist approach. The findings indicate that women experience subordination, objectification, marginalization, and social stereotypes that position them as weak and passive. Meanwhile, Adhilla et al. (2025) trace how patriarchal culture in the novel produces suffering for female characters. Women are depicted as victims of male domination through sexual exploitation, physical violence, and moral control.

Previous research indicates that studies on *Cantik Itu Luka* still focus on the social and cultural dimensions of patriarchy. Pramudita et al. (2025) highlight the social-psychological conflicts resulting from power relations, while Pertiwi et al. (2023) reveal gender injustices such as subordination and objectification, and Adhilla et al. (2025) examine the suffering of women due to male domination. However, none of these three studies has addressed how women's existential awareness is formed amid oppression. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by examining the representation of women as victims of masculine power through the lens of existential feminism.

By combining text analysis and existential feminist theory, this study hopes to provide a conceptual contribution to Indonesian feminist literary studies. This analysis also seeks to demonstrate that women's struggles in literature are not limited to social dimensions but also represent an ontological struggle to become conscious, sovereign, and free subjects.

The focus of this research is directed at uncovering the meaning and forms of representation of women as victims of masculine power, as well as the existential struggles of women facing male dominance, as depicted in Eka Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*. This study is grounded in an existential feminist perspective, a school of thought that positions women

as subjects with the freedom to determine their existence within the patriarchal social system. The primary focus of this research highlights how Eka Kurniawan portrays women as victims of masculine power structures. In *Cantik Itu Luka*, male power is represented through acts of violence, oppression, and the exploitation of women's bodies occurring in various social and historical contexts. Characters like Dewi Ayu become symbols of women whose bodies are commercialized and objectified by colonizers, local rulers, and society itself, which is built on patriarchal values (Pramudita et al., 2025). This form of oppression is not only physical but also symbolic, illustrating how women lose control over themselves and are compelled to submit to social norms created by men (Fazalani, 2021).

The existential feminist perspective aids this research in understanding that the struggles of women in *Cantik Itu Luka* are not only social but also philosophical and ontological. The resistance exhibited by female characters is an effort to free themselves from social determinism and assert their right to "become" fully human. Thus, this novel becomes a symbolic space that illustrates how Indonesian women, in the context of colonial and post-colonial history, continue to strive for true existential freedom (Wikanditha, 2024). Overall, the focus of this research emphasizes that *Cantik Itu Luka* does not merely present a tragic story of women but also showcases the dynamics of women's consciousness in confronting oppression. Through his magical realism style, Eka Kurniawan offers a narrative about women who are wounded yet resilient, battered by the patriarchal system, but still striving to affirm their existence in a world that seeks to nullify them (Pramudita et al., 2025). Thus, this research centers on how the representation and existential struggles of women in the novel reflect efforts to reclaim autonomy and personal freedom amid hegemonic masculine power.

2. Literature Review

Literature serves as a mirror of the complex human experience, rich with social and cultural values. According to Rahmawati et al. (2024), literature expresses reality and social ideas through aesthetic language. Yupianto et al. (2022) add that literature is an expression of human experiences and thoughts beautifully articulated, while Fals et al. (2023) state that novels are effective media for deeply portraying human life issues through characters and conflicts.

Eka Kurniawan's novel *Cantik Itu Luka* (2002) employs magical realism to reflect history, colonialism, and the suffering of women within a patriarchal system. The character Dewi Ayu symbolizes a woman whose body and identity are controlled by masculine power. Beauvoir's concept of the Other and Sartre's existential idea of freedom form the basis for understanding the struggles of female characters in the novel, where their existence is determined by patriarchal power relations. According to Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in The Second Sex, women are positioned as the Other due to male dominance as the center of power. This notion is supported by Gaviota (2021) and Lubis (2021), who explain that women's struggles in literature reflect efforts to assert their existence amid patriarchal structures.

In this context, Nuraulia et al. (2025) explain that feminist representation in karya in literature showcases the power imbalances between men and women, as well as women's struggles to gain autonomy over their bodies, voices, and lives. They assert that the patriarchal system shapes gender roles that position women as weak, emotional beings dependent on men. This perspective gives rise to injustices such as marginalization, subordination, and symbolic violence that constrain women's freedom. A feminist approach

is employed to reveal the forms of gender injustice experienced by women in society, particularly those caused by patriarchal social and cultural structures (Maharani et al., 2025).

Masculine power in the novel is depicted through physical violence, sexual exploitation, and moral control over women (Wikanditha, 2024; Fazalani, 2021). This condition illustrates that oppression is not only personal but also structural and ideological. Based on existential feminist theory, as explained by Tong (2019) in *Feminist Thought*: A More Comprehensive Introduction, patriarchal dominance gives rise to women's struggles to liberate themselves from subordinate positions toward awareness as independent subjects.

Previous research by Pramudita et al. (2025), Pertiwi et al. (2023), and Adhilla et al. (2025) has focused more on social aspects and gender injustice but has not addressed women's existential awareness. Therefore, this study employs an existential feminist approach with a qualitative descriptive method (Siswantoro, 2020; Creswell, 2014) to analyze the representation of women as victims of masculine power and their struggles to assert their existence. This research emphasizes that the struggles of women in *Cantik Itu Luka* are not merely social but also existential and philosophical.

3. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Siswantoro (2020:56), qualitative descriptive methods are ways to solve research problems by describing or explaining the research object based on real facts and actual conditions. Qualitative research is essential in behavioral sciences because it aims to uncover the motives underlying human behavior (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019) This method is employed because literary research is not oriented towards numbers but towards the interpretation of meanings, symbols, and values contained within literary texts. Through the qualitative descriptive method, this study aims to thoroughly describe the representation of women as victims of masculine power in Eka Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*, as well as to interpret the forms of existential struggle of female characters using an existential feminist perspective.

This research is grounded in the existential feminist theory proposed by Simone de Beauvoir (1949), which highlights that women become “the Other” due to constructions created by masculine social norms and structures. In the context of *Cantik Itu Luka*, this theory is used to explore how female characters such as Dewi Ayu, Alamanda, Adinda, and Maya Dewi experience structural oppression while also showcasing their efforts at resistance and existential awareness against male dominance.

Cantik Itu Luka was chosen as the research object because this work represents the complexity of gender relations, masculine power, and the existential struggles of women in the historical context of colonial and post-colonial Indonesia. Furthermore, the novel features strong yet tragic female characters who symbolize suffering and resistance against the patriarchal system**.** Eka Kurniawan's work possesses thematic depth and philosophical value relevant to existential feminist analysis, making it an appropriate choice for exploring how women's consciousness is formed amid social and cultural dominance.

The data sources for this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data comprises the text of *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan (2002), while secondary data is obtained from books, journals, and scholarly articles relevant to existential feminist studies. Data collection techniques involve intensive reading, note-taking, and classifying parts of the text that indicate forms of oppression and women's resistance against masculine power.

The data analysis procedure is conducted in three stages. The first stage is identifying and coding the data, which involves marking quotes or narratives that demonstrate

masculine power relations and women's experiences in the text. The second stage is thematic categorization, where the results of the identification are grouped into themes such as sexual oppression, social violence, and existential awareness. The third stage is theoretical interpretation, which involves interpreting the findings using Beauvoir's concept of the Other to uncover the existential meaning of women in the context of the patriarchal dominance depicted in the novel.

The accuracy of the data is maintained through triangulation of theories and sources by comparing the researcher's analysis results with various references on global feminism and the social context of the novel. Thus, this qualitative descriptive method not only explains the facts present in the text but also reveals the philosophical meanings and existential awareness of women in facing masculine dominance as depicted in the literary work.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Representation of Women as Victims of Masculine Power

The novel *Cantik Itu Luka* depicts male domination that oppresses women through physical, social, and symbolic power within a patriarchal society. Characters such as Dewi Ayu, Alamanda, and Si Cantik illustrate how women experience oppression while simultaneously struggling to assert their existence. From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism (1949), women are positioned as other beings whose existence is determined by men, resulting in a loss of freedom and subjectivity. In this context, the research conducts an in-depth analysis of the text by linking quotes from the novel, forms of masculine power, and theoretical interpretations of existential feminism. The analysis shows that the oppression of women occurs not only through physical violence but also through social and symbolic constructions that negate their existential freedom. However, behind this oppression, the female characters exhibit forms of resistance and self-awareness in their pursuit of freedom and authenticity. Through mechanisms of psychological, social, and symbolic power, the novel portrays the process of women's struggle against patriarchal structures and their effort to reconstruct their identities as independent subjects. Thus, this discussion not only describes the suffering of women but also interprets the philosophical meanings of their existential struggles, while reinforcing the contribution of this research to the study of feminist literature in Indonesia.

Data 1

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu – became a prostitute due to colonial coercion	“We treat the souls of sick soldiers,” he said. "That's how we became prostitutes, forced and unpaid." (page 96)

Data 1 shows the oppression of women experienced by Dewi Ayu, who was forced to become a prostitute by colonial powers. The quote "That's how we became prostitutes, forced and unpaid" emphasizes the loss of freedom and control over her body.

This condition reflects masculine domination and the dehumanization of women, where women's bodies are used as tools of power. However, Dewi Ayu's awareness of the injustice that befell her emerged, marking the beginning of existential awareness to affirm her existence amidst patriarchal oppression.

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Data 2

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Alamanda-relationship of love and power	“Don't you love me?” "I already have a girlfriend." (p. 220)

Data 2 shows a love relationship characterized by masculine domination and women's resistance efforts. The man's questions illustrate emotional pressure, while Alamanda's answers emphasize her independence to resist control. In Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective, Alamanda tries to become a free subject who makes her own choices and rejects her position as the Other. His actions reflect existential awareness and resistance to patriarchal power.

Data 3

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Beauty and the suffering of physical judgment	"Waiting for my Prince to come," said the girl finally, although she still didn't refuse. "To free me from the curse of an ugly face." (p. 20)

Data 3 depicts women's suffering due to oppressive standards of beauty and physical judgment. Beauty feels her life is cursed because her face is considered ugly, showing how patriarchal values place women based on appearance. This character represents women as the Other whose existence is determined by the male gaze. His hope for a "prince" shows existential alienation, but also a desire to free himself from the shackles of social values that limit his existence as a free human being.

Data 4

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu is the victim and interpreter of her life	"Look, that's Mama," he said to Alamanda. "Photographed by a Japanese, sometime later raped by a Japanese too, and it could be your father's Japanese." (p. 105)

Data 4 shows Dewi Ayu's awareness as a victim of masculine power as well as an interpreter of her own suffering. She realized that the violence that happened to her was not just a personal incident, but part of a patriarchal and colonial system that oppresses women. This awareness marks the first step towards existential freedom, where he tries to understand and affirm his existence even though he is entangled in masculine domination.

Data 5

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu's existential awareness of the masculine world	“There is no more terrible curse than bringing out beautiful baby girls in a world of men who are as perverted as dogs in mating season.” (p. 4-5)

Data 5 shows Dewi Ayu's existential awareness of the harshness of a world dominated by masculine power. She realized that being a beautiful woman was actually a burden and a source of suffering in a patriarchal society. However, by expressing her views critically, Dewi Ayu asserts her subjectivity and freedom to assess the reality of her own life, a form of resistance to masculine domination that oppresses women.

Data 6

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu becomes a prostitute and the object of men's gaze	"She's the best prostitute here, her name is Dewi Ayu," said Mama Kalong. “I will piss on his cock like a tiger marking his territory.” (pages 126-127)

Data 6 shows how Dewi Ayu is reduced to a sexual object in the eyes of men. Remarks that compare her body to a marked territory of power demonstrate a form of masculine domination that makes women objects of ownership and exploitation.

Data 7

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Alamanda was forced to marry by Shodancho	"Until finally he heard a fisherman say that one evening he saw Shodancho driving a truck out of the forest while Alamanda looked unconscious beside him." (page 231)

Data 7 shows the forms of violence and coercion experienced by Alamanda against women. The condition of "unconscious next to her" describes the loss of control of a woman's body and will due to the actions of male domination. This event confirms that the relationship between Alamanda and Shodancho is not based on love, but coercion that reflects patriarchal power. However, this traumatic experience also became a starting point for existential awareness to understand and reject the masculine system that oppressed him.

Data 8

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Rosinah is a mute servant and subordinate lower-class woman	"Rosinah just smiles. She can't talk except for meaningless mumbling sounds, but she can smile and she likes to smile." (p. 9)

Data 8 shows the form of subordination and silence of lower-class women experienced by Rosinah. The condition of being mute and only able to "smile" illustrates the limitations of women in expressing themselves under oppressive social structures. She becomes a symbol of women who are marginalized, whose existence is only recognized as a servant without a voice.

Data 9

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Objectification of women in society's view	“A woman threw her baby into the bushes, and a father carried a banana stalk.” (p. 2)

Data 9 depicts the degradation of women's human values due to the strong patriarchal social construction. The woman's action of "throwing her baby into the bushes" shows the loss of the meaning of motherhood and moral values as a result of oppressive social and cultural pressures. Meanwhile, "a father carrying a banana stalk" is a symbol of the absurdity of a society that has lost empathy and humanity.

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Data 10

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Exploitation of the body as a social identity	"One hundred and seventy-two men. The oldest is ninety-two years old, the youngest is twelve." (p. 3)

Data 10 This illustrates the exploitation of women's bodies as a form of loss of dignity and social identity. The phrase "one hundred seventy-two men" depicts the extent to which women's bodies are objectified to satisfy desires without consideration for their humanity. This quote emphasizes that women's bodies are reduced to tools for fulfilling masculine needs and egos, indicating extreme patriarchal domination.

The data above shows that *Cantik Itu Luka* places women in vulnerable positions due to layered patriarchal practices of body exploitation, violence, and social and moral restrictions. This portrayal is not merely an individual incident but part of a structure and discourse that maintains male dominance. Nevertheless, the text also presents the beginnings of awareness among female characters, a seed of awakening that leads to efforts to assert themselves as subjects. This finding aligns with other studies that emphasize the role of literature in uncovering power inequalities and fostering gender awareness (Nuraulia, Suaedi, & Vardani, 2025).

4.2 The Struggle of Female Characters Facing Male Power

In the novel *Cantik Itu Luka*, female characters such as Dewi Ayu, Alamanda, and Si Cantik are depicted as living under the shadow of patriarchy, yet they are not portrayed as submissive figures. Eka Kurniawan presents women as individuals with self-awareness and the courage to challenge the oppressive social system. From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism, their struggles represent a form of transcendence, an effort to move from the position of the Other toward awareness as free subjects. This resistance is manifested through inner consciousness and the assertion of the right to determine their own life paths, rather than through physical actions. The struggles of these female characters reveal three main forms of resistance: awareness of oppression, affirmation of identity and freedom, and opposition to symbols of masculine power. For instance, Dewi Ayu chooses to return to prostitution not out of despair but as an expression of existential freedom that rejects societal moral control. Alamanda demonstrates resistance through psychological strength against her husband, while Si Cantik strives to overcome her inner wounds by building an independent identity. Together, they represent different stages of women's existential awareness in combating the patriarchal structure that positions them as objects.

Data 1

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu rejects male domination with existential awareness	"There's no difference between a lowly soldier or a Japanese emperor, said Dewi Ayu. They all target women's crotch the same way." (page 93)

Data 1 shows the existential awareness of the character Dewi Ayu towards the patriarchal system that oppresses women. He understood that both the authorities and ordinary people treated women as sexual objects. This statement is not just a cynical expression, but a reflection of life experiences that are full of gender injustice

Data 2

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Alamanda is aware of her power over her body and its attractiveness	“I like men,” Alamanda once said, “but I prefer to see them cry because of love.” (p. 199)

Data 2 shows the character Alamanda's awareness of her position and attractiveness as a woman. She realized that her beauty and charm gave her symbolic power that could reverse the traditional roles between men and women. Alamanda's statement reflects a self-conscious attitude towards power relations, which usually place women as the ones who are controlled. By making men "cry because of love", Alamanda seems to reverse the subordinate position to become emotionally dominant.

Data 3

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Alamanda refuses to love because she wants to be free	"Alamanda raised her hand and made a reverse waving motion in a gesture to make him leave, and Kliwon finally left without saying a word. Undeniable proof that he was in a marriage he didn't want." (page 231)

Data 3 describes Alamanda's rejection of love relationships that limit her freedom. The hand movement used to expel Kliwon becomes a symbol of resistance to emotional and social ties that he does not want. This action shows that Alamanda is aware of the inauthenticity of the relationship she is in, and chooses to maintain her freedom rather than submit to the oppressive demands of love or marriage. Her attitude is a form of resistance to the domestic and emotional roles that are often imposed on women.

Data 4

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu dared to oppose male religious figures	“Because you asked a prostitute to take off her clothes,” said Dewi Ayu, “you must have money to pay me.” (p. 8)

Data 4 shows Dewi Ayu's courage in facing male figures who act as religious figures, who are usually seen as having high moral and social authority. Dewi Ayu's words are a form of sharp verbal resistance to the hypocritical attitude of men who pretend to be holy but still desire women's bodies. With this statement, Dewi Ayu not only refuses to be humiliated but also asserts control over her body and self-esteem. This action marks awareness of one's social position and is a form of reversal of norms that place women as objects of sin or disgrace.

Data 5

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Rosinah shows a form of silent resistance (passive resistance)	Rosinah had bought it at a bakery, and Dewi Ayu smeared herself with corpse preservative, even though it was a person. People sometimes use it as a mixture to make meatball noodles. (pp. 10-11)

Data 5 describes Rosinah as a woman who carries out a form of silent resistance or passive resistance to the system that oppresses her. In this quote, Rosinah's action of buying corpse

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preservation to help Dewi Ayu is not just an ordinary domestic activity but a symbol of support and solidarity among women in a patriarchal society.

Data 6

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Spiritual Awareness against oppression	"I have given four daughters to this cursed world. The time has come for my deathbed to pass." (p. 7)

Data 6 describes Dewi Ayu's inner and spiritual awareness of the suffering that befell herself and her daughters in a world dominated by patriarchal values. Her words show a form of existential reflection on a life full of suffering, where she realizes that the world in which she lives is "cursed" by injustice and oppression of women. This statement also shows resignation which is not just a form of despair, but a deep awareness of the social structure that oppresses and does not provide space for women to freely determine their fate.

Data 7

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu is reflectively aware of the reality of patriarchy	"If I live to be a hundred years old, then I will give birth to eight babies. That's too many." (p. 7)

Data 7 shows Dewi Ayu's reflective awareness of the social role assigned to her as a woman in a patriarchal system. His words were not just a complaint, but a form of criticism of society's view of women as mere reproductive tools. The statement "that's too much" contains a critical awareness that women's bodies are often used as objects for men's interests and a social order that requires them to submit to biological nature. Through this awareness, Dewi Ayu began to question the boundaries between personal will and oppressive social demands

Data 8

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu's independence after her resurrection from the grave	“On a weekend afternoon in March, Dewi Ayu rose from the grave after twenty-one years of death.” (p. 1)

Data 8 depicts the symbolic moment of Dewi Ayu's awakening as a form of enlightenment and existential independence. After twenty-one years of death, her resurrection from the grave is not just a magical event, but also a metaphor for the awakening of a woman's consciousness that refuses to submit to the fate and suffering of the past. Dewi Ayu, who rose again, shows the ability to "relive" with a new awareness of no longer just being a victim of patriarchy, but becoming a figure who understands suffering, laughs at it, and stands above it.

Data 9

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Dewi Ayu rejects society's moral stereotypes	“If possible,” said Rosinah with a gesture to a mosque imam, “he plans to worship himself.” (p. 11)

Data 9 illustrates Dewi Ayu's critical attitude and rejection of society's moral stereotypes, which often look down on women, especially those who are considered socially "impure". Through the symbolic expression that she "plans to worship herself," Dewi Ayu shows a form of spiritual and moral independence, as if rejecting the authority of men, including religious figures, in determining the value and honor of a woman**.**

Data 10

Characters/Events	Quotes from Novels
Existential awareness that rejects hereditary oppression	"I gave birth to four children, and I died." (p. 10)

Data 10 illustrates Dewi Ayu's existential awareness of the cycle of suffering experienced by women due to the patriarchal system. The sentence "I gave birth to four children, and I died" carries a reflective meaning that women's lives are often reduced to reproductive functions and servitude to constraining social values. This statement indicates that Dewi Ayu is aware of being trapped in a cycle of oppression, where women are born to serve men and subsequently pass on the same suffering to future generations.

From the analysis of the above data, it can be concluded that the representation of women in *Cantik Itu Luka* oscillates between two main axes: the victimization of bodies and identities, and existential awareness and resistance. The victimization of bodies and identities illustrates how the patriarchal system subjugates women through violence, sexuality, and social norms that limit their movements and freedoms. Meanwhile, existential awareness and resistance demonstrate the process by which women begin to understand the forms of oppression they experience and strive to assert their existence as free subjects. Thus, this novel not only depicts women's suffering but also constructs a narrative of existential awakening that aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's idea that "one becomes a woman through her own awareness." Through his magical realism style, Eka Kurniawan presents a symbolic world where wounds become a pathway to consciousness; "beauty" is indeed a wound, but it is through this wound that women discover themselves as free, conscious, and sovereign over their lives.

5. Conclusion

The discussion regarding the representation of women as victims of masculine power in Eka Kurniawan's novel *Cantik Itu Luka* can be concluded that this work portrays women living under the oppressive dominance of a patriarchal system. Masculine power in the novel is evident through physical violence, sexual oppression, and social and moral control that restricts women's freedoms. Characters such as Dewi Ayu, Alamanda, and Maya Dewi represent the suffering of women who are objectified by male power, both individually and structurally. This finding indicates that patriarchy not only limits women physically but also shapes their social consciousness and identity, as explained through existential feminist theory. However, behind this suffering, a spirit of resistance and strong existential awareness is also depicted. Women in this novel do not simply accept their fate as victims; they strive to assert their existence and freedom as independent human beings. Through the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism, the struggles of these female characters reflect efforts to move beyond the position of the Other and to become sovereign subjects of their own lives. This analysis underscores the relevance of existential theory in understanding the philosophical dimensions of women's struggles while also reinforcing the

argument about the limitations on women's freedom and agency within patriarchal structures. Thus, *Cantik Itu Luka* not only reveals gender inequalities and patriarchal power but also showcases the existential struggles of women to find meaning in their existence. This study provides a theoretical contribution to feminist literary criticism in Indonesia, demonstrating how an existential feminist approach can be used to interpret gender representations in the novel. The novel asserts that women's liberation is a process of self-awareness that involves rejecting oppression and affirming existence as equal and free individuals. For future research, this study could be expanded by comparing the representation of women in other literary works, thereby enriching the discourse of feminist literature in Indonesia and enhancing the understanding of women's existential struggles.

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EXPLORING DARK DESIRES IN AVENGED SEVENFOLD'S *A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN*: A PSYCHOANALYTIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL READING

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Abstract

Research on dark themes in literature and music often focuses on narrative or aesthetic form, leaving a gap in understanding how psychological and philosophical dimensions shape artistic expression. This study aims to explore how dark desires are represented in Avenged Sevenfold's *A Little Piece of Heaven* through psychological, sociological, and philosophical perspectives. Employing a qualitative descriptive method with thematic analysis, the research identifies symbolic patterns of unconscious drives, moral conflict, and emotional duality within the song's narrative. The analysis applies Freud's concepts of the id, ego, and superego alongside Jung's theory of the shadow self to uncover repressed impulses, while Nietzsche's philosophy is used to interpret how destructive instincts are transformed into creativity and moral reflection. The findings reveal that *A Little Piece of Heaven* embodies the duality of affection and violence, suggesting that dark desires function as both destructive and creative forces within human consciousness. This study contributes to literary and cultural studies by demonstrating how psychological repression and moral conflict in heavy metal music can be interpreted as a creative articulation of human emotion, offering insight for both literary analysis and cultural pedagogy.

Keywords: *Avenged Sevenfold; dark desires; Freud; heavy metal music; literary analysis; psychoanalysis; repression.*

1. Introduction

One of the most fundamental human instincts is the need to seek. It acts almost like a primal urge, motivating people to find joy, closeness, and inspiration. Life is organized around the need to seek, and the range can be as elementary as a need for company or as deeply satisfying as the need for self-actualization. Yet, when the need to seek becomes excessive, the result can be potentially immoral, prohibited, and socially unacceptable. Psychologists describe situations like these as 'dark desires'; they are excess desires resulting from the tension between morality and primal instincts. To illustrate, literature, film, and music explore these impulses within the accepted boundaries of culture and ethics. Absent these controls, society would be forced to confront the violence, obsession, and immoral acts embedded within the narratives.

The study of dark desires is more than psychological; it is also literary and cultural. Every piece of literature and art creates a vent for the attention of the imagination. Repressed emotions can pass through a medium and gain expression. Freud (1923) argues that the consciousness of every human is made up of three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id contains the base instincts which require immediate gratification, the ego mediates between desire and reality, and the superego is the moral consciousness which stems from the social order. When the base instincts of the id are held back by the superego, they find expression in a symbolic and creative form in art, music, or dreams. The Eros and Thanatos (1920) of Freud explain the driving emotions of love and hate, which are juxtaposed. These primary instincts co-exist in the human psyche.

Jung (1964) continued to elaborate upon Freud's ideology of the concept of the shadow self, which is essentially referred to as those hidden aspects of a person's personality that he tries to forget, deny, or even reject entirely. According to Jung, it is imperative to recognize the presence of this shadow self in order to achieve self-actualization; otherwise, this leads to mental chaos in people's minds. As symbols of such hidden emotions, literary works provide individuals an avenue to express those pent-up emotions, conflicts, and issues in a very safe manner, as per Jung's theory. According to this ideology, an individual's dark side in his/her artwork is in no manner an encouragement for darkness, but a cathartic experience to deal with this hidden darkness that is denied by people in general. According to Jung's theory, the Shadow Self encompasses a person's negative as well as those untapped facets of their personality, which implicitly shows that dealing with darkness in people leads to positive outcomes

From a sociological view, dark desire also engages with power, morality, and cultural control. According to Durkheim (1897) and Foucault (1978), social institutions manage and define the acceptable moral parameters, and then shape behaviors within the constructs of belief systems. Foucault pointed out that desire is not eliminated, and even repression, discourse simply directs it elsewhere. Society, therefore, condenses and reproduces the very impulses it seeks to control. Hence, art that expresses the social taboo of violence or death becomes a sign of social hypocrisy. It reveals morality is not absolute and is shaped, interrogated, and redefined through a value experience. Nietzsche (1887) similarly assailed the dichotomy of good and evil, arguing that moral bounds restrain human positive impulses. For him, one's instincts must be confronted, and the more one struggles with one's instincts, the more one gain authenticity. From such a perspective, darkness is a positive source of creative energy rather than destructive.

Avenged Sevenfold's *A Little Piece of Heaven* (2007) is an intriguing text for analysis of dark desires because of its controversial message of love, death, and resurrection in lyrics. The song features theatrical composition accompanied by heavy music, which articulates prohibited desires in an aesthetics-based, rather than morality-based, manner. The message of obsessed love, death, and forgiveness makes this song an important cultural artifact for analysis of how destructive desires are expressed artistically in music.

Related literature has explored dark issues in literary works, poems, and songs, but little is known about the combination of psychological and philosophical approaches in relation to heavy metal music. According to Kristiawan et al. (2024) and Evelyn et al. (2024), heavy metal songs contain aggression, dominance, and hidden emotions, which serve as figurative representations of human struggles. Additionally, psychoanalyzing Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* using Freudian psychoanalytic principles by Hartono (2021) views

guilt, shame, and paranoia as products of repression of desires, thus providing fundamental insights into psychological harms as products of human desires. Likewise, exploring Billie Eilish's song *Bury a Friend* by Andini (2022) identifies hidden meanings of anxiety, identity crises, and self-destruction, which contribute to psychological issues of music enthusiasts in this manner, but little work, at best, has explored how Freudian, Jungian, Nietzschean approaches combine in creating dark desires as both destructive impulses and powerful creativity.

This is what gives rise to this study's theoretical gap. Even today, little research has gone into how this concept of dark desires exists as an interplay between destruction and creation in a single form of art, such as in heavy metal music lyrics itself, although several previous studies involve concepts of repression, fear, as well as moral conflict between different desires in art.

This research explores multiple fields and applies Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Jung's archetype of the shadow, and Nietzsche's philosophy of morality to Avenged Sevenfold's *A Little Piece of Heaven*. Research on this song centers on explaining the meaning of the lyrics or the psychological conflict, and, unlike other works, this study interprets the dark desire in terms of the psychological, moral, and philosophical entirety. With the integration of these theories, this research seeks to demonstrate the idea of art capturing the process of transformation of repressed and destructive impulses and emotions into something constructive and positive. This study makes a fresh contribution to the fields of literary studies and cultural studies in that it proposes that A Little Piece of Heaven is more than merely a dark song, suggesting that it is a symbolic manifestation of human emotion, morality, and introspection.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine how Avenged Sevenfold's song entitled *A Little Piece of Heaven* explores psychological repression and moral conflict via the concepts of Freud, Jung, and Nietzsche, respectively, by identifying how this song converts negative impulses into a positive work of dark desire. This study seeks to lead to literary/cultural studies by providing insights into how heavy metal music actualizes psychological/moral reflection in relation to human emotion via an amalgamation of psychological and moral concepts devised by Freud, Jung, and Nietzsche, respectively.

2. Literature Review

Sigmund Freud's (1936) psychoanalytic theory is an imperative explanation for the manifestation of dark impulses and emotions that get repressed. Freud (1923) argued that the human mind is compartmentalized into three parts, which include the ego, id, and superego. Man's id is symbolic of his primitive impulses for sex, aggression, and instant gratification of his desires. Man's ego is driven by what is referred to as the reality principle, which is responsible for balancing those impulses originated by the id with those laid down by his superego, which is symbolic of society's norms for what is acceptable. For instance, when people's impulses get repressed by their superego, they appear in their dreams, in their daydreams, in art, music, as well as in literary work as an unconscious psychological manifestation of impulses for sex, aggression, and instant gratification of desires.

His later work (1920) brought about his concepts of Eros (life instinct) and Thanatos (death instinct) because he believed that creation and destruction appear to coexist in human actions, causing emotional duality in people's morality.

Jung, in his work (1964) in psychotherapy, progressed from Freud's thoughts by articulating that of the shadow self, which is an unconscious source of desires, emotions, and impulses, which, in turn, is rejected by the conscious mind as impolite, repugnant, ugly, evil, etc. Jung further explained that to attain psychological completeness, people must incorporate their shadows into themselves, rather than merely rejecting them, which implies that people should atone for what they find disgusting in themselves by expressing them in an aesthetic form of catharsis, as in literature, music, to convert darkness into creativity.

Freud sees repression as an internal psychological conflict, but Nietzsche (1888) perceives it as a productive challenge. Nietzsche's philosophy states that morality's restriction of people to either good or evil is limiting to human potential, whereas his Übermensch (Overman) ideology overcomes traditional morality by finding potential in instinctual impulses for greater creativity and strength. Nietzsche's philosophy, in conjunction with psychoanalytic theory, might state that morality's conflict between instinct and desire leads to art, as black desires aren't psychological problems but productive ones, achieving liberty in sinful artwork.

Foucault (1978) brings a more sociological analysis by looking at how society controls desire by regulating desire via power and discourse. For Foucault, religion, family, and even education do not suppress desire but merely divert it, changing how individuals express them instinctively. According to this analysis, art is an act of defiance, a manner of expressing those prohibited emotions from society's regulation by norms of morality, as in Avenged Sevenfold's song *A Little Piece of Heaven*, whose lyrics express in an eerie manner those prohibited emotions of love, death, and violence as an antagonistic statement to society's hypocrisy in relation to morality and desire.

The dynamic between all of these theories shows a common thread, which is the conflict between instinct versus control, repression versus expression. While Freud's id is all about seeking uninhibited pleasure, Nietzsche's *Overman* is able to convert repression into creativity, Jung's Shadow integrates darkness by acknowledging it, and Foucault reveals how society maintains this repression of desire by creating control systems.

For contemporaneity, current research has begun to apply psychoanalytic and philosophical concepts to popular culture as well as music. For instance, in more recent studies, Kristiawan et al. (2024) as well as Evelyn et al. (2024) illustrate how heavy music represents human aggression as well as hidden emotions. Sari & Handoyo (2023) discuss psychoanalytic approaches to trauma in song lyrics in relation to emotional healing, in addition to Nugraha (2022) who links Nietzsche's ethics to heavy music's rejection of social conformity (1966).

Miller & Gomez (2021) examine Freud's concept of sublimation in relation to music as a psychological outlet. As such, this study welcomes an integrated, multi-disciplinary study of psychoanalytical, philosophical, as well as sociological perspectives, in which this study seeks to provide an analysis of A Little Piece of Heaven, explained not only as a song of violence and affection but also as an experience of psychological repression as well as moral transgression, facilitated by an integrated study of Freud's concept of repression, Jung's concept of his Shadow, Nietzsche's concept of Self-overcoming, as well as Foucault's critique of moral regulation, which seeks to uniquely examine, for the first time, how darkness itself serves as a source of creativity, which seeks to mediate between destruction as well as redemption in itself.

3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to capture and interpret the representation of dark desires in Avenged Sevenfold's *A Little Piece of Heaven*. The primary data source consists of the song's official lyrics as published by Avenged Sevenfold (2007). To uncover the psychological dimensions of the lyrics, the analysis draws upon Freud's structural model of the psyche—comprising the id, ego, and superego—along with his theory of repression, to explore how unconscious desires and moral conflict are articulated within the song. In addition, Jung's concept of the shadow archetype and Nietzsche's philosophy of moral transgression are incorporated to broaden the interpretive framework and deepen understanding of the song's portrayal of dark human impulses (1974). The analysis utilizes a close reading methodology grounded in psychoanalytic literary criticism to examine the lyrical content. The analytical framework integrates Freudian, Jungian, and Gothic theoretical perspectives, enabling a multi-layered interpretation of psychological and symbolic meaning. The lyrics were systematically analyzed to identify thematic patterns, psychological symbolism, and narrative structures that reflect the workings of the unconscious and moral tension. Each lyrical segment was coded according to its alignment with specific psychological constructs, and interpretations were developed through established psychoanalytic and philosophical frameworks.

The process of analysis involved using the framework for thematic analysis of meaning as outlined in a study by Braun & Clarke (2006) to pick out recurring themes of desire, guilt, violence, and redemption expressed in the lyrics of the song. The research procedure also involved frequent listening to this song to grasp meaning in terms of emotional intent, symbolism, and depth of meaning expressed in this song, as well as picking out significant segments of lyrics pertinent to desire, morality, and repression.

In order to maintain credibility in the study as well as to control subjectivity, researcher reflexivity is utilized in this analysis for objective results. The researcher reflects upon his/her tendency to interpret in order to maintain grounded analysis in lieu of projection in order to bring authenticity to this study. As per this study's aim, this research methodology is preferred for its potential to explore the complex link between emotion, morality, and the human mind in a musical text (Creswell, 2014; Moleong, 2017).

4. Results and Discussion

The psychoanalytic analysis of Avenged Sevenfold's *A Little Piece of Heaven* reveals three distinct psychological dimensions of dark desire as manifested through the song's narrative structure: (1) primal impulses articulated through possessive violence (id), (2) rationalization of transgressive acts that challenge moral boundaries (ego), and (3) moral reconciliation achieved through forgiveness (superego). These findings demonstrate that the song employs Gothic literary tropes to externalize internal psychological conflict, creating a metaphorical landscape where desire, death, and forgiveness are intricately intertwined.

Textual evidence further supports the correspondence between these lyrical expressions and Freud's structural model of personality (Freud, 1923). Each psychological component emerges through distinct linguistic and narrative techniques: the *id* manifests in violent and possessive imagery, the *ego* through rationalizing discourse that justifies forbidden acts, and the *superego* through the language of forgiveness and moral restoration. This layered interplay of psychoanalytic dynamics illustrates how the song's narrative progression mirrors the movement from instinctual compulsion to ethical awareness.

Moreover, the integration of these psychological structures with Gothic aesthetics reinforces the song's position as a materialized form of Gothic literature, one that dramatizes forbidden psychological emotions through symbolic and transgressive expression (Botting, 1996). The synthesis of psychoanalytic and Gothic elements thus reveals *A Little Piece of Heaven* as not merely a musical narrative but a psycho-literary exploration of desire, guilt, and redemption.

Table 1

Psychoanalytic Representation in A Little Piece of Heaven

Psychological Aspect	Key Lyrical Manifestation	Theoretical Framework	Primary Function
Id (Primitive Impulse)	Violence and possession imagery	Death drive, Thanatos (Freud, 1955)	Unmediated desire satisfaction
Ego (Rationalization)	Minimization and justification	Defense mechanisms (A. Freud, 1936)	Mediation between impulse and morality
Superego (Reconciliation)	Mutual forgiveness and peace	Shadow integration (Jung, 1951)	Moral consciousness and acceptance

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Desire and Possession: Manifestation of the Id

The opening lyric: "Before the story begins, is it such a sin / For me to take what's mine until the end of time?" (Verse 1, lines 1–2) constructs love as possession, implying that the beloved is not an autonomous subject but an object of emotional entitlement. The possessive phrase *"what's mine"* reveals what Freud (1955) termed the pleasure principle, operating without regard for external or moral constraints. The narrator's question, *"is it such a sin?"*, exposes the id's amorality, seeking satisfaction regardless of ethical consequence.

The most striking manifestation of primitive desire occurs in the lyric: "I was all up in her guts until she started to cry." (Verse 1, line 5). This phrase employs brutal literalization to represent the id's unmediated destructive impulse. In Freudian terms, this expresses Thanatos, the death drive, where erotic desire fuses with aggression (Freud, 1955). The act transforms intimacy into annihilation, embodying what Bataille (1962) describes as *"transgressive eroticism,"* the collapse of boundaries between self and other through violence. The phrase *"until she started to cry"* marks the convergence of pleasure and pain, illustrating the gothic aesthetic of beauty intertwined with horror (Botting, 1996).

The murder that follows functions as symbolic possession. Unlike ordinary violence motivated by anger, the narrator's act represents a perverse attempt to preserve love eternally through death. This paradox aligns with Freud's (1957) claim that the id knows no contradiction it can express love and destruction simultaneously. Killing freezes the beloved in a moment of absolute control, fulfilling the id's demand for permanent possession while revealing the fundamental fear of loss that underlies obsessive attachment (Fromm, 1956). As Fromm (1956) noted, immature love seeks to *"absorb the other"* to escape abandonment; thus, the murder becomes a symbolic attempt to arrest time, freezing love in permanence.

This section shows that the id confuses love with possession and pleasure with destruction. Contemporary popular music, as shown here, reactivates the same

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psychological tensions long found in gothic literature (Day, 1985; Punter, 1996), but with modern, visceral imagery that intensifies the confrontation with primitive desire.

4.1.2 Death and Rebirth: Cycles of Desire and Return

The resurrection motif operates as both narrative progression and psychological transformation. The lyric: "Now I must admit, I really wish for this to be a dream / The only problem is what we've done can never be undone." (Verse 2, lines 1–2) reveals the ego's awakening to consequence the shift from pleasure principle to reality principle (Freud, 1955). Here the narrator recognizes irreversibility and begins negotiating between instinct and morality.

Later, the lyric: "And then I heard your voice / You told me that you love me / And you'd be with me through eternity." (Bridge, lines 1–3) subverts gothic convention: the dead beloved does not return for vengeance but forgiveness. This inversion represents what Jung (1964) termed the coniunctio oppositorum, the union of opposites, where destruction transforms into restoration. Death becomes not punishment but a liminal passage into reconciliation (Hogle, 2002).

The cyclical structure *life → death → reunion* reflects Freud's (1955) repetition compulsion, the drive to relive trauma to gain mastery. The resurrection is thus not supernatural but psychological: a re-enactment of unresolved attachment. The title's "little piece of heaven" becomes an ironic paradise achieved only through transgression, implying that fulfillment requires embracing one's shadow (Jung, 1951).

This section demonstrates that dark desire is recursive, seeking reenactment to repair incompleteness. Unlike earlier gothic readings emphasizing punishment (Botting, 1996), this interpretation sees resurrection as a symbol of psychic repetition, love's compulsive attempt to undo loss through fantasy.

4.1.3 Moral Transgression and Redemption: Superego Integration

The superego appears through reconciliation, not punishment. The resolution: "And in the end, we both found peace of mind." (Chorus, final line) marks the completion of psychic integration. The phrase *"we both"* implies shared responsibility moving beyond a binary of victim and perpetrator. This "peace" is not moral purity but shadow integration accepting one's repressed destructive side (Jung, 1951).

The lyric: "I really always knew that my little crime would be cold, that's why I got a heater for your thighs." (Verse 1, lines 7–8) illustrates ego defense. The diminutive *"my little crime"* reveals minimization, a defense mechanism that lessens perceived guilt (A. Freud, 1936). This tension between acknowledgment and denial shows the ego mediating between the id's impulse and the superego's conscience.

The final reconciliation transforms violence into eternal union, echoing Gothic Romanticism's idea that love transcends death. Yet unlike purification, redemption here arises from mutual acknowledgment of darkness (Botting, 1996). Both characters achieve psychological wholeness by accepting rather than erasing transgression a dynamic often misread in metal lyrics as glorification of violence (Arnett, 1996; Thompson, 2004).

4.1.4 Limitations of the Analysis

This study focuses mainly on Freudian–Jungian frameworks. Other psychoanalytic approaches (Lacanian, object relations, or post-structuralist) might yield alternative readings. Additionally, this research analyzes lyrics in isolation, excluding musical and performative dimensions that could deepen psychological interpretation. Finally, it does not include empirical audience data, which might illuminate how listeners emotionally process such dark symbolism. Future work may combine textual, musicological, and reception-based methodologies to expand these insights.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Theoretical Integration: Dark Desire as Psychological Truth

A Little Piece of Heaven operates as a psychoanalytic allegory where gothic imagery externalizes inner conflict. The id, ego, and superego interact dynamically rather than hierarchically, shaping the interplay of desire, guilt, and redemption. This extends Freud's concept of Thanatos, where the pleasure principle paradoxically serves the death instinct (Freud, 1955). The narrator's violence arises from fear of separation, a form of symbiotic union (Fromm, 1956), seeking to consume rather than respect the other.

Unlike traditional gothic texts that frame death as punishment (Botting, 1996), this song presents it as transformation. As Bataille (1962) proposed, eroticism seeks continuity through violation, and forgiveness becomes the true site of redemption. Thus, the song fuses destruction and love into one psychic movement.

4.2.2 Symbolic Analysis: Marriage, Murder, and Resurrection

The triad of marriage, murder resurrection forms a compressed mythology of attachment. Marriage represents social control of desire; murder, its destructive excess; resurrection, its psychic integration. This reflects Lacan's (1992) concept of jouissance pleasure that surpasses pleasure, rooted in pain and transgression. The posthumous "wedding" reverses traditional closure: it is not *happily ever after*, but *darkly ever after*. By embracing obsession and violence, the song critiques romantic idealism and exposes the hidden destructiveness of love itself (Fromm, 1956).

4.2.3 Gothic Aesthetics and Psychological Catharsis

The gothic excess in this song about necrophilia, resurrection, and violence is a subtler appropriation of prohibited desires, which, according to Sigmund Freud, serves to sublimate those desires (Freud, 1908). Art as a means of expressing those desires in a safe, symbolic manner is, of course, what Aristotle's concept of catharsis describes (335 BCE) (1996).

This is what makes gothic art attractive, because it turns psychological horror into an aesthetic experience. As far as previous research is concerned (Thompson, 2004; Halnon, 2006), this analysis proposes more complexity in understanding by combining psychoanalysis and aesthetics of gothic in a single concept. However, as Kahn-Harris (2007) suggests, in extreme metal music, violence is at risk of being aestheticized. In this respect, however, the story's hyperbole ensures that it is at a safe enough remove to allow for reflexivity, in which horror is transformed from psychological to metaphysical insight.

4.2.4 Implications for Understanding Dark Desire

Dark desire is neither pathology nor truth but is, in itself, complicated by possessiveness, fear, and aggression, which also find a place in love (Freud, 1912). Secondly, for those who create, this song demonstrates how metaphoric language and Gothic excess provide emotional articulation that is better than usual language use because of metaphoric language. For those who consume, this song asserts illogical desires of loss, guilt, and destruction as normal (Rogers, 1961).

In literary terms, this song reaches the level of literary texts to provide meaning between philosophy and pop culture (Frith, 1996). As it proves that gothic metal is more than entertainment, it is a serious exploration of humanism.

4.2.5 The Paradox of Dark Desire: Destruction and Creation

Dark desire represents love's shadow, where creation and destruction coexist. Jung's (1921) *Enantiodromia* explains that every extreme generates its opposite love turns to possession, possession to violence, and violence to renewal. The song's *Peace* symbolizes amor fati (Nietzsche, 1888): acceptance of one's fate, including its darkness. Genuine reconciliation, then, requires confronting, not denying, the destructive roots of passion

4.2.6 Implications for Future Research

Future research should examine psychoanalytically observed patterns across subgenres and cultures, combining analyses of music as well as audience research. A combination of text analysis and empirical approaches could provide better insights into how audiences emotionally interpret dark subject matter in art, which in turn might promote catharsis or identification processes. Cross-media comparisons (movies, artworks, literary texts) may provide insights into how different media express distinct processes of the unconscious.

4.2.7 Comparison with Previous Studies

Prior studies on heavy metal and gothic expression often emphasized social rebellion or aesthetic excess (Weinstein, 2000; Arnett, 1996; Halnon, 2006) rather than deep psychological mechanisms. This research diverges by foregrounding psychoanalytic integration, demonstrating that *A Little Piece of Heaven* enacts Freud's structural model and Jung's shadow theory within a musical narrative. While Botting (1996) and Hogle (2002) explored death in Gothic literature, this paper seeks to apply this same theory to popular music to examine how stories told in song lyrics echo this same conflict in music as well. In doing so, this paper seeks to fill this gap between literary Gothic scholarship and Metal scholarship by looking at this song as a work of art as well as a psychological study of this darkness of desire in contemporary music.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that Avenged Sevenfold's *A Little Piece of Heaven* functions as a complex psychoanalytic allegory, employing Gothic aesthetics to explore the dynamics of human desire. Through Freud's structural model of the psyche, the song's narrative reveals three interrelated psychological manifestations: (1) *id*-driven possessive violence, rooted in the death drive; (2) *ego*-mediated rationalization of transgressive acts; and (3) *superego*-

oriented reconciliation through forgiveness and moral integration. What initially appears as gratuitous violence is, in fact, a symbolic dramatization of unconscious conflict and cathartic transformation. The motif of resurrection reframes death not as punishment but as psychological transition, emphasizing healing through acknowledgment rather than repression of dark emotion.

This research contributes to psychoanalytic literary criticism by demonstrating that popular music—often dismissed as subcultural or transgressive—can embody the same psychological and symbolic complexity as canonical literature. It integrates Freudian, Jungian, and Gothic frameworks to interpret how dark aesthetics enable psychological truth-telling, sublimation, and the transformation of forbidden impulses into meaningful art. Rather than promoting moral corruption, such representations foster self-understanding and catharsis by confronting the shadow dimensions of the human psyche.

The findings hold significance for multiple fields. For literary studies, they challenge distinctions between "high" and "popular" culture, showing that both can articulate profound reflections on desire, morality, and redemption. For psychoanalytic criticism, the study reaffirms the continuing relevance of Freudian and Jungian theory when adapted to contemporary cultural texts. Within Indonesian scholarship, it offers a methodological model for analyzing global and local popular culture through rigorous interdisciplinary approaches that align with international standards.

While this study focuses on a single text, future research could expand its scope by incorporating musical and audience reception analyses, comparing different metal subgenres, or applying alternative psychoanalytic frameworks such as Lacanian or affect theory. Comparative studies across cultural contexts—especially between Western and Indonesian musical traditions—could further illuminate how societies differently encode transgression, desire, and moral reconciliation.

Ultimately, *A Little Piece of Heaven* demonstrates that darkness in art is not a moral defect but a symbolic space for psychological exploration. By transforming repressed desire into aesthetic expression, the song illustrates art's power to mediate between instinct and morality, chaos and order. Engaging critically with such works invites a mature understanding of human emotion—one that values integration over denial, and insight over judgment. Darkness, approached analytically rather than fearfully, becomes a path to both artistic and psychological illumination.

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TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S *LITTLE WOMEN* AND ITS INDONESIAN VERSION *GADIS-GADIS MARCH*

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Abstract

This qualitative study analyses the strategies used in translating idioms from Louisa May Alcott's novel *Little Women* into Indonesian *Gadis-Gadis March* and evaluates the degree of equivalence in the translation. Idioms, as an important element of linguistic and cultural richness, require appropriate strategies to ensure that the original message is conveyed accurately and naturally. Document analysis reveals five main strategies. The most dominant strategy is the use of idioms with similar meanings but different forms (39%), which indicates a priority on preserving meaning and emotional effect rather than adherence to the structure of the source language. The strategy of providing idioms with the same meaning and form (35%) was also used significantly, in an effort to maintain the authenticity of the text. In addition, paraphrasing was applied (22%), focusing on conveying meaning naturally and in accordance with the target cultural context. The strategies of omitting idioms (3%) and borrowing idioms (0%) were rarely used. The distribution of these findings suggests a dominant orientation towards dynamic equivalence, where the main focus of translation is the preservation of meaning, emotional nuance, and cultural impact, rather than literal translation. The results show that effective idiom translation in literary works depends on the selection of strategies that are sensitive to cultural context and capable of maintaining the naturalness of the target language. These findings make a significant contribution to the study of literary translation by clarifying the relationship between the choice of idiom translation strategies and the achievement of dynamic equivalence in fictional texts.

Keywords: *idiomatic expressions; little women; the equivalence of translation; translation; translation strategies.*

1. Introduction

In the field of translation, especially for literary works, translators do not simply replace words, but transform messages and nuances from the source language to the target language. Translation is the process of transferring messages and nuances from one language to another, not merely replacing words. Literary translators have strategic freedom in choosing an approach to reconstruct meaning so that the translation has the

same essence and impact as the original text. In this process, careful word choice and consideration of cultural context are essential to avoid ambiguity.

The success of a translation is measured by its ability to transfer messages, ideas, and concepts from the source language to the target language, so that readers feel the same impact as the original text, as stated by Newmark (1988). This requires a competent translator to overcome linguistic and cultural inequalities and be able to capture and convey the implied meaning in the text.

A translator functions as an agent of knowledge dissemination who bridges languages and cultures. This role is very important because inaccurate translations can lead to misunderstandings. On the other hand, good translations allow readers to enjoy the richness of narrative and the beauty of global literature. One of the main challenges in translation is translating idiomatic expressions, which cannot simply be replaced word for word.

Translating literary works, such as novels, is a highly complex task due to their expressive nature and rich connotations and symbolism (Hartono, 2017). This complexity is compounded by Jureczek (2017), who states that novels are rich in narrative elements, characters, and deep cultural aspects that reflect social and moral values. Therefore, translators must master the language and be able to reproduce the author's creativity in order to maintain the aesthetic quality of the original work.

One of the main challenges in the translation process is idiomatic expression. Idiomatic expressions are an integral part of language, especially in literary works, whose meaning is figurative and tied to a cultural context, so they serve to convey cultural values and unique perspectives. Idioms cannot be translated literally because their overall meaning depends on metaphorical interpretation, not dictionary definitions. Failure to understand these cultural connotations can lead to misunderstanding and even distort the meaning. Therefore, translators must have a deep understanding of the social and cultural contexts of both languages in order to choose the right strategy for accurately conveying the meaning of idioms.

Louisa May Alcott's classic novel Little Women was chosen as the object of research because of its status as a work rich in idioms typical in 19th-century American English. The novel tells the story of four sisters during the American Civil War, making it a reflection of cultural values and emotions that are important to analyze in the context of translation.

This study is supported by previous studies that analyzed idiom translation strategies. Floranti (2020) highlights the problems faced by translators and finds that strategies such as paraphrasing are often used to reproduce the meaning of idioms. Aulia (2023) also finds that paraphrasing is the most frequently used strategy in the film "The Perfect Date". Meanwhile, Jaya (2020) analyzed the translation of the novel Dracula and showed that translators have the freedom and flexibility to choose a translation ideology that involves cultural elements.

However, the studies on the translation of idioms in English-language classic novels into Indonesian, such as the novel *Little Women*, is still limited. Unlike previous works that focus more on the audiovisual contexts than literary texts. This research examined the idioms in the classic novels to how the concept of translation equivalence shapes the choice of the translation strategy. This research also examines the impact of these strategic choices on Indonesian readers' understanding of the cultural and emotional nuances of idioms, as well as compare the translations of *Little Women* to reveal the relationship between the strategies used and the translators' backgrounds by comparing the translated version with the original source.

Therefore, the research aims to identify and analyze the strategies used in translating idiomatic expressions employed by translators from the classic novel 'Little Women' into Indonesian, as well as to examine the level of equivalence achieved through the chosen strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Translation Theory

Translation is defined differently by several experts, but essentially it is the process of transferring a message from one language to another. According to Nida and Taber (2003), translation is an attempt to reproduce the message of the source language in the target language with as close a natural equivalence as possible in terms of meaning and style. Similarly, Catford (1965) views translation as the replacement of text material in one language with equivalent text material in another language. Meanwhile, Newmark (1988) considers translation to be the skill of replacing written messages from one language to another. Larson M. L. (1984) argues that translation is essentially a change of form, where the form of the target language replaces the form of the source language. Overall, translation is a complex task that not only changes words, but also preserves meaning, context, and cultural nuances.

There are several types of translation that are distinguished based on their purpose andlinguistic focus, including:

- Literal Translation: Focuses on words or expressions that have the same meaning in the source and target languages.
- Dynamic Translation: Attempts to reproduce the message with natural equivalence, avoiding literal translation.
- Semantic Translation: Sticks to the original culture and helps readers understand the main message of the text
- Communicative Translation: Aims to provide a reading experience similar to that of the original reader.
- Aesthetic Translation: Seeks to balance the ‘form’ and ‘meaning’ of the text to preserve its artistic value.

Nida and Taber (2003) divided the translation process into three main stages. First, analysis of the source text to understand its meaning and grammatical relationships. Second, transfer, which is moving that meaning from the source language to the target language. Finally, restructure, where the translator adjusts the meaning so that the translation feels natural and is fully acceptable to the reader. This process emphasizes that translation is a task that requires a deep understanding of the source and target cultures, not merely a replacement of words.

2.2 Idiomatic Expression in Translation

Idiomatic expressions are combinations of words whose meanings cannot be interpreted literally (Ping, 2018). These expressions function as a single unit of meaning and cannot be broken down. According to Baker (2018), idioms have three main features: institutionalization, cohesion, and semantic opacity. These features ensure that idioms cannot be rearranged, deleted, added to, or have their linguistic elements replaced. For example, the idiom ‘facing the music’ cannot be changed to ‘the music is faced,’ because this grammatical change is not allowed.

Experts have proposed various types of idioms. In English, there are three types based on their denotative meaning: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. In addition, idioms can also be categorized into six types based on their linguistic components, such as verb phrases (e.g., call off, put off), prepositional phrases (e.g., in short, in time), or idioms with nouns as keywords (a blessing in disguise) (Baker (2018). In Indonesian, idiomatic expressions are divided into two main types: complete idioms and partial idioms, which are equivalent to pure idioms and semi-idioms. Isodarus (2017) explains that idioms can appear in various syntactic constructions, ranging from words, word groups, phrases, clauses, to sentences.

Translating idioms is a significant challenge because their meaning cannot always be guessed from their constituent words (Baker, 2018). Hashemian and Arezi (2017) found that there are always unavoidable losses or gains when translating idioms, requiring semantic adjustments.

Word-for-word translation is not an appropriate method because the results are often nonsensical. According to Baker (2018), translators must consider several things, such as whether there are idioms in the target language that have the same meaning, whether the chosen idiom is appropriate for the language register, and how important the lexical elements are. The main goal is to find natural expressions in the target language that most closely match the meaning of the source language. In this process, meaning is considered more important than form.

Given the complexity and interconnection of idioms with the storyline and socio-cultural context, the translation of idioms in novels cannot be done accurately by machine translators. This process requires human translators who have direct experience and a deep understanding of both languages and cultures.

According to Baker (2018), there are five strategies that can be used to translate idioms, including:

a) Translating with Similar Idioms

This strategy is used when there is an idiom in the target language that has a similar form and meaning to the idiom in the source language. Although ideal, this strategy is difficult to apply because idioms are closely tied to culture, so such similarities are rarely found. For example, the Indonesian idiom 'besar kepala' can be directly translated to 'big head' in English because both have the same structure and meaning, namely 'arrogant'.

b) Translating with Different Idioms

This strategy is more commonly used when there is no exact equivalent idiom. The goal is to find an idiom in the target language that has a similar meaning, even if the words or structure are different from the source language idiom. This strategy prioritizes meaning over form. For example, the phrase 'bibirnya yang pucat dan seperti lilin tuangan' can be translated as 'her pale, waxen lips' because both describe the same meaning even though they use different words.

c) Translating with Paraphrasing

This is the most common strategy. Paraphrasing means translating the meaning of an idiom using simpler, non-idiomatic words. This strategy is chosen when there is no suitable idiomatic equivalent, or when the idiom in the source language is too culturally specific and difficult for the target audience to understand. For example, the idiom 'her face was scarlet' can be translated as 'her face was red', which conveys the meaning (a red face) without retaining the form of the idiom.

d) Omitting Idioms in Translation

This strategy is applied when idioms are difficult to translate due to cultural differences or stylistic reasons. There are two types of omission strategies:

- Omission of Idiomatic Play (TBOP): Idioms that contain wordplay or double meanings are omitted to make the meaning clearer. The translator conveys only the literal meaning. For example, a joke based on the idiom 'losing your cool' (becoming angry/losing your composure) is removed so that the sentence remains logical and easy to understand in Indonesian.
- Omission the Entire Idiom (TBOE): The entire idiom is omitted if there is no suitable equivalent or it is difficult to paraphrase, but the core meaning of the sentence is retained. For example, the idiom 'get up the juice' (gather courage) is omitted and simply translated as 'He might kiss me.'

e) Borrowing the Source Language Idioms Strategy

This strategy involves taking idioms from the source language in their entirety without changing their form or meaning. This strategy is often used if the idiom has a high degree of cultural uniqueness or is a specific name, such as a place name. For example, the idiom 'Out of This World' is retained in the translation because it is the name of a museum gallery and has a specific context.

Equivalence is a fundamental concept in translation. Its purpose is to ensure that the meaning of the source text is conveyed equally in the target text. This equivalence is achieved when elements in both languages have relevant and similar relationships in a given context. According to linguist Eugene Nida (2003), there are two main types of equivalence that translators focus on: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Both have different approaches to balancing fidelity to the source text and the naturalness of the target text.

a. Formal Equivalence

Formal equivalence (also known as "gloss translation") is a translation method that aims to preserve all aspects of the original message, including language structure, style, and cultural elements. This approach focuses on reproducing the source text as accurately as possible. As a result, translations often feel stiff and literal to the target reader, as idioms must be translated literally and may require footnotes. The main goal is accuracy in the source form, not fluency in reading. Therefore, this method is generally not suitable for texts that require natural fluency, such as novels or entertainment texts. Example: The phrase 'Let your light shine before men' (from English) is translated literally as 'Biarlah terangmu bercahaya di hadapan manusia' (in Indonesian), retaining its original structure even though the figurative meaning may be less natural.

b. Dynamic Equivalence

In contrast, dynamic equivalence prioritises naturalness and cultural relevance for the target audience. The goal is for the reader's response to the translated text to be similar to their response to the original text, both in terms of information and emotion. This approach is more flexible and allows translators to adapt idioms and figurative expressions to make them easier to understand and feel natural in the target language. Dynamic equivalence is more commonly used in the translation of modern texts, including novels, as it is considered more communicative. Example: The idiom 'Break a leg!' (as an expression of encouragement) is translated as 'Semoga sukses!' (Good luck!) or 'Semangat ya!' (Good

luck!) in Indonesian, as these translations are more appropriate to the cultural context and communicative purpose in the target language.

2.3 Difficulties in Identifying Idioms

According to Baker (2018), the first difficulty in translating idioms is recognizing them as idioms. Baker explained that idioms are easier to recognize if:

1. Their meaning 'violates the conditions of truth', or does not make sense when translated literally.
2. Their grammatical structure is 'not well formed', or feels grammatically strange.

Conversely, there are two situations that make identifying idioms difficult:

1. Deceptive Idioms: Idioms that appear to be ordinary expressions, but actually have figurative meanings.
2. Similar but Different Equivalents: Idioms in the source language have similar equivalents in the target language, but their meanings may be completely or partially different.

After successfully identifying idioms, Baker (2018), outlined four main challenges in the translation process:

1. No Equivalent: Often, there is no equivalent idiom in the target language.
2. Different Context of Use: An idiom may have a similar equivalent in the target language, but the context or situation in which it is used is very different.
3. Multiple Meanings: Idioms can be used with multiple meanings, i.e. literal and idiomatic meanings simultaneously, which are difficult to preserve in translation.
4. Differences in Usage: The frequency and context of idiom usage in written text can be very different between the source and target languages.
   Understanding and translating idioms accurately requires a high degree of linguistic and cultural sensitivity on the part of the translator.

2.4 About Novel Little Women

Literature is an imitation of the world that combines the author's imagination and content to convey ideas to readers. According to Sehandi (2014: 15), literature is a harmonious blend of content and form that aims to be ethical and aesthetic. Literary works are the result of creativity (Ayutya S, 2021) and communicative creations with aesthetic purposes (Nurhasana, 2021). Literature helps us understand social conditions, morals, and values (Rohmah, 2021) and serves as a tool for conveying ideas, expressing ourselves, and promoting moral values, which ultimately shapes us into better individuals (Soulisa, 2022). Literary genres include poetry, prose, and drama. Novels, as works of fiction in the prose genre, tell the life stories of characters (Yulandari, 2020) and describe complex storylines (Tarigan, 2015: 167). Susilo (2021) explained that novels are long prose works that focus on characters and their traits.

According to Mujarod (2022), novels are constructed from two main elements:

1. Intrinsic Elements: Elements within the novel itself, such as characters, plot, setting, point of view, and theme. The theme serves as the main idea that guides the author in developing the narrative.
2. Extrinsic Elements: Elements from outside the novel, such as moral, socio-cultural, and religious values, as well as the author's personal and educational background. These elements form the context and overall meaning of the novel.

To create an interesting novel, the author must develop these elements in a way that is relevant to real life.

Little Women, Louisa May Alcott's classic 1868 novel highlighting themes of sisterhood and struggle, is a rich but challenging source of data for translation. The main challenges lie in the use of 19th-century language and variations in register between characters, but the most significant challenge is translating idiomatic expressions that are steeped in culture. Translators must be able to convey both denotative and emotional meaning while adapting the socio-cultural context so that the essence of the novel remains relevant to Indonesian readers. Therefore, comparing the source text and translation in terms of idioms is crucial for revealing specific translation strategies and their impact on reader comprehension.

3. Research Method

This research used a qualitative descriptive approach supported by simple quantitative calculations for frequency analysis. The qualitative approach is used to identify, classify, and analyze idiom translation strategies and measure the types of equivalence achieved. Simple quantitative calculations are used to analyze the frequency of occurrence of the most dominant translation strategies and the level of equivalences.

The research data consists of idiomatic expressions found in the novel *Little Women*. This qualitative data was collected from the original English text and its Indonesian translation. This study used two versions of the novel *Little Women* as its main data sources:

- Original Version (English): The novel by Louisa May Alcott (Volume 1, 23 chapters), used as a source for identifying idioms in the source language (SL).
- Translated Version (Indonesian): The novel translated by Annisa Cinantya Putri and Widya Kirana, published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama (2020), was used as the source for analyzing the equivalent idioms in the target language (TL).

This novel was chosen because of its rich use of idioms that reflect 19th-century American social and cultural values, making it a valid and relevant data source for the study of culture-bound idiom translation strategies. This study uses the documentation method (Ary, 2010), in which the novel *Little Women* (original and translation) serves as the main popular cultural document. Purposive sampling was used with consideration for efficiency and balanced representation. Data samples were taken from even-numbered chapters (chapters 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, and 22) from both versions of the novel.

There are the steps of data collection in this research.

- Intensive Reading: The researcher carefully read the novel in both languages.
- Sentence Selection: The researcher selected sentences containing relevant idiomatic expressions.
- Idiom Identification: The researcher specifically identified idiomatic expressions in the source text and their equivalents in the target text.

The main instrument of this study was a document analysis table (supplementary file/appendix) designed to systematically collect, classify, and analyze data. The supporting analysis tools used were an idiom dictionary (such as Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and a general dictionary (such as Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia/KBBI) to assist in the analysis of strategies and the meaning of equivalence of translation.

The data will be analyzed by using Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, which consists of three main stages:

- Data Reduction: The process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data (idiomatic expressions). Relevant data related to idiom strategies and types of equivalence—is selected and classified, while irrelevant data is eliminated.
- Data Presentation: Data is presented systemically document analysis table (as mentioned in the instrument section)
- Conclusion/ Verification: The final stage involves formulating a summary of findings, identifying the most dominant translation strategies, and assessing the consistency and types of equivalence achieved.

To ensure data quality, this study applied four validity criteria (Lincoln and Guba, 1985):

- Credibility: Achieved through in depth-reading, triangulation (comparing data from sources, methods, and theories such as Baker's idiom theory and Nida's equivalence), and discussion with peer review.
- Transferability: Ensured through in-depth contextual descriptions and clear and systematic research steps.
- Reliability: Guaranteed through consistent process documentation and the creation of an Audit Trail (detailed data table) for replication. Furthermore, to ensure reliability, data identification is verified by two independent raters who discuss differences in findings until consensus is reached.
- Confirmability: Maintained through a transparent Audit Trail and supported by empirical evidence (direct quotations from the novel), ensuring that findings are based on actual data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

This research analyzed the data related to the novel *Little Women* and produced important findings related to idiomatic translation and the equivalence translation. The researcher will try to analyze and classify the translation strategies used in the translation of idiomatic expression whether they deal with the meaning equivalence or not, by using relevant theory.

Table 1 below presents a summary of the frequency and percentage of idiom translation strategies found in the novel Little Women.

Table 1

The Percentages of Types of the Translation Strategies of Idiomatic Expression in Novel Little Women

No	Types of the Translation Strategies	Total	Percentages (%)
1.	Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning and Form	84	35
2.	Translated by Paraphrase	53	22
3.	Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form	94	39
4.	Translated by Omission TBOP and TBOE	9	4
5.	Borrowing the Source Language Idioms Strategy	-	0
		240	100

Note: TISFM = Translating idioms by using an idiom that is similar in form and meaning; TP = Translated by Paraphrase; TIDFM = Translating idioms by using an Idiom of similar meaning

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but different form; TBOE = Translated by Omission of Entire Idiom; TBOP = Translated by Omission of a Play on Idioms.

Research on translation strategies for idiomatic expressions in the novel *Little Women* shows the dominance of two idiom-based strategies used to preserve the idiomatic character of the text. The most frequently used strategy is Using Idioms with Similar Meanings but Different Forms, with a frequency of 94 times (39%), followed by the strategy of Using Idioms with Similar Meanings and Forms, with a frequency of 84 times (35%). The Similar Meaning, Different Form strategy is considered the most ideal choice because it successfully conveys the original idiomatic meaning accurately while ensuring that the translation feels natural and fluent in the target language. The next strategy is Translated with Paraphrasing (22%), while the least frequent strategy is Translated with Omission (4%), and the strategy of Borrowing Source Language Idioms was not found (0%), which is most likely due to methodological limitations or a small sample size. Understanding these strategy preferences, which prioritize adaptation for naturalness, is crucial for translators to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, producing effective, accurate, and enjoyable translations.

According to Baker (2018), there are five strategies that can be used to translate idioms, including:

a. Translating idioms by using an idiom that is similar in form and meaning to the source language idiom

One strategy for translating idioms is to use idioms in the target language that have similar meanings and forms to the idioms in the source language. This strategy can be applied if there is an equivalent idiom with the same grammatical structure and meaning.

Datum 1 (TISFM)

SL: as the plates went round, and the ice began to melt out of sight, with ohs and ahs satisfaction

TL: sementara piring-piring bersileweran, dan es krim mulai menghilang dari pandangan diiringi seruan oh! dan ah! menyatakan kepuasan

Idiomatic Expression:

SL:the ice began to melt out of sight

TL: es krim mulai menghilang dari pandangan

Strategy Identified: Using an Idiom that is Similar in Form and Meaning to the Source Language Idiom

Reasoning:

In source Language (SL) illustrates that the ice cream is eaten up very quickly, rather than literally melting. In the Target Language (TL), the translation *'menghilang dari pandangan'* does not explicitly mention that the ice cream is eaten, but readers can understand its meaning through context.

The translator retained a similar metaphorical form in the translation (TL). Although "menghilang dari pandangan" is not a typical Indonesian idiom, this phrase creates a literary effect similar to the source text (SL) and shares the same connotative meaning (food that runs out quickly). This choice successfully retained the idiomatic power and emotional impact.

b. Translating idioms by using an Idioms of similar meaning but different form

When translating, if an idiom with the exact same form cannot be found in the target language, one strategy that can be used is to find another idiom with a similar meaning, even if the words or structure are different.

Datum 1 (TIDFM)

SL: and both fell to work with the hearty goodwill which in spite of all obstacles, is sure to succeed at last.

TL: *Keduanya pun segera bekerja dengan segunung tekad baik yang, dengan tantangan seberat apapun pasti akan membuahkan hasil pada akhirnya*

Idiomatic Expression:

SL: work with the hearty goodwill

TL: *bekerja dengan segunung tekad baik*

Strategy Identified: Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form

Reasoning:

The translation *segunung tekad baik* is not a literal translation of "hearty goodwill", but rather a substitution of form with a similar meaning. This phrase uses a metaphor that is unique in the Indonesian cultural context *segunung tekad*) to convey an intensity of work ethic and sincerity comparable to the source idiom. The choice of *segunung tekad* manages to maintain the expressive power of the source idiom without compromising the naturalness of the language.

c. Translating idioms by Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is a common strategy in translating idioms using simpler and more easily understood words, without retaining the idiomatic form. This strategy is often used when the idiom in the source language is too culturally specific or difficult for the target audience to understand.

Datum 1 (TP)

SL: "I shall take the cream and the muffins," added Amy, heroically giving upthe articles she most liked.

TL: *"Aku akan membawa krim dan muffin," Amy menambahkan dan dengan penuh pengorbanan menyerahkan dua makanan kesukaannya.*

Idiomatic Expression:

SL: heroically giving upthe articles she most liked

TL: *dan dengan penuh pengorbanan menyerahkan dua makanan kesukaannya*

Strategy Identified: Translated by Paraphrase

Reasoning:

The idiom phrase above is a small form of altruistic action that describes an act of sincerity and courage to give up something that is favored for the good or comfort of others.

The translators restated the idiomatic meaning (altruistic action/courage) in the TL without retaining the literal form of the SL idiom. This allows the emotional meaning to be

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conveyed in a more natural and communicative expression in Indonesian culture (*penuh pengorbanan*), even though the SL style becomes simpler.

d. Omitting the Idiom in Translation (Omission)

Omission are used when idioms in the source language are difficult to translate into the target language due to cultural differences or stylistic reasons. This strategy is divided into two types. First, omission of a play on idiom where the translator removes wordplay or double meanings that are difficult to transfer and leaves only the main meaning so that it is easy to understand. Second, omitting the entire idiom, where the idiom is removed entirely if there is no suitable equivalent or it is difficult to paraphrase, while retaining the core meaning of the sentence to maintain the fluency of the translation.

Datum 1 (TBOE)

SL: Long, quiet days she spent, notlonely nor idle, for her little world was peopled with imaginary friends, and
she was by nature a busy bee.

TL: *Hari-harinya yang anjang dan lama, tetapi ia tidak pernah merasa kesepian dan tidak berpangku tangan. Dunia kecil Beth diisi dengan teman-teman khayalan. Secara alamiah, ia senang menyibukkan diri*

Idiomatic Expression:

SL: she was by nature a busy bee

TL: *Secara alamiah, ia senang menyibukkan diri*

Strategy Identified: Translated by Omission of Entire Idiom

Reasoning:

The idiom "a busy bee" is not translated in its equivalent idiomatic form in the TL. The translator chooses to omit the idiomatic form entirely, but retains the contextual meaning through the descriptive phrase **"***senang menyibukkan diri***."** This strategy is used to maintain narrative clarity and cultural authenticity for the target readers, without losing the essence of the idiom's meaning.

Datum 2 (TBOP)

SL: and she lay hour after hour, tossing to and fro, with incoherent words on her lips, or sank into a heavy sleep which brought her no refreshment.

TL: Dan, Beth pun terbaring jam demi jam, bergolek-golek gelisah sambil meracau, atau jatuh tertidur begitu rupa hingga ia melewatkan makan dan minum

Idiomatic Expression:

SL:tossing to and fro , with incoherent words on her lips

TL: bergolek-golek gelisah sambil meracau

Strategy Identified: Translated by Omission of a Play on Idioms

Reasoning:

The translator removed the play on idioms and parallel structure (rhythmic repetition) from the source language (tossing to and fro), but retained the general meaning

of Beth's suffering through a more concise phrase ('bergolek-golek gelisah sambil meracau.'). This strategy was used to maintain the efficiency of the narrative. The phrase 'hour after hour' already encompasses the prolonged condition, and 'writhing restlessly while babbling' conveys the idiomatic effect functionally, albeit without retaining the idiom's typical SL form.

e. Borrowing the Source Language Idioms

The strategy of adopting native language idioms is a translation approach that preserves idioms intact from the source language to the target language. Idioms are copied without any changes to their form, structure, or meaning.

Based on the analysis of data in the novel Little Women, no use of Borrowing the Source Language Idioms Strategy was found in the analyzed quotations

Table 2 below shows the clear dominance of Dynamic Equivalence in idiom translations in the novel Little Women.

Table 2

The Percentages of the Equivalence Translation of Idiomatic Expression in Novel Little Women

No	Equivalence Translation	Total	Percentages (%)
1.	Formal Equivalence	90	38
2.	Dynamic Equivalence	150	62
		240	100

Note:FE =Formal Equivalence; DE = Dynamic Equivalence

Research on translation equivalence used for idiomatic expressions in the novel Little Women shows a significant dominance of Dynamic Equivalence, with a high frequency of 62%. This figure reflects the translator's primary priority to transfer meaning and cultural nuances naturally, ensuring that the text is easily understood by readers of the target language. In contrast, Formal Equivalence is used less frequently, at 38%, indicating that efforts to preserve the original linguistic structure are a secondary consideration. The dominance of Dynamic Equivalence (62%) argues that translators consciously choose to prioritize readability, cultural familiarity, and equal impact on the target audience. These findings reinforce the translation philosophy that considers adaptation (dynamic) to be a more effective approach to translating culturally bound idioms than literalism (formal), thereby ensuring that the richness of the novel can be fully enjoyed without feeling stiff or foreign to readers.

According to Nida(2002), there are two main types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence.

1. Formal Equivalence

Formal equivalence is a type of translation that prioritises the literal reproduction of the original message from the source text, including linguistic structure, style, and cultural context. This approach, often referred to as 'gloss translation,' tends to make the translation feel foreign to the reader.

Datum 1 (FE)

SL :Ned, getting sentimental, warbled a serenadewith the pensive refrain

TL : *Ned, yang mulai terbawa perasaan, menyanyikan sebuah lagu romantic yang sarat makna tersirat*

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Idiomatic Expression:
SL :getting sentimental
TL : *yang mulai terbawa perasaan*

Idiom Translation Equivalence: Formal Equivalence

Analysis:

The idiom "getting sentimental" translates to "*yang mulai terbawa perasaan*". Both expressions manage to capture the essence of a melancholic and soulful emotional state very closely. "*yang mulai terbawa perasaan*" literally means 'being carried away by feelings', which is conceptually and functionally very similar to 'getting sentimental'. This translation maintains the same level of formality and emotional feel as the original. Since this translation has not undergone any significant shift in either form or meaning, it is a strong representation of Formal Equivalence.

2. Dynamic Equivalence

Dynamic equivalence is a translation approach that focuses on making the text feel natural and easy to understand for the target audience, rather than simply preserving the original message. The aim is for the reader's response to the translation to be similar to their response to the source text, both informatively and emotionally.This strategy often adapts elements of the source text to make them culturally appropriate and more relevant to the reader.

Datum 1 (DE)
SL: He was a homely man, but they thought his face quite heavenly when he smiled,
TL: *Wajahnya tidak tampan, tetapi bagi Jo dan Meg, ia tampak sangat tampan ketika tersenyum*

Idiomatic Expression:
SL: his face quite heavenly
TL: *ia tampak sangat tampan*

Idiom Translation Equivalence: Dynamic Equivalence

Analysis:

The idiom "his face quite heavenly" literally means 'his face is very much like heaven' or atau 'wajahnya surgawi'. This expression has a metaphorical nuance that conveys extraordinary beauty or heavenly peace. However, in this context, the idiom conveys the meaning that the man's face looks exceptionally beautiful or very attractive to Jo and Meg. The translation in the target language, "*ia tampak sangat tampan*," successfully captures the essence of the praise and admiration intended in the context. The translator avoids a literal translation that could have overly strong religious connotations or be inappropriate in Indonesian culture. This choice prioritises the emotional effect and meaning intended by the original expression over its form. Therefore, this translation, which demonstrates significant cultural and contextual adaptation, is classified as Dynamic Equivalence.

4.2 Discussion

In translating idioms in the novel Little Women, four main strategies were found to be used by translators. The most dominant strategy was to use idioms with similar meanings but different forms 94 times (39%). This strategy was considered effective because translators could retain the meaning of the source idiom with a more natural form in the target language. The next strategy is to use idioms with similar meanings and forms, which was used 84 times (35%). These two idiomatic strategies, which combined account for 74%, show that the translator attempted to preserve the idiomatic nature of the source text while adapting it to the context of the target language so that it would sound natural to Indonesian readers.

The paraphrasing strategy was used 53 times (22%). This strategy was chosen when a direct equivalent idiom could not be found in the target language. Through paraphrasing, translators can still convey the meaning of the idiom functionally, even though the idiomatic form is no longer preserved. Meanwhile, the omission strategy was only used 9 times (4%), and the borrowing strategy was not found at all (0%). The low use of the omission strategies indicates that the translator tried to avoid losing meaning or disrupting the cultural continuity of the translated text. And the borrowing strategy was not found. This may be due to the limited sampling methodology (analysis of even chapters).

The distribution of translation strategies is very consistent with Baker's (2018) classification of idiom strategies, which shows that translators strive to preserve the original idiomatic meaning while paying attention to the fluency and readability of the target text. The dominance of idiomatic and paraphrasing strategies shows a tendency to emphasize meaning rather than form.

The distribution of translation strategies also directly reflects the translator's tendency to prioritize dynamic equivalence over formal equivalence. Based on the analysis results, dynamic equivalence was found in 62% of all data, while formal equivalence only reached 38%. Dynamic equivalence focuses on conveying the same meaning and effect to the target reader, even though the sentence structure may change from the original form. Therefore, meaning-oriented strategies—such as the use of idioms with similar meanings but different forms and paraphrasing strategies—are widely used because they are able to generate equivalent responses and understanding for the target reader.

Conversely, formal equivalence, which focuses on preserving the form of the source language, has a smaller proportion. The strategy that most closely approximates the principle of formal equivalence, namely 'using idioms with similar meanings and forms,' ranks second in frequency of use. Meanwhile, strategies such as omission are rarely used because they can disrupt the flow of the story or cause confusion for Indonesian readers.

According to Nida (2002), the dominance of dynamic equivalence (62%) over formal equivalence (38%) indicates that translators prioritize similarity in the experience and meaning received by readers over the rigid preservation of the linguistic form of the source text. Thus, the idiom translation strategy in this novel demonstrates a cross-cultural communication-oriented approach, where message and effect are prioritized over the literal form of the source text.

A comparative perspective from other studies provides an important framework for evaluating these findings. The results of this study are in line with Aulia's (2023) study, which analyzed the translation of idioms from English to Indonesian in the film The Perfect Date. Her study also found a predominance of dynamic equivalence and meaning-based strategies (especially paraphrasing). Although the most dominant strategy in this study was Using

Idioms with Similar Meanings but Different Forms—which is a meaning-based strategy—rather than paraphrasing as found by Aulia, the core principle of emphasizing dynamic equivalence and meaning adaptation was maintained, indicating that this pattern is strongly applicable in English-Indonesian translation. On the other hand, these findings contrast with Floranti's (2020) study, which analyzed the translation of idioms from Indonesian into English in the novel This Earth of Mankind, where paraphrasing (another meaning-based strategy) was the most frequently used strategy, often with longer explanations. The difference in dominant strategies may be attributed to the direction of translation or genre characteristics, but this study highlights that form adaptation is crucial in idiom translation, regardless of the source or target language.

5. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, analysis of the translation strategies for idioms in the novel Little Women showed that translators focused on conveying meaning and reading experiences that were easily understood by Indonesian readers. This study identified four main strategies used. The most dominant strategy was the use of idioms with similar meanings but different forms. This choice shows the translator's tendency to maintain the fluency and clarity of the message in the target language. The next strategy is idioms with similar meanings and forms, which are used when the source language idiom can be retained without causing any disruption to the meaning. In the third place is the paraphrase, which is used when there is no natural idiomatic equivalent in Indonesian. Two others, omission and borrowing, are rarely used because they have the potential to disrupt comprehension or the narrative flow. From these strategy patterns, it can be seen that translators mostly apply dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes the same impression and effect of meaning for the target reader. Meanwhile, formal equivalence still appears through the preservation of certain idiom forms, but it is not a priority. Overall, the translation of idioms in this novel shows a strong effort to preserve the message, emotional nuances, and naturalness of the language so that the reading experience for Indonesian readers remains in line with the meaning in the original text. Further, research could be directed towards other genres such as modern fiction, poetry, or through empirical studies to assess readers' perceptions of idiomatic translations.

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LINGUISTIC ATTITUDES AND LANGUAGE CHOICES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN A MULTILINGUAL GHANAIAN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

In multilingual environments, language users continuously negotiate their linguistic identities by selecting among available languages to achieve specific communicative purposes. However, such choices are not random; they are shaped by context, domain, and attitudes toward each language. Anchored in Communication Accommodation Theory and Identity Negotiation Theory, this study examines students' language preferences within the academic setting of a Ghanaian university. Adopting a qualitative research design, data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs) to capture students' linguistic choices and the factors influencing them in both academic and informal contexts. The findings indicate that students' language choices are driven by attitudinal orientations, situational contexts, and group membership dynamics. Elements such as time, place, interlocutors, and conversation topics significantly influence which language is chosen in a given interaction. The study highlights how multilingual students strategically adjust their linguistic behavior to align with social expectations and identity positioning. These insights have implications for understanding language attitudes and communication practices in multilingual educational and professional settings.

Keywords: *communication accommodation theory; Ghanian university; linguistic choices; multilingual.*

1. Introduction

In multilingual communication environments, language users draw from a rich linguistic repertoire to achieve various communicative goals. Their choices are often strategic, influenced by factors such as the nature of the relationship between interlocutors and the topic of conversation. Preference for one language over others can reflect speakers' perceptions of their own identity, as multilingual individuals are not only fluent in multiple languages but also participants in diverse cultural spheres. Apfelbaum and Meyer (2010) observe that several factors influence language preference in communication. While some multilinguals select a particular language to compensate for limited proficiency in another, others do so to align themselves with a specific social group—whether ethnic, national, peer, or ideological.

Contextual factors also play a significant role in shaping linguistic choices. Multilingual speakers must navigate appropriate language use depending on communicative domains and the linguistic repertoires of their interlocutors (Akrofi Ansah, 2016; Romaine, 2008). Thus, in multilingual speech communities, variables such as time, place, participants, and conversational topics are crucial in determining language choice. Attitudes toward language further influence these decisions. As Astuti (2021) notes, language attitude connects thought and action: learners with positive attitudes toward a language not only appreciate it intellectually but also express such attitudes behaviorally—by using and praising it frequently. People's attitudes toward a language often mirror their views of its speakers, the contexts in which it is used, and the social functions it serves. Consequently, positive attitudes encourage language use, while negative ones inhibit it.

Studies have shown persistent tensions between the prestige associated with English and the identity value of indigenous languages (Nyamekye, 2024; Lomotey & Rathert, 2024; Mensah et al., 2024). Multilingual individuals may therefore switch between languages, selecting the one most appropriate to the communicative situation (Dewi & Setiadi, 2018; Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). In the Ghanaian context, Dako and Quarcoo (2017) observe that English enjoys high prestige, as it is perceived as the key to educational and socioeconomic advancement. English proficiency is thus linked to academic success and access to well-paid employment. Conversely, Ghanaian indigenous languages receive limited recognition, particularly in formal education settings (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). These authors further note that students who choose to study Ghanaian languages are often regarded as less capable, opting for easier subjects to secure good grades. Such perceptions stem from the belief that indigenous languages belong to the domestic sphere and are unworthy of academic study.

The issue of language choice as the official medium of instruction in academic institutions has long been a contentious topic that continues to attract scholarly attention. The debate typically centers on whether a target second language should be prioritized over indigenous languages or vice versa, as reflected in studies such as Twumasi (2021), Yildirim (2020), and Owu-Ewie and Edu-Buandoh (2014). Although language choice in such contexts is often determined by government policy, learners' attitudes toward the target language play a crucial role in the successful implementation of these policies. Previous studies on language choice within educational settings have largely concentrated on students' attitudes toward language instruction in classroom contexts (Astuti, 2021; Dewi & Setiadi, 2018; Hinmassia, 2024; Twumasi, 2021). However, there remains a paucity of research focusing on tertiary students' attitudes and linguistic choices beyond classroom interactions within the same educational environment. The present study addresses this gap by examining students' attitudes toward English as the medium of instruction in a Ghanaian university while also exploring their use of indigenous languages on campus. Particular attention is given to the motivations underlying their linguistic preferences and the contextual factors influencing their language choices. This study, therefore, seeks to answer the following research question: *What factors influence the linguistic choices of students in intergroup communication situations on campus?*

2. Literature Review

The choice of language in multilingual contexts is influenced by multiple interrelated factors. Some multilingual individuals select a particular language to compensate for limited proficiency in others, while others base their linguistic choices on the desire to identify with

specific social groups—ethnic, national, peer, or ideological. At the heart of this linguistic behavior lies the issue of identity, a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which humans engage in social interaction (De Fina, 2016; Joseph, 2016). Central to the concept of identity are the notions of belonging and acceptance within society. The sense of belonging—whether to a gender, creed, ethnicity, nationality, or profession—is crucial to an individual's sense of self-worth and societal recognition. People often justify their affiliation with or detachment from a group based on the need to establish meaningful social links essential to personal and communal development. These affiliations are shaped by personal values, beliefs, and lived experiences emerging from continuous interaction with the social world. As Jenkins (2008) and Kitchen et al. (2015) explain, the need to belong or identify with a group forms the basis of community building, while Evans (2015) adds that individuals align themselves with social groups to avoid feelings of rejection, marginalization, or identity loss, thereby securing a sense of acceptance and security.

A critical dimension of identity construction is its fluid and shifting nature. Llamas and Watt (2010) emphasize that both language and identity are dynamic and continuously renegotiated in response to changing social contexts. Joseph (2010) further argues that individuals perform a repertoire of identities that shift depending on circumstances, reflecting constant processes of negotiation and re-negotiation. This view aligns with McWhorter (2014), who contends that people often adjust or reconfigure their identities to conform to prevailing social standards or to gain recognition and acceptance within their communities. Since identities are constructed through discourse and thought, language remains central to this process (Edwards, 2009; Kohli, 2012).

Language choice in multilingual speech communities is also shaped by domains and topics of interaction. Biachani (2015) identifies domain as a socially assigned function or communicative space that determines language use among participants. Romaine (2008) distinguishes five key domains—family, friendship, religion, employment, and education—within which multilingual individuals face different social pressures influencing language choice. Beyond domain, the topic of conversation may also dictate linguistic preference, as interlocutors select vocabulary and structure appropriate to the subject matter. Certain topics are often more naturally discussed in one language than another (Fishman, 2000; Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) further note that situational contexts—such as setting, participants' age, gender, occupation, and socioeconomic status, as well as conversational topic—serve as triggers for language selection in multilingual environments. Thus, all discourse in such settings reflects social interactional patterns that govern language behavior.

Llamas and Watt (2010) reaffirm that human identity and language continuously shift in response to interactional changes. This dynamic is exemplified in the Ghanaian context, where Agyekum (2010) observes that many Muslims in the northern regions shift from their Gur languages to Arabic as a lingua franca during Islamic worship. Similarly, speakers of the Bono dialect in southern Ghana often use the Asante variety of Akan in schools and other formal contexts, while the Ahanta language in the Western Region is frequently supplanted by the Fante dialect of Akan. These linguistic shifts, as Akrofi Ansah (2014) explains, reflect multilingual speakers' strategic efforts to select appropriate languages based on communicative domains and the linguistic repertoires of their interlocutors.

2.1 The Language Situation in Ghana

Ghana has a uniquely complex linguistic landscape with different indigenous languages employed for communication in diverse contexts of situations (Torto, 2014). According to Eberhard, et al (2020), there are eighty-one (81) languages in Ghana of which seventy-three (73) are indigenous and eight (8) are non-indigenous. English Language, as the lingua franca of Ghana, has 9.8 million second language (L2) speakers. It is the official language of government, judiciary and education. It is also used in formal situations such as churches, courts, schools, parliament, offices, media, meetings, and during public speech delivery. English is sometimes code mixed with the local language in informal spoken discourses (Torto, 2014). There are, however, eleven local languages: Ewe, Dagomba, Dagaaare, Ga, Nzema, Dangme, Gonja, Kasem, Fante, Twi and Guruni. These languages are government sponsored and supported by the Bureau of Ghana Languages. Akan is the most widespread indigenous language in Ghana, with 8.1 million first language (L1) speakers. Other widely spoken indigenous languages include Éwé (3.32 million speakers), Dagbani (1.16 million speakers), Dangme (1.02 million speakers), and Dagare (924,000 speakers), (Eberhard, et al. 2020; Torto, 2014). According to Huber (2012) Ghanaian Pidgin English is also widely spoken, with 5 million first language (L1) speakers. Dako and Quarcoo (2017) emphasise that most Ghanaian English speakers are bilingual with at least one local language in addition to English whilst more than 70% can speak an Akan dialect (Twi, Fante, etc.) They aver that British Standard English (BSE) is the written target language of education, and the language of instruction in all subjects except the Ghanaian Language as a subject. Further, Received Pronunciation (RP), is the examinable spoken norm and thus the target in spoken English. Pidgin English is part of the linguistic configuration of Ghana although it is not officially recognized as a language of Ghana and there is no standardized orthography. The variety of pidgin commonly spoken by students is mesolectal pidgin (Adika, 2012; Torto, 2014)

2.2 Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on Ting- Toomey's (1999; 2005) Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) and Giles and Ogay's (2007) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). INT dwells on the essence of negotiating sociocultural membership identity and personal identity in inter-group communication situations. The theory posits that individuals tend to feel included when their desired group membership identities are positively endorsed via satisfactory outcomes such as feelings of being understood, respected, and valued. However, they may experience identity differentiation when their desired group membership are stigmatized which manifests in the degree of remoteness an individual perceives in regulating group-based boundaries with either in-group or out-group members. Closely connected to this theory is Giles' and Ogay's (2007) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) which focuses on the notion that interlocutors adjust and adapt to each other for a successful social interaction. Upon entering a communicative encounter, people begin to synchronize aspects of their verbal (e.g., accent, speech rate) and nonverbal behavior (e.g., gesture, posture). These adjustments, according to Giles, are at the core of communication accommodation theory (CAT). The theory identifies three basic adjustment strategies (convergence, divergence and maintenance) through which individuals can adjust their communicative behaviors relative to one another. Convergence refers to adjusting one's communicative behaviors to be more like another's. Divergence implies adjusting one's communicative behaviors to be more dissimilar to another's whilst maintenance

involves sustaining one's "default" level of communicating, without adjusting for others. Giles and Ogay (2007) identify two distinct motives for adjusting communication. The first is affective motivation in which speakers can pursue positive personal and social identities by communicatively regulating social distance and signaling their attitudes toward each other as individuals and group members. Cognitive motivation on the other hand occurs when speakers are motivated to assess their interlocutors' communicative needs and characteristics and adjust their speech to be intelligible, predictable, and comprehensible. The two motives, according to Giles and Ogay (2007) are not mutually exclusive, and communicative behaviors may be motivated by both types of concerns. In the context of this study, INT and CAT combined to form a coherent analytical framework for examining how students linguistically construct and negotiate identities in a multilingual communicative environment. Whilst INT provided insight into how students negotiate in-group and out-group membership through expressions of identity inclusion and differentiation, CAT explained how they strategically adjust their speech styles to accommodate or resist linguistic alignment with peers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The integration of the two theories enabled an understanding of how identity processes are enacted through everyday communicative adjustments.

2.3 Related Studies

Hinmassia (2024) investigated language choice and attitudes of tertiary students in public institutions. Using domain analysis for the study, findings showed that students, the teaching staff, university administrators and support staff had both positive and negative attitudes towards their language choices which were made with contributing factors such mutual intelligibility, social inclusion/exclusion, intimacy, solidarity and work coordination. Also, Adomako and Akrobotu (2023) study concluded that pupils often developed unfavorable attitudes toward Ghanaian languages, influenced by parental expectations, school policies, and limited teaching resources. Twumasi (2021), studied the attitude of students towards the study of Ghanaian languages in a Ghanaian University and the motivational factors for the study of these languages. Results indicated that students had positive attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian indigenous languages whilst proffering instrumental reasons for the study of this language. In another perspective, Astuti (2021) investigated language attitude and choice of English by the second-year students of English Education study program of Palangka Raya University. Result showed that the students committed to the positive attitude on English with the explanation that English is important to be mastered. In the academic environment contexts, the students mostly used English as the main language but outside of the context they were more comfortable to use Bahasa Indonesia and even local languages. Similarly, Yildirim (2020) compared the language attitudes of Arabic-Turkish bilinguals from Mersin and Hatay cities located in the East Mediterranean Region of Anatolia. The comparison revealed that Arabic-Turkish bilinguals from Hatay interiorized Arabic language more than Arabic-Turkish bilinguals from Mersin with the first group using Arabic in their professional career and transferring it to the new generations. Dewi and Setiadi (2018) studied language attitude and language choice in bilingual academic learning environment at Bina Nusantara University in Indonesian. The study concluded that students of the English department hold positive attitude toward English, which were shown through the statements of the majority of the students who saw English as an international language that offered more career opportunities. The two main factors that determine the use of English are the role of the lecturers and the English

language exposure in the academic environment. Owu-Ewie and Edu-Buandoh (2014) investigated the negative attitude of Ghanaians towards the study of L1 in the SHS, and how SHS students studying their L1 coped with the negative attitude. Findings revealed that parents, school authorities, language teachers, students, and the general populace depicted negative attitudes towards Ghanaian language study in the SHS and these manifested in utterances, actions and behaviour. Whilst these studies largely focused on English as the language of instruction in the educational sector in Ghana, the literature depict gaps in the study of indigenous languages in academic communication environment.

3. Research Method

The study adopted a qualitative approach using a focus group discussion (FGD) to gain an in-depth understanding of the linguistic choices of students on campus. The research site was the Institute of Journalism campus of the University of Media, Arts and Communication, formerly Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), a specialized University of communication in Ghana founded in 1959. A focus group discussion was held among ten participants comprising six women and four men who willfully decided to participate in the discussions. The sample size of ten participants was considered adequate for the focus group discussion, as it provided sufficient diversity of linguistic and cultural perspectives while maintaining a manageable group size that encouraged interactive, reflective, and in-depth discussion of multilingual communication experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

In this study, ethical procedures followed the Declaration of Helsinki, with verbal consent documented. The interaction took place on the campus of UniMAC-IJ. All the participants were sophomore students who had gained considerable experience in their academic and non-academic engagements on campus. The age of the participants ranged between 18 to 22 years indicating a very youthful peer group on campus. To ensure that students express themselves freely, the focus group discussions were conducted by a recently graduated teaching assistant and an efficient course representative of one of the classes who was very much known to the participants. These two were young and approachable, thus creating a relaxed atmosphere of peer attachment, trust and camaraderie. As a result, the FGD was held in a free non-intimidating environment. Participants were asked to respond to questions concerning their linguistic choices during academic and non-academic sessions on campus. They were instructed to ascribe reasons to the choices they made in their preference of a particular language of communication during interaction on campus. Adopting the thematic analysis method of qualitative study, the data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase systematic process of coding and theme development. After familiarizing with the transcripts through repeated readings, initial codes were generated to capture important interactional patterns. These codes were then refined and clustered into broader themes guided by the theoretical lenses of Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999; 2005) and Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Codes reflecting participants' expressions of belonging and distinctiveness were organized under identity negotiation dimensions, while those capturing convergence, divergence, and maintenance behaviors were grouped under communicative accommodation patterns. This integrative coding process ensured that the themes reflected participants' lived multilingual experiences. This study is limited in terms of sample size and research setting. The relatively small sample of ten participants, while sufficient for generating rich qualitative insights, restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. Additionally, the study was conducted at a single university site, which

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may limit the transferability of results to other higher education contexts with different linguistic and cultural dynamics. Nonetheless, the depth of participant engagement and contextual focus provided valuable exploratory insights into multilingual communication and identity negotiation within this setting.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Findings

This study set out to investigate the linguistic choices of students in a Ghanaian University (University of Media, Arts and Communication). Participants in focus group discussions (FGD) indicated their choices for a particular language in academic and non-academic learning environments proffering reasons for their choices.

4.1.1 Linguistic Choices in an Academic Learning Environment

Responding to the issue of language choice in a formal discourse environment on campus, participants first mentioned the likely communication settings which include lecture halls; durbars involving Student Representative Council (SRC) and the general student body; SRC general assembly meetings; student conferences and general conversation with lecturers outside lecture halls. In all these discourse settings, the respondents were unanimous in their language preference which is English Language.

Prestige of English

R1, Male, (21) had this to say:
'It's always been English, especially during lectures…there's no alternative because in the lecture hall English is the language the lecturer uses to teach…who are you to speak any other language?'

R3, Male, (20) shared his opinion thus:
'…Oh English language is always the number one…especially formal gatherings and lectures and stuff… I remember back in the days of SHS (Senior High School) during our elections manifesto, one guy expressed himself so well in English. He was so eloquent…am like wow! …Everyone clapped for him when he finished his presentation, even the teachers… he was given a standing ovation…'

R6, Female, (19) remarked:
'…yeah, for me I am always careful when answering questions from the lecturer or contributing to subject discussion during lectures. Of course we speak English during lectures… You Know, the lecturer is watching you, your mates are watching you and stuff… Every eye is on you, so I am very mindful of my language so I don't slip. You can't get it wrong! You got to prove that yeah you can flow well in English…. It's a good feeling'

R7, Female, (20) explained thus:
'…It's always a nice feeling when you're noticed for your eloquence in English language…. There was a time a female student approached me after class and asked me where I attended high school. I asked why and she was like… 'I like your confidence… you speak good English!'…We became friends later'

R9, Male, (20) responded:

…. In class if you 'gba' (student term for wrong English usage) you are finished! That becomes your nickname and it's not funny at all so for me I will not say anything in class unless the lecturer forces me, even that, I rehearse what I am going to say in my head quickly before I say anything (loud laughter).

R10, Female, (18) shared her experience thus:
…Anytime there is student durbar I do everything possible to contribute… It's a big platform to show what you've got…you know what I mean…lots of guys are there too…You speak your mind and you do it well… You want to show everyone that you can flow. It feels good, trust me, when friends know you can speak good English…'

R9, Female, (22) mentioned:
'… When you answer questions and you struggle with some English words, you try to fix in twi (a popular indigenous dialect) but when you do that, they'll laugh at you. So Charlie, you have to force and impress…'

R4, Female, (22) remarked:
'… there is very little chance of speaking Twi during lectures… It is the lecturer who controls the medium of instruction which is always English for sure…you can't even attempt to chip in bits of Twi in your answers because you will look odd and your friends might think you lack English vocabulary that's why you're switching to twi…it's unfortunate'

(R9), further made an interesting submission thus:
'…There is this particular lecturer who is fond of using Twi terms to kind of embarrass stubborn students or a dozing student during lectures just to create humour… Sometimes he will ask some students in the class to describe the behavior of the stubborn student in Twi. When this happens, we seize the opportunity to also show our Twi vocabs… this is the only time we can speak any local language whilst lectures is ongoing'
It is clear from the submissions of the participants that attitude towards English Language is high in formal communicative environment and that student interlocutors would do everything possible to impress in such circumstances. The responses of the participants depicted a good-feeling mentality anytime one spoke good English which was rewarded with positive reinforcement from friends, students and even teachers as evident in the excerpts from the responses:
'…Everyone clapped for him, even the teachers'
'…Every eye is on you…You can't get it wrong'
'…I like your confidence… you speak good English!'
'…I rehearse what I am going to say in my head quickly before I utter anything'
'…It feels good, trust me, when friends know you can speak good English'
'…you have to force and impress'

The above quotes show that students are driven by various motivation such as admiration, pride, and recognition to speak good English in formal communicative environment. This finding is consistent with Dewi and Setiadi's (2018) and Romaine's (2008) assertions that attitudes of users influence language choice and use as much as the status of the language among interlocutors in a particular society. The findings further reinforce Dako and Quarcoo's (2017) and Saah's (1986) submission that English enjoys great prestige in

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Ghana as it is seen as a language of power and security and that Ghanaians are proud of their competence in English which is highly regarded in Ghanaian societies. In terms of theoretical implications the excerpts illustrate how students' language choices in formal academic settings reflect accommodation strategies as espoused in Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Ogay, 2007). It is evident here that participants' preference for English represents convergence, as they align with institutional and peer expectations to gain approval and project competence, while fear of ridicule for using Twi reflects the social penalties of divergence. From the perspective of Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999; 2005), speaking fluent English symbolizes identity inclusion and validation within the academic community, as seen in the pride and admiration expressed by peers and teachers, whereas the avoidance of indigenous languages signals identity differentiation linked to perceived low prestige. Overall, language use emerges as both a means of social accommodation and a marker of negotiated identity in Ghana's linguistically stratified university context.

4.1.2 Negative Attitude towards Indigenous Languages

Interestingly, within the same formal academic environment, students' attitude towards the indigenous languages is frowned upon as evident in excerpts of statement of some of the respondents thus:

'… when you answer questions and you struggle with some English words, you try to fix in twi but when you do that they'll laugh at you.'

'… there is very little chance of speaking Twi during lectures…you can't even attempt to chip in bits of Twi in your answers because you will look odd and your friends might think you lack English vocabulary…'

Temporarily, during lectures, Twi terms are used by both lecturer and students 'to kind of embarrass stubborn students or a dozing student during lectures just to create humour…'

These excerpts align with Adomako and Akrobotu (2023) who reported that pupils often developed unfavorable attitudes toward Ghanaian languages, influenced by parental expectations, school policies, and limited teaching resources. It further confirms Owu-Ewie and Edu-Buandoh's (2014) claim that attitude towards ethnic Ghanaian languages in formal educational settings is not favoured. However, it contradicts Twumasi's (2021) submission that students have positive attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian indigenous languages.

4.1.3 Linguistic Choices in a Semi-formal Academic Discourse Setting

Within semi-formal discourse environment on campus, participants identified circumstances that reflected reduced formality involving interlocutors. One of such issmall student-discussion groups to dilate on topics taught by lecturers. The other is tutorials, often led by the Teaching Assistant (TA) of the lecturer. Tas are usually recently graduated first degree students and so they bond very closely with the undergraduate students. Participants agreed that the choice of language in semi-formal environments depends on the composition of members of a particular group as evidenced in the extract of some of the participants:

R7, Female, (20) explained thus:

…for me I think the choice of language for discussion depends on who and who are involved in the group discussion… Sometimes you find yourself among 'sharks' (extremely brilliant

students) in the group and it's like they initiate the discussion. You know these guys speak well (good English) so you're forced to flow in your own way to measure up…'

R2, Male, (21) stated:
'… Sometimes the choice of language during group discussions depends on peculiar circumstances. When it becomes difficult explaining things in English, you switch to Twi because… yeah most of the guys identify with the Twi language and you yourself you can express yourself better to the understanding of everyone'

R3, Male, (20) intimated
…when you find yourself in a group of fun-loving guys… like boys-boys, though we use English for our discussions we sometimes switch to pidgin or Twi just to create a relaxed atmosphere … you know what I mean… It can't always be English, English, English… everyone feels free to contribute. No strict grammar stuff!'

R6, Female, (19) indicated:
'…I have been in two different types of groups during discussions. In the first group, we spoke English throughout because the members were serious but in the second we spoke Twi mixed with English because the group members were too relaxed'

Submissions made by participants in the extracts clearly suggest that the choice of language is determined by prevailing circumstances and group membership dynamics in a semi-formal communication environment. In some circumstances, 'sharks' in a group always initiate conversation in English and so to identify with them 'you're forced to flow in your own way to measure up'. Similarly, another respondent contends that peculiar circumstances like difficult topics can make group members switch from English language and identify with Twi because it helps to 'express yourself better to the understanding of everyone'. In the view of another respondent, an 'all-boys' 'fun-loving' group members oscillate between English, Pidgin and Twi during group studies simply because it engenders 'a relaxed atmosphere' which makes 'everyone feel free to contribute. In so doing they need not worry about committing grammatical errors but express themselves freely in a language that makes them feel relaxed. These findings resonate with (e.g., Astuti, 2021; Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014) findings whilst reinforcing the submissions of Apfelbaum and Meyer (2010), and Romaine, (2008) that multilingual individuals may choose to communicate in a specific language to compensate for the lack of proficiency in another language while in some circumstances, language choice may be motivated by the context or situation within which the multilingual individual finds himself or herself. In terms of theory, the excerpts demonstrate that students' language choices in semi-formal academic settings are guided by both accommodation and identity needs. Consistent with Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Ogay, 2007), participants adjusted their speech to align with group dynamics—using English to signal seriousness and competence, and switching to Twi or Pidgin to create comfort and solidarity. From the perspective of Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999; 2005), these shifts reflect efforts toward identity inclusion within peer groups and identity differentiation in academically demanding contexts. Thus, code-switching functions as a strategic means of balancing social belonging and intellectual identity in semi-formal university discourse.

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4.1.4 Linguistic Choices in Non-academic Discourse Environment on Campus

Participants in the focus group discussion agreed that non-academic discourse environment involves communication that lie outside teaching and learning (lecture halls), official engagements with school authorities and formal student communication engagements. In effect, small group meetings (friends and peers) at the cafeteria, campus food joints, and relaxation joints etc. constitute non-academic discourse environment. The same question of language choice and the driving motivations were asked and participants gave varying responses.

The following extracts are the recurring responses given by the participants:

R4:
'…Oh outside lectures, I feel comfortable speaking the local dialect especially, twi because…ei why should I speak English after all the teaching and discussions in class… I need to feel free to express myself anyhow in a language my friends and I feel ok… Most of the time in such circumstances, we speak Twi because it offers us the opportunity to express ourselves freely. Who is going to mark our grammar here? (laughs)…'

R3, Male, (20), also remarked:
'…Yeah, when I am not attending lectures and I am relaxing with my buddies on campus, we go freestyle…like any common language apart from English. Usually, it is pidgin or Twi…We don't even make attempt to speak English because we want to feel each other's vibes…No, why should I speak 'good 'English in boys-boys movement? …You know what I mean...'

R1, Male, (21) also commented:
'…Me, I am part of the 'Yankees' on campus … two of our guys did high school in the US but me I did mine (SHS) in Ghana…but because I move with these guys so I try and force to slang like them…you know what I mean ,.. yeah'

R6, Female, (19) responded thus:
'…. Yeah, it depends… I speak Twi with my friends outside lectures If we are from different ethnic background…but even here when your Twi is not too good you have to try else, they'll laugh at you…But if I move with friends from my ethnic background we speak our language thus Ga…'

R8, Female, (19) indicated:
'… Sometimes even in informal situations you are forced to speak English particularly when moving with ladies who cannot flow well in Twi especially some of my friends from the north (northern part of Ghana)… For such ladies you are forced to speak English so they feel part of the conversation'

It is apparent from the responses of the participants that communication setting, group membership dynamics, communication accommodation as well as lack of proficiency in the language are major determinants in language choice for communication as reflected in the extracts below:

'Why should I speak good English in boys-boys movement?
'I speak Twi with my friends outside lectures If we are from different ethnic background… But if I move with friends from my ethnic background we speak our language thus Ga…'
'…but because I move with these guys so I try and force to slang like them.'

These submissions by the participants confirm Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) studies which proffer reasons for language choice in a multilingual speech community which include situations and settings ; participants in interactions- such as age, gender, occupation, socioeconomic status, and the conversational topic. . In relation to theory, the responses show that in non-academic settings, students' language choices reflect both social accommodation and identity affirmation. Consistent with Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles & Ogay, 2007), participants diverged from the formal English norm and converged toward Twi, Ga, or Pidgin to build solidarity and ease interaction. From the lens of Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999; 2005), such shifts signify identity inclusion, as students align with peer groups to express belonging and authenticity. Occasional switches to English to include non–Twi-speaking peers further demonstrate accommodation for mutual understanding. Overall, informal language use functions as a marker of group identity and relational harmony.

4.2 Discussions

The responses of the participants in this study have so far established that several factors account for linguistic choices and preferences of students in academic and non-academic multilingual discourse environments. First, language choice may be influenced by peculiar situations or the context of situations in which the interlocutor may have to adopt a particular language in order to accommodate members of the group in a discourse situation as espoused by Coulmas (2013) who averred that in a multilingual communication environments, individuals adapt their linguistic repertoire to new situations and build their language for specific purpose. Secondly, this study has proved that language choice is influenced by attitude of the interlocutors towards the target language as evidenced in the arguments of Dewi and Setiadi (2018) and Owu-Ewie and Edu-Buandoh (2014) to the effect that positive language attitude promotes encouragement to the language use whilst negative attitude becomes a disincentive towards the choice and use of a language. These conclusions were evident in the present study where participants expressed satisfaction and feel-good mentality towards English language whilst trivializing the speaking of the indigenous Ghanaian languages in the academic discourse environment. Again, instances of interlocutors linguistically accommodating others in a discourse engagement is consistent with Apfelbaum and Meyer (2010), Romaine, (2008) submissions that multilingual individuals may choose to communicate in a specific language to compensate for the lack of proficiency in another language. It further reinforces McWhorter (2014) and Llamas and Watt's (2010) arguments that Individuals and groups may shift or re-negotiate their identities to suit prevailing standards to feel recognized and accepted in their various communities. However, preference for indigenous languages particularly Asante Twi in informal communication environment on campuses is very much paramount as evident in the responses of the participants. All in all, language choice in group communication is dependent on several factors including attitude, setting of the discourse environment, and group membership dynamics.

5. Conclusion

This study has established three influencing factors that affect language choice in a multilingual academic discourse environment, and include: attitude towards the language, discourse setting and group membership dynamics. These conclusions make the two theories for the study even more relevant in that Ting-Toomey's (1999; 2005) argumentation

on identity negotiation highlights the dynamics of people's group membership where individuals tend to feel included when their desired group membership identities are positively endorsed but may experience identity differentiation when their group membership is stigmatized. The theory has implications on linguistic choices of members in multilingual speech communities. Giles and Ogay's (1997) communication accommodation theory focuses on the notion that interlocutors adjust and adapt to each other for a successful social interaction. Upon entering a communicative encounter, people begin to synchronize aspects of their verbal and nonverbal behavior to accommodate views during interaction. The findings of this study thus corroborate several previous studies establishing the fact that linguistic choices in any communication environment are influenced by attitude towards a particular language. However, the study makes specific claims that, apart from language attitude, communication setting and group membership dynamics also influence the choice of language as interlocutors negotiate and re-negotiate their identities to suit prevailing standards in order to feel recognized and accepted in their various communities (Llamas & Watt 2010; McWhorter 2014).

In essence, this study establishes that in formal academic communication environments like lectures, students prefer to speak English language because it comes with prestige and makes the interlocutor feels 'respected'. In semi-formal communication environments like study groups, students oscillate between languages from English to 'Pidgin' or 'Twi' depending on the dynamics of group membership. Finally, in informal non-academic communication environment such as the cafeteria, campus food joints, and other student hangouts, students prefer communicating in the indigenous languages or 'pidgin' English. On rare occasions do students speak Standard English in informal circumstances on campus or choose to speak indigenous languages in formal academic setting. This study extends Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) by showing how convergence, divergence, and identity negotiation manifest differently across formal, semi-formal, and non-academic interactions in a multilingual university context. It expands both theories beyond their traditional Western focus, revealing how language prestige, peer dynamics, and contextual shifts shape accommodation and identity performances in Ghanaian higher education. Further studies could adopt survey methods to corroborate the findings of this qualitative study. The study has implications on linguistic attitude and choices of individuals towards language in other institutions and organizations in professional settings.

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MAXIM VIOLATIONS IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF *RUMSPRINGA: AN AMISH IN BERLIN*

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Abstract

This study shows on purpose violations of conversational maxims and their implied meanings in the Netflix film *Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin* (2022) through a pragmatic and cross-cultural. The film shows Jacob, a young Amish man, going through Rumspringa in Berlin. The cultural differences Jacob sees show the various ways of communicating, values, and perspectives between the Amish way of life and modern city living. This study aims to identify the types of maxim violations and explain their pragmatic functions within the intercultural setting of the film. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. In order to analyze data that were obtained from selected dialogues in the film using Grice's Cooperative Principle framework (1975). The findings reveal that maxim of relevance, which is the sole maxim violated in the data, is employed as a strategy to communicate deeper meanings, express cultural identity, create humor, and subtly critique society. The study contributes to pragmatic and intercultural communication research by illustrating how media discourse reflects complex cultural negotiations through linguistic and multimodal implicature.

Keywords: *cross-cultural communication; Grice's maxims; maxim violation; pragmatic analysis; Rumspringa.*

1. Introduction

In a globalized world, cross-cultural communication is becoming increasingly important because of how people interact, derive meaning, and develop understanding within and across social settings. With the increase in the global interconnectedness of societies via migration, technology, and the media, communication is multifaceted and involves different people and cultures with their unique values, beliefs, and normative linguistic approaches. While communicative effectiveness does require a common language, the absence of shared social and cultural frameworks governing meaning may disrupt communicative rationality. Where communicators are situated within different cultural frameworks, potential cultural norms are likely to conflict. Pragmatic breakdowns involving the violation of conversational maxims may result. This highlights the social nature of language beyond the simple exchange of information. It stems from a complex interplay of cultural norms, social identity, and ideology.

Films use dialogue, visuals, and other nonverbal cues to convey messages. As cultural products and modes of communication, films also use interactivity to engage the audience. Take, for instance, conversations involving a few people. Although meanings in

conversations might be overt, a lot of the time they are left unsaid. Typically, a speaker does not, in a direct or straightforward way, put across what they are intending to say. In this regard, the pragmatic theory is crucial (Yule, 2020). Yule (2020) defines pragmatics as a branch of linguistics that investigates the way in which meaning is generated and comprehended within a social context. This field considers factors such as the relationship between speakers, the purpose of communication, and the context of the conversation. Pragmatic studies are primarily concerned with the phenomenon of conversational implicature, which is a form of meaning that is not explicitly stated but is ascertained by the context of the conversation and the situation (Yule, 2020).

Grice's idea from 1975 about Conversational Implicature, which introduced the Cooperative Principle, is a key concept in understanding how people talk to each other. Grice (1975) defines conversational implicature as the cooperative principle, which comprises four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. The maxim of quantity requires speakers to provide just enough information but not too much; when less or more is given, that usually serves to indicate hidden meaning. The maxim of quality invites speakers to be truthful, not to say what they lack evidence for; when violated deliberately, it usually carries irony or sarcasm. The maxim of relevance demands utterances to be contextually related in a certain way to the speech act; flouting it could signal evasion, humour, or even criticism. Lastly, the maxim of manner demands clarity and brevity, without ambiguity or disorder; speakers may flout it to attain politeness or to be indirect. When speakers intentionally break these rules, they create extra meanings that listeners have to work out on their own. These hidden meanings, known as conversational implicatures, allow people to express feelings, jokes, or criticism without saying it outright. This also demonstrates that the conversational maxims are not rigid rules, but flexible principles that speakers manipulate strategically. People usually understand conventional implicature, which is when a word or phrase's implied meaning is linked to its precise meaning and doesn't depend on its context. Conversational implicature, on the other hand, comes from shared assumptions, the cooperative principle in interaction, and the situational context. This means that it depends a lot on interpretation and prior knowledge (Grice, 1975).

Yule (2020) claims that implied meanings in conversations come not just from how words are used but also from the situation, shared beliefs, and what the people involved already know. Studies by Osman, Subaiah, and Mohammed (2022), along with Elsheikh and Mohammed (2022), show that breaking conversational rules often happens in everyday talks. This can help send unspoken messages, manage social interactions, or reduce disagreements. Research based on movies (Akmal & Yana, 2020; Khairunas et al., 2020; Hidayati & Mahmud, 2022; Efizahane & Afriana, 2022) shows that the violation of maxims—particularly those regarding relevance and quantity–often serves to create comedy, highlight identity, or offer nuanced social commentary. Igwedibia (2018) and Indarti (2024) argue that in cross-cultural contexts require pragmatic awareness is required to ensure the correct understanding of nonliteral meanings. According to the literature, conversational implicature and maxim violations are pragmatic strategies affecting social contact and acting as important devices for cultural representation, especially in audiovisual media. This suggests that films provide a rich environment for examining how maximum flouting shapes meaning.

Film uses a range of nonverbal features as multimodal text, including facial expressions, speech intonation, body language, and other visual aspects. This enhances the way in which implicatures are conveyed throughout character conversation. According to

the study done by Simaremare and Cendana (2021), conversational maxim violations in the movie *Mulan* (2020) are used to convey emotional messages, sarcasm, and social tension. The study of implicit information in movies helps one to understand the importance of intercultural communication and social engagement. An interesting example of practical cross-cultural contact is the movie Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin (Heinrich Nika, Oskar Minkler, & Mira, 2022). The movie tells the story of a young man from the Amish culture, a traditional religious group in Pennsylvania, United States, who visits Berlin, Germany. According to Amish custom, the Rumspringa period is when kids get the opportunity to see the outside world, including drinking alcohol, dancing, and having sex, before deciding on whether to stay in Berlin or go back to their home (Basham, 2019). The cultural battle between the Amish community's conventional beliefs and the German contemporary lifestyle creates a sophisticated dynamic of communication that demands variations in interpretation and transmission of meaning. Society demands variations in the interpretation and transmission of meaning. This shows that the cross-cultural study of conversational implicatures makes this film a suitable topic.

The importance of differences in the application and understanding of implicatures is heightened in the context of cross-cultural communication. Indarti (2024) argues that a range of social conventions, cultural expectations, and value systems shape how intercultural contact is understood. One civilization could view what could be seen as a breach of a maxim as inappropriate or even disgusting in another. However, previous studies have mostly focused on interpersonal relationships, persuasion, or comedy, while very few have examined how maxim violations operate specifically within a distinctly cross-cultural setting such as Amish–German interaction. This contrast highlights a research gap that this study aims to address. Most previous studies have focused either on interpersonal connections (Sari & Litbagay, 2019), persuasive approaches (Hidayati & Mahmud, 2022), or comedic scenarios (Cristina & Afriana, 2021). Thus, the goals of this study are to investigate the form and function of language using Grice's (1975) theoretical framework and the cross-cultural pragmatic approach of conversational implicatures in the film *Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin* (2022).

Theoretically, this study aids the development of pragmatic research focusing on cross-cultural communication and media. Investigating how implicit meanings are produced by conversational means, this study should help us to better understand communication differences in worldwide media, implicatures and audience understanding of these messages from many cultural origins. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify and analyze the types of maxim violations in the film *Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin* (2022) and to explain how these violations reflect cross-cultural communication patterns.

2. Literature Review

Many investigations into written and spoken language have employed Grice's (1975) theory of implicature and the Cooperative Principle. Many academics, including Yule (2020), Osman, Subaiah & Mohammed (2022), and Elsheikh and Mohammed (2022), have noted that verbal implicature sometimes occurs. Deliberate breaking of rules by speakers enables them to convey implicit meaning, maintain social contacts, or attain practical objectives.

Research on films also indicates that breaking the rules can be a way to make audiences laugh, develop characters, and challenge societal expectations. Akmal and Yana in 2020 examined the movie Kingdom of Heaven, Khairunas and others in 2020 explored Beauty and the Beast, and Efizahane and Afriana in 2022 investigated Doctor Strange in the

Multiverse of Madness. These investigations found that a common technique for creating hidden meanings was to disregard the typical rules about relevance and quantity. Similarly, Indarti in 2024 highlighted how important it is to use multiple methods in understanding cultural communication by demonstrating how spoken words and visual signals come together to create implied meanings.

Although not many studies explore cross-cultural communication in film, particularly when ancient and new values conflict, these works demonstrate the need for pragmatic analysis in media speech. Looking at maximum infractions in the film Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin (2022), this study builds on this body of knowledge by contrasting Berlin's contemporary city life is contrasted against Amish values. Previous searches have mostly focused on Western or worldwide blockbusters. On the other hand, this research looks at how implicature operates in cross-cultural meetings, especially on how norm-breaking can be utilized as a technique of negotiating identity, expressing cultural differences, and bridging value gaps.

3. Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method employing a pragmatic approach based on Grice's (1975) Conversational Implicature Theory. This approach was applied to uncover and look closely at the hidden meanings in the dialogue of the movie *Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin* (Heinrich Nika, Oskar Minkler, & Mira, 2022), especially regarding how different cultures communicate, showing the clash between two unique sets of beliefs. Qualitative research is about exploring and understanding, which helps researchers grasp the importance of unspoken messages that can be understood through the setting, the way people talk to each other, and the cultural contexts of those engaged in the conversation.

A practical way of looking at things is needed for this research because pragmatics looks at how language is structured and how it's used in everyday talk and social situations. Yule (2020) explains that pragmatics is a part of linguistics that studies how language signals connect to how people understand each other based on the situation. To put it differently, pragmatics explore how what the speaker wants to say, how the listener understands it, and how people interact with each other affect the meaning of what is communicated. The film is treated as a multimodal text, where both verbal and nonverbal elements (intonation, facial expressions, gestures) are analyzed to interpret the intended meaning.

Interpretation of conversational implicature relies on the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the scenario, and the social connections between the characters. Conversational implicature is the subject of this research. When people from different cultures communicate with one another, it's not uncommon for their answers to seem meaningless, unclear, or even symbolic due to cultural differences in values and communication expectations. This is an example of implicature. The intentional (by sarcasm, comedy, or irony) or unconscious (as a result of cultural misunderstandings) transgressions of maxims shown in several cinema scenes are intriguing to examine from a practical perspective.

The primary data source is the Netflix film *Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin* (2022). The data consist of conversational transcripts containing instances of maxim flouting, supported by detailed descriptions of the visual and situational contexts of the scenes. When gathering information, all important nonverbal signals, like body language, how someone talks, and their facial expressions, were noted down to make sure we understood the hidden

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meanings correctly. After that, researchers take note of, copy, and transcribe pertinent statements, particularly those that suggest transgressions of Grice's maxims. The information was examined in three steps using Grice's model from 1975. The first step, data selection, was about finding conversations that intentionally broke the rules of good talk. The second step, pragmatic analysis, looked at the Cooperative Principle to figure out what the words really meant and what they suggested. The third step, contextual interpretation, linked the meanings we figured out with the differences in culture between the Amish and characters from Berlin, showing how breaking the conversation rules helps shape identity and connect different cultural values.

To make sure the information is trustworthy, we kept the data accurate and dependable by using different methods to check our understanding. We compared all conversation notes with the German online dictionary *duden.de* to make sure the language was correct. Also, we checked each hidden meaning against the situation and how it fits into the context, making sure that our findings were based on solid language and cultural facts. The study is more likely to be true because it uses linguistic analysis, cultural context, and multimodal observation to show how conversational flouting is used as a cultural and practical strategy in the movie.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analytical findings on how characters flout conversational maxims—specifically the maxim of relevance in the movie *Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin* (2022), using Grice's idea from 1975 about how people imply things in conversation. The analysis of how the characters ignore the relevance maxim to convey hidden messages while interacting between the Amish community and the culture of Berlin. Instead of retelling the film's plot, the discussion interprets how each instance of flouting functions pragmatically, like how they reveal beliefs, personal identities, and cultural values, and how they make the film humorous and critical of society. This part not only discusses the differences in global communication but also explains how language helps to create meaning, highlight conflicts in values, and build connections between cultures.

4.1 Flouting the Maxim of Relevance for Revealing Ideology, Identity, and Cultural Values

Taxi Driver: Geld haben wir? (Do we have money?)
Jacob: Ich bin Amish. My people believe that money itself has no value.
(I am Amish. My people believe that money itself has no value.)

Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin (05:22)

The main character, Jacob, talks to a taxi driver in Berlin. In this situation, the taxi driver asks a direct question known as an *Entscheidungsfragesatz* (closed question), with the question *Geld haben wir?* Which literally means 'Do we have money?' and implicitly demands a 'yes' or 'no' answer. On this topic, Jacob didn't answer exactly. Instead, he said something philosophical: *Ich bin Amish*. My people believe that money itself has no value. This respondent's answer was clearly different from what would normally be expected in a

business setting. Jacob didn't answer the question of whether he had money; instead, he used this chance to show how his community's values work.

According to Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature, Jacob's response is a flouting of the maxim of relevance. He purposefully did this in this instance to guide his interlocutor to a more profoundly suggested interpretation. It appears that Jacob purposefully avoided providing a straight response in this instance in order to express the values of the Amish people, who reject consumerism and maintain that money has no inherent worth. The implications that result from Jacob's response are unusual, as the sentence does not make clear what it means. Only those who comprehend the underlying ideological and cultural background will be able to comprehend them. Furthermore, Jacob's words demonstrate a different understanding of the worth of money. It also illustrates how a person from a different culture searches for his identity and life values in the context of a recently established social structure. This demonstrates that maxim violation is not only a communication mistake but also a communication tactic to express ideology, identity, and cultural values.

Freja: ***Jacob, Ich glaube, Alf könnte eher was von dir lernen als andersherum.*** (Jacob, I think Alf could learn more from you than the other way around.)

Jacob: ***Das ist schön. Alf, wir Amish helfen jedem gern.*** (That's great. Alf, we Amish are happy to help everyone.)

Rumspringa - An Amish in Berlin (12:37)

Freja talks with Jacob. Their talk seems simple, but it has a deep meaning that has to do with how different cultures have different values and ways of looking at life. Freja tells, *Jacob, Ich glaube, Alf könnte eher was von dir lernen als andersherum* 'I think Alf could learn more from you than from the other way around.' For the most part, this sounds like a compliment, but it really means something else: Jacob's way of life is thought to have more important values than Alf's. Freja was talking about Jacob's character. Jacob is from the Amish community, which is known for living a simple, organised life and sticking to moral and religious rules. By saying that Alf can learn from Jacob, Freja is comparing Alf's way of life—which is like modern Berlin society, which is free, consumerist, and individualistic. There are times when Freja hints that Alf could learn from some things about Jacob's life, even though she doesn't say it directly. Jacob then said, *Das ist schön*. *Alf, wir Amish helfen jedem gern* 'That's great. Alf, we Amish are happy to help everyone.' Jacob's answer didn't immediately respond to Freja's analogy; instead, it confirmed the good ideals that his community holds dear. Jacob helped to keep the good image of his community by saying that the Amish are delighted to help anyone.

Grice's (1975) conversational implicature theory framework says that Freja's comment breaks the flouting of the maxim of relevance by not following a rule. This happens because Freja does not say that Alf's way of life is pointless or that Jacob is morally better. To get her point across, she instead uses hints and omissions. This violation is planned because it lets moral lessons or criticisms of society get across without directly confronting

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people. In cross-cultural communication, this scene shows that breaking the rule of relevance can be used not only to send hidden meanings but also to be polite, keep social ties alive, and send political messages in that way. In the movie, this method is used to both tell the story of Jacob and Freja's relationship and show the themes of conflict and harmony that can happen when people with different values interact.

Ina: ***Ist es eine Sünde, wenn man sich verliebt?*** (Is it a sin to fall in love?)
Jacob: ***Wir sind nur ein einziges Mal verliebt. Wir bleiben ein Leben lang beieinander.*** (We only fall in love once. We stay together for the rest of our lives.)

Rumspringa - An Amish in Berlin (51:29)

Ina talked about her first love; she asked Jacob if he had ever been in love. Ina asks *Ist es eine Sünde, wenn man sich verliebt?* 'Is it a sin to fall in love?' It was clear that this question had deep religious and moral meanings for Ina, who thought that the Amish might have strict rules or even bans on having relationships before marriage. When asked this question, Jacob replied, *Wir sind nur ein einziges Mal verliebt. Wir bleiben ein Leben lang beieinander* 'We only fall in love once. We stay together for the rest of our lives.' It sounds like this answer is philosophical and full of cultural worth. Instead, he changes the subject from religious morals to the Amish belief that love is a commitment that lasts a lifetime. According to Grice's (1975) framework of conversational implicature, Jacob's response can be categorized as flouting of the maxim of relevance.

This is broken when someone answers a question in a way that doesn't directly answer the questioner, but still makes sense when looked at in the context of culture and society. In this case, Jacob didn't answer the question of whether falling in love is a mistake**.** Instead, he talked about how his community sees love as a lifelong promise that must be kept. People who know about the Amish way of life can figure out that falling in love is not a mistake, but something very holy that is bound by strong morals. This scene shows how the movie breaks rules to make talks between different cultures more meaningful. Characters not only give information about facts, but they also teach cultural and moral values in a subtle way through flouting. People who watch this exchange can learn about how different cultural and moral backgrounds can affect how people answer the same question, even in private and sensitive situations.

4.2 Flouting the Maxim of Relevance for Humor and Social Critique

Jacob: ***Ich bin auch Amish.*** (I'm Amish too.)
Alf: ***Bitte?*** (What?)
Jacob: ***Ich bin auf Rumspringa. Du auch, oder?*** (I'm on Rumspringa. You too, right?)
Alf: ***Äh, nee, ich bin auf Bier.*** *(Uh, no, I'm going to drink beer.)*

Rumspringa - An Amish in Berlin (07:39)

Jacob is strolling around the city when he spots Alf sporting a white shirt, hat, and beard, which are all typical of the Amish people's distinctive dress. Jacob boldly declares, *Ich bin auch Amish,* 'I'm Amish too', based on this outward impression, before adding, *Ich bin auf Rumspringa. Du auch,* oder? 'I'm on Rumspringa. You too, right?' In addition to reflecting Jacob's presumption that Alf and he have similar cultural backgrounds, this statement attempts to forge a bond through common cultural experiences. However, Alf's answer was nothing like what Jacob thought it would be. Alf answered, *Äh, nee, ich bin auf Bier,* 'I'm going to drink beer.' This sentence seems to be similar to Jacob's in terms of structure, but it has nothing to do with meaning. Alf didn't say whether he was Amish or Rumspringa. Instead, he answered with a reference to something that many Berliners do: drinking beer. This is a normal part of life in Berlin and has nothing to do with religious groups or customs.

Alf's response can be classified as flouting of the maxim of relevance, according to Grice's theory of conversational implicature (1975). This violation occurs when the speaker intentionally communicates a response that is unrelated to the context of the conversation. In this context, Alf does not explicitly respond to Jacob's inquiry regarding whether he is also undergoing Rumspringa; rather, he responds with a statement that completely alters the meaning. This flouting is not a communication error; rather, it is a deliberate linguistic strategy that aims to achieve a specific effect, in this case, a comical effect and an expression of disinterest in the cultural topic being discussed. The language used by Alf in the conversation can be interpreted in different ways. It could be seen as a rejection of Jacob's offer of cultural identification. On the other hand, it could be seen as an act of silliness or dishonesty on Alf's part to deal with awkward social situations. So, this scene shows that breaking a maxim isn't just a way to say something without saying it directly; it's also a way to make people laugh, show how two different cultures are at odds with each other, and show how they relate to each other. The pragmatic method, especially Grice's theory, gives us a good way to think about how movies show hidden meanings in everyday conversations that seem silly but have important cultural and social meanings.

Bo: ***Hat er sie geknattert?*** (Did he sleep with her?)
Alf: ***Ja, Mann!*** (Yes, man!)
Bo: ***Oh Mann, ey, selbst der Amish.*** (Oh man, even the Amish.)
Alf: ***Selbst der Amish, Alter!*** (Even the Amish, dude!)

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Rumspringa - An Amish in Berlin (1:13:22)

This scene was important because it went against the very strict morals of the Amish society, which thinks that having sex outside of marriage is a very bad thing to do. Bo asks *Hat er sie geknattert?* 'Did he sleep with her?' is a question that uses German slang and a sexual tone to find out about a relationship. Alf's answer: *Ja, Mann!* 'Yes, man!', which proved Bo's hunch. Bo's response, *Oh Mann, ey, selbst der Amish* 'Oh man, even the Amish!' made his shock even stronger, and Alf repeated it right away, *Selbst der Amish, Alter!* 'Even the Amish, dude!' This repetition serves to make them even more shocked and to show how impressed or amazed they are by Jacob's bravery or sin. When it comes to how things are said, this talk is interesting because it not only shares facts but also makes moral and cultural judgments. Bo's question isn't just a request for proof; it also has a tone of surprise and puts the focus on how strange the act is, since Jacob is an Amish man. Bo thinks it's strange that an Amish young man had sex with someone other than his wife. This goes against what most people think about the Amish society.

Within the framework of Grice's conversational implicature theory (1975), this conversation can be categorized as flouting of the maxim of relevance. According to the principle of relevance, what you say in a talk should be related to the topic and point of the interaction. But Bo and Alf's answers are more about how shocked they are than about giving useful answers or reasons for what happened. Instead of just talking about the facts, they focus on the moral and cultural aspects of Jacob's deeds. This violation is done on purpose, and it creates an unusual implication: that people find Jacob's actions shocking because he comes from a group that believes sexual behavior should be limited.

5. Conclusion

This research looked at how the maxims are broken in Rumspringa: An Amish in Berlin (2022) by applying Grice's (1975) ideas about conversation, especially focusing on the maxim of relevance. The findings indicate that the ways the film breaks these rules are not merely mistakes in communication; they are also deliberate methods that carry more significant cultural, ideological, and humorous meanings. Characters, particularly Jacob, utilize ostensibly indirect or irrelevant comments to convey Amish beliefs, emphasize cultural identity, and navigate disparities in their interactions with Berlin culture. Sometimes, not following typical rules of conversation can help to make people laugh or ease awkward situations. This makes the story better and helps everyone understand different cultures more easily.

This research is new because it demonstrates how violations of conversation rules, often viewed as simple errors, can actually help create understanding in different cultures through movie discussions. The study reveals that the hidden meanings in these conversations reflect cultural beliefs and social messages, allowing audiences to notice both the differences in ideas and the chance for connection between different cultural

backgrounds. This bolsters the assertion that pragmatic phenomena cannot be comprehensively grasped without consideration of cultural and ideological contexts.

This study makes two important contributions. Theoretically, it contributes to the study of pragmatics by contextualizing maxim violations within a cross-cultural cinematic framework, illustrating the functioning of implicature beyond quotidian discourse. In practice, it underscores the educational efficacy of cinema in imparting international pragmatics, especially in cultivating learners' awareness of latent meanings and cultural subtleties.

Future study could expand this approach by exploring maxim violations across various film genres or in multilingual environments, as well as by examining audience reaction to gain a deeper understanding of how cultural backgrounds affect the interpretation of implicatures. These directions would enhance our comprehension of the functioning of pragmatic tactics as both communicative and cultural resources.

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METAPHORS WE SHOOT BY: METAPHORS IN LIVE TEXT FOOTBALL COMMENTARY

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Abstract

This paper examines metaphors in live text football commentary, a developing genre of computer-mediated sports discourse. Drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's CMT, live text commentaries of three final football matches were used as the data for the study. The commentaries included that of the 2025 UEFA Champions League, 2025 Conference League and 2025 Europa League. The commentaries were analysed using the Pragglejaz Group's (2007) procedure for identifying metaphorically used words, enabling the study to systematically detect and classify lexical items whose contextual meanings diverged from their basic meanings. The results show that war, journey, construction and power domains were mapped onto various events in the football game. These domains functioned to frame football as a combative struggle (war), a contest for dominance (power), a structured and progressive movement toward a goal (journey), and a creative or strategic process (construction). The following conceptual metaphors were identified: *A Football Match Is War, A Football Match Is Competition For Power, A Football Match Is A Journey* and *A Football Match Are Construction*. The analysis provides support for the claim that metaphors are not merely stylistic choices but fundamental cognitive tools through which football discourse is structured and communicated.

Keywords: *computer-mediated communication; conceptual mapping; conceptual metaphor theory; football language; live text football commentary; sports discourse.*

1. Introduction

Sports discourse represents a communication genre, including interactions and dialogues, focused on sports-related topics (Caldwell, Walsh, Vine & Jureid, 2017). Language in sports discourse is conveyed through three main forms of communication: written, spoken and computer-mediated (Amoakohene, 2017). To situate the present study more precisely within this broad field, this paper focuses specifically on live text football commentary as a developing computer-mediated genre. Currently, there is a growing focus on computer-mediated communication within academic literature. The increasing impact of technology in modern culture, rooted in its essential role in human life, explains the widespread adoption of computer-mediated communication and the attraction to internet genres. Consequently, the growing integration of technology into everyday life has also

influenced how sports are discussed and consumed, with computer-mediated communication and internet genres now playing a central role in sports discourse across the globe (Bergh & Ohlander, 2012). Sports discourse is widely recognised as a prominent form of communication that takes place on computer-mediated platforms. Nartey (2018) posits that a prominent theme within computer-mediated platforms is the discourse surrounding sports. In the realm of football-related online communication, various internet formats like football tweets, digital commentary and analyses before and after matches are widely observed. In recent years, these genres have attracted academic attention, resulting in several studies within this field (Nartey, 2018; Pérez-Sabater et al., 2008). The various forms of sports discourse include commentary (traditional and online), match previews, after-match panels, sports eulogies and sports news presentations.

There has been a growing number of linguistic studies concentrating on sports discourse. Varied methodological and theoretical perspectives like critical discourse analysis (Liu, 2024), genre analysis (Amoakohene, 2017), appraisal theory (Munday, 2004), intertextual analysis (Waliaula, 2012), morphological analysis (Chanh, 2011; Dzahene-Quarshie, 2012), discourse analysis (Kuo, 2003), rhetoric (Roohani & Esmaeili, 2010), pragmatic (Addi & Kadhim, 2022) and cognitive metaphor (Manu & Afreh, 2024; Sopa, 2023) have been applied in exploring sports discourse. These studies have largely used data from traditional media outlets (television, radio and newspaper). However, despite this rich tradition, research on computer-mediated sports discourse, particularly live text football commentary, remains comparatively limited, creating a clear gap that the present study addresses. In recent times, sports discourse is pervasively enacted on computer-mediated platforms with the prevalence of genres such as online football commentary, football tweets and pre-and-post-match analysis. This has occasioned researchers exploring linguistic features in this new genre of sport discourse. Bergh (2011), for instance, explores war terminologies and metaphors in minute-by-minute football commentary and argues that WAR metaphors are pervasive in this genre, making a strong claim for the master metaphor FOOTBALL IS WAR. Hussein (2019) also explores metaphors in live text commentary and agrees with Bergh (2011) that the source domain of war dominates the genre. In a bid to explore verbal interactions in live text commentary, Chovanec (2006) observes that this genre is interactive, competitive and highly masculine. Nartey (2018) also undertakes a move analysis of match previews and finds that the genre has six moves with a relatively restricted range of grammatical resources.

The present study proposes to expand and add to the existing literature in the relatively new genre of computer-mediated football discourse, specifically live text football commentary. Live text football commentary, mostly referred to as online text commentary (OTC) is an emerging form of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) that has recently developed and established itself as a distinct mode of communication. Limited research has been conducted in this area, and it remains a subject of ongoing investigation (Chovanec 2018; Jucker 2012; Lewandowski, 2012). This is also termed ‘event tracker’, ‘minute-by-minute report’, ‘live ticker’, ‘match cast’, ‘text commentary’, ‘live match report’ or ‘live text commentary’ (LTC) (Hussein, 2019). Chovanec (2009) described LTC as a distinct genre of online journalism, differentiating it from blogging by its institutional nature, authored by expert reporters, and typically featured on the web pages of established newspapers. Furthermore, both the commentary and the extralinguistic events occur simultaneously, with the distinction between these two processes being the brief duration needed for the

creation of the written message and its subsequent online posting. Despite this recognition, the metaphorical structuring of this genre across multiple high-profile matches has not been fully examined, which highlights the novelty of the present study.

It has been established that metaphors are integral to sports reporting (Bergh, 2011; Sopa, 2023). The present study seeks to explore metaphors in live text football commentary as a way of expanding literature in the relatively new genre of computer-mediated football discourse. Accordingly, the purpose of the study is to identify the conceptual metaphors deployed in live text commentary and examine how these mappings frame football events for online audiences.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Metaphors in Football Commentary

Metaphors are key linguistic resources in football language. Research indicates that metaphors are utilised not only for enhancing descriptive vividness but also for persuasive and evaluative functions (Charteris-Black, 2004; Rina et al., 2022). Commentators often employ metaphors of war or battle to emphasise player confrontations, as well as metaphors of journey and adventure to depict a team's progression through a tournament (Koller, 2004). These metaphorical constructions affect fans' interpretations and emotional engagement with the ongoing match (Caballero, 2012). Luo (2023) shares that metaphors are indispensable in football commentaries as they make the game exciting. For Wilinski (2014), metaphors hold an interpretative function in sports commentary and related news as they attract and sustain the attention of sports enthusiasts. A variety of source domains are used to frame sports with researchers agreeing on the preponderance of war domains (Jinying & Xinping, 2012; Manu & Afreh, 2024; Xiaobo, 2016). Manu and Afreh (2024) agree with Addi and Kadhim (2022) that the common use of words such as shooting, attacking, defending, squad, target, captain and campaign projects the game of football as a combative event. Keranen (2024) shares that war metaphors are particularly frequent in attacking and defending sections of the football game. Wilinski (2014) similarly notes that although written soccer commentaries draw on a variety of source domains, the domains of physical fight and military conflict are particularly prominent. Using online minute-by-minute football commentary, Bergh (2011) contributes to this field of analysis by reporting a high number of war-inspired metaphors in this genre. His study provides a fresh outlook to metaphor studies in football commentary as it examines the linguistic item in online sports commentary, an underexplored genre. Furthermore, Alzawaydeh and Alghazo (2018) quantified war metaphors in football headlines as almost 56%. Even in women's matches, Sopa (2023) identified high war-related source domains in football language. Referencing the obvious prominence of war metaphors in football commentary and related news, Bergh (2011) makes a case for the master metaphor FOOTBALL IS WAR. However, Luo (2023) cautions that the excessive use of metaphors in football commentary causes language violence. Nonetheless, the impression must not be made that war metaphors are distinct from football language as they have been analysed in other genres such as politics (Burgers & Ahrens, 2020; Ngula, 2021) and health communication (Cherpurnaya, 2023; Habwe & Ndung'u, 2022; Seixas, 2021).

Luo (2023) finds that war, animal and object metaphors rhetorically increase the image and comprehension of football matches. While Luo (2023), Yusuf (2016) and Hussein

(2019) attribute the prevalence of war metaphors in football commentary to the fierce, domineering and competitive nature of the sport, Xiaobo (2016) argues that the isomorphism of the structural and cognition features of football and war domains explains this observation. Aside from war metaphors, other domains used to describe football are human behaviour, animal, spatial and journey domains (Luo, 2023; Wilinski, 2014). Lewandowski (2012) argues against war-related metaphors in football language and claims that non-violent metaphors are equally prominent in the genre. He, for instance, identifies the metaphors *A Soccer Match Is A Theater Performance* and *A Soccer Match Is A Test*. Sopa (2023) relatedly identified the metaphor *Football Is A Show*. Keranen (2024) similarly identified art/performance-related metaphors in the attacking side of the game. Performing-related metaphors in describing the attacking side of the game, according to Keranen, rendered a feminine stereotypical frame to the game, although masculinity-related domains overpowered the language of the genre. Aside from war-related metaphors, Manu and Afreh (2024) also identified *A Football Match Is An Examination* and *A Football Match Is Communication* metaphors.

Caballero (2012) makes an interesting observation on the social functions of metaphors in tennis reporting. She asserts that metaphors build interpersonal relationships and add empathy to the highly competitive game of tennis. Luo (2023) agrees with Caballero's assertion on the social function of metaphors as both put forward that commentators use metaphors to celebrate sportsmanship, individual heroism and uphold the dignity of players.

2.2 Cognitive Approach to Metaphor

In order to conceptualize and analyse the metaphors used in live text football commentary, the current study employs the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). This theory enhances our comprehension of metaphor utilisation in sports discourse and provides insights into the conceptual structuring of discourse and thought, highlighting the significance of both abstract and concrete concepts in the development of conventional metaphors in human cognition.

CMT, as established by Lakoff and Johnson (1980a), posits that metaphorical use of language extends beyond literary texts to include all aspects of everyday life. Lakoff and Johnson (1980a: 4) note that '[o]ur ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature' and that 'metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way' (ibid: 8). As a result, there are now two types of metaphors: linguistic and conceptual. Linguistic metaphors are metaphors that appear in certain language usages as words, phrases, or even visual representations, while conceptual metaphors are thinking processes that underlie linguistic metaphors. Therefore, metaphors are terms that come from or are based on a person's conceptual framework whether they are used in either written or spoken form. An often-used example of a conceptual metaphor in Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) is LOVE IS WAR. This metaphor explains people expressing love are conceptualized to be similar to people fighting in a war. The authors argue that LOVE IS WAR metaphor, like any other metaphor, is reflected in our everyday language. They provide these italicized linguistic expressions below in support of their assumption:

a) He is known for his many rapid conquests
b) She fought for him, but his mistress won out

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c) He fled from her advances
d) She pursued him relentlessly
e) He is slowly gaining ground with her
f) He won her hand in marriage
g) He overpowered her
h) She is besieged by suitors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a: 49)

Each of the above expressions about love is uttered in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS WAR. In these expressions, the abstract notion of LOVE ('target' domain), evidenced by the words advances, mistress, marriage and suitors, is systematically spoken about in the context of a tangible idea of (military) WAR ('source' domain), demonstrated with the words conquests, fought, won out, fled, pursued, overpowered and besieged. Kövecses (2002: 4) expounds that '[t]he conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain'. Accordingly, Krennmayr (2015: 530) states emphatically that 'metaphor in language reflects conventional thought structures in our minds'.

A conceptual metaphor consists of a structure comprising two domains that correspond to one another: the source domain and the target domain (Kövecses, 2002; Semino, 2008). The source represents the domain that supports the literal interpretation of the utterance, while the target domain, as noted by Croft and Cruse (2004), pertains to the actual subject of the expression. Kövesces (2010) notes that source domains are typically tangible, real, simple, known and well-defined, while target domains are generally abstract, complex, unknown and less clearly defined. To illustrate these mappings, Kövesces (2002: 8) uses the SOCIAL ORGANIZATION ARE PLANTS metaphor.

Source: plant	Target: social organization
(a) the whole plant	⇒ the entire organization
(b) a part of the plant	⇒ a part of the organization
(c) growth of the plant	⇒ development of the organization
(d) removing a part of the plant	⇒ reducing the organization
(e) the root of the plant	⇒ the origin of the organization
(f) the flowering	⇒ the best stage, the most successful stage
(g) the fruits or crops	⇒ the beneficial consequences

The abstract concept of social organization (target domain) is explained within the domain of the more concrete term of plant. The basic components of plants parallel systematically to constituent elements of social organizations, such as companies, and the words that are used about plants are employed systematically in connection with organizations. The mappings are made manifest in the PLANTS metaphor by the words branch, is growing, prune, root, blossom, flower and fruits.

Culture is also principal in Lakoff and Johnson's CMT. The sociocultural setting in which language is used can often determine not just what source domain is used to clarify the target domain, but also how both domains are mapped to create understanding, meaning, and interpretation. By extension, the main idea behind CMT is that metaphors are more than just words we use. They shape how we think and how we organise our ideas, and

we often use real ideas that come from our cultural background to figure out what other, more abstract ideas mean.

3. Research Method

The data were live text football commentaries of final matches from three major European competitions: the 2025 UEFA Champions League (UCL), the 2025 Conference League (ConfL) and the 2025 Europa League (EurL). The UCL commentary consisted of 3,235 tokens, the ConfL 3,125 tokens, and the EurL 3,762 tokens. The UEFA Champions League match was between Paris Saint-Germain and Internazionale Milano at the Allianz Arena in Italy on May 31, 2025, while the 2025 Europa League match was played on May 21 at Estadio de San Mamés in Spain between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United. The Conference League was also played on May 28 at Tarczynski Arena Wroclaw in Poland between Real Betis and Chelsea F.C. Since the present study was interested in text commentary, I downloaded the live text football commentary of the games from LiveScore, an E-sport company that provides real-time sports news and updates. The text was analysed per Praglejazz Group's (2007) four-step procedure for metaphor identification. The procedure involved identifying lexical units, determining their basic meanings, comparing these with contextual meanings and marking items as metaphorical when a contrast was observed. Metaphorical expressions were catalogued under general conceptual descriptions and aligned with appropriate primary metaphors identified by Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) and Kövesces (2002). In applying these mappings, the structural correspondences between source and target domains were traced directly from recurring linguistic expressions in the dataset, ensuring that each conceptual metaphor reflected consistent cross-domain patterns evident in the commentary. Two trained research assistants supported the coding process by independently identifying metaphorical items and reconciling discrepancies through discussion until agreement was reached. Further presentation and discussion of the metaphorical expressions were carried out with reference to linguistic examples from the data.

4. Results and Discussion

In line with the study's aim of identifying and analysing the conceptual metaphors used in live text football commentary, the analysis revealed that football is framed around the domains of war/battle, competition for power, journey and construction. The conceptual metaphors identified were *A Football Match Is War, A Football Match Is Competition For Power, A Football Match Is A Journey* and *A Football Match Is A Construction*. These metaphorical expressions are discussed in the next section using linguistic evidence from the dataset.

4.1 A Football Match Is War

A prominent conceptual metaphorical structuring in the live text football commentary is *A Football Match Is War*. The metaphorical use of militaristic words frames the game of football as war. This metaphorical understanding finds parallels with one significant claim of Lakoff and Johnson (1980b: 202) where they use the concept war to show 'that metaphorical concepts are based on complex experiential gestalts' which are semantically represented within natural occurrences. In their seminal paper titled The

Metaphorical Structure of the Human Conceptual System, the authors use the gestalt structure for WAR to explain conversational activity, giving rise to the primary metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. Similarly, we find parallels between the gestalt structure for war and the gestalt structure for football. Lakoff and Johnson (1980b: 202) outline the following gestalt structure for war:

1. Participants: People or groups of people playing the role of ADVERSARIES
2. Parts:
   a. The two POSITIONS
   b. PLANNING STRATEGY
   c. ATTACK
   d. DEFENSE
   e. RETREAT
   f. MANEUVERING
   g. COUNTERATTACK
   h. STALEMATE
   i. TRUCE
   j. SURRENDER/VICTORY
3. Stages:
   a. INITIAL CONDITIONS: PARTICIPANTS have different positions. ONE or BOTH wants the other to surrender, etc.
   b. BEGINNING: one ADVERSARY ATTACKS
   c. MIDDLE: combinations of DEFENSE, MANEUVERING, RETREAT, etc.
   d. END: TRUCE or STALEMATE or SURRENDER/VICTORY
   e. FINAL STATE: PEACE, VICTOR HAS DOMINANCE
4. Linear Sequence:
   RETREAT after ATTACK
   DEFENSE after ATTACK
   COUNTERATTACK after attack, etc.
5. Causation: ATTACK results in DEFENSE or COUNTERATTACK or RETREAT, etc.
6. Purpose: VICTORY
   These six dimensions of war equally characterizes the activity of football. The six dimensions of football is given as follows:
   1. Participants ⇒ PLAYERS or the two TEAMS who play against each other and MATCH OFFICIALS.
   2. PARTS ⇒ PASSING, DRIBBLING, SHOOTING, DEFENDING, CORNER KICKS, FREE KICKS, THROW-INS, HALF-TIME BREAK, SUBSTITUTIONS, and PENALTY SHOOTOUT.
   3. STAGES ⇒ PRE-MATCH PHASE, FIRST HALF, HALF-TIME BREAK, SECOND HALF, STOPPAGE TIME/ADDED TIME, and PENALTY SHOOTOUT.
   4. Linear Sequence ⇒ ATTACKING and DEFENDING. Play typically begins with BALL POSSESSION, followed by PASSING, DRIBBLING, and ADVANCING toward the opponent's goal. This leads to CROSSING or SHOOTING attempts, which are met by defensive actions such as TACKLING, INTERCEPTIONS, or GOALKEEPING, after which the cycle restarts with a change in possession.

5. Causation ⇒ SHOOTING results in scoring a GOAL, LOSSING possession results in conceding a goal, WINING the ball results in launching a COUNTERATTACK and committing FOUL results in receiving a (red/yellow) card.
6. Purpose ⇒ Winning by scoring more goals

The gestalt for war is structured by means of correspondences with selected elements of a football match, in which the game of football is understood in terms of physical fighting. Various acts of the game such as intense opponent attack, strong defense, blocked attacks and defensive actions in football were represented within the WAR domain. Through CMT, these lexical choices indicate that commentators draw upon entrenched cultural knowledge of combat to structure how readers mentally organize football events. The WAR metaphors highlight and coherently organize the defending and attacking aspects of the football experience. Words/expressions such as pressure, dangerous challenge, shoot, target, win, charge, intercept rough, attack and defend, which are primarily associated with war, are used to describe various aspects and events in the game. Yusuf (2016) and Luo (2023) made similar observations in their studies and concluded that the preponderant use of militaristic words to frame the game of football is attributable to the fierce and competitive nature of the sport.

The commentaries' repeated use of combative phrases maps the physical contest and manoeuvres of war onto football. These present the match as a site of struggle, risk, competition and tactical engagement. The following are illustrative examples:

TEXT 1

a. Good effort by Cole Palmer as he directs a shot on target, but the keeper saves it [MIN 6 - ConfL]
b. Achraf Hakimi charged Lautaro Martinez from behind and it's a free-kick [MIN 17 - UCL]
c. Manchester United with a potentially dangerous attack [MIN 87 - EurL]
d. Natan from Real Betis intercepts a cross aimed towards the box. [MIN 45+2 - ConfL]

The source domain of war is metaphorically mapped onto the target domain of football to frame actions like attacking and defending. In (1a), the metaphorical expression directs a shot on target maps the concept of aiming in warfare onto football action. The commentator describes Cole Palmer as an archer or marksman and the goal as the target. This description draws on combative experiences, where an object is carefully aimed towards a goal, to describe the accuracy and intentional dynamics of the football game. Attacking is thus described as an intentional act. Manu and Afreh (2024) make a similar observation in their study where attacking is metaphorically framed as driving (directing). The authors catalogued this metaphor as ATTACKING IN FOOTBALL IS DRIVING with the source domain being war. Achraf Hakimi's defence against Lautaro Martinez is also metaphorically described as a soldier or animal that attacks by rushing at an opponent as exemplified in (1b). The source domain of war is used to structure our understanding of defending in football. This description does not render the game as mere sports but as a moment of physical conflict. A similar description of the attack is observable in (1c), where a Manchester United movement is described as potentially dangerous attack. The expression projects a physical offensive act that causes harm to an opponent. This act is typical of war domain where opponents are threatened and harmed (attacked) on the battlefield. The metaphor is used to conceptualize the movement of Manchester United as parallel to an

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army mounting a threatening assault. Defence in football is also metaphorically described as a military interception. In 1(d), Natan of Real Betis is described to have 'intercepted a cross', similar to the cutting off of enemy communications, supply lines and movements in warfare to disrupt the enemy's plans. This act of the player disrupts the attacking team's pass before it can reach an attacker. These militaristic frames intensify the game, position the teams as opposing armies, the players as combatants, attacking and defending as crucial battle points.

Related to the domain of war is the use of control metaphors to vividly describe the game. The conceptual metaphor A FOOTBALL MATCH IS COMPETITION FOR POWER is observed throughout the dataset. Within CMT, this metaphor reflects a mapping from the concrete domain of SOCIAL/POLITICAL POWER onto the abstract domain of football dynamics. The commentators borrowed experiences from the field of competition to gaudily present a game imbued with power relations. In terms of conceptual mapping, the POWER domain structures how possession, dominance and territorial control in the match are mentally conceptualised by online audience. The source domain reflects a domain where people in authority hold power and are considered to be imperial in every human engagement. Such a prestigious status is equally enviable as it offers dominance and recognition. This life event is used to explain the competition between the two teams on the field of play as akin to individuals fighting for power and hegemony. Consider the following examples:

TEXT 2

a. Paris Saint-Germain take a throw-in in their own half of the field. Paris Saint-Germain are in control of the ball. [MIN 22 - UCL]
b. Patrick Dorgu makes the tackle and wins possession for his team. [MIN 62 - EurL]
c. Marc Bartra wins an air challenge against Trevoh Chalobah. [MIN 45+1 - ConfL]

Paris Saint-Germain is described to have taken control of the ball (2a). They are noted to be dominating play in that particular instance. This metaphorical description draws on the idea of authority and ownership in power where those with power determine the direction of the distribution of resources. Here, the team in power is said to be in control as it dictates the flow and pace of the game. This enviable status is reinforced by the idea of each team struggling for possession. In 2(b), the goal of every tackle is to win possession for one's team. Metaphorically, winning is not just about taking the ball but seizing power and dominance on the field of play, just like a person usurps power. The metaphor frames possession as a valuable resource in the game of football that can be captured and lost in the ongoing event. When Patrick Dorgu tackles and wins possession, the balance of power is swiftly shifted in favour of his team. The essence of a direct physical contest for power and dominance is also reinforced in 2(c) where Marc Bartra goes into an air challenge to assert the supremacy of his team. This metaphor presents heading duels as contests for dominance, further evidence of the incessant struggle to win in football.

4.2 A Football Match Is a Journey

Another frequently deployed metaphor is *A Football Match Is A Journey*. The source domain is journey and the target domain is a football match, with various movements such as start, progression, and end being structured metaphorically as stages of a journey. The metaphor describes the progression of play as movement through space and time towards a

goal. This metaphor finds parallel with Lakoff (1994) and Winter's (1995) metaphorical conceptualisation of *Life Is A Journey* which maps the conceptual phenomenon of life onto a tangible experience of a journey. In this metaphor, the abstract concept of life is understood in terms of the physical event of a journey with recognizable terms and landmarks such as 'start', 'destinations' and 'obstacles'. This shapes our understanding of life as a movement along a path with significant experiences. Our comprehension of a journey, as a tangible experience, influences our perception of the abstract notion of life. Consequently, life goals are analogous to destinations on a trip, which Winter (1995) indicates that our actions represent progress along the road, while meaningful experiences serve as landmarks. Our everyday expressions exemplify the journey metaphor. Lakoff (1994) for instance mentions that we discourse about life in terms of movement by using linguistic metaphors such as 'We are at a crossroads', 'She has come a long way' and 'He is on the right track'. Goals and ambitions are often phrased as destinations. This is evident in linguistic metaphors such as 'I am reaching for my dreams' and 'He is on a path to success'; while challenges are also described as obstructions – 'I hit a barrier in my plans', 'She overcame a major hurdle'. Decisions, according to Lakoff (1994), are framed as choosing a route. Thus, we talk about 'taking a new path' or 'needing to chart a new course' to describe our evaluation on taking new life paths. The journey description of life is also exemplified in our description of significant moments. Such moments, in Winter's (1995) view, are described as landmarks. It is, therefore, usual to observe expressions such as 'Getting married was a turning point in her life' and 'Graduation was a major milestone' used to describe major life moments.

Similarly, the game of football is framed using journey metaphors akin to the process of life. The event is described as one that has a start, coordinated progression, temporary pauses and an eventual end. Consistent with CMT, the JOURNEY domain provides a concrete schema; movement, direction, obstacles and endpoints, through which the temporal progression of a match is conceptualised. These mappings demonstrate how commentators frame the match as a structured path with coordinated phases, enabling audiences to understand football action as purposeful movement toward a goal. Consider the following texts:

TEXT 3

a. Paris Saint-Germain start a counter attack. [MIN 61 - UCL]
b. The match will start in about 5 minutes. [MIN 1 – UCL]
c. They are off to a flying start. [MIN 46 - ConfL]
d. The team loses their way in the final third. [MIN 29 – ConfL]
e. He's driving through the midfield. [MIN 59 - EurL]

The source domain (journey) frames the football game as a structured event that must be understood as having purposeful movements, stages and attempts towards a goal(destination). In 3(a), Paris Saint-Germain is described as starting a journey towards the opponent's direction. This is parallel to the beginning of a journey or a trip where a purposeful action is taken towards a desired goal/destination. Paris Saint-Germain's counter attack is conceptualized as a rapid advance that changes the direction of the game. Similarly, the expression: the match will start in about 5 minutes (3b), conceptualizes the game as a journey as it signals the commencement of the game, similar to the dawn of a journey where everything and all possibilities are open. The team's 'journey' in the match is also described in 3(c). 'Off to a flying start' metaphorically means that their journey has begun with speed,

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energy, and success, akin to travelers who set off swiftly and confidently on a trip. The use of "flying" intensifies the sense of rapid unhindered progress at the start of the journey. Through the match, the team's attack is metaphorically likened to a journey with a specific destination (the opponent's goal post). The 'final third' refers to the last part of the pitch before scoring. 'Loses their way' metaphorically suggests that, like travelers who become disoriented or take a wrong turn before reaching their destination, the team fails to find the right path or method to complete their journey with a goal. The hall marks of a journey are mapped onto the game to reflect how progress toward a target in football is conceptualized as traveling along a path that can be disrupted, diverted, or confused (see 3d). The image of a vehicle moving purposefully towards a destination is also evoked in 3(e). The player's movement with the ball through the midfield is described as an active forceful travel along a journey's route. The midfield acts as part of the 'road' or 'path' that must be traversed to reach the opponent's goal which is the journey's endpoint. This linguistic expression frames the match as an act of progressing upfield along a path with controlled movement. Apart from providing vivid language, the journey metaphor invites spectators or fans to see the game as an unfolding story and renders the contest more relatable and meaningful.

4.3 A Football Match Is Construction

The game of football is also framed as a creation event. The conceptual metaphor A FOOTBALL MATCH IS CONSTRUCTION is deployed throughout the online commentary. This metaphor conceptualizes the game as an act of construction or engineering. From a CMT perspective, this metaphor draws on the concrete domain of BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION, blocks, clearing, and creating, to structure understanding of abstract tactical processes in football. Words such as create, clear, building up and blocks reinforce the idea of constructing an object. Kövesces (2002) identifies buildings and construction as a common metaphorical source domain. He contends that both the static entity of a home and its components, together with the process of its construction, provide a common basis for describing the abstract dimensions of life. This perspective emphasizes the impact that architectural imagery can have in shaping our perceptions and interpretations of existence.
The following are illustrative examples from the commentaries to support A FOOTBALL MATCH IS CONSTRUCTION metaphor.
TEXT 4

a. A shot by Ousmane Dembele is blocked. Federico Dimarco successfully blocks the shot. [MIN 34 - UCL]
b. Marc Cucurella relieves the pressure with a clearance. [MIN 26 - ConfL]
c. Tottenham take a throw-in in their own half of the field. Manchester United are trying to create something here. [MIN 64 - EurL]

The construction metaphor is deployed to describe the teams' effort in defending their territory/goalpost to prevent conceding a goal. The metaphor highlights the incremental, engineered nature of football play, positioning players as architects who assemble attacking sequences or dismantle threats. In 4(a), Dembele and Dimarco are described as successfully removing a danger that threatened their team. A similar description is observed in 4(b) where the commentary describes Cucurella's actions as eliminating danger and bringing temporary comfort and respite to the team. Just as

construction workers clear debris and unwanted materials from their site and build barriers to protect certain areas, players also 'clear' and 'block' the ball away from their half of the playing field to prevent the entry of their opponent team and the danger of being scored. Manu and Afreh (2024) also made similar observations on the use of metaphors to describe how players defend and clear their lines. The authors catalogued this metaphor as DEFENDING IN FOOTBALL IS CLEANING. The action of building new pathways and access routes, a typical event in construction, is also exemplified in 4(c). This involves planning, constructing and connecting spaces. Manchester's attempt to create something [an opportunity to score] is described in the commentary. These pathways are advances made by the team after blocking shots. The offensive play is metaphorically seen as constructing a path toward the opponent's goal, building up an attack or creating openings. These concrete aspects of the construction domain are borrowed to enhance the vivid description of the game and enhance easier visualization for readers (spectators).

5. Conclusion

The present study examined the conceptual metaphors that structured live text football commentary across three major 2025 European final matches. Using the principles of CMT, the analysis identified and interpreted four dominant metaphorical domains; war, power, journey and construction, and showed how each domain shaped readers' conceptualisation of match events. These mappings worked collectively to represent football as a combative contest, a struggle for dominance, a purposeful progression through space and time, and a tactical process of building and dismantling opportunities. The findings demonstrate that live text commentary relies on a coherent cognitive system through which abstract sporting actions are made intelligible by grounding them in familiar experiential structures.

A key contribution of this study is the demonstration that CMT remains a rigorous and productive framework for analysing football discourse, including newer computer-mediated genres. While prior work concentrated largely on spoken commentary and single-domain metaphor analyses, this study broadened the empirical scope by examining multiple tournaments and revealing how several metaphor domains operated concurrently within the dataset, thereby exposing the multilayered conceptual organisation of online sport narratives.

Future research may build on these findings by comparing metaphor use across different online platforms (e.g., live commentary, fan tweets, match blogs), examining audience reception of metaphorical framing, and exploring variations across gendered, cultural, or multilingual football contexts. Such studies would deepen understanding of how metaphors shape online sporting discourse and how digital environments influence metaphor choice and interpretation. Conclusively, the study showed that metaphors are not stylistic embellishments but stable cognitive tools through which football commentary is structured, interpreted and communicated across shifting media forms.

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SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE POEM *A CONVERSATION WITH MY MOTHER ABOUT THE BLOODSTAINS ON MY SHIRT* BY DARIUS SIMPSON

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Abstract

Leech's semantic theory plays a crucial role in analyzing meaning in a poem, as it highlights the multiple layers of interpretation embedded in poetic language. The aim of this study is to analyse the types of meaning in the poem "A Conversation with My Mother about the Bloodstains on My Shirt" by Darius Simpson. This study employs Leech's semantic theory as the primary theoretical framework for interpreting the semiotic meanings present in the poem's text. The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive approach, using content analysis of Leech's semantic categories. The findings reveal six distinct types of meaning in the poem. They are conceptual meaning (16 %), connotative meaning (27 %), affective meaning (18%), thematic meaning (16 %), social meaning (18%), and reflected meaning (4%). The dominant meaning is connotative, emphasizing the emotional burden and sociopolitical critique of the poet. While the least is reflected meaning, because the poem prioritizes clarity, emotional resonance, and sociopolitical truth, rather than wordplay or associative ambiguity. Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive lens for interpreting how poets use linguistic creativity to communicate meaning in subtle, layered, and aesthetic ways.

Keywords: *Darius Simpson's poem; Leech's semantic theory; types of meaning.*

1. Introduction

Race, racism, and discrimination are central themes in studies of the African American culture, particularly in literature. Research reveals a clear divide between the lives of Black and White Americans, not only in social, political, and cultural aspects but also in rights and opportunities. During this period, Black Americans were denied equal status and access, resulting in deeply rooted inequality between the two groups (Seputri, et al., 2022).

Black poetry is deeply rooted in Afrocentric culture and draws on techniques from Black folklore. Baker, a key figure in African American literary criticism, traces its origins to blues music, slave narratives, spirituals, and Black vernacular traditions. By linking the blues to broader American cultural and literary history, Baker highlights how African American expression operates at a vernacular level. As a result, much Black poetry developed spontaneously and was preserved through oral tradition rather than written forms (Jindal, 2022).

The poem "A Conversation with My Mother about the Bloodstains on My Shirt" by Darius Simpson presents a lively dialogue that explores the intersections of race, identity, trauma, and generational pain within the African American experience. Through its emotional tone and layered imagery, the poem reflects not only the personal struggle of the speaker but also a collective history of racial injustice and survival. Feagin (2006) argues that racism in the United States was intentionally constructed through centuries of slavery, segregation, and institutional practices that created enduring racial hierarchies privileging white people while disadvantaging Black Americans.

The title of the poem establishes a framework of intimacy and confrontation, as the act of conversing with one's mother becomes a metaphor for connecting personal wounds to inherited memory. The "bloodstains" emerge as a central semiotic sign, representing violence, endurance, and the inescapable mark of systemic oppression, making the poem a rich text for semiotic interpretation (Danesi, 2004) .

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior, offers an insightful lens for analyzing Simpson's poem. Drawing upon the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, semiotic analysis focuses on how meaning is constructed through the relationship between signifier and signified, denotation and connotation . In this context, Simpson's choice of imagery, language, and structure functions as a system of signs that communicates deeper meanings about identity, racialized existence, and emotional inheritance. The analysis of these signs allows for a deeper understanding of how the poet encodes his lived experience within symbolic and cultural frameworks (Danesi, 2004) .

The problem addressed in this study lies in the limited exploration of African American poetry through a semiotic framework, particularly works that articulate contemporary experiences of racial identity and generational trauma. While Simpson's poem is widely recognized for its emotional depth and social critique, a systematic semiotic reading can reveal new dimensions of meaning, especially regarding how symbols and language are used to resist marginalization and reclaim agency. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge the gap between literary aesthetics and cultural semiotics by decoding the poem's layers of signification. Thus, this study addresses the gap by employing a semiotic framework to decode the symbolic elements, revealing what kind of meaning within Simpson's poem.

The objectives of this study are to identify and interpret the types of meaning present in Simpson's poem, and to analyze how these signs convey themes of racial trauma, resilience, and identity. By doing so, this study highlights the importance of symbolic language in articulating lived realities and contributes to broader discussions on the role of poetry as a vehicle for cultural and political commentary.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to literary scholarship by demonstrating the applicability of semiotic analysis to poetry. It emphasizes how poets like Darius Simpson use symbolic language not merely to describe experiences but to reconstruct and challenge dominant narratives of race and history. Furthermore, this study enriches the discourse on African American literature by illustrating how meaning operates through both the text and the context embedded within it. Ultimately, this semiotic analysis underscores the power of poetic language as a tool for consciousness, resistance, and transformation.

2. Literature Review

Semiotics etymologically comes from the Greek word "semion," which means "sign." Semiotics is the study of signs. This study is not limited to language alone, but extends to

include social phenomena such as culture and society, all of which can be analyzed as sign systems (Jadou & Al Ghabra, 2021). These signs can have meaning because of agreed-upon systems, norms, and conventions. Therefore, all forms of language are fundamentally dependent on the use and interpretation of symbols and signs (Suroso et al., 2024).

Chandler (2007) emphasizes that semantics in semiotics deals with the relationship between the signifier (form) and the signified (concept), stressing that meaning is not fixed but shaped by cultural and contextual factors. He argues that language operates as a system of differences, where each sign gains meaning in relation to others rather than through intrinsic properties. This relational nature of meaning, drawn from Saussurean linguistics, allows for multiple interpretations depending on cultural codes, individual experience, and social positioning, a perspective particularly relevant to interpreting poetry that engages with race and identity, such as Simpson's.

Semiotics can be used to explore the hidden meanings in symbols and linguistic signs (Behiery, 2025). The study of semantics is also at the core of understanding human thought processes, cognition, and conceptualization, all of which are closely related to how humans classify and convey expressions about the reality of the world through language. Poetry has a unity that is not only formal but also semantic, and is full of signs that need to be interpreted in order to convey the intended meaning and ideas of the poet (Ibragimova, 2024).

Meanwhile, Cobley (2005) argues that meaning is co-constructed through processes of encoding and decoding, where audiences actively interpret signs based on shared conventions and cultural frameworks. His perspective underscores the dynamic interaction between text and reader, suggesting that meaning is neither wholly embedded in the text nor entirely subjective, it emerges through a negotiated process. This framework is especially useful in analyzing performance poetry, where verbal, emotional, and cultural signs interact to produce layered significance.

Danesi (2004), on the other hand, approaches semantics from a cognitive and cultural semiotic standpoint. He views meaning-making as a human cognitive activity rooted in metaphor, symbolism, and cultural experience. In his work *Messages, Signs, and Meanings*, Danesi highlights how semantic systems mirror human thought patterns and how metaphors function as central cognitive tools that connect abstract ideas with lived experience. His perspective deepens the understanding of poetic language by framing it as a site where emotion, memory, and cultural identity converge. Through this lens, Simpson's poem can be read not only as linguistic expression but also as a cognitive and cultural act of meaning-making that transforms personal trauma into shared understanding.

Generally speaking, semiotics is one of the most interpretive methods of literature research in terms of the way signs and symbols are deployed to build meaning, disrupt conventional language usage, and respond to cultural and historical contexts (Behiery, 2025).

According to Leech (1981), semiotic theory is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of meaning, both conceptual meaning and meaning that arises from social, emotional, and cultural relationships in language use. In Leech's semantics theory, meaning in language can be categorized into seven main types, namely conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. The explanation as follows.

a. Conceptual meaning

Conceptual meaning is the basic or denotative meaning of a word or expression. This meaning is directly related to the reference or object referred to in the real world. Leech

emphasizes that conceptual meaning is the basis of the semantic system of language because it forms the basis for understanding linguistic communication.

b. Connotative meaning

Connotative meaning relates to the added value or emotional, social, and cultural associations attached to a word. This meaning not only describes the literal reference, but also reflects the public's attitude and views towards the word.

c. Social meaning

Social meaning arises from the social context of language use. Word choice, dialect, or style of speech convey social information such as status, regional origin, level of education, or the relationship between speaker and listener.

d. Affective meaning

Affective meaning relates to the speaker's feelings, attitudes, or emotions towards something that is said or towards the interlocutor. This meaning describes the psychological dimension of language communication.

e. Reflected meaning

Reflective meaning occurs when a word has more than one meaning, and one of those meanings influences the interpretation of the other meanings. This often happens with words that have taboo, religious, or symbolic meanings.

f. Collocative meaning

Collocative meaning is the meaning that arises from the habit of a word being paired with another word in a particular context. This relationship indicates the tendency of words to appear together with certain words that are semantically supportive of each other.

g. Thematic meaning

Thematic meaning is determined by how the sentence structure is arranged and which elements are emphasized. This meaning is related to the focus, order of information, and communicative purpose in the discourse.

Leech (1981) divides meaning into seven types because he argues that language is multidimensional and cannot be fully understood through literal meaning alone. In communication, words do more than convey factual information. They also express emotions, reflect social relationships, evoke cultural associations, follow habitual patterns, and shape interpretation through structure. By separating meaning into conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic categories, Leech demonstrates that meaning is influenced by both linguistic form and social context. This classification helps explain why the same word or sentence can communicate different messages depending on tone, culture, context, or intention. Essentially, Leech’s division allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how meaning operates at cognitive, cultural, emotional, and structural levels, making the analysis of language richer and more accurate (Leech, 1981).

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3. Research Method

The research method applied in this study is a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Emzir (2009), qualitative research in literature is a type of research that focuses on interpreting and understanding literary texts through descriptive and analytical methods rather than numerical or statistical analysis. Besides that, this study also focuses on semantic–semiotic analysis using Leech's theory of the types of meaning (Leech, 1981). This method is chosen because it allows the researchers to interpret the poem "A Conversation with My Mother About the Bloodstains on My Shirt" by Darius Simpson beyond its literal surface, exploring deeper linguistic and socio-cultural meanings. The primary data source is the poem itself, while secondary sources include journals, books, and theoretical references on semiotics and semantics.

3.1 Data Collection Technique

Data collection technique are devided into three steps:

a. Acquiring the full poem text. The first step in collecting data is to acquire the full text of poem
b. Close Reading. Repeated reading for initial comprehension, understand its structure, tone, and thematic focus, and to get the main point and gain a comprehensive of the poem's content
c. Identifying and marking the linguistic units for analysis. After close reading, then mark important linguistic elements related to Leech's semantic categories; and note-taking, where observations about language use, signs, and symbols are recorded. Additionally, supporting data such as books, journal articles, and previous research on semiotics and Leech's semantic theory are collected as secondary sources to strengthen the interpretation.

3.2 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis technique are devided into four steps

a. Categorizing. Separating each identified word/phrases into one of Leech's seven categories of meaning; conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic meaning.
b. Coding/Labelling. Assigning codes to each data unit. Each coded element is then analyzed to interpret how meaning is constructed and how linguistic choices contribute to the deeper message of the poem. This process involves identifying literal meanings, emotional connotations, cultural references, symbolic associations, and linguistic patterns.
c. Calculating Frequency. Counting the number of occurances for each meaning type
d. Interpreting. Providing a qualitative interpretation of the findings, focusing on the dominant meaning (connotative), and other types of meaning, and linking them to the poem's themes of trauma and ideology. Each linguistic sign and symbol is analyzed to uncover how meaning is constructed and how the poem conveys themes of race, identity, trauma, and personal experience. Through this analytical framework, the study interprets how the poem communicates complex emotional and cultural messages by using language not only as a system of communication but also as a carrier of social history and lived experience.

4. Results and Discussion

The poem:

A Conversation with My Mother about the Bloodstains on My Shirt
by Darius Simpson

do you remember in fifth grade
when i was all of eighty pounds
soaking wet and fully clothed
i told you there was a boy on the bus
twice my size and three grades ahead
he liked to throw his weight every which way
and i had little to no weight to throw back
with all the reasons to get out of his path
you sent me back to that narrow aisle
with slim chances of victory you told me
you gotta stand up to people like that
so they know they don't own the world
there's a Palestinian student
who waited all night for me when pigs snatched me
from an action and she taught me about genocide
about the PLO and Black Panther Party
said our struggles share goals and enemies
i met a Congolese dancer who said slavery didn't separate us completely
he told me of Nkrumah and Lumumba and Garvey and Cabral
and how brutal belgium and all of europe is to Africans
did you know we been fighting back
since before the slave ships docked
did you know the shore tried to wash our footprints
away but some of us walked here on air
did you know there are traces of us
in every speck of dust in this dirty world
Ma we are thousands of miles apart but there are Black women
who look just like Granny braving floods in makeshift tents up the street
there's an east side where the sun shines all night
and there's no shade in the daytime and no grocery stores year round
if a bully must be stopped then what are we to do about biden or obama
or congress or Chevron or Firestone or Apple or Nike
these cowards push buttons and traffic in drone strikes and slave labor
and pandemics and extinctions and mass slaughter and apartheid
ain't they just some wooden giants
don't they got toothpick ankles
won't they fall like all weak effigies
must eventually with enough gasoline
believe me your baby is still your baby but (un)fortunately
now he sees himself in handcuff scars and collapsed mines
i stay up late all week studying
every other night a new corpse who looks

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like me falls off the pages and onto my floor
a whole human gone before i knew them
who loved me enough to offer their life
what am i to do with all this sand in my chest
i read about another political prisoner last night
and nearly drowned in salt water
i can't keep crying for dead and dying people
without doing something about the death
i'm trying to say it's fifth grade again
and the aisle is getting more narrow
the bus is headed off a cliff
if we don't knock
this stubborn giant off its course
i hope you can understand
why i haven't called
why i still think of you daily

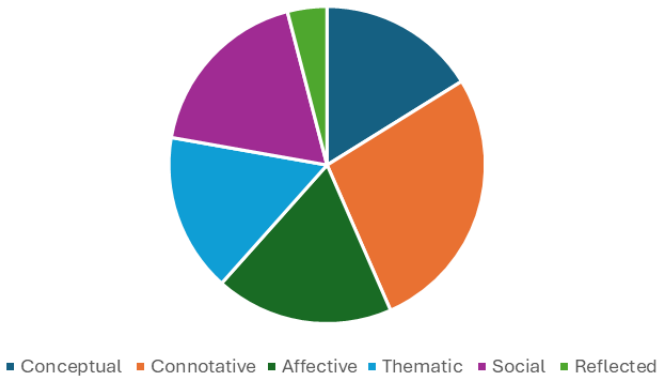
The findings are as follows:

Tabel 1
The Occurrences of types of meaning

No.	Type of Meaning	Occurrences	Percentage	Description
1	Conceptual	8	16 %	Literal or denotative meanings
2	Connotative	13	27 %	Emotional, social, or associative meanings
3	Affective	9	18 %	Feelings and emotions
4	Thematic	8	16 %	Central themes or moral focus
5	Social	9	18 %	Social or cultural context meanings
6	Reflected	2	4 %	Symbolic or ideological reflection
	Total	49	100%	

Based on the table above, six out of seven types of meaning were found. The conceptual meaning is 16 %. It represents literal or denotative meanings. Then connotative meaning is 27 %. It represents emotional, socail, or associative meanings. The affective meaning is 18 %. It represents feelings and emotions. Next, the thematic meaning is 16 %. It represents central themes or moral focus. The social meaning is 18 %. It represents social and cultural nontext meanings. And the last, the reflected meaning is 4 %. It represents symbolic or idiological reflection.

Figure 1
The Occurrence of Types of Meaning



Based on the figure 1 above, the occurrence of connotative meaning is the highest, because it emphasizes the *emotional burden* and *socio-political critique* of the poet. While the affective and social meanings are the same (18%). The conceptual and thematic meanings are also having the same occurrences (16%). And the least is reflected meaning. The reflected meaning is low because the poem prioritizes *clarity, emotional resonance*, and *socio-political truth*, rather than wordplay or associative ambiguity. The language is used not to mask or complicate meaning but to expose harsh realities directly.

The examples and explanations are as follows:

1. Conceptual meaning

Data 1

Stanza 1 line 1: *do you remember in fifth grade*

Analysis:

The conceptual meaning of the phrase "do you remember in fifth grade" refers to its literal and dictionary-level meaning, which is the act of asking someone—here, the mother—to recall an event or experience that happened when the poet was in fifth grade. Conceptually, the phrase signals a shift into a past memory or a specific moment in childhood without implying emotion, judgment, or symbolism. It functions as a reference point in time and serves to introduce a past experience that is relevant to the present conversation.

In Leech's terms, this meaning is objective, factual, and informational, focusing solely on the basic temporal reference rather than emotional or cultural associations (Leech, 1981). In terms of meaning, it shows a literal memory that becomes the initial emotional background before moving on to larger social issues. The mention of *fifth grade* not only serves as a time reference, but also describes a period of moral formation and life values. Then, the use of the words *do you remember* depicts an intimate and nostalgic impression, reinforcing the emotional dimension and the closeness of the mother-child relationship.

Data 2

Stanza 1, lines 4-5: *I told you there was a boy on the bus, twice my size and three grades ahead*

Analysis:

The conceptual meaning of the sentence "I told you there was a boy on the bus, twice my size and three grades ahead" is its literal informational content. At this level, the sentence simply describes a situation in which the poet informed their mother about an older and physically larger boy on the school bus.

Conceptually, the sentence communicates measurable and factual details: the boy's size is significantly bigger than the poet's, and his school level is three grades higher. There are no implied emotional associations or symbolic interpretations at this stage, only a straightforward statement of a past event involving two individuals and their physical and academic differences.

Data 3

Stanza 3 line 1: *there's a Palestinian student who waited all night for me*

Analysis:

The conceptual meaning of the sentence "there's a Palestinian student who waited all night for me" is its literal and factual meaning. At this level, the statement simply conveys that a student of Palestinian background spent the entire night waiting for the poet. The

phrase identifies three basic pieces of information; the presence of a student, the student's nationality or identity as Palestinian, and the action of waiting throughout the night. In conceptual terms, it does not yet imply emotional, cultural, or symbolic meaning, only a straightforward description of an event involving a specific person and a prolonged act of waiting.

2. Connotative meaning

Data 4

Stanza 1 lines 2-3: *when I was all of eighty pounds soaking wet and fully clothed*

Analysis:

The connotative meaning of the phrase "when I was all of eighty pounds soaking wet and fully clothed" goes beyond the literal reference to body weight. Connotatively, the phrase evokes a sense of vulnerability, fragility, and childhood innocence.

The expression "soaking wet and fully clothed" intensifies the idea that the poet was not only physically small but also defenceless and easily overpowered, emphasizing emotional helplessness rather than simply stating a number. It suggests a moment in life when the poet lacked physical strength, protection, or power, and therefore may have been exposed to bullying, harm, or intimidation. Overall, the connotation reinforces themes of weakness, youth, and power imbalance within the context of racial and personal struggle.

Data 5

Stanza 1 line 6: *he liked to throw his weight every which way*

Analysis:

The connotative meaning of the phrase "he liked to throw his weight every which way" suggests more than physical movement, it implies abuse of power, aggression, and dominance. While the literal words describe someone using their body forcefully, the connotation paints the boy as someone who enjoys exerting control or intimidation over others, especially those who are smaller or weaker.

The phrase evokes the image of someone reckless and unapologetic, using physical strength as a form of superiority rather than in a neutral or harmless way. In this context, it reflects not only bullying behaviour but also the broader theme of power imbalance, where strength becomes a tool of fear and control rather than merely a physical characteristic (Dar, 2024).

Data 6

Stanza 1 line 7: *and I had little to no weight to throw back*

Analysis:

The connotative meaning of the phrase "and I had little to no weight to throw back" suggests more than just lacking physical strength. Beyond its literal meaning, the phrase conveys a deeper sense of powerlessness, inferiority, and lack of defence. It implies that the poet was not only physically unable to fight back but also socially or emotionally unprepared to respond to aggression or injustice.

The expression evokes vulnerability and imbalance, highlighting a situation where one person holds power while the other is left without the means to resist. In the poem's context, this connotation reinforces themes of oppression, helplessness, and the broader experience of being marginalized or overpowered (Zhang, 2023).

3. Affective meaning

Data 7

Stanza 1 line 8: *with all the reasons to get out of his path*

Analysis:

The affective meaning of the phrase "with all the reasons to get out of his path" reflects the speaker's emotional state and attitude in the situation. Rather than simply stating that avoidance was possible, the phrase conveys feelings of fear, anxiety, and intimidation, suggesting that the poet felt pressured or compelled to move aside because of the perceived threat.

It expresses a sense of emotional burden, implying that avoiding confrontation seemed not only logical but necessary for safety. The wording carries an undertone of resignation and emotional discomfort, revealing how the poet felt overpowered and emotionally affected by the encounter, rather than merely observing it as a neutral event (Niaz et, al., 2019).

Data 8

Stanza 4 line 16: *and how brutal Belgium and all of Europe is to Africans*

Analysis:

The affective meaning of the phrase "and how brutal Belgium and all of Europe is to Africans" reflects strong emotional expression rather than just a factual statement. The phrase conveys feelings of anger, pain, injustice, and historical trauma, suggesting deep emotional response to colonial violence and ongoing racism faced by Africans in Europe (Feagin, 2006).

The word "brutal" intensifies these emotions, implying cruelty, oppression, and dehumanization, rather than neutral or objective criticism. It reveals the poet's emotional stance, one shaped by awareness of suffering, discrimination, and systemic racism, while also evoking empathy and shared collective memory among those who have experienced similar histories. In this context, the affective meaning emphasizes not only personal feelings but also the emotional weight of historical wounds carried across generations.

Data 9

Stanza 8 line 27: *believe me your baby is still your baby but (un)fortunately*

Analysis:

The affective meaning of the phrase "believe me your baby is still your baby but (un)fortunately" conveys a complex emotional tone involving reassurance mixed with discomfort or irony. On one level, the poet is offering comfort by affirming that they are still the mother's child ("your baby"), suggesting love, connection, and emotional closeness.

However, the insertion of "(un)fortunately" introduces a conflicting emotional layer, implying that although the relationship remains intact, circumstances, such as life experiences, racial realities, or personal growth, have changed the poet in ways that may be painful or difficult. This creates an emotional blend of sadness, resignation, and perhaps a subtle critique of the world that forced the poet to mature prematurely. The phrase expresses tenderness toward the mother while simultaneously acknowledging the harsh realities shaping identity, suggesting emotional tension between innocence and harsh lived experience (Masyhur et, al., 2023).

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4. Thematic meaning

Data 10

Stanza 1 line 7: *you sent me back to that narrow aisle*

Analysis:

The phrase "you sent me back to that narrow aisle" thematically conveys enforced social marginalization, restricted identity, and systemic power imbalance. It symbolizes how individuals—especially those from oppressed groups—are repeatedly pushed back into confined roles rather than allowed to exist freely, equally, or fully. However, metaphorically, it signifies a social space that restricts and oppresses weak individuals, especially those who live under unjust power structures (Feagin, 2006).

Data 11

Stanza 2 line 12: *so they know they don't own the world*

Analysis:

The line "so they know they don't own the world" thematically signifies a challenge to social hierarchy, privilege, and oppression. It encapsulates the poem's broader message of resisting silence, asserting identity, and confronting systems that marginalize others. It also emphasizes the pursuit of justice, dignity, and equal belonging in a world historically shaped by power imbalance. However, thematically, this sentence expands into a symbol of liberation from oppressive power, whether in a social, racial, or political context (Jindal, 2022).

5. Social meaning

Data 12

Stanza 1 line 10: *you told me you gotta stand up to people like that*

Analysis:

The line "you told me you gotta stand up to people like that" socially conveys a learned expectation to resist oppression and defend one's dignity. It reflects cultural values of strength, resilience, and self-assertion, especially within a community that has historically faced discrimination. The statement is not just advice. This meaning represents a social norm about how to survive, be respected, and claim one's rightful place in society (Danesi, 2004). The choice of the word "you gotta", the informal form of *you have got to*, indicates formal and informal language, emphasizing emotional closeness and a warm but firm family relationship.

Data 13

Stanza 2 line 11: *when pigs snatched me from an action*

Analysis:

The line "when pigs snatched me from an action" in the sentence *pigs snatched me* has a strong social meaning because it reflects the political and social slang of the African American community during the civil rights movement. The word *pigs* in this context does not literally mean pigs, but is an idiomatic term for repressive police officers who use violence to silence popular protests. The sentence describes forced arrests during protests, thus containing social meaning about the tension between the people and state power (Seputri et al., 2022). The use of informal and idiomatic language signifies the voice of the lower classes or activists, rather than the official discourse of institutions.

6. Reflected meaning

Data 14

Stanza 6 line 3-4: *did you know there are traces of us in every speck of dust in this dirty world*

Analysis:

This line contains reflective meaning through the use of metaphors that describe the relationship between human identity and a morally corrupt world. The phrase *traces of us* symbolizes the traces or remnants of black people in a world that has long been marked by injustice and colonialism (Asmasika, 2022). Meanwhile, *dust* has a reflective meaning because, in addition to its literal meaning, it also has spiritual and philosophical connotations, reminding us of the origin and end of human life. The phrase *dirty world* reinforces the reflective meaning by describing a world that is *dirty* not physically, but morally and socially, full of oppression and racism (Chandler, 2007).

Data 15

Stanza 9 line 3-4: *what am I to do with all this sand in my chest*

Analysis:

The line "what am I to do with all this sand in my chest" displays a reflective meaning through the emotional metaphor *sand in my chest,* which figuratively describes psychological burdens, sadness, and inner exhaustion due to social and personal suffering. A word can carry emotional associations that reflect other meanings. In this case, *sand* reflects an image of dryness, destruction, and heaviness, signifying the inability to breathe freely amid the pressures of life. The word *chest* is reflexively associated with the soul and the canter of human emotions, so this metaphor implies a chest filled with sadness and inner wounds. This line is not merely a physical expression, but a form of deep inner reflection on suffering and humanity (Asmasika, 2022).

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, six out of seven types of meaning were found. The conceptual meaning is 16 %. It represents literal or denotative meanings. Then connotative meaning is 27 %. It represents emotional, social, or associative meanings. The affective meaning is 18 %. It represents feelings and emotions. Next, the thematic meaning is 16 %. It represents central themes or moral focus. The social meaning is 18 %. It represents social and cultural meanings. And the last, the reflected meaning is 4 %. It represents symbolic or ideological reflection.

The semiotic analysis of Darius Simpson's poem *A Conversation with My Mother About the Bloodstains on My Shirt* using Leech's Semantic Theory reveals that the poem operates on multiple layers of meaning, transforming a personal memory into a powerful commentary on racial identity, violence, and resilience. Through conceptual and connotative meaning, the poem exposes the harsh realities faced by Black individuals in a society where power and identity are unequally distributed. Affective meaning captures the emotional weight of fear, pain, and strength woven into the poet's experience, while social and thematic meanings highlight cultural expectations, generational teachings, and the struggle against systemic oppression. Reflective and collocative meanings further enrich the poem by linking language to historical trauma and collective memory within the African American community. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Simpson's poem is not only a personal narrative but also a symbolic act of resistance, where language becomes a tool for reclaiming identity, asserting dignity, and speaking truth to power.

Future research on Darius Simpson's poem *A Conversation with My Mother about the Bloodstains on My Shirt* could benefit from applying additional frameworks such as Critical Race Theory or discourse analysis to deepen understanding of its racial and ideological themes. Additionally, educators may incorporate the poem into classroom discussions to encourage critical awareness of systemic racism and lived experience through literary analysis.

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ICT INTEGRATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN VIETNAMESE HIGHER EDUCATION: LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Information and communication technology (ICT) has been conducting sweeping changes in higher education worldwide. With its focus on communication and interaction, language education can be immensely benefitted from various available ICT tools. A number of studies have been conducted in the field of ICT application in language education, but the perspective of language teachers in Vietnamese higher education – a pivotal part – is not thoroughly studied. Hence, this research investigated the issue of ICT integration in foreign language teaching in Vietnamese higher education from the perspective of language teachers. Using the descriptive qualitative method, the research employed the instrument of interview with 87 teachers of different foreign languages from a number of tertiary institutions in Vietnam. The findings showed that various ICT tools were used in their foreign language teaching for different purposes and can be grouped into 06 groups according to their functions in use. Such ICT integration resulted in more effective teaching, learning, assessment, class management, and students' higher learning motivation and better language learning outcomes. The ICT tools were acknowledged to help with the development of the four macro-language skills as well as vocabulary. To promote ICT integration in language teaching, supportive school leadership and policy frameworks alongside with ICT training for language teachers are required. In short, this research has provided insights into how ICT can be more effectively integrated into language teaching practices in Vietnam.

Keywords: *ICT integration; language teaching; teachers' perspectives; Vietnam.*

1. Introduction

In recent years, information and communication technology (ICT) has become a transformative force in global education, reshaping teaching, learning and administrative models via technology integration. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI), cloud-based platforms, and mobile learning have expanded the possibilities for interaction, personalization, and learner autonomy across educational systems worldwide. According to the UNESCO (2023) and the OECD (2021), ICT tools increasingly underpin innovative pedagogies, data-driven decision-making, and flexible learning models in higher education. Studies have shown that digital environments, such as learning management systems (LMS),

virtual classrooms, and AI-powered tutoring systems, can facilitate interactive learning and promote student-centered pedagogies, leading to improved accessibility, more flexible delivery modes, and greater inclusivity in higher education globally (e.g., Bond et al., 2021; Henderson et al., 2022).

As for language education, ICT has had particularly useful implications, given its emphasis on communication, interaction, and learner autonomy. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) research demonstrates that ICT can enhance oral fluency, strengthen receptive skills, and support individualized feedback (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017; Chapelle, 2020; Zou & Thomas, 2023). Digital tools such as speech-recognition apps, automated writing evaluators, and multimodal learning platforms help create immersive learning environments that align with communicative language teaching principles. The pedagogical affordances of ICT - immediate feedback, authentic input exposure, and collaborative learning - are widely recognized as valuable for both teachers and learners.

In Vietnam, ICT integration in higher education has become a national priority. Major policy frameworks, namely the *Program for National Digital Transformation to 2025, Vision 2030* and the *Project on Enhancing IT Application and Digital Transformation in Education for the 2022-2025 Pperiod, Vision 2030*, underline the urgent need to enhance educational quality, accessibility and innovation via the application of technology. To guide the implementation, the Ministry of Education and Training has provided a set of indicators for the evaluation of digitalization in higher education. Despite this strong policy momentum, research shows that several challenges persist, including uneven digital competence among teachers, limited access to digital resources, and institutional barriers to innovation (Nguyen & Le, 2021; Pham, 2023).

Although international scholarship on ICT integration is extensive, studies focusing specifically on ICT integration in foreign language education in Vietnam's higher education remain comparatively limited, leaving a gap regarding university-level language instructors' experiences, perceptions, and classroom practices. Few studies systematically examine how foreign language teachers in Vietnam navigate ICT demands, what tools they adopt, and what contextual factors shape their ICT application in language teaching.

Therefore, this study aims to explore teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges in integrating ICT into foreign language teaching in the context of Vietnamese higher education. Guided by the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) and focusing on teachers as key agents of pedagogical innovation, the study offers insights that can support the development of digital teaching competency, inform institutional planning, and contribute to ongoing national efforts in educational modernization for improved educational quality.

In summary, this research addresses the existing gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence on ICT integration in foreign language teaching at the university level in Vietnam. It aims to (1) identify teachers' perceptions of ICT in language training, (2) examine their current ICT-supported teaching practices, and (3) analyze the challenges and favorable conditions that affect technology adoption. The findings are expected to contribute to effective ICT integration in higher education.

2. Literature Review

This section aims to review the existing scholarship on the integration of ICT into foreign language teaching by synthesizing global and Vietnamese research on ICT integration and to identify the research gap in the literature.

2.1 ICT in Education and Language Learning

In response to the trend of digital transformation in education, applying advanced technologies in general and integrating ICT in particular into foreign language teaching, has become a critical necessity. Numerous studies have appreciated the cutting edge of ICT integration into language teaching. According to UNESCO (2019), ICT supports equitable access and enhances teaching quality by enabling interactive, multimedia-rich environments. Recent studies (Selwyn, 2022; García et al., 2021; Warschauer & Liaw, 2020) continue to affirm that ICT can help to create adaptable and individualized learning environments, support learner-centered education and encourage innovative teaching methods that enhance interaction and collaboration between teachers and learners, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of educational quality.

In the context of foreign language education, Dudeney and Hockly (2016), Chapelle and Sauro (2017), and Li and Cummins (2019) also share the view that ICT functions as a powerful pedagogical tool that fosters interactive, learner-centered, and personalized learning experiences and enabling multimodal learning by integrating diverse formats such as audio, video, interactive software, and online communication platforms, hence enriching the overall teaching and learning process.

Digital tools, such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and other online collaboration tools, can foster autonomous learning and enhance students' motivation and communicative competence by enabling learners to develop their language skills by engaging with multimedia materials and adaptive learning technologies (Egbert & Shahrokni, 2022, Li and Hafner, 2022). Such tools are believed to boost learners' engagement via real-time feedback, pronunciation practice, game-based learning experiences and authentic communication opportunities (Hubbard & Levy, 2016, Golonka, Bowles, Frank & Richadson, 2014) and to further learners' accessibility to language content anytime and anywhere (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). ICT tools also provide language learners with personalized assistance tailored to their specific learning needs (Albashtawi & Al Bataineh, 2020) and enable improved learner retention and increased levels of engagement compared to those in traditional classrooms (Sun and Yang, 2015).

From a pedagogical perspective, ICT integration in language teaching contributes to the four language skills as follows:

- Listening – through interactive audio platforms and speech-recognition feedback;
- Speaking – via synchronous communication tools enabling authentic conversation;
- Reading – with hypertext environments and adaptive reading applications;
- Writing – supported by online editors, grammar checkers, and peer-review platforms.

These affordances highlight ICT's role not merely as a teaching aid but as a transformative driver of language pedagogy.

2.2 ICT Integration Models

ICT integration is grounded theoretically on a number of frameworks as follows:

TPACK Framework

The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) conceptualizes successful ICT integration as the interplay between teachers' technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. According to Li & Deng (2020) and Jang

& Tsai (2021), teachers with higher TPACK competence are able to design more effectively technology-mediated tasks in their teaching practice.

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) explains users' willingness to adopt technology based on perceived usefulness and ease of use. Teo (2011) points to the fact that TAM makes it possible to examine teachers' attitudes and readiness for digital transformation in higher education.

SAMR Model

The SAMR model (Puentedura, 2014) provides a framework for evaluating the integration of technology in teaching and learning. The model categorizes ICT integration into four progressive levels: Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition.

ICT Competency Framework for Teachers

UNESCO's ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (2018) highlights digital pedagogical competence as foundational for ICT-enhanced teaching practice. Cabero-Almenara et al. (2023) state that there is an increasing emphasis on digital competence assessment in higher education institutions.

These frameworks collectively serve as theoretical anchors for analyzing teachers' ICT practices and identifying competency gaps.

2.3 Determinants of ICT Integration

The literature consistently identifies multiple determinants affecting ICT adoption. Pelgrum (2001) highlights policy support and infrastructure as crucial determinants of ICT success in education. Sharing this viewpoint, Almusharraf and Khahro (2020) point out the challenges language teachers encounter in implementing ICT include limitations in digital literacy, insufficient institutional support, restricted access to technological resources, and various technical or infrastructural constraints.

As noted by Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2019: 68), "simply having access to technology is not enough; teachers must also develop confidence and competence in using ICT to support student learning". Hew and Brush (2007) believe that teachers with unfavorable attitudes toward ICT tend to be less inclined to adopt or explore new technologies, even when resources are accessible. This view is shared by Teo (2011) who holds that the adoption of ICT in teaching is often impeded by teachers' resistance to change, fear of technology replacing conventional pedagogical practices, and a limited perception of its practical value. With regard to resistance to change, according to Wang (2023), in certain cases, traditional teacher-centered approaches are still dominant, making it uneasy to shift to ICT-driven, active learning, personalization and student autonomy, which are core to the student-centered paradigm. Howard & Mozejko (2015) share this when stating that cultural perceptions of teaching authority, assessment practices, and curriculum design have an impact on how technology is integrated into teaching practice.

Regarding access to ICT resources and technical support, Pelgrum (2001) and Bingimlas (2009) note that being short of necessary ICT tolls and in the absence of sufficient technical support, teachers frequently struggle to resolve software or network-related problems, which limits their capacity to deliver ICT-based instruction and discourages them from incorporating technology into their teaching practices.

Vietnamese scholarship has increasingly addressed ICT integration in higher education, particularly following the national digital transformation agenda (MOET, 2020). Studies indicate that while ICT awareness among teachers is generally high, effective pedagogical integration remains limited. In their studies, Tran & Nguyen (2021), Pham & Nguyen (2020) and Le & Do (2021) notice the limited digital pedagogical competence among language lecturers, while Tran & Hoang (2020) point to the certain challenges faced by language teachers in Vietnam regarding ICT infrastructure, especially inconsistent internet connectivity. Vu & Doan (2022) highlight the need for continuous ICT training rather than technical knowledge alone if ICT integration in language teaching practice is to be improved. Also, there is a strong demand for ICT-enhanced materials and assessment tools to be available for use in EFL classrooms (Le & Ha, 2021). As for policy and institutional support, universities without robust institutional support, clear strategies, incentives, or professional development programs tend to see lower ICT adoption rates since teachers may not have the required motivation and necessary resources to enhance their digital teaching competencies (Pham & Do, 2021; Le & Nguyen, 2022).

These studies reveal the structural and pedagogical constraints in the context of ICT integration in language education in Vietnam's higher education.

2.4 Research gap

While global research extensively documents ICT benefits and challenges, several gaps emerge in the Vietnamese context, including limited empirical studies on teachers' practical ICT integration experiences in language classrooms; few studies on examining ICT adoption through integrated theoretical frameworks such as TPACK or TAM; limited research on teachers' use of ICT to deliver lessons of specific language skills; and insufficient research connecting institutional policy with everyday teaching practice. These gaps justify the necessity for the present study.

3. Research Method

This section describes the research design, participants, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations adopted in this study.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative descriptive design, which is appropriate for exploring teachers' experiences, perceptions, and practices regarding ICT integration in foreign language teaching. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative approaches are suitable for examining how individuals interpret their experiences, while Denzin and Lincoln (2018) emphasize that qualitative inquiry allows for rich, context-dependent accounts of social phenomena.

Given that the research seeks to understand how teachers integrate ICT in their language teaching, what challenges they encounter, and what support they require, a qualitative descriptive design was selected to capture authentic, nuanced perspectives in participants' own words.

3.2 Participants and Research Setting

The research data was collected from 87 participants, being foreign language teachers from 11 public and private tertiary institutions located in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. With their teaching experience ranging from 5 to 20 years, they were teachers of English (n = 39) accounting for nearly 45%, and the rest are teachers of other foreign

languages like Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Russian, making up around 55%. A majority of participants were female (**n = 67**, approximately 77%).

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select teachers who (1) teach foreign languages at the tertiary level, (2) have at least five years of teaching experience, and (3) have prior exposure to ICT tools in their teaching. This sampling approach is commonly used in qualitative studies to recruit participants who can provide rich, relevant insights (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The research setting consisted of universities with varying levels of ICT infrastructure, allowing for comparative insights across institutional contexts.

3.3 Research Instruments

The primary data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview, comprising 10 open-ended questions focusing on:

- types of ICT tools used in foreign language teaching
- benefits and challenges of ICT integration
- impacts on students' engagement and language skills
- institutional policies and support mechanisms
- barriers and recommended measures for ICT integration

10 OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What ICT tools do you often use in your language teaching?
2. How does the use of ICT tools help you with your foreign language teaching?
3. How do ICT tools help with the development of the four macro language skills?
4. Can ICT use in language teaching help students be more active and interactive in language learning?
5. Do you find using ICT tools in teaching effortless or challenging? Why?
6. Do you notice any differences in the attitude and learning outcomes of students when being taught with ICT integration?
7. Does your institution have a policy to support ICT integration in teaching?
8. Does your institution provide you with any support on how to integrate ICT in your language teaching? If yes, what kind of support?
9. What do you see as barriers to your ICT integration in language teaching?
10. What do you see as necessary measures to promote ICT integration in language teaching?

Interview was used for data collection in this research since it can provide in-depth, detailed insights into participants' beliefs, experiences, and attitudes. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), interviews enable researchers to explore how participants interpret the world in which they live and the meanings of their experiences. Participants being interviewed can express their perspectives in their own words, hence providing rich, qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). What is more, Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) state that interview allows for flexibility and clarification because researchers can ask follow-up questions to probe deeper into emerging issues. In short, interviews allow the depth,

validity, and interpretive power of the research thanks to the disclosure of participants' experiences behind the data.

The interview questions were developed based on existing literature on ICT in language education. To ensure content validity, a pilot interview with five language teachers was conducted to refine wording, flow, and clarity. Later, adjustments were made to enhance coherence and ensure questions aligned with the research objectives.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection followed several steps:

- **Permission and Consent:** Approval was obtained from participants. Teachers received an invitation letter explaining the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation. Informed consent was collected prior to participation.
- **Conducting the Interviews:** Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online, depending on participants' availability. Each interview lasted around 15-20 minutes.
- **Recording and Data Management:** With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The audio files were anonymized and securely stored.
- **Organization of Data:** Transcripts were coded and categorized systematically.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

This approach is appropriate for identifying patterns in qualitative data, allowing rich interpretation while staying close to participants' actual expressions.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was protected by assigning pseudonyms and removing identifiable information. Data were used only for research purposes.

3.7 Summary

These research procedures were designed to address the study's objectives and provide reliable insights into teachers' ICT integration in language teaching practices. By adopting a qualitative descriptive design supported by rigorous data collection, and thematic analysis, the study ensures methodological robustness and meaningful interpretation of teachers' experiences.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teachers' ICT Practices in Foreign Language Teaching

The results revealed that teachers frequently used a wide range of ICT tools to support foreign language teaching. Their practices clustered around six major functional categories.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams were among the most commonly used platforms. Teachers employed these systems to upload teaching materials, administer assignments and quizzes, manage attendance, and provide structured feedback. LMS platforms were perceived as essential for blended learning, enabling organized interaction and efficient classroom administration.

Communication & Collaboration Tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams played a central role in maintaining synchronous communication between teachers and students. Teachers reported using these tools for online discussions, group presentations, real-time feedback, and speaking practice sessions. Several respondents emphasized that these platforms facilitated continuous interaction outside physical classroom time.

Digital Content Creation Tools comprising Canva, PowerPoint and video-editing apps were also frequently integrated into teaching. These tools allowed teachers to design visually appealing slides, infographics, and multimedia materials, which were particularly useful in teaching vocabulary and grammar - areas typically perceived as less engaging to students.

Language-Specific Learning Tools including Duolingo, BBC Learning English, VOA Learning English, Quizlet, ChatGPT were used to help with teaching and learning the four macro-language skills, vocabulary, grammar with the possibility of individualizing the learning process with instant feedback. They were especially beneficial for students of varying proficiency levels.

AI & Adaptive Learning Tools such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Elsa Speak were adopted by some teachers to tailor the learning content to personal competence and provide feedback. to These tools were perceived as innovative supports for improving pronunciation, speaking fluency, and writing feedback.

Assessment & Feedback Tools including Google Forms, Quizlet Test Mode to help with online testing and Turnitin enabled teachers to diversify assessment formats, detect plagiarism, and conduct reflective learning.

These findings indicate that ICT integration in foreign language teaching is both diverse and purposeful, aligning with global trends reported in the earlier studies.

4.2 Perceived Benefits of ICT Integration

A majority of teacher-respondents agreed that ICT tools could help teachers to deliver the lessons in an entertaining manner and manage large classes more effectively. Many echoed the argument of Hidayat (2022) and Guaña-Moya et al. (2024) that ICT increases learner motivation by introducing multimedia elements and interactive tasks.

One teacher stated: "ICT tools help to make the lessons more engaging to my students and, so, they tend to be more attentive and interested in learning. It is really effective when teaching boring things such as grammar and vocabulary. I can notice that many students appear to be more eager to learn with ICT".

Another teacher emphasized ICT's impact on collaborative learning: "ICT tools can offer interactive practice opportunities for students, so they are more willing to practice using language together and with the tools, without much teachers' requirement or

supervision. This is very useful for teaching large-sized classes when students tend to have a passive learning style".

Teachers also found ICT integration helpful as they can tailor their teaching to the varying learning needs of students thanks to the employment of ICT tools. Platforms like Quizlet, Duolingo, and AI-based tools allowed learners to practice at their own pace, which was difficult to achieve with solely traditional tools such as textbooks, blackboards and cassette players. This saves teachers a lot of burden when teaching classes with students of different levels of language proficiency. The finding aligns with literature highlighting ICT's capacity to support individualized learning pathways (Du Plooy et al, 2024, Contrino et al., 2024).

Teachers further noted that ICT facilitated real-time monitoring of learners' comprehension. Interactive exercises created using Google Forms or LMS-based quizzes could provide teachers with immediate insights into students' performance, allowing them to adjust their teaching and materials to ensure that most students can acquire what they are taught. Such adaptive teaching practices reflect the pedagogical benefits identified in Neo and Neo (2009).

4.3 Role of ICT in Developing the Four Macro Language Skills

Across the dataset, teachers consistently acknowledged the positive effects of ICT tools on the teaching and learning of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. For listening, tools such as YouTube, VOA, BBC Learning English, and AI-based speech analysis applications helped transform listening from a passive reception process into an active, personalized learning activity. Teachers appreciated that ICT provides authentic exposure to native speakers' pronunciation, intonation, and accents, which is consistent with the communicative language teaching perspective. Also, teachers could, with the help of ICT tools, design listening materials which matched with students' proficiency levels, hence, boosting the learning motivation of students when students could listen and understand most of what they heard.

Speaking skills were also reported to improve when ICT was integrated meaningfully. Teachers noted that online platforms and AI-powered speaking apps offered students additional speaking opportunities beyond the classroom. This could help to improve students' speaking confidence and fluency when they speak the language. One respondent remarked: **"***As practice makes perfect, more opportunities to practice speaking without the restriction of class time make it possible for students to speak more confidently and fluently***."** ICT tools could also provide students with chances to pick up native-like speaking styles. Many teachers noticed the improvement in students' speaking skills after learning with the aid of ICT.

Regarding reading skills, teachers highlighted that digital platforms offer a vast repository of texts covering diverse topics and proficiency levels. Students were benefited from integrated dictionary functions, hyperlinked explanations, and interactive reading tasks. Moreover, teachers could resort to ICT-enabled reading materials to support both extensive and intensive reading practices for students of different proficiency levels without relying on printed textbooks.

As for writing, teachers emphasized that ICT tools transformed writing into an active process with instant feedback, modification and correction. With access to online sample texts, collaborative writing platforms, grammar-checking tools, and teacher feedback via LMS, students could revise their work more effectively for their self-study and self-practice.

These findings reinforce the claims in earlier scholarship that ICT encourages learner autonomy and reflective writing practice.

4.4 Challenges and Institutional Support Needs

Despite the numerous benefits, teachers faced several barriers that constrained their ICT integration efforts. A notable proportion of respondents indicated limited ICT knowledge and insufficient confidence in applying technology in alignment with curriculum requirements. While some teachers could troubleshoot minor technical issues, others expressed frustration with unfamiliar software and limited technical support.

Increased workload concerns were also prominent. One teacher admitted: **"***For me, using ICT tools initially requires more time and effort compared to traditional teaching methods. I often do not have enough time to prepare ICT-based lessons alongside my other teaching responsibilities. In order to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to apply ICT tools to my teaching*, *I have to spend extra time & efforts and I also have to prepare back-up plan in case there is technological breakdown without higher payment***."** This echoes broader concerns in the literature regarding teachers' technology-related workload (Prestridge et al., 2012).

Another barrier was the inconsistency in institutional policies. Some institutions provided teachers with training, guidelines, and technical assistance, while others left ICT use optional to teachers. Teachers in the latter context felt discouraged as they neither received adequate training on how to use ICT tools effectively in the classroom nor received sufficient technical support in case of ICT tool malfunction during lessons. In many cases, teachers had to manage by themselves. One teacher stated: "*The available ICT tools to me are not user-friendly and I do not receive enough encouragement or support from the school administration to use ICT in the lessons so I am reluctant to apply technology as long as I can fulfil my teaching duty as required*". To remove this barrier, according to Prestridge et al. (2012) and Abedi (2023), clear policies, professional development programs, and incentives for teachers are required so as to gain effective ICT integration.

4.5 Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings suggest that successful ICT integration in foreign language teaching hinges on three main conditions: consistent training, adequate infrastructural support, and pedagogical guidance. Tertiary institutions should provide structured professional development programs that focus not only on technical skills but also on pedagogical strategies for using ICT effectively. Additionally, administrators are required to ensure reliable ICT infrastructure and timely technical assistance. Clear institutional policies and recognition mechanisms can further motivate teachers to engage with ICT meaningfully. These implications reinforce the broader educational discourse that ICT integration should be supported at systemic, not merely individual, levels.

5. Conclusion

This study revealed that foreign language teachers at the tertiary level in Vietnam generally demonstrated positive attitudes toward ICT integration and employed a wide range of digital tools to support teaching, learning, and assessment. The findings addressed the research objectives by showing that ICT not only enhanced classroom interaction and language-skill development but also reshaped pedagogical practices in ways consistent with contemporary digital teaching frameworks. Specifically, the study indicated three core

outcomes: firstly, teachers commonly used LMS platforms, communication tools, language-learning applications, and AI-based systems to support instruction; secondly, ICT integration was perceived to increase learner engagement and promote personalized, collaborative learning; and thirdly, institutional and technical constraints—particularly limited training and insufficient support—continued to hinder optimal ICT use.

The results aligned with established theoretical perspectives such as the TPACK model and technology acceptance frameworks, which emphasize the interplay between technological knowledge, pedagogical design, and contextual factors. The study's findings confirmed that teachers' digital competence, combined with supportive institutional policies, played a decisive role in moving ICT integration from basic use toward more transformative forms of technology-enhanced pedagogy.

These findings carry several educational implications. The usage of ICT in language teaching is proved to be fruitful and applicable but to promote ICT integration in language teaching, certain measures are supposed to be undertaken. Higher education institutions should invest in continuous professional development programs that strengthen teachers' digital skills and pedagogical confidence. Policy frameworks must prioritize not only infrastructure but also technical support mechanisms and incentives to sustain meaningful ICT adoption. For language teachers, these results suggest the importance of designing learning activities that leverage ICT integration to maximize the potential of ICT in language education.

This study is not without limitations. Its sample was confined to a specific group of tertiary-level language teachers from universities in 2 big cities in Vietnam only, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings across diverse Vietnamese institutions. Data were also limited to teacher perspectives; student viewpoints and objective measures of learning outcomes were beyond the scope of the present investigation. Hence, future research could examine learners' experiences with ICT-supported instruction, evaluate long-term impacts of teacher training in digital pedagogy, or compare ICT integration practices across different institutional types. Such studies would broaden understanding of the conditions necessary for sustainable and meaningful technology use in foreign language education.

Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing discussion of ICT integration in Vietnamese higher education by highlighting both progress and persistent challenges. The findings underscore the importance of institutional leadership, digital competence development, and coherent policy support in advancing innovative, effective, and equitable ICT-enhanced language teaching.

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WEB-BASED INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE TOEFL ITP READING SKILLS

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Abstract

The TOEFL ITP reading comprehension section poses a significant challenge for many EFL learners, necessitating innovative instructional approaches. This study aims to develop and evaluate a dedicated web-based learning platform integrating interactive strategies to enhance reading skills for the TOEFL ITP. Employing a Research and Development (R&D) design with the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, Disseminate), the study involved 109 university students selected through purposive sampling. The platform's development included validation by English teaching and educational technology experts, followed by a limited field test. Data were collected through pre-test/post-test assessments and a usability questionnaire. The results indicated a substantial improvement in reading proficiency, with mean scores increasing from 355.88 to 423.45, a statistically significant gain of 18.98% ($Z = -9.019$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, user evaluations revealed positive feedback on the platform's accessibility, interactivity, and ability to maintain engagement. This study concludes that the purpose-built web-based platform serves as an effective intervention for improving TOEFL ITP reading skills. It contributes to the field of digital-based EFL instruction by demonstrating the efficacy of a tailored, interactive learning tool for standardized test preparation.

Keywords: *educational technology; interactive strategy; reading skills; R&D method; TOEFL ITP; web-based learning*

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension stands as a fundamental pillar of academic English proficiency, playing a crucial role in the success of non-native speakers in standardized testing contexts. The ability to comprehend complex academic texts efficiently is essential for higher education and professional advancement globally.

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Institutional Testing Program (ITP), remains a critical benchmark for assessing academic English proficiency in many non-native speaking contexts, particularly in Indonesia. Its significance extends beyond the classroom, often serving as a prerequisite for graduation, scholarships, and professional advancement (Sari et al., 2021). Despite its importance, achieving a competitive score poses a considerable challenge for many test-takers. The reading comprehension section is particularly daunting, as it demands not only robust linguistic knowledge but also advanced cognitive strategies for

deconstructing complex academic texts under severe time constraints (Aeni, 2024; Fajri, 2019; Fitria, 2022).

The urgency of this problem is acutely evident at Hafshawaty Zainul Hasan University. Internal data from the 2024 academic year revealed a concerning trend: more than 80% of the student body failed to achieve the target average score of 500 on the TOEFL ITP. This widespread underperformance signals a profound deficit in academic reading skills, which are indispensable for scholarly success (Nation, 2019). Traditional pedagogical approaches, often characterized by teacher-centered instruction, a one-size-fits-all methodology, and limited opportunities for individualized feedback, appear inadequate to address this multifaceted deficit (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2022). Consequently, students frequently report low motivation, anxiety, and a sense of being ill-prepared for the specific demands of the TOEFL ITP reading section (Sukandi, 2024; Zalha et al., 2020).

Concurrently, the ongoing digital transformation in education offers a compelling alternative. Web-based learning platforms have emerged as powerful tools capable of delivering flexible, personalized, and engaging educational experiences (Aldosari, 2020). In this study, interactive strategies refer to digitally-enhanced pedagogical approaches that include immediate automated feedback, embedded reading strategy tutorials, and progress tracking features, which differentiate from conventional static online materials. Their potential lies in providing ubiquitous access to learning materials, enabling self-paced study, and facilitating immediate, automated feedback—features that align perfectly with the needs of autonomous language learners (Rahmati et al., 2021). Previous research has demonstrated the efficacy of digital tools in enhancing general English proficiency. For instance, studies by Maisaroh and Sofia (2022) on TOEIC preparation and Sailuddin (2022) on online TOEFL courses have shown positive impacts on learning outcomes and motivation.

However, a critical gap persists in the existing literature. While previous studies have demonstrated the utility of online platforms for language learning and test preparation (Maisaroh & Sofia, 2022; Sailuddin, 2022), they predominantly utilize general-purpose Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle or Google Classroom (Hidayati et al., 2025). In these cases, the innovation is often confined to the pedagogical content or curriculum design delivered through a generic platform, not in the design of the platform itself. This approach, while valuable, does not fully address the nuanced cognitive and strategic demands of the TOEFL ITP reading section, which requires specific skills like skimming, scanning, and inference under time pressure (Fitria, 2022; Nation, 2019). The feedback mechanisms in these generic systems also often lack the specificity needed to address common error patterns in TOEFL ITP questions, moving beyond simple knowledge of results to detailed knowledge of performance (Carby, 2023; Maier & Klotz, 2022). Consequently, there is a significant lack of research on the development and efficacy of a purpose-built web-based platform—one whose core architecture, interactive exercises, and automated feedback systems are intrinsically and specifically engineered from the ground up to target the unique challenges of TOEFL ITP reading comprehension, thereby bridging a critical gap between general digital learning tools and specialized test preparation needs.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide both practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, it offers an innovative learning tool for students and teachers. Theoretically, it contributes to understanding how web-based interactive strategies can address specific reading comprehension challenges in standardized testing contexts.

This study aims to develop and evaluate web-based interactive strategies to enhance students' TOEFL ITP reading comprehension. The platform's innovation is its targeted design, which integrates a concentrated suite of interactive reading strategies, authentic practice questions, and automated, explanatory feedback tailored specifically to the TOEFL ITP format (Carby, 2023; Maier & Klotz, 2022). This research was guided by two central research inquiries:

1. To what degree does the resulting online platform meaningfully enhance learners' TOEFL ITP reading performance?
2. How do students perceive the platform's usability, learning value, and ability to maintain engagement?

The findings are expected to contribute both a validated technological tool for language preparation and deeper theoretical insights into the design principles of effective, domain-specific digital learning environments.

In summary, this study addresses the critical problem of low TOEFL ITP reading scores through developing web-based interactive strategies. Using a Research and Development design, this study aims to create an effective digital learning solution that bridges the gap between conventional teaching methods and the specific demands of TOEFL ITP reading comprehension

2. Literature Review

This section establishes the conceptual foundation of the study by synthesizing the theoretical and empirical literature on reading comprehension in academic contexts, the application of web-based learning in language education, and the role of interactive strategies, culminating in the identification of a specific research gap in TOEFL ITP preparation.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that extends beyond mere word recognition to involve the active construction of meaning from text. In the context of academic English proficiency, this process requires readers to employ advanced strategies such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, understanding referents, and synthesizing information from complex passages (Nation, 2019). The theoretical underpinning of this study is grounded in Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) (Sweller, 2020), which posits that learning is most effective when instructional designs optimize the use of limited working memory capacity. For EFL learners facing the TOEFL ITP reading section, the combined demands of linguistic decoding, strategy application, and time pressure can induce cognitive overload, thereby hindering comprehension and performance.

2.2 Web-Based Learning as a Modern Pedagogical Tool

Web-based learning has emerged as a transformative force in education, characterized by the use of internet technologies to deliver, support, and enhance learning. It is defined by its key attributes: flexibility, accessibility, and the capacity for personalized instruction (Aldosari, 2020; Rahmati et al., 2021). In language education, these platforms facilitate learner autonomy and self-regulated learning by allowing students to access

materials and practice at their own pace and convenience (Broadbent et al., 2020). The post-pandemic educational landscape has further accelerated the adoption of such digital tools, highlighting their role as viable and often superior alternatives to traditional, teacher-centric methods, particularly for structured skill development like test preparation (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2022).

2.3 Interactive Strategies in Digital Language Learning

A critical component of effective web-based learning is the integration of interactive strategies. For this study, interactive strategies are operationally defined as digitally-facilitated instructional techniques that prompt active mental engagement from the learner. These are not static content displays but dynamic features that respond to user input. The key strategies integrated into the developed platform include:

1. Immediate Explanatory Feedback: Moving beyond simple correct/incorrect indicators, this provides tailored explanations for errors (e.g., clarifying pronoun referents or logical inferences), transforming feedback from "knowledge of results" to "knowledge of performance" (Carby, 2023; Maier & Klotz, 2022).
2. Embedded Strategy Training: Direct instruction on specific reading strategies (e.g., skimming, scanning) is woven into the practice interface, offering "just-in-time" support that is immediately applicable (Nation, 2019).
3. Progress Tracking and Visualization: Dashboards that allow learners to monitor their performance over time, fostering metacognitive awareness and self-regulation (Chen, Hwang & Lai, 2024).

These interactive elements are designed to manage cognitive load by guiding the learner's attention and providing scaffolding, thereby making the acquisition of complex reading skills more efficient.

2.4 Synthesis of Previous Studies and Identification of the Research Gap

A substantial body of research affirms the positive impact of technology on language learning. Studies focusing on standardized test preparation, such as those for TOEIC (Maisaroh & Sofia, 2022) and TOEFL (Sailuddin, 2022), have reported significant improvements in scores and learner motivation when using digital tools. Furthermore, the inclusion of interactive and gamified elements has been shown to enhance engagement in online learning environments (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2022). However, a critical synthesis of this literature reveals a consistent methodological limitation: the majority of these studies are conducted within the confines of general-purpose Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle or Google Classroom (Hidayati et al., 2025). While these platforms are effective for content delivery, their generic nature means the pedagogical innovation is typically layered on top of the system rather than being built into its core architecture. This results in a one-size-fits-all digital framework that is not inherently optimized for the specific cognitive and strategic demands of a high-stakes task like the TOEFL ITP reading section. Consequently, a significant research gap persists: there is a lack of empirical investigation into the efficacy of a purpose-built web-based platform, whose very design and functionalities are intrinsically and specifically engineered from the ground up to target TOEFL ITP reading comprehension through integrated interactive strategies. This study is designed to fill this precise gap by developing and evaluating such a bespoke learning tool.

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3. Research Method

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach utilizing the 4D framework originally introduced by Thiagarajan and Semmel. The 4D model includes four sequential phases, namely Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate. This framework was chosen because it provides a structured pathway for creating educational products and is recognized for supporting rigorous validation and refinement during development.

3.1 Research Design and Procedure

The research procedure was executed in a systematic, multi-stage process. The stages are described as follows:

1. **Define**: Needs Analysis
   The initial stage involved a comprehensive needs analysis to establish a foundational understanding of the problem. This was conducted through a literature review on TOEFL ITP reading challenges and a survey administered to 96 students at Hafshawaty Zainul Hasan University, chosen purposively as they demonstrated an intermediate English proficiency level. The survey aimed to identify specific difficulties, learning preferences, and the technological readiness of the potential users. This step is critical in R&D to ensure the product is developed based on empirical user needs rather than assumptions.
2. **Design**: Content and Platform Design
   Based on the needs analysis, the subsequent phase involved the concurrent design of learning content and the platform's architectural blueprint. The content design focused on creating interactive materials and practice questions aligned with TOEFL ITP reading formats (Computer-integrated), integrating strategy instruction directly into the exercises. Simultaneously, the platform was designed to be user-friendly, featuring modules for structured learning, an automated scoring and feedback system, and a progress-tracking dashboard.
3. **Develop 1:** Expert Validation and Initial Revision
   The initial product design, including the content structure and platform wireframes, underwent a validation process by experts. This panel consisted of two English language teaching specialists and one educational technology expert. Their feedback focused on content accuracy, pedagogical soundness, and interface usability. The insights gained from this stage were used to revise and refine the prototype before development, enhancing its content validity and design robustness.
4. **Develop 2:** Prototype Development
   In this stage, the approved design was transformed into a functional web-based platform. The development process involved employing HTML, CSS, and JavaScript to build the user interface, while the back-end handled database functions and controlled the interactive tasks and automated feedback mechanisms.
5. **Develop 3:** Limited Field Testing and Revision
   The functional prototype was then subjected to a limited field test with a group of 27 students. The purpose was to identify any technical issues, assess the clarity of instructions, and gather initial feedback on user experience. This small-scale trial allowed the researchers to make necessary technical adjustments and final refinements

to the platform before full-scale implementation, a common practice in product development to ensure functionality.

6. **Disseminate:** Implementation and Data Collection
   The fully revised platform was implemented for the research sample over a predetermined period. Data acquisition was carried out through two primary methods:
   a. Quantitative Data: A one-group pretest-post-test experimental format was applied. A TOEFL ITP reading assessment was given to all 109 participants prior to and following the use of the platform. This design was chosen to measure the impact of the intervention by comparing the participants to themselves over time.
   b. Qualitative Data: A usability questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was distributed post-implementation. This instrument measured main elements of user experience, such as accessibility, material quality, interactive features, and learning motivation.

3.2 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were processed using analytical approaches aligned with the mixed-methods methodology:

1. Quantitative Analysis: The scores (both pre and post) were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to illustrate score distributions and improvements. Furthermore, the data did not meet normality criteria, as indicated by a Shapiro–Wilk test ($p < .05$) (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965), a non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to determine if the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant. The questionnaire data were analysed descriptively by calculating the mean score for each assessed aspect.
2. Qualitative Analysis: Responses from the open-ended questionnaire items were examined through thematic analysis to uncover recurring ideas, key themes, and recommendations for improvement.

This systematic and chronologically structured methodology, supported by established R&D principles and appropriate statistical techniques, ensures the scientific rigor and validity of the research findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Results: Improvement in Reading Comprehension Skills

The use of the web-based platform resulted in a noticeable enhancement in learners' TOEFL ITP reading comprehension performance. Analysis of the pre- and post-assessment results showed considerable gains across the 109 participants.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Pre and Post-test Reading Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Score	109	300	419	355.88	35.030
Post-test Score	109	312	505	423.45	45.833
Valid N (listwise)	109				

The data indicates a remarkable mean score increase of 67.57 points, representing an 18.98% improvement. The higher standard deviation in post-test scores (45.833) compared

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to pre-test (35.030) suggests varied levels of improvement among participants, indicating the platform's differential impact on students with varying initial proficiency levels.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank analysis verified that the improvement was statistically significant ($Z = -9.019$, $p < .001$). This statistical evidence suggests that the observed improvement is associated with the intervention, though the one-group pretest-posttest design warrants caution in making definitive causal claims.

4.2 Qualitative Results: User Experience and Platform Acceptance

The usability questionnaire provided insights into students' perceptions of the web-based platform across four critical dimensions:

Table 2
Usability Evaluation Results

Aspect	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Ease of Access & Usage	3.95	0.659	Very Good
Interactivity & Feedback	3.94	0.719	Very Good
Motivation & Satisfaction	3.92	0.773	Very Good
Content Quality	3.85	0.692	Good

The results show that all aspects received positive evaluations, with "Ease of Access & Usage" achieving the highest rating ($M = 3.95$). This indicates that students found the platform intuitive and straightforward to navigate. The slightly lower but still positive rating for "Content Quality" ($M = 3.85$) suggests an area for potential enhancement in future iterations.

4.3 Comprehensive Discussion

4.3.1 Effectiveness of the Web-Based Learning Approach

The significant improvement in test scores (18.98%) strongly supports the positive impact of the online platform in improving students' TOEFL ITP reading comprehension performance. This result is consistent with Abdulrahaman et al. (2020), who reported that multimedia-supported learning environments can substantially strengthen instructional delivery and student engagement. This finding demonstrates that the purpose-built platform effectively addressed the specific reading challenges, such as complex syntactic structures and limited vocabulary, as identified by Fitria (2022). The 18.98% improvement is particularly noteworthy considering the relatively short implementation period, suggesting that focused, interactive web-based learning can accelerate reading skill development.

The platform's success can be attributed to several key factors. First, the immediate feedback system allowed students to identify and address their weaknesses promptly. Second, the structured progression from basic to complex reading tasks enabled gradual skill development. Third, the interactive elements maintained student engagement throughout the learning process, consistent with Wibowo (2023) findings on the importance of interactive learning experiences.

The platform's success can be further explained through the lens of Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2020). By providing structured learning modules and integrated strategy training, the platform effectively managed intrinsic cognitive load. Furthermore, the

immediate and explanatory feedback reduced extraneous cognitive load by helping students focus on the reasoning process rather than just the answer. These results reveal that the platform's design, grounded in these principles, successfully managed intrinsic load through structured modules and reduced extraneous load through explanatory feedback, facilitating more efficient schema construction for reading comprehension tasks.

4.3.2 User Experience and Learning Motivation

The high ratings in usability aspects (M = 3.85-3.95) demonstrate the platform's success in creating a positive learning environment. The highest score in "Ease of Access & Usage" confirms that the platform's design effectively addressed potential technical barriers, making it accessible to students with varying levels of technological proficiency. This finding echoes Maisaroh and Sofia (2022) research, which highlighted the importance of user-friendly interfaces in web-based learning environments.

The strong performance in "Interactivity & Feedback" (M = 3.94) and "Motivation & Satisfaction" (M = 3.92) suggests that the platform successfully created an engaging learning experience. The automated feedback system, combined with progress tracking features, appears to have enhanced students' sense of accomplishment and motivation. This observation supports Pratiwi and Waluyo (2022) emphasis on the importance of interactive elements in maintaining learner engagement in online TOEFL preparation. These findings align with the theory of learner self-regulation (Chen, Hwang & Lai., 2024), indicating that the platform's autonomous learning environment empowered students to take control of their learning process.

4.3.3 Addressing the Research Gap and Innovation Contribution

This research fills a notable void in prior studies by creating and evaluating a dedicated online learning platform tailored for TOEFL ITP reading preparation. Unlike previous studies that utilized general-purpose learning management systems, this research demonstrates the value of a purpose-built platform tailored to the specific demands of TOEFL ITP reading comprehension.

The platform's innovative integration of strategy instruction within practice exercises represents a significant advancement over conventional preparation methods. This approach moves beyond mere practice testing to include explicit strategy training, addressing the fundamental skill deficits that hinder reading comprehension performance. The positive results validate this integrated approach and suggest its potential for application in other language learning contexts.

4.3.4 Implications for EFL Instruction and Limitations

The findings offer significant implications for EFL instruction. This study provides a validated model for integrating technology into test preparation curricula, offering educators a tool to provide differentiated instruction that addresses individual student needs in reading comprehension. The varied improvement patterns among students (evidenced by the increased standard deviation in post-test scores) highlight the platform's adaptability to different learning paces and styles. This flexibility is particularly valuable in diverse classroom settings where students may have varying initial proficiency levels and learning needs.

However, some limitations should be acknowledged. The focus on content quality as the lowest-rated aspect (though still positive) indicates room for improvement in material

variety and authenticity. Future research could explore the integration of more diverse text types and authentic reading materials. Additionally, the study's duration limited the observation of long-term retention effects. Future studies could investigate the platform's impact on sustained skill development over extended periods. Research could also explore the platform's effectiveness across different demographic groups and educational contexts.

In conclusion, the web-based platform has proven effective in enhancing TOEFL ITP reading comprehension skills while providing a positive user experience. Its success underscores the potential of specialized digital tools in addressing specific language learning challenges and offers meaningful contributions to the expanding area of digitally supported language learning. The results confirm that the platform's innovative integration of interactive strategies and immediate feedback effectively bridges the gap between conventional teaching methods and the specific strategic demands of the TOEFL ITP reading section.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of a purpose-built web-based platform in enhancing TOEFL ITP reading comprehension skills among EFL learners. The findings indicate a statistically significant improvement in reading performance following the implementation of the platform, alongside positive user evaluations regarding its accessibility, interactivity, and motivational value. These outcomes collectively suggest that the integration of interactive reading strategies, immediate feedback mechanisms, and structured learning modules within a tailored digital environment can effectively address the specific challenges of TOEFL ITP reading preparation.

Theoretically, this research validates the application of Cognitive Load Theory and self-regulated learning principles in the design of specialized language learning tools. Practically, it offers educators a flexible and engaging alternative to conventional test preparation methods, providing a model for technology integration that accommodates diverse learner needs and proficiency levels.

Several promising directions for future development emerge from this study. The platform could be enhanced through the incorporation of more diverse and authentic reading materials, adaptive learning features that personalize instruction based on individual performance, and expansion to include other language skills assessed in the TOEFL ITP. Future research should also investigate the long-term impact of the platform on reading skill retention and explore its applicability across different educational contexts and standardized tests.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of tailored digital tools in language education. While the findings are context-bound to TOEFL ITP preparation in Indonesian higher education, they highlight the potential of purpose-built web-based platforms to provide effective, engaging, and accessible learning solutions that bridge the gap between conventional instruction and the specific demands of standardized testing.

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TRANSLATION OF EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS BY PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST CHARACTERS IN *THE WITCHER SERIES*

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Abstract

This study examines the translation of expressive speech acts in the Netflix series The Witcher, focusing on the protagonist Geralt of Rivia and the antagonist Cahir Mawr Dyffryn. Expressive speech acts—such as apology, gratitude, condolence, lament, congratulation, protest, and praise—play a crucial role in conveying emotions and shaping character identity. A total of 158 utterances were analyzed from English–Indonesian subtitle pairs using qualitative descriptive methods, supported by translation quality assessment based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Findings reveal distinct pragmatic patterns: Geralt frequently uses empathetic expressions like protest, apology, and regret, reflecting moral engagement and interpersonal sensitivity, while Cahir predominantly employs praise and boasting, emphasizing authority and self-image. Analysis of 700 translation instances shows that established equivalence (56.14%) and variation (17.29%) were the most common techniques, supporting naturalness, readability, and cultural appropriateness. Techniques such as modulation, paraphrase, amplification, and compensation were applied to preserve pragmatic force and emotional nuance. Overall, translation quality was high, with mean scores of 2.84 (accuracy), 2.76 (acceptability), and 2.89 (readability). This study contributes a novel perspective by linking expressive speech acts with character function and translation strategies in subtitling. The findings emphasize the importance of selecting translation techniques that maintain pragmatic intent, emotional impact, and character portrayal, offering guidance for audiovisual translators and informing future research on cross-cultural narrative translation.

Keywords: *expressive speech acts; subtitling; translation shift; translation techniques; translation quality.*

1. Introduction

Speech events refer to linguistic interactions that occur within specific situational contexts. Among the various types of speech acts, expressive speech acts are important because they convey psychological states such as gratitude, apology, condolence, congratulation, lamenting, protest, and praise. These utterances carry not only

communicative intent but also emotional and cultural values, making them relevant for analysis in pragmatics and translation studies (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996).

In audiovisual media, expressive speech acts contribute to character construction and emotional resonance. In the Netflix adaptation of The Witcher, expressive acts are frequently used by the protagonist, Geralt of Rivia, and the antagonist, Cahir Mawr Dyffryn. Their contrasting narrative positions provide a valuable context for examining differences in pragmatic expression and how these are represented in translation.

Subtitling presents specific challenges because translators must maintain the illocutionary force while ensuring naturalness, brevity, and readability. Certain techniques, such as modulation or paraphrase, may enhance acceptability but subtly change the original pragmatic intent, potentially influencing audience perception (Nida & Taber, 1982).

Previous research has examined expressive speech acts and their translation (Syarif, Nababan & Santosa, 2020; Aninditya stuti & Basari, 2022). However, most studies emphasize classification and translation techniques without fully integrating translation quality assessment. Other studies that evaluate both translation techniques and quality (e.g., Nurhidayah, 2013; Cahyanisa, 2021) generally analyze expressive speech acts across all characters without differentiating protagonist and antagonist roles. Thus, previous studies have not fully explored how expressive functions, translation techniques, translation shifts, and translation quality interact differently across character roles in subtitling contexts.

To address this gap, the present study analyzes the translation of expressive speech acts in The Witcher, focusing on the protagonist and antagonist. The research aims to:

1. Identify the types of expressive speech acts used by both characters.
2. Analyse the characters portrayal based on the expressive utterance.
3. Analyse the translation techniques applied in subtitling.
4. Evaluate translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability.

Integrating pragmatic and translation analysis, this study provides a more detailed understanding of how expressive meanings are transferred in audiovisual translation and how translation strategies influence pragmatic equivalence and character representation.

2. Literature Review

Pragmatics concerns how language is interpreted in context, examining the relationship between linguistic forms and the physical, social, and psychological circumstances in which they occur (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996). Within pragmatics, speech act theory introduced by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1979) proposes that utterances are actions performed through language. Expressive speech acts specifically convey the speaker’s psychological states such as apology, gratitude, protest, lament, congratulation, or praise (Ronan, 2015), making them crucial in character portrayal and interpersonal dynamics.

In translation studies, Nida and Taber (1982) emphasize that translation requires reproducing meaning and communicative intent from the source to the target language. Molina and Albir (2002) categorize eighteen translation techniques such as literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and paraphrase, which represent micro-level decisions taken by translators when transferring meaning. Quality in translation is commonly assessed using the framework of accuracy, acceptability, and readability, as formalized by Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012).

Audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling, introduces additional constraints that distinguish it from written translation. Subtitles must respect spatial and temporal limits—typically no more than two lines on screen and 35–42 characters per line—while remaining synchronized with image and dialogue (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007). Given these limitations, translators often condense, reorganize, or paraphrase expressive acts to preserve pragmatic intent and viewer comprehension. Consequently, subtitling demands a balance between linguistic fidelity, viewer processing load, and emotional resonance.

Based on previous studies conducted by several researchers, "Translation Technique of Women Anger Speech Act in Television Series 13 Reasons Why Season 1" by Syarif, Nababan & Satosa (2020) and "Translation Techniques of Expressive Speech Acts of the Main Characters Used in the Subtitle of The Princess Switch Movie" by Aninditya stuti, A. D., & Basari, A. (2022), the findings of both studies primarily reveal the various types of expressive speech acts in the films as well as how translation techniques were employed.

Meanwhile, other previous studies, such as "An Analysis of Translation Techniques and Quality in Terms of Accuracy, Acceptability and Readability of Pi's Expressive Speech Act in the Film Life of Pi" by Nurhidayah, A. (2013) and "Analisis Kualitas Terjemahan Tindak Tutur Ekspresif dalam Subtitle Film Little Women" by Cahyanisa, W. (2021), examined expressive speech acts and translation quality. In evaluating translation quality, it is also necessary to analyze the translation techniques applied.

Therefore, this study identifies a research gap, namely the analysis of expressive speech acts in both the main protagonist and antagonist characters, the translation techniques used, the quality of the translation, and how the application of translation techniques functions in reflecting each character.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study applies a qualitative descriptive research design supported by quantitative scoring derived from translation quality assessment. The design is aligned with product-oriented translation research, examining the subtitling of expressive speech acts in The Witcher Seasons 1 and 2.

3.2 Data and Data Source

The data consist of 158 expressive utterances spoken by the protagonist (Geralt of Rivia) and the antagonist (Cahir Mawr Dyffryn). The data were extracted from English–Indonesian subtitle pairs and verified by rewatching each scene to ensure contextual accuracy.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was employed to restrict the dataset to utterances that met predefined criteria, namely:

1. the utterance must belong to an expressive speech act,
2. it must be spoken by the protagonist or antagonist, and
3. the utterance must appear in both source and target language subtitles.

This approach ensured relevance and prevented unnecessary data expansion.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out through:

1. Documentation, involving extraction and alignment of English and Indonesian subtitle scripts;
2. Scene verification, where audio-visual segments were re-examined to confirm tone, speaker intention, and pragmatic force;
3. analysing the collected data using a focus group discussion involving three ratters, who would assess the types of expressive speech acts, translation techniques, and translation quality.

3.5 Rater Selection

Translation quality evaluation was conducted by three expert raters selected using purposive expert sampling. All raters satisfied the following criteria:

- advanced proficiency in English and Indonesian,
- academic background in linguistics and/or translation,
- familiarity with pragmatics, particularly speech act theory,
- minimum five years of translation experience,
- prior involvement in translation quality evaluation.

The FGD (focus group discussion) was conducted over two days to carry out the assessment. In the first meeting, the raters identified various forms of expressive speech acts and classified them based on their functions, while in the second meeting, the raters worked collaboratively to examine the use of translation techniques and assess the translation quality.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed through Spradley's ethnographic analytical stages, comprising:

1. Domain analysis,
2. Taxonomic analysis,
3. Componential analysis, and
4. Cultural theme analysis.

Translation techniques were identified according to Molina and Albir's (2002) classification, while translation shifts were determined by comparing source–target structural changes. Meanwhile Translation quality was measured using the evaluation model of Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012), consisting of:

- Accuracy,
- Acceptability,
- Readability.

Each parameter was scored using a 1–3 Likert-type rating scale, where:

- 3 = high quality,
- 2 = moderate quality,
- 1 = low quality.

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3.7 Reliability and Validity

Inter-rater reliability was calculated using percentage agreement, following Miles and Huberman (1994). Differences in scoring were discussed during FGD until consensus was achieved, with minimum agreement of >75% considered acceptable.

Research validity was ensured through:

- Source triangulation, by comparing audio-visual scenes with subtitle texts, and
- Method triangulation, using documentation and FGD as complementary procedures.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

This study analyzed 158 expressive speech acts produced by the protagonist (Geralt) and antagonist (Cahir) in The Witcher Seasons 1–2. A total of 700 translation techniques were identified. The data show that conventional equivalence and variation dominated the subtitling process.

4.1.1 Types of Expressive Speech Acts

As the result we find eleven types of expressive speech acts based on Searle's theory. Here are the eleven expressive speech acts translated into English, Apologizing, Thanking, Expressing regret, Lamenting, Boasting, Protesting / Complaining, Condoling, Congratulating, Praising, Complimenting, Welcoming.

Geralt of Rivia (Protagonist)
Total expressive acts: 118
Table 1
Distribution of Expressive Speech Acts by Protagonist Character

No.	Expressive Speech Act	Frequency
1	Apologizing	19
2	Expressing regret	15
3	Lamenting	8
4	Protesting / Complaining	27
5	Compliment	10
6	Congratulating	15
7	Condoling	9
8	Welcoming	15

1. **Apologizing**

"I apologize for the abrupt intrusion"

Context:

Geralt arrives unexpectedly during a tense situation and recognizes that his entrance may have caused disruption.

This utterance functions as an explicit expressive speech act of apology. It shows Geralt acknowledging that he has violated a conversational or social norm (entering without invitation). Although Geralt is known for his stoicism, this apology reflects his ability to respect social expectations and to accept responsibility for minor offenses. The illocutionary

force is direct: to mitigate possible negative feelings from the hearer by showing regret for the interruption.

2. Expressing Regret

"It's hard to regret something you didn't choose."

Context:

Geralt is speaking about how destiny has shaped his life. Many major events have been imposed upon him rather than chosen freely.

This utterance is an expressive speech act of regret, but not in the form of personal apology. Instead, it expresses philosophical regret about the nature of a life controlled by destiny rather than agency. Geralt frames regret as difficult when one has not actively made the choice that led to the outcome. The utterance therefore reflects internal emotional evaluation rather than interpersonal repair.

3. Lamenting

"Mistakes … are also important to me. I don't cross them out of my life, or memory. And I never blame others for them."

Context:

Geralt reflects on the mistakes he has made throughout his life, considering them an integral part of who he has become.

This constitutes a lament, a deep emotional reflection on past personal failures. Geralt acknowledges his own shortcomings and expresses sadness and introspection about them. Instead of denying or forgetting mistakes, he accepts their emotional weight. The speech act communicates self-criticism, regret, and melancholy, revealing vulnerability beneath his hardened exterior.

a. Protesting / Complaining

"I run into dilemmas all the time … This is not one of them. … You disgust me. And deserve to die."

Context:

Geralt confronts a morally corrupt antagonist. While he often struggles with ethical ambiguity, in this case he sees no conflict — the enemy has acted in ways he finds unquestionably evil.

This utterance functions as a strong expressive protest and moral condemnation. Geralt rejects the idea that the situation is a moral dilemma and openly voices his disgust. The speech act expresses frustration, anger, and moral judgment. It also positions Geralt not as neutral, but as someone emotionally engaged and affected by injustice.

b. Compliment

"Your ass puts others to shame." (A rough, humorous compliment attributed to Geralt)

Context:

Geralt gives a compliment in his typical blunt and unfiltered style, aimed at acknowledging the attractiveness of another character.

Although unconventional and crude, the utterance functions as a compliment — it expresses admiration toward the addressee. The compliment also reflects Geralt's

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personality: he rarely expresses positive emotions directly, and when he does, his tone is dry, humorous, or teasing. This aligns with his pragmatic and stoic character design.

c. Congratulating

"Congratulations, you managed to accomplish it."

Context:

Raven has just returned from a difficult mission that involved significant risks. Geralt, who has been waiting anxiously, learns that the mission was completed successfully and expresses congratulations as acknowledgment of the achievement.

This utterance falls under expressive speech acts, specifically congratulating, as the speaker conveys positive feelings toward the hearer's success. The expression reinforces interpersonal bonds and signals appreciation, fulfilling a socio-emotional function in dialogue. The tone remains concise and retains the original illocutionary force in translation.

d. Condoling

"I am sorry for your loss."

Context:

Yennefer has experienced the loss of someone close due to a tragic event. Geralt approaches to express sympathy and emotional support in this difficult moment.

This expressive act is categorized as condoling, as it expresses the speaker's sadness regarding the misfortune experienced by the hearer. The utterance plays a supportive role, reinforcing emotional solidarity in a culturally appropriate way. The translation maintains the respectful and formal tone commonly associated with condolence expressions.

e. Welcoming

"Welcome back."

Context:

Ciri who has been away for a long time finally returns. Geralt and team member who has been waiting welcomes them warmly, expressing relief and happiness upon reunion.

This utterance represents an expressive speech act of welcoming, communicating positive feelings about the hearer's return. The act contributes to interpersonal closeness and supports social harmony within the narrative context. The translation maintains naturalness, directness, and emotional warmth typical of welcoming expressions.

Cahir Mawr Dyffryn (Antagonist)

Total expressive acts: 40

Table 2

Distribution of Expressive Speech Acts by Antagonist Character

No.	Expressive Speech Act	Frequency
1	Praising	13
2	Boasting	10
3	Apologizing	3
4	Expressing Regret	5
5	Protesting / Complaining	9

1. Praising

"You were exceptional in battle today."

Context

Cahir, after witnessing an ally's effective performance in combat, acknowledges their skill. Although he rarely gives praise openly due to his military personality, he occasionally recognizes competence in others, especially comrades who prove themselves.

This utterance represents an expressive act of praising, intended to convey professional admiration and acknowledge military competency. The expression is restrained, aligned with Cahir's disciplined personality. The praise reinforces hierarchical relationships while maintaining emotional distance, characteristic of his role as a Nilfgaardian officer.

2. Boasting

"We will retake the North. Nilfgaard has never been stronger."

Context

Cahir is speaking to soldiers during a strategic discussion, expressing confidence in Nilfgaard's strength and military dominance. His statement functions as both reassurance and propaganda.

This utterance reflects a boasting expressive speech act, where the speaker elevates the reputation and capability of his side. Boasting here functions not as personal arrogance but as ideological reinforcement. The speech act supports Nilfgaard's image as a powerful empire, demonstrating Cahir's commitment to imperial propaganda and command rhetoric.

3. Apologizing

"I failed my mission. I accept responsibility."

Context

Cahir admits his fault to a superior after failing to protect or recover Ciri, an objective central to his military duties. Although he rarely apologizes directly, this type of admission reflects his sense of honor and discipline.

This represents a direct apology, signaling acceptance of fault. For Cahir, apologizing is not a display of vulnerability but an act of military integrity. The illocutionary force reinforces hierarchical values and demonstrates that Cahir prioritizes professional responsibility over personal emotion.

4. Expressing Regret

"Something has ended in me… something has burned out."

Context

Cahir reflects on the loss of comrades and the moral stain of his actions while serving Nilfgaard. This occurs at a moment of emotional vulnerability when he begins questioning the righteousness of his mission.

This is an expressive act of regret, conveying psychological distress and personal reckoning. Unlike earlier acts grounded in military loyalty, this moment reveals a break in Cahir's ideological certainty. The utterance marks a turning point in his character arc, where he begins recognizing the cost of war beyond strategic outcomes.

5. Protesting / Complaining

"We were not given the resources we were promised. How were we expected to succeed?"

Context:

Cahir challenges a decision by his superiors after being inadequately supported in a military mission. The complaint is formal, reflecting military protocol rather than emotional outburst.

This utterance represents an expressive act of complaint, in which Cahir criticizes the unfavourable conditions that contributed to mission failure. Despite his loyalty, he asserts rational protest, maintaining a formal tone befitting his rank. The speech act functions as both critique and defence, showing that military obedience does not exclude strategic disagreement.

4.1.2 Analyze the characters portrayal based on the expressive utterance

The analysis of expressive speech acts in The Witcher reveals clear pragmatic differences between the protagonist and antagonist.

Geralt of Rivia (Protagonist)

The analysis shows that Geralt of Rivia produced a total of 118 expressive speech acts in the series. The most dominant forms were protest (27 instances), apology (19 instances), and expressions of regret or lamenting (15 instances). This distribution reflects a character who frequently responds to conflict with emotional clarity and moral reasoning. Geralt's speech acts project a personality that is responsible, empathetic, self-reflective, and critical, while also demonstrating emotional openness. His linguistic behavior indicates strong moral engagement and social sensitivity, allowing audiences to perceive him as a protagonist who is both principled and deeply connected to interpersonal relationships.

Cahir Mawr Dyffryn (Antagonist)

Cahir, in contrast, produced only 40 expressive speech acts in total. The most frequent types were praise (13 instances) and boasting (10 instances), with very few expressions of apology (3 instances) or regret (5 instances), Protesting/Complaining (9 instances). This pattern suggests a character who is emotionally controlled and oriented toward maintaining authority, self-image, and personal power. Cahir's utterances emphasize dominance, confidence, and reputation rather than empathy or emotional vulnerability. Accordingly, his expressive speech acts reflect a personality that is narcissistic, image-driven, and distant, establishing a clear pragmatic contrast with the protagonist.

4.1.3 Types of Translation Techniques

The analysis identified 700 occurrences of translation techniques, which are summarized in Table 3. A total of nine translation techniques were found in the data, consisting of established equivalent, variation, amplification, paraphrase, pure borrowing, modulation, reduction, literal translation, and transposition. The translation of expressive utterances from English into Indonesian involved a variety of techniques. The most dominant were:

Established Equivalent (393 data / 56.14%)

This technique is the most frequently used, accounting for more than half of all translation choices.

Reason:

- This technique is typically selected when a direct and natural equivalent already exists in the target language.
- It supports readability and naturalness, making subtitles easier for audiences to understand quickly.
- For expressive speech acts (e.g., apologizing, thanking, praising), Bahasa Indonesia already has fixed, common expressions, so translators can simply choose the closest natural equivalent without altering meaning.

Variation (121 data / 17.29%)
Variation is the second most used technique.
Reason:
- It allows translators to adjust linguistic or stylistic forms to improve cultural appropriateness or tone.
- In subtitling, variation is useful when the speaker's tone, social relationship, or emotional intent needs to be conveyed in a way that matches Indonesian norms.
- This technique helps maintain the speaker's personality, especially in expressive acts where mood, attitude, or role (e.g., protagonist vs antagonist) must remain recognizable.

Amplification (54 data / 7.71%)
Amplification is another commonly used technique.
Reason:
- Subtitling often requires adding short clarifications to make implied meanings explicit in the target language.
- This technique is especially helpful when the English dialogue contains implicit emotional messages that may not be obvious in Indonesian.
- It improves audience comprehension without changing the original meaning, important in emotional or dramatic scenes.

Table 3
The Frequency of Translation Techniques

No.	Translation Technique	Frequency	Presentage
1	Established Equivalent	393	56.14%
2	Variation	121	17.29%
3	Amplification	54	7.71%
4	Paraphrase	45	6.43%
5	Reduction	29	4.14%
6	Modulation	22	3.14%
7	Pure Borrowing	21	3.00%
8	Transposition	3	0.43%
9	Literal Translation	1	0.14%
Total		**700**	**100%**

1. Paraphrase
BSu: "You humans will never understand what it is to lose everything."

BSa: "*Kalian manusia takkan pernah mengerti rasanya kehilangan segalanya*."
→ Reformulation of structure without changing the meaning.

2. Amplification
BSu: "I genuinely feel bad about it."
BSa: "*Saya sangat menyesal tentang semua itu*."
→ The addition of "*Semua*" to clarify the referent.

3. Variation
BSu: "You saved me."
BSa: "*Kamu menyelamatkanku*."
→ Register adjustment (you → *kamu*).

4. Borrowing
BSu: "Papa, please! Papa, don't go! Come back!""
BSa: "*Papa, jangan pergi*!"
→ The term "*Papa*" is retained.

5. Modulation
BSu: "You have my deepest condolences."
BSa: "*Saya sangat menyesal atas kehilanganmu*."
→ Shift in point of view (you have → *Saya menyesal*).

6. Reduction
BSu: "People never really took notice of me."
BSa: "*Orang-orang tidak ada yang memperhatikanku*."
→ Omission of the intensifying element (*really*).

7. Compensation
BSu: "Finally, you show your true colours."
BSa: "*Kau akhirnya menunjukkan jatidirimu yang sesungguhnya*."
→ Transferring the idiomatic effect to another structure.

The results show that translators preferred techniques that maintain meaning accuracy, fluency, and naturalness for Indonesian viewers. Established equivalent ensures straightforward comprehension, variation handles stylistic and cultural alignment, and amplification helps clarify implied emotional content.

4.4 Translation Quality Assessment

The three raters assessed the expressive utterances based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability using a 1–3 scale. The results show an average score of 2.84 for accuracy, indicating that most translations were accurate, though some experienced a slight loss of pragmatic force. Acceptability received an average score of 2.76, suggesting that the translations were generally natural and culturally appropriate. Meanwhile, readability scored the highest at 2.89, reflecting that the translated utterances were highly readable and easy

to understand. Translation quality was evaluated by three raters using a 1–3 Likert-type scale, following Nababan et al. (2012):
3 = Good
2 = Moderate
1 = Poor

Table 4
Mean Quality Scores

Aspect	Mean Score
Accuracy	2.84
Acceptability	2.76
Readability	2.89

Example:

1) **Accuracy**
   BSu: I apologize for my man's interference in your day.
   BSa: *Maafkan anak buahku yang mengganggu harimu*.

The analysis shows that the choice of translation techniques significantly influences how effectively expressive speech acts convey emotional meaning in the target language. Techniques such as literal translation and established equivalent tend to preserve the original meaning accurately, ensuring that the speaker's intention, emotional tone, and illocutionary force remain intact. However, more flexible techniques such as modulation, adaptation, and amplification are often used when cultural or linguistic differences require adjustments to avoid pragmatic loss. These techniques may slightly shift the form of the expression but help ensure that the translated utterance remains natural and socially acceptable for the target audience. In some cases, techniques that prioritize semantic accuracy might weaken emotional intensity, while techniques that prioritize pragmatics may sacrifice formal correspondence for communicative effectiveness. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that translators must balance linguistic fidelity and contextual appropriateness to preserve the speaker's intended psychological and emotional impact in the translation.

2) **Acceptability**
   BSu (Source): "I'm sorry for what happened"
   BSa (Target): "*maafkan aku atas apa yang telah terjadi"*

The translation "*maafkan aku atas apa yang telah terjadi*" is categorized as highly acceptable in Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) because it fully meets the criteria of naturalness, readability, and pragmatic equivalence in the target language. The sentence flows smoothly and is commonly used by native Indonesian speakers, making it sound natural and idiomatic rather than literal or forced. Moreover, the emotional and pragmatic intent of the source utterance—expressing sincere apology and regret—is accurately preserved, meaning the illocutionary force of the expressive speech act remains intact. Culturally, the translation fits standard Indonesian norms for apologies, reflecting politeness and humility without adding or omitting meaning. Since the translation maintains complete

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semantic content, remains faithful to the tone of the original, and presents no grammatical or stylistic issues, it fulfils the indicators of a highly acceptable translation in TQA.

3) Readability

BSu: "I'm sorry for not trusting you"
BSa: *"maaf karena aku tak percaya padamu"*

The translation "*maaf karena aku tak percaya padamu*" receives a high score in readability based on Nababan's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) because it is clear, natural, and easy for Indonesian readers to understand without requiring any additional interpretation effort. First, the sentence follows a common and natural grammatical structure in Indonesian, using everyday vocabulary that is familiar and uncomplicated for target readers. There are no ambiguous or unnatural elements, and the expression maintains the emotional nuance of the original utterance smoothly. The phrase "*tak percaya padamu*" is a direct and natural equivalent of "not trusting you," commonly used in spoken and written Indonesian, which enhances its fluency and readability. Additionally, the translation preserves the tone of personal regret without introducing awkwardness or overly formal wording, making it feel authentic and emotionally appropriate. Because readers can immediately understand the message as intended, with no distortion, awkward phrasing, or unnatural construction, the translation meets Nababan's criteria for a readability score of 3 (high) in TQA.

The results of the translation quality evaluation indicate that the subtitles of The Witcher series obtain a high mean score across the parameters of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accordingly, the translation is classified as high quality, achieving an overall rating of 3 on the assessment scale.

4.2 Discussion

The results highlight three main points. First, expressive speech acts reflect character roles: protagonists employ empathetic expressive while antagonists rely on confrontational ones. Second, translation techniques such as variation and established equivalence dominate due to subtitling constraints. Third, translation quality shows a tendency to privilege naturalness and comprehension, occasionally at the expense of preserving illocutionary force.

The findings also reveal novelty compared with earlier studies. This study assessed quality but did not distinguish characters, and shows how protagonist–antagonist contrasts affect expressive act translation.

4.2.1 Dominance of Conventional Equivalence and Variation

The results show that 56.14% of translation techniques were established equivalence, indicating that the subtitler prioritized:

- natural target language expressions,
- readability,
- cultural appropriateness.

This aligns with Newmark's (1988) principle that effective subtitles should "sound natural for the target viewer."

Example 1 – Apology (Established Equivalence)
Source: "I'm sorry for what happened."
Target: "*Aku minta maaf atas kejadian itu*."

The expression I'm sorry has a stable and idiomatic Indonesian equivalent, allowing the intended illocutionary force to be preserved.

4.2.2 Explicitation and Implicitation in Emotion-Heavy Expressions

Explicitation (7.71%) is most frequently applied in:

- apologies,
- condolences, and
- emotional acknowledgements,

because Indonesian pragmatics tend to be explicit in expressing polite sentiments.

Example 2 – Condolence (Explicitation)
Source: "You have my condolences."
Target: "*Saya sangat menyesal atas kehilanganmu*."

Here, *sangat* and *kehilanganmu* introduce explicit emotional detail consistent with Indonesian norms of politeness. Implicitation, conversely, is used when visual context already conveys emotional intensity, reducing redundancy in subtitle space.

4.2.3 Modulation, Paraphrase, and Compensation for Pragmatic Adjustment

These techniques often appeared in subtitles involving:

- protests,
- praise,
- boasting, and
- emotionally charged criticism,

where structural or pragmatic equivalence required adaptation.

Example 3 – Protest (Modulation)
Source: "I can't forgive them."
Target: "*Aku belum bisa memaafkan mereka*."

The shift from absolute (can't) to temporal (*belum bisa*) reflected Indonesian cultural preference for softened directness, demonstrating modulation.

Example 4 – Praise (Paraphrase)
Source: "You have the most incredible heart and the most annoying personality."
Target: "*Hatimu luar biasa, tapi kepribadianmu menjengkelkan*."

- Structure was reorganized,
- the contrast marker *tapi* clarified meaning, and
- the emotional force remained intact.

Example 5 – Boasting (Compensation)
Source: "I'm the only one who can defeat me."
Target: "*Hanya aku yang bisa mengalahkan diriku sendiri*."

The emphatic stance was preserved through the addition of hanya, compensating for the structural shift in translation. This aligned with Munday (2016), who notes that compensation transfers rhetorical effect when direct equivalence is not possible.

4.3 Minor Techniques

Borrowing, transposition, literal translation, and reduction were applied only when:

- cultural equivalents did not exist,
- grammatical transfer required minimal restructuring, and
- subtitle space limitations demanded concision.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the translation of expressive speech acts by the protagonist (Geralt of Rivia) and antagonist (Cahir Mawr Dyffryn) in The Witcher series. The findings show that expressive acts play a crucial role in shaping character identities and narrative dynamics. Geralt's utterances were dominated by empathetic expressions such as apologizing, condoling, and forgiving, while Cahir's were marked by confrontational acts such as protesting and boasting.

The findings indicate that the translation of expressive speech acts in The Witcher subtitles is closely shaped by both character roles and the selection of translation techniques. Evidence suggests that the expressive utterances produced by the protagonist and antagonist differ in frequency, emotional function, and pragmatic orientation, and these nuances must be carefully maintained to preserve character portrayal and narrative intent. The integration of speech act analysis, translation technique mapping, shift identification, and quality evaluation offers a comprehensive methodological contribution that has not been fully addressed in previous studies.

The analysis reveals that established equivalent and variation are the most frequently applied techniques, reflecting the translator's preference for naturalness and readability while still retaining pragmatic force. Overall translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability is strong, indicating that the chosen strategies generally succeed in conveying expressive meaning effectively.

This research contributes a novel perspective by examining expressive speech acts not only at the linguistic level but also in relation to character function within the narrative. Based on the results, translators are encouraged to prioritize techniques that safeguard pragmatic intent, especially when dealing with emotional or character-defining language. Future studies may extend this approach to other audiovisual genres, larger datasets, or cross-cultural comparisons to determine whether similar translation tendencies and pragmatic patterns are consistently observed across different narrative and linguistic contexts. Importantly, the findings reinforce the relevance of these insights for strengthening audiovisual translation practices in Indonesian contexts, where audience expectations and cultural interpretation play a significant role.

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SEMIOTICS IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION OF TRADITIONAL MARKET TRADERS IN MEDAN CITY: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of semiotics in the interpersonal communication of traders in traditional markets in Medan City through a pragmatic lens. Semiotics, as the study of signs and symbols, plays a central role in shaping meaning and mutual understanding in everyday interactions. Traditional markets offer a rich communicative environment where traders and buyers depend not only on verbal exchanges but also on gestures, intonation, cultural codes, and symbolic expressions to negotiate meaning and sustain social relationships. This research adopts a qualitative descriptive design involving 20 traders selected purposively from three major traditional markets in Medan. Data were collected through participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews to capture authentic communicative behaviors and interpretations of meaning. The data were analyzed using semiotic and pragmatic frameworks to identify the implicit functions of signs and contextual negotiation of meaning in interpersonal exchanges. The findings reveal that semiotic elements in traders' communication function to build trust, strengthen social solidarity, and create persuasive strategies that influence economic decision-making. From a pragmatic standpoint, meaning is constructed contextually, reflecting the traders' cultural values, social norms, and economic intentions. The study concludes that semiotic practices in traditional market communication represent not only linguistic phenomena but also socio-cultural strategies that sustain market interactions and preserve local wisdom. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of interpersonal communication as a dynamic process supporting the cultural and economic vitality of local communities.

Keywords: *cultural values; interpersonal communication; pragmatics; semiotics.*

1. Introduction

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human life, functioning as the primary medium through which individuals convey thoughts, express emotions, establish relationships, and sustain social interactions. Within the scope of communication studies, semiotics—the science of signs and symbols—offers an essential lens to understand how

meaning is constructed and interpreted in diverse contexts. Semiotics does not limit its attention only to verbal expressions but also encompasses nonverbal signals, bodily gestures, intonation, cultural symbols, and shared codes that all together form the basis of human interaction. In this sense, semiotics provides a deeper understanding of communication as not merely the exchange of words but as the complex negotiation of meaning shaped by cultural and social conventions.

In the Indonesian context, traditional markets remain a vital socio-economic institution that connects people in direct face-to-face interactions. Unlike modern shopping centres, where transactions are often standardized and mediated through technology, traditional markets preserve a communicative environment that is dynamic, flexible, and deeply rooted in local culture. In these markets, communication between traders and buyers goes beyond the exchange of goods and money; it involves persuasion, trust-building, negotiation, and the reinforcement of social bonds. Traders rely on a variety of communicative strategies to attract customers, maintain long-term relationships, and establish reputations within the market community. As Ahmed and Rahimi (2020) highlight, linguistic interactions in bazaars are not merely economic but also reflect power relations and social hierarchies that influence how meaning is negotiated in daily trade. Likewise, Becker (2018) views traditional markets as *performing spaces* where social identities and cultural values are enacted through semiotic practices, turning communication into a cultural performance. These strategies often manifest through verbal language enriched with humour, politeness, metaphors, or bargaining expressions, as well as through nonverbal elements such as eye contact, hand gestures, tone of voice, and symbolic actions that signify honesty, hospitality, or authority.

Medan City, as one of the largest urban centres in Indonesia, presents a unique setting for examining traditional market communication. The city hosts a variety of traditional markets that reflect its multicultural composition, where traders and buyers from diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as Batak, Javanese, Minangkabau, Chinese, Malay, and others, interact daily. This multicultural dimension enriches communicative practices, as traders must navigate not only linguistic diversity but also cultural norms, values, and symbolic systems. In such a complex environment, semiotics becomes indispensable for understanding how meaning is successfully negotiated across differences and how communication fosters both economic and social harmony. Additionally, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) and other local sources highlight the continuing socio-economic importance of traditional markets in Indonesia. The *BPS Profile of Traditional Markets, Shopping Centers, and Modern Stores (2018/2019)* provides a comprehensive overview of the functions of traditional markets as key distribution and marketing platforms for agricultural and fishery products. It also underscores their vital role in supporting local economies and offers a comparative analysis with modern markets. This source is particularly relevant in substantiating claims regarding the contribution of traditional markets to the utilization of agricultural and fishery products, the creation of local economic opportunities, and their overall impact on microeconomic development in Indonesia.

Previous studies on traditional markets have predominantly examined economic aspects such as pricing, supply chains, and the resilience of traditional markets but rarely explore their communicative or semiotic dimensions. Although several studies highlight interactional patterns or language variation in market settings, they do not analyse how semiotic signs function pragmatically within buyer–seller interactions. Moreover, existing research has not addressed how these semiotic and pragmatic strategies operate within

multicultural environments such as Medan, where ethnic diversity adds further layers of meaning negotiation. This unresolved intersection between semiotics, pragmatics, and multicultural market interaction constitutes the research gap that this study aims to fill. Thus, this study addresses a clear gap: the intersection of semiotics, communicative strategies, and multicultural market interaction in traditional markets in Medan.

Understanding this phenomenon is crucial because communication in traditional markets not only facilitates economic exchange but also preserves cultural heritage. The ways in which traders employ semiotic resources reflect values such as respect, solidarity, reciprocity, and trust, which are deeply embedded in Indonesian cultural norms. For example, the use of certain gestures or greetings may signify more than politeness; it can express acknowledgment of shared cultural identity or reinforce social hierarchy. Likewise, the pragmatic strategies of persuasion or humour used by traders are not merely functional for sales but also serve to maintain customer loyalty and strengthen interpersonal bonds. Therefore, a semiotic-pragmatic analysis provides insights into the richness of human communication that would otherwise be overlooked by purely economic or linguistic approaches.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it expands the application of semiotic and pragmatic perspectives in analysing interpersonal communication, offering a framework for understanding how signs function in real-life interactions beyond formal linguistic structures. Practically, the study sheds light on the communicative practices of traders, which may inform strategies for preserving traditional markets as cultural and economic institutions. Policymakers, cultural organizations, and local communities can benefit from recognizing that sustaining traditional markets requires more than economic support; it also involves maintaining the communicative traditions that form the social fabric of these spaces.

In addition, this research provides a deeper understanding of how communication operates in multicultural urban settings. Medan, with its diverse population, exemplifies how semiotic resources are adapted to negotiate meaning across ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Such findings may contribute to broader discussions about intercultural communication, social cohesion, and the role of cultural practices in urban development. By highlighting the communicative dimension of traditional markets, the study emphasizes the importance of considering human interaction as a central factor in sustaining both cultural identity and economic vitality.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it aims to identify the semiotic signs—both verbal and nonverbal—that traders in Medan's traditional markets employ in their interpersonal communication. Second, it seeks to analyse how these semiotic signs function pragmatically in shaping meaning, persuasion, and relationships between traders and buyers. Third, it intends to interpret the cultural values and social functions embedded within these communicative practices. Through these objectives, the research aspires to bridge semiotic theory with practical communication studies, demonstrating the relevance of semiotics in everyday life and its indispensable role in interpersonal interaction.

There remains limited research that explicitly applies a semiotic lens to the entire communicative ecology of traditional markets in Medan. For instance, Hamdani et al. (2024) investigated social interaction adaptation among grocery traders in a Medan traditional market. Meanwhile, studies on language variation (code-switching/mixing) in traditional markets have been conducted in Sifundo and Pagar Alam. However, what is missing is a holistic semiotic analysis of how verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies interact

with cultural symbols, ethnic diversity, and market dynamics in Medan's traditional markets. In particular, little work has addressed how traders from different ethnic backgrounds use semiotic resources (gestures, symbolic, and linguistic codes) to negotiate meaning and trust in buyer–seller interactions in a multicultural urban market context.

In conclusion, the introduction of semiotics into the study of traditional market communication in Medan City is timely and significant. By applying a pragmatic lens, the research not only reveals the functional roles of signs in transactional contexts but also underscores the cultural and social dimensions of communication. This study, therefore, stands to contribute to the interdisciplinary field of communication, linguistics, and cultural studies, while simultaneously affirming the value of traditional markets as sites where economic, social, and cultural life converge.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review is to situate the current research within the context of existing knowledge, highlight the theoretical perspectives that guide the study, and demonstrate the originality of the investigation. This section discusses prior research related to semiotics and communication, outlines the methods and techniques that have been applied in similar studies, introduces new ideas and concepts relevant to the topic, and establishes the theoretical frameworks that will support the analysis. In doing so, the literature review ensures that the present study on semiotics in interpersonal communication of traders in traditional markets in Medan City is grounded in scholarly discourse while also contributing new insights free from duplication.

2.1 Previous Studies on Communication in Traditional Markets

This section now includes more local Indonesian references and draws out key themes and gaps. A few local studies that have been initiated earlier can be described as such:

- *Komunikasi Pedagang Pasar Tradisional (Pekan) di Keude Buloh Blang Ara Kec. Kuta Makmur* (Taufiq, Maradi & Ali, 2021) examines communicative patterns of traders in a weekly traditional market in Aceh Utara. Their qualitative research highlights face-to-face persuasion, direct seller speech, and the use of WhatsApp/Instagram for promotion purposes.
- *Pola Komunikasi Budaya dalam Aktivitas Jual Beli pada Pasar Traditional* (Nurmawaddah, 2022) investigates patterns of interpersonal communication (verbal and non-verbal) between sellers and buyers in Indonesian traditional markets, using ethnographic communication methods. It shows that communication extends beyond the transaction topic into broader social talk, and non-verbal cues (attire, posture) play a role.
- *Faktor Komunikasi Kebijakan Dalam Pengelolaan Pasar Tradisional* (Darmawan, 2015) focuses on policy communication in market management, emphasising that transmission clarity, consistency, and information quality affect market governance. Though not strictly interpersonal communication between traders and buyers, it provides insight into communicative contexts of markets

2.2 Semiotics and Its Relevance to Communication

Semiotics, as first conceptualized by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce (1931), provides a foundational framework for analyzing signs and symbols in human

interaction. Saussure emphasized the structural relationship between the *signifier* (the form of a sign) and the *signified* (the concept it represents), whereas Peirce proposed a triadic model involving the *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant*. These classical theories underscore the principle that communication is not limited to linguistic utterances but also involves a system of signs that derive meaning from cultural and social contexts.

In communication studies, semiotics has been applied to examine how individuals create shared meanings through both verbal and nonverbal codes. Scholars such as Roland Barthes (1972) expanded semiotics into cultural analysis, revealing how everyday interactions carry connotations beyond their literal meanings. For the purposes of this research, semiotics is essential in explaining how traders in traditional markets employ signs, verbal phrases, gestures, body language, and cultural symbols to negotiate meaning and achieve communicative goals.

2.3 Pragmatics as a Complementary Framework

While semiotics provides a lens for analysing signs, pragmatics emphasizes the use of language in context. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics is concerned with the relationship between linguistic expressions and their usage in specific situations. Theories of speech acts (Austin, 1962) highlight how utterances perform functions such as requesting, persuading, or promising, which are central to traders' interactions in market settings. Similarly, Grice's cooperative principle and maxims of conversation (1975) are relevant in understanding how traders and buyers rely on implicatures, politeness strategies, and contextual cues to achieve mutual understanding.

In the context of traditional markets, pragmatics complements semiotics by illustrating how the interpretation of signs is dependent on situational factors such as social roles, cultural norms, and the nature of the economic transaction. The integration of semiotics and pragmatics provides a holistic framework for analysing interpersonal communication that is both sign-based and context-driven.

2.4 Socio-economic or cultural dimensions

Research on traditional markets in Indonesia and other regions has often focused on socio-economic or cultural dimensions. For example, studies have explored the survival of traditional markets in the face of modern retail competition, the role of markets as centers of social interaction, and the cultural practices embedded within market life. Some communication-focused studies have highlighted the role of bargaining language, politeness strategies, and verbal negotiation in market interactions.

Methodologically, these studies have employed qualitative approaches such as ethnographic observation, participant interviews, and discourse analysis. For instance, researchers examining bargaining language typically record conversations between traders and customers, transcribe the data, and analyze linguistic strategies. Nonverbal communication has also been studied through observation of gestures, body orientation, and other kinesics signals. However, while these methods shed light on isolated aspects of communication, they often lack a systematic integration of semiotics and pragmatics, leaving a gap in understanding how signs function holistically in market interactions.

2.5 Emerging Concepts and Theoretical Insights

Recent developments in communication studies introduce concepts such as multimodal communication (Kress, 2010), which recognizes that meaning is constructed through the integration of various modes: verbal, visual, gestural, and spatial. This concept is particularly relevant to market interactions, where communication is inherently multimodal. Traders use spoken words, facial expressions, and symbolic actions (such as handing goods in a particular manner) simultaneously to convey meaning.

Another useful concept is intercultural communication, especially in the multicultural setting of Medan City. Scholars like Ting-Toomey (1999) emphasize that cultural values and identity influence communicative choices, including the use of politeness, indirectness, and nonverbal signs. In markets where traders and customers belong to diverse ethnic groups, semiotic and pragmatic analysis must account for how cultural diversity shapes communication strategies.

2.6 Theoretical Framework for the Present Study

Drawing from the reviewed literature, this study is anchored in two main theoretical perspectives: semiotics and pragmatics. Semiotics provides the analytical tools to identify and interpret signs both verbal and nonverbal used by traders. Pragmatics, on the other hand, explains how these signs function contextually to perform communicative acts such as persuading, negotiating, and building trust. The combination of these frameworks allows for a comprehensive understanding of how meaning is constructed and negotiated in traditional market settings.

Furthermore, the study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology, which is consistent with prior research but distinguished by its integrated theoretical lens. By systematically combining semiotic and pragmatic analysis, the research avoids duplication of previous studies that focused narrowly on linguistic or socio-economic aspects. Instead, it contributes new insights by highlighting the functional role of signs in sustaining economic exchanges and cultural values in Medan's traditional markets.

2.7 Strengthening the Research Position

The originality of this research lies in addressing the gap between semiotic and pragmatic analyses of market communication. While prior studies have acknowledged the importance of nonverbal signs or bargaining strategies, they have not fully explored how these semiotic elements function pragmatically in real-life interactions. By situating the analysis within Medan's unique multicultural context, the study also contributes to the understanding of intercultural communication in urban Indonesia.

In summary, the literature reviewed demonstrates the relevance of semiotics and pragmatics to communication studies, outlines the methods previously applied to market research, introduces emerging concepts such as multimodal and intercultural communication, and establishes the theoretical framework for the present study. This foundation ensures that the research is both well-grounded and original, offering new perspectives on interpersonal communication in traditional markets and avoiding duplication of prior work

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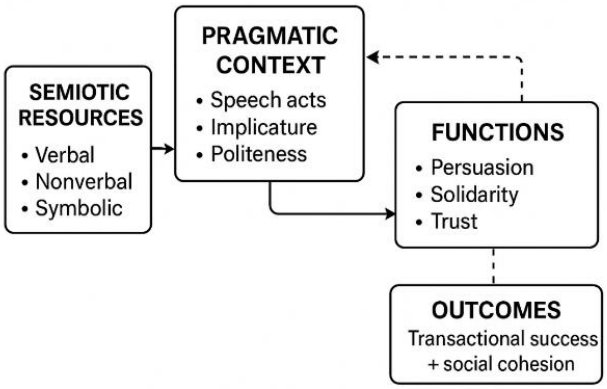


3. Research Method

A rigorous research method is necessary to ensure that the study on the function of semiotics in interpersonal communication of traders in traditional markets in Medan City is conducted systematically and produces valid, reliable, and scientifically acceptable findings. This section outlines the research design, procedures, data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and validation strategies.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena by emphasizing meanings, experiences, and contexts rather than numerical generalizations. A descriptive approach was chosen to provide a detailed account of semiotic signs and pragmatic functions as they occur naturally in market interactions. This design allows the researcher to interpret how traders use verbal and nonverbal signs to negotiate meaning and build relationships with buyers in real-life contexts.

The qualitative design was particularly suited for semiotic and pragmatic analysis because it focused on the interpretation of communicative signs and their functions in specific settings (Silverman, 2016). In this study, the context is the traditional market, which is rich in cultural codes, social practices, and interpersonal dynamics that cannot be fully captured through quantitative measurement.

3.2 Research Site and Participants

The research site is selected traditional markets in Medan City, such as Pasar Petisah and Pasar Sukaramai, which represent multicultural interactions and diverse communicative practices. Participants are traders who have actively engaged in market transactions for at least five years, as they are considered to possess communicative competence and established relationships with buyers. A purposive sampling technique (Patton, 2015) was used to select participants who can provide relevant and rich data about the research topic.

3.3 Research Procedure

The research procedure was structured chronologically to ensure systematic data collection and analysis. The main steps are as follows:

1. **Preparation Stage**
   - Identifying research problems and defining objectives.
   - Reviewing literature to establish theoretical frameworks in semiotics and pragmatics.

- Obtaining permission from local authorities and market associations to conduct fieldwork.

2. **Data Collection Stage**
   - Conducting non-participant observation in market settings to capture natural interactions between traders and buyers.
   - Recording audio and video of communicative exchanges, focusing on verbal expressions, tone, gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal signs.
   - Conducting semi-structured interviews with selected traders to explore their perspectives on communication strategies, meanings of signs, and cultural values embedded in their practices.

3. **Data Processing Stage**
   - Transcribing recorded conversations and translating them into written texts while retaining original expressions.
   - Classifying data into categories: verbal signs, nonverbal signs, pragmatic functions (e.g., persuasion, negotiation, solidarity).

4. **Data Analysis Stage**
   - Applying semiotic analysis to interpret signs based on Saussure's dyadic model (signifier and signified) and Peirce's triadic model (representamen, object, interpretant).
   - Using **pragmatic analysis** (speech act theory, conversational maxims, politeness theory) to examine how traders' signs function in context.
   - Integrating semiotic and pragmatic interpretations to generate comprehensive insights.

5. **Validation and Conclusion Stage**
   - Triangulating data from observation, interviews, and recordings to ensure credibility.
   - Member checking by discussing preliminary findings with participants to confirm accuracy.
   - Drawing conclusions about the functions of semiotics in interpersonal communication within Medan traditional markets.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Two primary techniques were used:

- Observation: Following Spradley (1980), observation allows researchers to understand naturally occurring interactions in their cultural settings. Field notes were taken to document communicative events, while recordings captured detailed semiotic elements.
- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews provided traders' perspectives on their communication practices. Interviews lasted 30–45 minutes and were guided by open-ended questions, enabling participants to elaborate freely.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model:

1. Data Reduction: Selecting relevant communicative episodes and simplifying transcripts.

2. Data Display: Organizing semiotic signs and pragmatic functions into tables and diagrams.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Interpreting the meanings and validating them through triangulation and member checking.

The semiotic framework included Saussure's concept of *langue* and *parole* and Peirce's categorization of signs (icon, index, symbol), (1916/2011). Pragmatic analysis relied on Austin's speech act theory (1975), Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts (1969), and Grice's cooperative principle to interpret how signs function in communication (1975).

3.6 Data Validation

To ensure scientific credibility, several validation strategies were applied:

- Triangulatio**n**: Using multiple data sources (observation, recordings, interviews) to cross-check findings. Triangulation allows researchers to have more trust on the validation of the data. Techniques such as triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing, and thick description are employed to enhance the credibility and dependability. Lincoln & Guba (1985, pp. 301–305)
- Member Checking: Involving participants in reviewing interpretations to ensure authenticity.
- Peer Debriefing: Discussing findings with academic peers for critical feedback
- Thick Description: Providing detailed contextual accounts of communication to enhance transferability.

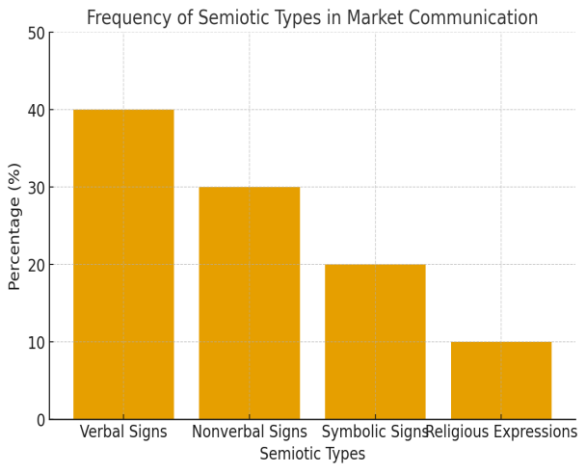
3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought to protect participants' rights. Consent was obtained before recording or interviewing, and participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential. The study adhered to principles of respect, integrity, and cultural sensitivity.

The research method integrates qualitative descriptive design, semiotic-pragmatic frameworks, and systematic data collection and analysis techniques. By combining observation, interviews, and semiotic-pragmatic interpretation, the study ensures that findings are both scientifically valid and culturally grounded. The chronological structure, represented algorithmically, reinforces the transparency and rigor of the methodology, distinguishing this research from previous studies and strengthening its academic contribution

4. Result and Discussion

The findings highlight that semiotics plays a central role in the interpersonal communication of traders in Medan traditional markets. The findings resonate with Chen and Huang's (2020) observation that semiotic expressions in traditional markets are culturally embedded and serve to maintain inclusivity and mutual understanding among traders and buyers in multicultural contexts. The discussion is organized into sub-chapters for clarity. The findings of this study also align with Ahmed and Rahimi's (2020) observation that communicative exchanges in traditional markets often reflect power dynamics and social positioning. Traders' semiotic choices—such as tone, address forms, and gestures—serve not only transactional purposes but also reinforce status relations and mutual respect within the market community.



4.1 Verbal Semiotic Signs and Pragmatic Strategies

Verbal communication remains the backbone of market interaction. Traders frequently employ greetings, persuasive phrases, and bargaining language. From a pragmatic perspective, these verbal signs function as speech acts (Austin, 1962). For instance, the greeting "Horas" not only performs a social act of respect but also implicitly establishes ethnic identity and solidarity. Similarly, bargaining phrases such as "Let's meet halfway" represent commissive acts, promising compromise to maintain customer satisfaction. These findings align with Searle's (1969) categorization of speech acts, demonstrating that traders use language not just for information exchange but to perform relational and economic functions.

4.2 Nonverbal Semiotic Signs and Multimodal Communication

Nonverbal elements such as smiles, nods, hand gestures, and eye contact were found to be equally important. According to Kress (2010), meaning-making in interaction is multimodal, requiring attention to how different semiotic resources combine. Traders' smiles and open body orientation create an atmosphere of friendliness, reinforcing verbal offers. Eye contact, in particular, serves as an indexical sign (Peirce), pointing directly to sincerity and reliability. The findings support the theory of proxemics, as traders often reduce physical distance to build closeness with buyers. In language, we use signs and symbols — whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, or even objects — to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas, and feelings." (Hall 1997: 1)

4.3 Symbolic Semiotic Signs and Cultural Identity

Beyond verbal and nonverbal acts, symbolic practices were observed. For example, *Ya, Allah*. Barthes (1972) emphasized that symbols in daily life produce *mythologies*—cultural narratives encoded in ordinary practices. As Iskandar and Suhartono (2022) emphasize, nonverbal elements such as gestures, body posture, and facial expressions often play a more decisive role than verbal exchanges in maintaining interpersonal harmony between traders and buyers in traditional markets. The use of red bags or traditional attire thus extends beyond practical function, symbolizing generosity, trust, and cultural pride. In Medan's multicultural markets, such symbols also signal identity, allowing traders to connect with buyers from similar or different cultural backgrounds.

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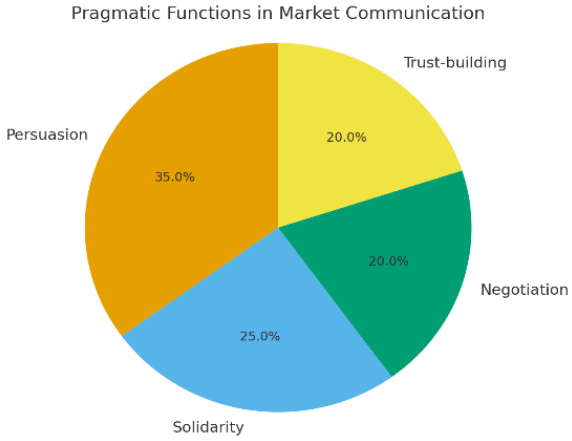
4.4 Pragmatic Functions in Market Interactions

The pragmatic functions of persuasion, solidarity, negotiation, and trust-building emerged as central themes. Traders' communicative strategies confirm Grice's cooperative principle (1975), but with local adaptations. For example, while traders sometimes violate maxims of truth (e.g., exaggerating product quality), these violations serve pragmatic functions of persuasion and are accepted as part of the cultural bargaining ritual. Similarly, the frequent use of religious references (e.g., "Ya, Allah, Demi Tuhan, By God, this is an honest price") reflects a culturally embedded politeness strategy that enhances credibility and builds trust.



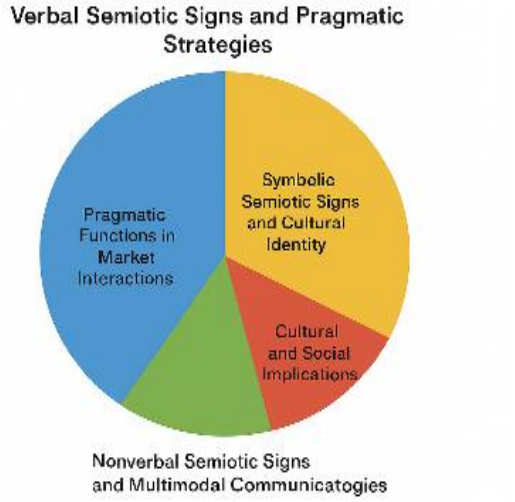
4.5 Cultural and Social Implications

The study reveals that communication in traditional markets is not merely transactional but socio-cultural. Semiotic and pragmatic practices reflect values of reciprocity, trust, and solidarity, which sustain market communities. This finding resonates with Ting-Toomey's (1999) intercultural communication theory, as traders in Medan must adapt communicative styles to buyers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Thus, semiotic practices contribute not only to successful transactions but also to maintaining multicultural harmony in the city.

4.6 Theoretical Contributions

By integrating semiotic and pragmatic analysis, the study bridges a gap in prior research that often examined linguistic strategies in isolation. The findings support the argument that communication in traditional markets is semiotically rich and pragmatically functional, embodying a holistic system of meaning-making. Traditional markets operate as performing spaces in which every day economic exchanges are also cultural performances. Vendors and buyers enact roles that communicate social identity, trust, and community belonging through semiotic expressions such as gestures, verbal styles, and spatial arrangements."

Becker (2018) strengthens the theoretical position that semiotics and pragmatics are interdependent frameworks for understanding real-life communication.



Summary of Results and Discussion

The study demonstrates that traders in Medan's traditional markets rely on a complex system of semiotic signs, including verbal, nonverbal, and symbolic elements. These signs perform pragmatic functions such as persuasion, solidarity, negotiation, and trust-building, which are vital for both economic transactions and social relationships. The findings highlight the cultural richness of market communication and contribute to broader discussions on semiotics, pragmatics, and intercultural communication.

5. Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that interpersonal communication among traders in Medan's traditional markets is shaped by a complex interplay of semiotic and pragmatic elements. Traders rely not only on verbal signs such as greetings, persuasive offers, and bargaining expressions but also on nonverbal and symbolic resources, including gestures, eye contact, tone of voice, packaging styles, and traditional attire. These semiotic means are pragmatically employed to perform key communicative functions such as persuasion, solidarity, negotiation, and trust-building. Consequently, market communication transcends mere transactional exchange, emerging as a socio-cultural process that sustains interpersonal relationships, reinforces collective identity, and maintains community harmony.

Theoretically**,** this study contributes to communication scholarship by integrating semiotic and pragmatic frameworks to analyze interactional practices in Indonesian traditional markets—a perspective rarely explored in national academic discourse. By situating the analysis within the multicultural context of Medan, it underscores how semiotic systems operate across linguistic and cultural boundaries to negotiate meaning and preserve local wisdom. This highlights the traditional market not only as an economic institution but also as a living cultural arena where social cohesion, shared values, and local identity are continuously reproduced. Practically**,** the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, cultural institutions, and community leaders. Understanding the communicative role of signs in persuasion, negotiation, and trust-building can inform strategies to strengthen the sustainability of traditional markets amid the rise of modern retail spaces. The findings suggest the need for training programs that enhance traders' communicative competence, especially in multicultural and multilingual environments, to foster more inclusive, persuasive, and culturally grounded interactions. Such initiatives can help preserve

traditional markets as vital cultural and economic centers that reflect Indonesia's social diversity.

Looking ahead**,** future research could expand this inquiry through comparative studies across regions or market types to identify both shared and context-specific semiotic practices. Quantitative or mixed-methods approaches may also help measure the impact of communicative strategies on consumer behavior and social cohesion. Interdisciplinary research involving cultural anthropology, sociology, and marketing would further enrich the understanding of how semiotics contributes to broader socio-economic development.

In conclusion**,** this research affirms that semiotics lies at the heart of interpersonal communication in traditional markets. By integrating semiotic and pragmatic perspectives, it offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how communication sustains both economic transactions and cultural continuity. Thus, this study successfully fulfilled its objectives of identifying semiotic signs, their pragmatic functions, and their embedded cultural meanings. The study also opens new pathways for scholarly exploration and provides actionable recommendations for preserving local communicative traditions that embody Indonesia's cultural resilience and community solidarity.

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REPRESENTATION OF MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN THE NOVEL *LELAKI HARIMAU* BY EKA KURNIAWAN

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Abstract

Multiculturalism refers to the diversity of life across the world or a cultural framework that emphasizes the acceptance and coexistence of different cultures. Multicultural values, therefore, represent society's appreciation of all that is considered good, important, noble, appropriate, and functionally beneficial for fostering collective development and the well-being of social life. This study aims to describe the representation of multicultural values in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan. The type of research conducted is qualitative; utilizing descriptive analysis methods, while the method employed in this study is content analysis. Based on the study's results, the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan features 78 quotes that represent multicultural values. The essence of human life has 20 quotes, the essence of human work has 13 quotes, the essence of human position in space and time has 19 quotes, the essence of human relations with nature has 11 quotes, and the essence of human relations with others has 15 quotes. Based on the research results, the representation of multiculturalism values in the form of the essence of human life dominates in this novel, while the multiculturalism values in the form of the essence of human relations with nature are the least. The findings of this study can provide readers with information that the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan explores individual abilities in living life. Additionally, it can be a reference for readers regarding real-life situations.

Keywords: *cultural values; Eka Kurniawan; Indonesian novel; literary representation; multiculturalism.*

1. Introduction

The human imagination is the source of literary works that arise and flourish in society. One type of creative art that uses language as its medium is literature. Literary works are a mirror of the time period in which they were created, specifically the society that surrounded the author, because the author is inextricably linked to it as a member (Lina, 2020). The anthropological method is predicated on the idea that a person's literary creations serve as a reflection of society. An author creates a literary work by fusing their imagination with real-life experiences or encounters.

Indonesian literature is evolving quickly to keep up with the developments. Readers can feel, appreciate, and learn from the author's life concerns through literary works.

Readers' perceptions of a phenomenon can be influenced by literary works. Multiculturalism is one social phenomenon, particularly in Indonesia. A person's viewpoint on the diversity of life in the world or a cultural policy that stresses acceptance of diversity and the different cultures (multiculturalism) that exist in society concerning the values, systems, cultures, customs, and politics they adhere to are known as multicultural values (Fatmawati, 2017). The term "multiculturalism" is being used and discussed increasingly frequently in forums and literary works as it gains popularity. The novel is one literary work that promotes the development of Indonesian literature. Because novels contain life values including moral values, religious values, and character education, they can serve as a guide for acting responsibly towards the environment in addition to providing readers with entertainment.

An author can use a novel to illustrate multicultural values in literary works. A novel is a type of literature in which the author writes about human existence. Novels are written works of fiction with both internal and external components. Authors write novels with the intention of helping readers comprehend the real-life stories they portray. In their writings, authors communicate their societal background (Fakihuddin et al., 2021; Fatoni et al., 2022). Multicultural diversity is a concern often portrayed in books. The multicultural values of particular ethnic groups are depicted in several novels currently in circulation. One novel by Indonesian author Eka Kurniawan that exemplifies intercultural principles is *Lelaki Harimau*. Generally speaking, the range of practices, cultures, and beliefs found in society is reflected in the multicultural principles portrayed in this book. The character of Margio has an alternative viewpoint because violence, coercion, and adultery arise in Margio's family. The latter causes Margio's family life to fall apart.

Based on these issues, despite the novel's engaging plot, no other scholar has looked into how multicultural principles are portrayed in it. This study aims to analyze how multicultural values are represented in Eka Kurniawan's *Lelaki Harimau* using content analysis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Literary Work

The content of literary works is culture. Therefore, it is argued that to understand a society's culture, one must understand it through its literary works (Ratna, 2017). In literary works, writers can express their ideas and thoughts about anything, channeled through writing using free language. This writing can convey meaning to readers. The results of a beautiful literary work are not seen in the words or sentences, but rather in the essence or content of the writing. The ideas in the author's mind that produce the literary work. These ideas concern social life in society or are based on the author's experiences. Indonesian literature is all literary creations written in the Indonesian language and embodies Indonesian aspirations and culture (Mujiyanto, 2017). Determining whether a literary work is factual or mythical requires careful consideration. In ancient literature, an event was considered reality by the community, so they liked or disliked the event and characters based on their ideological system. Similarly, in modern literature, people will like a work of literature if it aligns with their ideology.

Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that literary works are a means of channeling the ideas in the author's mind, resulting in a work of art. Authors write their works based on conditions in their surrounding society or personal experiences. There are

many forms of literary works that can depict societal conditions, one of which is the novel. Novels tell the many experiences of the characters in the story, from the beginning of the problem to its resolution. The issues raised are not usually limited to a single issue, and they have a more complex narrative than short stories.

2.2 Novel

A novel is a work that tells the story of the life problems of one or several characters in an imaginative story (Rahmawati, 2022). Meanwhile, novels are a type of fictional literature alongside short stories (Susanti, A. W., 2021). In European tradition, novels are called romances. The term "novel" developed in Indonesia, originating from English literature. It can be concluded that novels are a type of literary work. The writing is not bound by any particular format; the most important thing is that the author's message is conveyed effectively to the reader. Novels are created from numerous life events, often based on the author's experiences. They tell the story of how these conflicts arise, highlighting the character and attitudes of each character. Novels are imaginative and can serve as life lessons. Because novels contain values, including morality, religion, and character education, they can serve as guidelines for acting responsibly towards the environment, as well as providing entertainment for readers.

2.3 Multicultural Values

A writer can use a novel to depict multicultural values in a literary work. A novel is a type of literary work in which the author writes about human existence. In their writing, the author communicates their social background (Fakihuddin et al., 2021; Fatoni et al., 2022). Multicultural diversity is one of the issues depicted in books. The multicultural values of certain ethnic groups are depicted in several novels currently circulating. In social life, everything humans do has value. Likewise, culture has values that serve as benchmarks for human action. The definition of value is something good that is always desired, aspired to, and considered important by humans as members of society. One of the five basic foundations of multiculturalism values is the essence of human life (Koentjaradiningrat, 2009).

a. The essence of human life is related to the individual's ability to live life (Koentjaradiningrat, 2009), for example, some view human life as bad, while others view it as something that can be cultivated into something good. Harmony between human views of life is crucial for facing life. the essence of human life also has a function: life is bad, but humans must strive to make it good (Koentjaradiningrat, 2015).
b. The essence of human work is everything that is thought and done by human hands with different purposes. Some create works with the aim of making ends meet, others for assignments, or simply for satisfaction and pleasure. The essence of human work is related to humans themselves (Koentjaraningrat, 2009), for example, viewing life as essentially aiming to make life possible, others view human work as providing a respectable position in society, and others believe that the essence of human work is a movement of life to produce even more works. In addition, the essence of human work has a function, namely that work is to add to work. A work produced has the benefit of adding to other works so that the work can be useful for society.

c. The essence of humankind in space and time is that humans generally view the past as crucial for guiding life, while others consider a narrow view of time to be indifferent to the past or the future (Koentjaraningrat, 2015). Furthermore, the essence of human work in space and time serves as an orientation or perspective that underlies thoughts about the future. Therefore, humans will be influenced by past or modern cultures, which serve as guidelines for human behaviour.
d. The essence of human relations with the surrounding nature that views nature as something so powerful that humans can only surrender to nature (Koentjaraningrat, 2015). On the other hand, there are also those who view nature as something that can be fought and conquered by humans. The essence of human relations with nature has the view that humans must try to master nature. This means that humans as perfect creatures created by God must try to master nature so that humans can maintain and utilize nature as best as possible for the present and the future.
e. The essence of human relationships between humans is one of the basic problems in life, namely human relationships with others, which is the behaviour of humans living in a culture (Koentjaradiningrat, 2015). People in a culture will feel very dependent on each other. Efforts to maintain good relationships with neighbours and others are considered very important in life. In addition, there are also other cultures that highly value individualism, highly valuing the idea that humans must stand alone in their lives.

2.4 Previous Study on Indonesian Novels

This topic has been examined by several previous researchers. Suprapno (2015), in a study entitled *Multiculturalism from an Islamic Perspective: A Case Study of the Novels Ayat-Ayat Cinta and Bumi Cinta by Habiburrahman El Shirazy*, investigated representations of multiculturalism in these works. The findings indicate that many of the actions, attitudes, and linguistic expressions in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and *Bumi Cinta* reflect multicultural values viewed through an Islamic lens.

Similarly, Lestari (2017), in *Representation of Cultural Forms in a Multicultural Society in Y. B. Mangunwijaya's Novel Burung-Burung Rantau*, explored how cultural forms are represented in multicultural contexts through characters' adherence to social norms related to ethics and systems of knowledge. Furthermore, the study by Farida and Dienaputra (2021), titled *Multiculturalism in Leila S. Chudori's Novel Pulang*, revealed that multiculturalism in *Pulang* is manifested through the characters' everyday routines and behaviours. The data source for that study was Leila S. Chudori's novel *Pulang*.

Although the present research focuses on Lang-lang R.'s *Kiamat Masih Lama*, it is conceptually aligned with these earlier studies on cultural diversity. Previous scholarship has illuminated the ways in which novels portray multicultural values from differing perspectives, depending on their narrative style and genre. Consequently, each literary work inevitably presents a distinct articulation of multiculturalism.

3. Research Method

The type of research conducted was qualitative research using descriptive analysis methods. The method used in this study was content analysis. This method aims to collect data by analyzing documents. The content analysis method is a technique for drawing conclusions by identifying various specific characteristics of a message objectively, systematically, and generally (Sitasari, 2022). Objective means following rules or procedures

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that, when implemented by other people (researchers), can produce similar conclusions. Systematic means determining content or categories according to consistently applied rules, including ensuring data selection and coding to avoid bias.

The data of this research is in the form of words, phrases, and sentences in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* and the data source in this research is the *novel Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan. Data collection in this research is carried out by: (1) Reading repeatedly to understand the contents of the novel. (2) Documenting the research data. (3) Recording data that is in accordance with the research objectives that have been formulated. (4) Collecting data that has been found in the novel. (5) Sorting the data into parts that are in accordance with what has been formulated.

The data analysis techniques used by the researchers in this study are as follows: data presentation, data analysis, and verification. The data that has been identified and fits into the predetermined categories is then collected in tabular form and analyzed based on the problem formulation outlined previously.

4. Results and Discussion

This study focuses on the representation of multicultural values, namely 5 types, including the Essence of Human Life (HL), the Essence of Human Work (HW), the Essence of Humans in Space and Time (HST), the Essence of Humans with the Surrounding Nature (HSN), the Essence of Humans with Each Other (HEO). In the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan, there are 78 representations of multicultural values, 20 in the Essence of Human Life (HL) data, 13 in the Essence of Human Work (HW) data, 19 in the Essence of Humans in Space and Time (HST) data, 11 in the Essence of Humans with the Surrounding Nature (HSN), and 15 in the Essence of Humans with Each Other (HEO) data. Researchers will classify the data according to multicultural values which will then be analyzed by researchers.

4.1 The Essence of Human Life (HL)

Based on research data, there are 20 findings representing multicultural values in the essential aspects of human life. One of the representations of the values of the essence of human life in the novel as follow:

> "*Margio akhirnya menyembelih sendiri ayam jago untuk menggelar selamatan kecil bersama mameh dan ibu mereka. Ia mencukur sendiri bayi yang rebah dan tak bisa menangis lalu membari bayi tersebut nama*."
> "Margio finally slaughtered a rooster himself to hold a small celebration with his mother and their mother. He personally shaved the baby who was lying down and unable to cry, and then gave the baby a name."

The quote, as mentioned above, which illustrates the existence of customs and beliefs inside a religion, symbolizes the multicultural principles inherent in human life. A belief is a lesson that a family has internalized and practiced. Islam is one of the many religions practiced in Indonesia, where people are free to choose. According to the quote, Margio, who is a Muslim, carries out the tradition of slaughtering a rooster as a sacrifice to name his newborn sibling. Thus, every person has their own opinions in life, including religious convictions. We will come across people with different views in social situations, which will promote religious tolerance.

4.2 The Essence of Human Work (HW)

Based on the data examined by the researcher, there are 13 findings of multicultural values in the essence of human works. One of the representations of the values of the essence of human works in the novel as follow:

> "*Warung itu dulunya kantin untuk para pegawai perkebunan dan desa, menyediakan makan siang dan sayuran serta lauk bagi ibu-ibu yang enggan memasak, namun karena terpencil dan disulap menjadi tongkrongan begundal.. Menyendiri di tepian kebun coklat, Agus Sofyan mulai menjual bir dan arak, kadang ada bungkus ganja dan pil tidur yang dijual lebih diam-diam, mendesak tempat itu menjadi tempat mabuk dan kencan mesum, pengganti pos ronda kala siang."*
>
> "The stall used to be a canteen for plantation and village employees, providing lunch and vegetables and side dishes for mothers who were reluctant to cook, but because it was isolated, it was transformed into a hangout for thugs. Living alone on the edge of the cocoa plantation, Agus Sofyan started selling beer and alcohol, sometimes there were packages of marijuana and sleeping pills sold more discreetly, pushing the place into a place to get drunk and have dirty dates, replacing the guard post during the day"

The multicultural inherent in the essence of human work is embodied in the quotation above. This quotation captures the essence of human labour, which is making a living. In this case, Agus Sofyan's character believes that working to earn a living is necessary to support oneself. This is very relevant to the culture of people in the past, where everyone was required to work to support their families, regardless of whether the work was legal or not. This culture is passed down to the next generation. However, all ethnic groups in Indonesian culture have an obligation to support their families through legal means; earning a living through illegal means is not the only way to solve a family's financial problems.

4.3 The Essence of Humans in Space and Time (HST)

Based on data that has been examined by researchers, there are 19 findings of data on multicultural values on the essence of human position in space and time. One of the representations of the value of the humans in space and time in the novel as follow:

> "*Banyak orang dikampung ini yang memiliki harimau, beberapa dari mereka mempunyainya sebab kawing dengan harimau, yang lain memperolehnya dari warisan yang diturunkan dari generasi ke generasi. Kakek memiliki itu dari ayahnya, dan ayahnya dari ayahnya, dari nenek moyang yang barang kali tidak diingat siapa yang pertama kawin dengan harimau"*
>
> "Many people in this village have tigers, some of them because they mated with tigers; others got them from inheritance passed down from generation to generation. Grandpa had it from his father, and his father from his father, from an ancestor who probably doesn't remember who was the first to mate with a tiger"

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The quote above embodies multicultural values in the essence of human existence in space and time, as it explains what life will be like in the future. Margio, who is descended from his grandfather, who had a tiger in his body, will one day inherit that heritage. Consequently, he is indirectly forced to learn how to care for the tiger, which will be passed down to him in the future. This culture cannot be applied to everyone because not everyone shares the same belief in the supernatural.

4.4 The Essence of Humans with the Surrounding Nature

Based on the data examined by the researcher, there are 11 findings of multicultural values in the essence of human with the surrounding nature. One of representation of the values of the essence of human with the surrounding nature in the novel as follow:

> "*Hujan diluar masih bergemuruh, pasti membikin anak-anak mengeluh, dan kala seperti itu bakalan banyak pohon pisang dipangkasi daunnya, pengganti paying sekali pakai*"
> "The rain outside is still pouring down, which will definitely make the children complain, and at times like this, many banana trees will have their leaves pruned, replacing disposable umbrellas."

The quote above embodies a multicultural value in the relationship between humans and their natural surroundings, where humans submit to the will of nature, namely rain. Rain is a regulated process that humans cannot control. The multicultural value contained in this quote is that schoolchildren used nature itself to mitigate the rain by using banana leaf branches as umbrellas at that time. This culture is no longer found in large cities today.

4.5 The Essence of Humans with Each Other (HEO).

Based on the data examined by the researcher, there are 15 findings of multicultural values in the nature of human with each other. Representation of the values of the nature of human with each other in the novel as follow:

> "*Ma muah akan mendongeng di teras rumah, di malam-malam yang hangat. Anak-anak bergerombol di samping dan belakang dan di kakinya, dengan beberapa gadis memijit-mijit pundaknya. Jika ia mendongeng di sore hari, gadi-gadis itu akan mencari kutu di rambutnya*."
> "Ma Muah would tell stories on the porch, on warm evenings. Children would gather beside her, behind her, and at her feet, with some girls massaging her shoulders. If she told stories in the afternoon, the girls would pick lice in her hair."

The quote above embodies multicultural values in the essence of human with each other, as it explains mutualistic activities. Ma Muah is assisted by children in removing lice and massaging them while entertaining them with stories without prior agreement. Therefore, the cultural value of always having good relations with fellow humans must be preserved. From this quote, we can learn that not all past cultures are outdated, but cultures like this are actually needed forever as humans.

The multicultural values contained in the novel "*Lelaki Harimau*" by Eka Kurniawan provide valuable lessons for those who read it. This story generally tells the social life of

ancient society which is indirectly depicted in the story providing social lessons to readers and can absorb positive values so that they can be applied in social life in the present day. Based on the results of the analysis of the novel "*Lelaki Harimau*" by Eka Kurniawan represents 5 types of multicultural values. 5 types, including the Essence of Human Life (HL), the Essence of Human Work (HW), the Essence of Humans in Space and Time (HST), the Essence of Humans with the Surrounding Nature (HSN), the Essence of Humans with Each Other (HEO) which will be detailed in the following table.

Table 1

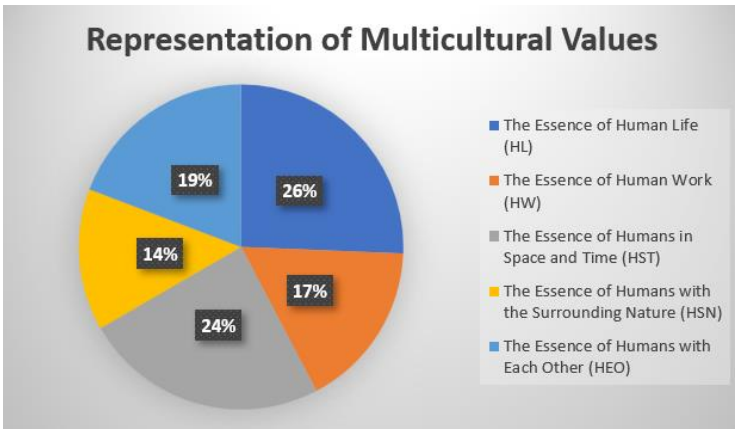
Representation of Multicultural Values

Representation of Multicultural Values					
The Essence of Human Life (HL)	**The Essence of Human Work (HW)**	**The Essence of Humans in Space and Time (HST)**	**The Essence of Humans with the Surrounding Nature (HSN)**	**The Essence of Humans with Each Other (HEO)**	**Total**
20	13	19	11	15	78
26%	17%	24%	14%	19%	100%

Based on the findings of data from a total of 78 quotations, as many as 20 or around 26% of the total sentence quotations are on the essence of human life, 13 quotations or around 17% of the total sentence quotations are on the essence of human works, 19 quotations or around 24% of the total sentence quotations are on the essence of humans in space and time, 11 quotations or around 14% of the total sentence quotations are on the essence of humans with their surroundings, and 15 quotations or 19% of the total sentence quotations are on the essence of humans with each other.

Figure 1

Representation of Multicultural Values



The representation of multicultural values found in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan, namely in the form of sentences that show the essence of human life, the essence of human work, the essence of humans in space and time, the essence of humans with their surroundings, and the essence of humans with each other. It can be concluded that the most dominant type of multicultural values in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan is found in the Essence of Human Life, namely 20 data. The essence of human life dominates this novel, as it chronicles the life of a child, Margio, who faces a family life

lacking harmony and encountering numerous social and family problems. Therefore, Margio's decisions in resolving these issues are closely linked to the essence of human life.

The results of this study are relevant to previous studies, namely (Suprapno, 2015) and (Lestari, 2017) the values of multiculturalism in the novel are represented from the actions, attitudes, and language of the society that are told according to the plot of the novel. Each novel must have the characteristics of the society that is told according to the background of the novel's writing, so that each novel will have a different representation of multicultural values.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion regarding the representation of multicultural values contained in the novel *Lelaki Harimau* by Eka Kurniawan, there are 5 types of multicultural values, namely the Essence of Human Life (HL), the Essence of Human Work (HW), the Essence of Humans in Space and Time (HST), the Essence of Humans with the Surrounding Nature (HSN), the Essence of Humans with Each Other (HEO). Indonesia is called a multicultural country consisting of various ethnicities, religions, races, ethnicities and other cultures. Multicultural differences themselves will result in conflict if there is no tolerance among people, so multicultural values are needed in the community. Multicultural values can be found in the community environment such as family, school and social life. Multicultural values need to be understood in everyday life because we will always find diversity of culture, race, tribe, ethnicity, and religion.

Multicultural Values examines various political and democratic issues, justice and law enforcement, employment and business opportunities, human rights, the cultural rights of communities and minority groups, ethical and moral principles, the level and quality of productivity, and various other more relevant concepts. For example, the essence of human life, namely that human life is essentially dependent on the perspective from which humans can change their lives. Religion as a life and guide and control of humans through the power of reason has been able to be cultivated for their survival. The essence of human work, which is meant by work, is in the form of living to support themselves, both themselves and their families. The essence of humans in space and time is orientation to the present, namely seeing the human condition with a way or lifestyle that always follows the development of time, orientation to the past, namely, always related to the proverbs or beliefs of previous ancestors, orientation to the future, namely a way of thinking to make life in the future.

The nature of humans with their surrounding nature is that humans submit to nature with their will, humans maintain harmony by protecting nature itself or by means of community beliefs to respect nature, and humans control nature to own or take what nature has for their own interests. Then the nature of humans with each other is that humans depend on others, such as Village Head and other community leaders, and humans are individualistic, namely standing alone or feeling superior to other humans.

This finding can be a reference for writers and literary researchers who will write works related to regional culture. The representation of Multiculturalism Values in each novel certainly varies according to the background of the setting, characters, conflicts, and plot in the novel. The cultural diversity in each region in Indonesia makes novels that raise themes or stories of society also influence the writing of literary works. The representation of diverse multiculturalism values can shape the character of the novel reader that can be applied in their real world.

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INVESTIGATING THE ARTICULATION DISORDER OF THE ARABIC PHONEME /L/: A CASE STUDY IN POST-ISCHEMIC STROKE PATIENT

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Abstract

This research investigates the articulation of the lateral phoneme /l/ in an Arabic speaking post-ischemic stroke patient using acoustic phonetic analysis and Praat software. Speech data were obtained from the patient's Qur'anic recitation. The Qur'anic recitation was selected because it serves as a controlled phonetic corpus standardized through the rules of *tajwīd*, ensuring precise and consistent sound production, which makes it highly suitable for acoustic analysis requiring reliable comparison with native-speaker models. The model speaker was Sheikh Mishary Rasyid Al-Afasy. The analysis focused on the production of /l/ in the vocalic contexts /la/, /li/, and /lu/. The analysis of the surrounding vowels /a/, /i/, and /u/ was essential because these vowels provide the coarticulatory environment that directly shapes the articulation of /l/, allowing vowel impairments to explain disruptions in the target phoneme. The vowel /a/ had a certain degree of impairment on the vowel with increased duration and heightened laryngeal tension. The speech parameters that demonstrated /i/ had a reduction in trunk selective control, thus centralising the vowel. Furthermore, production of the vowel /u/, the most devoid of articulation and therefore the most significant impairment, was characterised by reduced precision with respect to the production of the manner of articulation, as well as marked reduction in coordination of the high and low tongue, and the lips. The severity of the impairment was ranked as /lu/, /li/, /la/. The acoustic baseline identified in this study offers a diagnostic basis for developing targeted, step-by-step speech therapy programs for Arabic-speaking post-stroke patients, directly supporting clinical SLP in this demographic.

Keywords: *acoustic phonetics; Arabic phonemes; articulatory disorder; clinical linguistics; post-ischemic stroke.*

1. Introduction

Disorders of speech can result from medical and environmental factors. Medical factors include disorders of the central nervous system and problems with articulation organs (tongue, lips, palate, vocal folds), whereas environmental factors consist of a lack of linguistic stimulation or socially inadequate conditions to foster the development of language (Ali et al., 2023). Among these medical factors, ischemic stroke stands out as one of

the most prevalent causes, with 40–80% of survivors exhibiting speech and articulation impairments resulting from disrupted neural networks for motor speech planning and execution. Within the field of psycholinguistics, language is regarded as a highly complex cognitive process involving intricate coordination between the brain and the nervous system in the reception, processing, and production of speech and written text. This activity engages several key regions of the brain, including Broca's area, Wernicke's area, the visual, auditory, and motor cortices, as well as the arcuate fasciculus. Impairment or dysfunction in any of these regions can lead to disruptions in linguistic competence, affecting an individual's ability to comprehend or produce language effectively (Shah, 2023; Wei et al., 2023).

In post-stroke patients, motor impairment, particularly within the articulation system, remains the most problematic. Stroke can weaken coordination of speech muscles, resulting in post-stroke patients struggling to articulate sounds accurately. This circumstance negatively affects the phonological abilities to discern and produce language-governed phonemes (Delvaux et al., 2020). Stroke in itself can be of two types: ischemic, which involves blockage of blood flow to the brain, and hemorrhagic, which is more complex due to ruptured brain blood vessels and can involve aphasia or impairment of language comprehension (Kirshner & Wilson, 2021). The precise ability to identify and produce sounds is not limited to articulatory aspects; it also involves how the brain processes and controls phoneme production and its lateral mechanisms (Syahid & Nurdianto, 2022).

Foreign and domestic research has shown that post-stroke patients' speech disorders are not merely generalised speech weakness; they are precise to the involvement of the tongue in the production of certain sounds. These findings were also reported by Sundoro et al. (2020), who highlighted sounds produced with the tip of the tongue (apical) as the most disrupted, due to the neuromuscular pattern of the tongue with the alveolar ridge. Motoric damage due to stroke leads to specific place of articulation dysfunction, thereby causing unavoidable mispronunciation. Consequently, the clarity of the utterance and the meaning of the words are directly affected. Furthermore, clinical studies have also emphasised that the diseased articulatory disorders are not of specific phonemes, but are rooted in the dysfunction of the tongue's movements after the stroke (Haldin et al., 2020).

Arabic phonology is characterized by a rich consonantal system, including emphatic consonants, gutturals, and a wide range of place-manner contrasts that require precise articulatory coordination (Farisi et al., 2025; Ulpah et al., 2025). In the case of post-stroke ischaemic, the weak control of the tongue muscles can produce sounds that should be silenced, emerging from the mid-tongue, but are released from the front or back of the mouth, resulting in significant phonological errors (Ziegler, 2022). It is for this reason that this study focuses on the analysis of the pronunciation of the phoneme /l/ in the recitation of the Holy Qur'an. The use of Qur'anic recitation as speech data is methodologically justified because its production is governed by the rules of *Tajwid*, which require highly precise, consistent, and carefully controlled articulation. These rules standardise phonetic realisation across readers, creating a culturally relevant and rigorously regulated phonetic corpus. Such standardisation makes Qur'anic recitation an ideal reference for detecting diagnostically meaningful articulatory deviations, as even minor departures from the expected patterns become measurable and clinically significant.

The selection of the phoneme /l/ as the focus of this study is based on two reasons. First, the study's subjects reported having a particular problem with the phoneme in question. Second, from a phonetic perspective, the phoneme /l/ is categorized as a voiced

alveolar lateral consonant, whose articulation relies heavily on precise tongue movement. Consequently, its production is particularly vulnerable to impairment resulting from post-stroke neuromuscular weakness or other oromotor disturbances. (Simic et al., 2021).

Given the clinical complexity of post-stroke speech impairment, this study employs acoustic phonetic analysis as its primary methodological framework. Acoustic analysis provides objective, quantifiable, and reproducible measurements—such as segmental duration, formant frequencies (F1–F2), and fundamental frequency (F0)—which cannot be reliably captured through perceptual (auditory) evaluation alone. While many studies detail speech production disorders in Indo-European languages using acoustic methods, there is a distinct lack of systematic, acoustic investigation into the articulation of complex phonemes in Arabic post-stroke patients. Specifically, a single-case study rigorously correlating acoustic parameters of surrounding vowels to the production of the lateral /l/ is absent. This study addresses this critical gap. Therefore, this research aims to systematically investigate, via acoustic analysis, the specific articulation impairments (duration, formants, intensity) of the Arabic phoneme /l/ and its co-articulatory vowels in a post-ischemic stroke patient, establishing a quantitative diagnostic baseline.

2. Literature Review

Numerous previous records are concerned with findings on the subject of exponents of the phenomenon designated by the term 'phonology disturbance.' Balinese aphasia Broca patients demonstrated that the alteration of complex sounds was achieved through the simplification of sounds by means of substitution, omission, addition, or simplification (mutation). This was noted as especially true of the phonemes having to do with the place of the articulatory system, serving the function of a phoneme. Notably, however, a different version of the same approach (Wardhana, 2021). Other research sustains evidence that the therapy of reciting short *surahs* in the Qur'an enhances the ability to verbalise on spiritual topics the subject of which motor post aphasia (Purnomo & Jenie, 2020). Findings similar to the preceding are equally documented in children aged 5 and 6 years of the Arab nation of Jordan which belongs to the phonological discharge sub-category of the sample who were aged, with the younger having a lower score dictated by the phonological system, in addition to a regular pattern cognitive system of articulation error (Huneety et al., 2024).

2.1 Neurolinguistics and Acquired Articulation Disorders

An ischemic stroke involves a sudden loss of blood flow to the brain due to a blockage in a blood vessel (artery), resulting in disability and brain damage (Kirshner & Wilson, 2021).This type of stroke is recognized as a significant and common cause of acquired communication disorders, especially those disorders that affect the programming and execution of motor behaviour. This type of stroke disrupts central nervous system functions, affecting the coordination of the articulatory muscles (those involved in speech production, such as the tongue, lips, palate, and vocal folds) and the production of discrete speech sounds.

Dysarthria is one of the most prevalent motor speech disorders which occurs after stroke and refers to a group of speech disorders characterized by neuromuscular problems that affect the speech motor system (Patel et al., 2020). This particular condition also needs to be distinguished from Aphasia, a disorder of language that affects the comprehension,

formulation, and expression of language. Aphasia does not affect the physical ability to produce speech sounds (Patra et al., 2022). In dysarthria, brain injuries both in the brain's outer and inner layers damage the ability to plan and execute the motor activities that are necessary for the formulation of speech sounds, leading to speech that is not only imprecise but has changes in its rhythm and melody (prosody) and is not easily understood (Code, 2021).

2.2 Acoustic Phonetics as a Diagnostic Tool.

Accurate assessment of post-stroke articulation deficits requires methodologies that go beyond perceptual evaluation. Acoustic phonetic analysis provides an objective, quantifiable, and reproducible approach to measuring subtle changes in speech production that auditory perception alone cannot reliably capture (Jebahi et al., 2024). Parameters such as segmental duration, fundamental frequency (F0), formant frequencies (F1–F2), vowel space area, and voice onset time offer precise metrics for detecting deviations from normative speech patterns, making them essential for clinical diagnostics and treatment planning.

Several studies have demonstrated the clinical utility of acoustic measures. For instance, acoustic analysis has been successfully applied to quantify articulatory impairments in dysarthria, revealing deviations in vowel formants and temporal organization that correlate with neuromotor deficits (Taiebine & Faris, 2019). In post-stroke populations, these measures allow clinicians to identify minute articulatory changes, document progress over time, and develop targeted therapeutic interventions.

By employing acoustic phonetics, researchers can establish a quantitative baseline of speech production, comparing patient performance to native speaker references. This approach is particularly important for languages with complex phonological systems, such as Arabic, where precise articulation is critical. The resulting objective data not only enhance the reliability of diagnosis but also provide a foundation for evidence-based, stepwise rehabilitation protocols, tailored to individual neuromotor deficits.

2.3 The Phonetic and Phonological Status of Arabic /l/.

Voiced alveolar lateral consonants containing the phoneme lam (ل) are articulatorily defined by the contact involved between the tip of the tongue, or apex, and the alveolar ridge, happening in conjunction with the lateral release of air and formation of a lateral resonant tone. In the production of /l/, to the resonance configuration of the tongue, to the position of the tongue, and the neuromuscular control, hue, and resonance pattern can be produced to shift (Meili et al., 2024). According to manner of articulation, phoneme /l/ has characteristics such that it can be classified into six groups, namely voicing, partial closure, non-velarization, lateral articulation , open oral cavity, and ease of articulation due to the tongue tip (Jaisy, 2021).

This research examines the articulation of the Arabic phoneme /l/ among post-stroke ischemic patients reading the Qur'an, a largely unstudied area in the field of phonology-based clinical Qur'anic reading. The research focuses on the phonetic characteristics of the voiced alveolar lateral /l/, which are particularly related to the regulation of oral motor mechanisms, enabling the determination of the degree of articulatory disturbance and, therefore, making a significant contribution to the development of speech therapy after stroke.

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2.4 Case Study Methodology in Neurolinguistics.

Single-case methodology greatly impacts neurolinguistics research due to it's internal validity, and analyzes the micron details of how particular lesions impact linguistic abilities. Single-case designs allow for the interaction to be unmasked between the lesion(s) and the motor-linguistic output. In this way, research is able to examine and describe disorders with low incidence, and those that are very unique to the individual (Centeno, 2023).

In the domain of speech related disorders, and with the loss of speech in particular, single-case studies document the effects that specific lesions to particular neural pathways have in the areas of phonological encoding, motor planning, and the ability to actuate speech. This is critical, as post-stroke speech loss can be very different across patients, and that difference is based on where the lesions are, how many there are, the severity of the lesions, and the patterns in the involuntary muscular responses (Jianu et al., 2022). This also shows that the precise locations of the lesions can be related to specific articulatory deficiencies.

In the articulation analysis of Arabic phonemes after a stroke, this methodological framework is especially important because of the difficulty in cross-dialectal variation and a lack of normative data. Because the present study is centered on one participant, we can generate a high-resolution acoustic profile of lateral /l/ and its co-articulation. This profile yields valuable clinical data that would otherwise be lost in pooled data.

3. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design (Suganda et al., 2021). Subject observed in context, pronunciation, and reading the Qur'an in juz to 30. Through this approach, researchers can explore in-depth the articulation errors of patterns in PSS, hereinafter referred to as (PSS) and compare them with the pronunciation of a native Arabic speaker Sheikh Mishary Rasyid Al-Afasy, hereinafter referred to as (SMRA). For the known level disturbance, alveolar lateral phonemes are voiced or /l/ in several forms of the vowel, which are *fathah (a)*, *kasrah (i)*, and *dammah* (u).

This study involves a single participant. The subject was chosen using purposive sampling, based on specific relevant criteria, with the objective of the research. Criteria for the election subject covering background behind health, ability to read and write Arabic phonemes with good enough proficiency, as well as a habit of reading the Qur'an. PSS is a 52-year-old male with a high school and religious school background. The medical history subject became a subject post-stroke ischemic light in 2021–2023. Election subject single. This is done because his profile is considered representative for observing the disturbance articulation of the phoneme /l/ in non-SMAR after ischemic stroke, which has an adequate phonetic basis.

Table 2
Identity subject study

Educational History	Age	Gender	Background	Medical history
High school, religious school	52 years old	Male	Ability to recognize, read, and accurately transcribe Arabic phonemes as well as Qur’anic text.	Ischemic stroke mild, Bell's palsy, and pulmonary tuberculosis since 2021-2023

Primary data were obtained by recording the subject's voice immediately after the subject post-stroke read verses of the Qur'an containing the target phoneme. They were then compared with recordings of SMAR as a standard. The data were analyzed, then transcribed phonetically using IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols (Brierley & Heselwood, 2022). Analysis was done using the device Praat to observe the formant waveforms and spectrograms of the sounds, including intensity, duration, and frequency base (F0) for each variant vowel /a/, /i/, /u/.

Through this strategy, researchers can describe pattern error articulation, irregularity lateral resonance, and level disturbance emerging phonetics consequence limitations, neuromuscular post-stroke analysis done in a comparative thematic way, namely compare subject spectrogram results post-stroke with reading SMAR to find differences in aspects of *makhraj* (place of articulation), *ṣifāt al-ḥurūf (*manner of articulation*),* as well as characteristics of the acoustic phoneme /l/.

This study emphasizes that the interpretation of the findings is qualitative and descriptive, focusing on identifying patterns of articulatory impairment and their linguistic implications, while the data collection process is strictly quantitative, relying on objective acoustic measurements such as duration, fundamental frequency (F0), and formant values (F1 and F2). By integrating quantitative acoustic evidence with qualitative linguistic interpretation, the study provides a comprehensive and clinically meaningful account of the articulatory deviations observed in the post-stroke subject. This analysis contributes to the field of clinical phonetics in Arabic by elucidating the influence of orofacial motor disorders on the articulation of Qur'anic phonemes, and it further enriches applied *tajwīd* studies by grounding them in phonetic-acoustic principles, offering empirical data that bridges traditional *tajwīd* theory with modern phonetic science within the context of neurological impairment.

4. Results and Discussion

This case study analyzes the articulation of the phoneme /l/ in Arabic pronunciation by a PSS. Analysis focused on the phoneme /l/ with three form vowel /a/, /i/, /u/, each of which is represented through three example readings of the Qur'an in the same position namely at the end of the word. Phoneme /l/ with the */a/* vowel analyzed in the word */al.laj.la/* in Surah An-Naba verse 10, phonemes /l/ with the */i/* vowel in the word */walˈlaj.li/* in Surah Al-Lail verse 1, and phonemes /l/ with the */u/* vowel in the word */ ʔaldʒiba:lu /* in Surah Al-Qāri'ah' ah verse 5.

Table 2

List of words

Surah	Sentence analysis	Phonetic transcription	Syakal Category	Vocals
An-Naba /10	وَجَعَلْنَا ٱلَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا	*/al.laj.la/*	*Fathah*	/a/
Al-Lail /1	وَٱلَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَىٰ	*/walˈlaj.li/*	*Kasrah*	/i/
Al-Qari'ah/5	وَتَكُونُ ٱلْجِبَالُ كَٱلْعِهْنِ ٱلْمَنفُوشِ	*/ ʔaldʒiba:lu /*	*Dammah*	/u/

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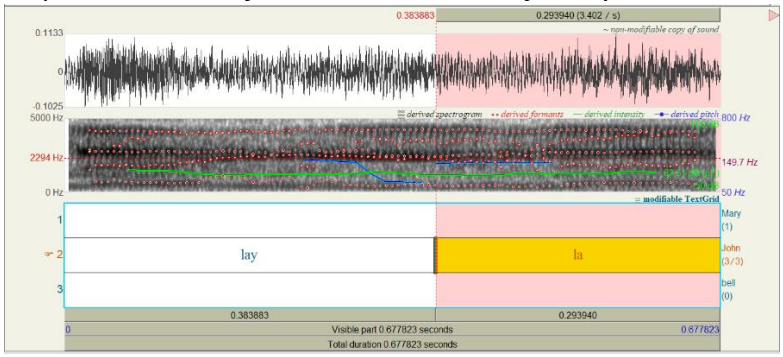
The pronunciation analysis of the three words containing the phoneme /l/ was conducted using Praat version 6.4.46 (Shivaswamy et al., 2025). This app shows a spectrogram of the subject's audio recording while reading, thus allowing researchers to see surface as quality or intensity) the frequency modulated pulsations of air pressure as well as sound duration corresponding to each vowel. Focus was on several phonetic parameters such as duration, fundamental frequency, and characteristics of the sound waves in the spectrogram analysis (Farisi et al., 2025). This acoustic analysis was carried out to compare the subject's pronunciation with that of SMAR and to identify any significant differences in the pronunciation of the phoneme /l/ in Arabic when reading the Qur'an. In addition, this analysis explored possible differences in the points of articulation used to produce the phoneme.

4.1 Acoustic Visualization of the Phoneme /l/ in the *Fathah* Vowel Variation /a/

The following shows a spectrogram illustrating of the phonetic review of SMAR and PSS who pronounce the phoneme /l/ with the */a/* vowel in the word */al.laj.la/.*

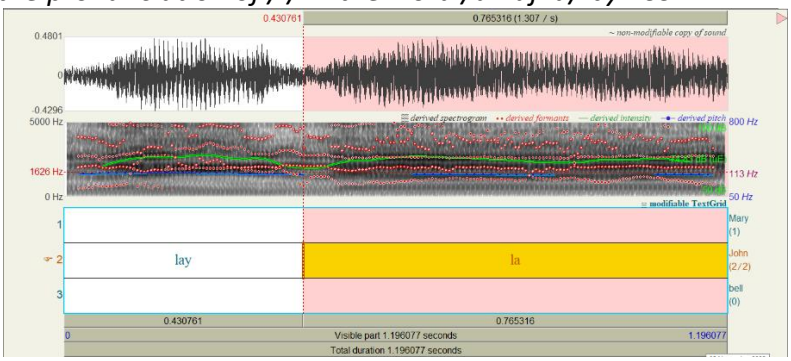
Spectrogram 1

Visualization of the pronunciation of /l/ in the word /al.laj.la/ by SMAR



Spectrogram 2

Visualization of the pronunciation of /l/ in the word /al.laj.la/ by PSS



Producing the phoneme /l/ in the word 'la' shows significant differences in the spectrograms of SMAR (1) and PSS (2). The PSS produced the syllable /la/ in 0.765 seconds, while the SMAR produced it in 0.294 seconds, indicating an increased duration of 260%. This was accompanied by instability in the fundamental frequency (F0) of post-stroke listeners, who had irregularly lower F0s (113Hz) than the SMAR, who was stable at 149.7Hz. Spectrographic analyses show that PSS experienced a wider-than-normal dispersion of voice energy at F1 (800–900Hz) and F2 (1400–1500Hz). Such a condition indicates a misfit of the oral cavity, which should form a partial resonating tube (Fang et al., 2025). Interestingly, the

voice of PSS with F0 at 113Hz had a higher amplitude (0.48) than that of regular speakers (0.11). This does not mean the voice of PSS was stronger and more efficient, but shows excessive effort with the breath to compensate for a weak tongue and oral muscles (Ramoo et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Arabic phonology, the vowel /a/ of the tongue should be in a low position. The fronted position with a fully opened mouth so that there can be smooth transitions for the lateral consonant to an open vowel. In Spectrogram 1, the implementation of this place of articulation is reflected in the well-defined and appropriate formant structure with stable F1-F2, signifying high precision in achieving the target articulatory. In contrast, in Spectrogram 2, a nervous disorder caused the weakness of the tongue's intrinsic and extrinsic muscles, resulting in an inability to form intense apical contact and appropriate lateral closure (Shellikeri et al., 2016). This inability is exemplified in the phonetic outcome of the recorded voice, specifically the energy distribution in the sound that is unfocused, the widening of the frequency bandwidth in the voice's spectrum, and the increased length of the articulatory time due to the extra effort of the body to compensate for the deficient movement of the articulators.

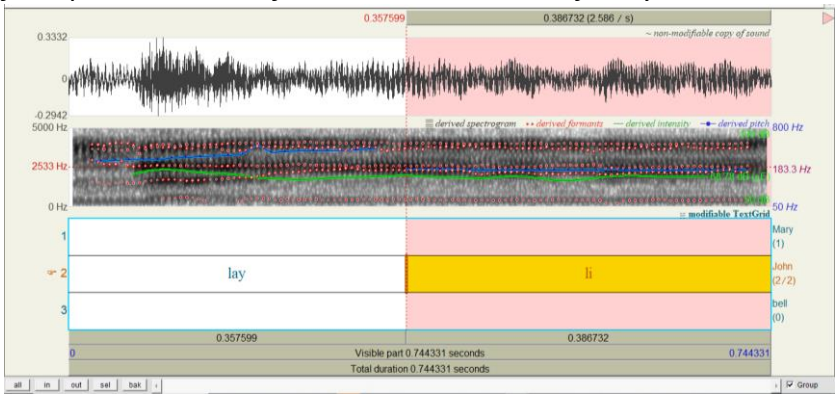
Analysis of *manner* of articulation shows multi-dimensional disruptions in producing the /l/ sound with an /a/ vowel. The voicing feature, along with some pronunciation issues like voice instability (especially in speakers with a history of stroke), was present although voiced quality persisted (more so due to voice disorder). The intermediate stricture feature relates to the level of obstruction during /l/ production, which was enough to cause prolonged sounds. Airflow through the sides of the tongue was sufficient to produce extended sounds. The lateral articulation sub-feature was caused by air fragmenting and escaping horizontally. Instead, the energy output was spread out and unarticulated with the lateral and uncharacteristic block structures missing (Jianu et al., 2021). The closure of the front part of the tongue was fairly normal, as indicated by the /a/ vowel measurements. The open oral cavity was also affected because the oral and pharyngeal cavities were unbalanced. The ease of articulation was most severely affected by the prolonged /l/, which led to unexplained voicing during production.

4.2 Acoustic Visualization of the Phoneme /l/ in the *Kasrah* Vowel Variation /i/

The following shows a spectrogram illustrating of the phonetic review of SMAR and PSS who pronounce the phoneme /l/ with the /i/ vowel in the word */walˈlaj.li/.*

Spectrogram 3

Visualization of the pronunciation of /l/ in the word /walˈlaj.li/ by SMAR



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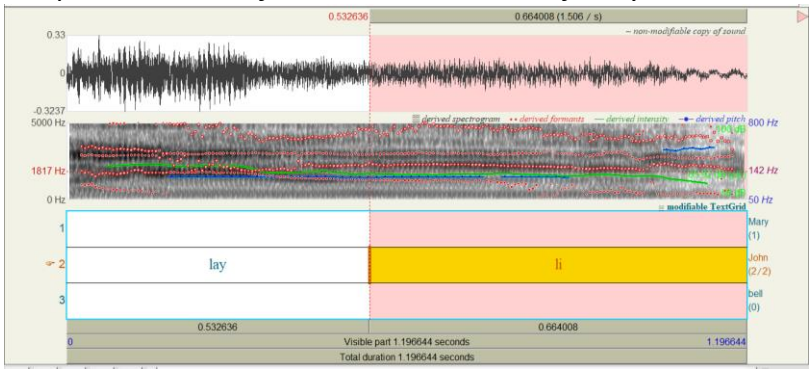
Spectrogram 4

Visualization of the pronunciation of /l/ in the word /walˈlaj.li/ by PSS



Acoustic analysis of the pronunciation of the syllable /li/ indicates an articulation disorder. In SMAR, the /i/ vowel is pronounced with a duration of approximately 0.387 seconds and produces a stable, clear sound. In contrast, PSS showed a significantly longer duration 0.664 seconds, about 72% longer than in SMAR. Although this lengthening is less than that of the vowel /a/ (which reaches 160%), the quality of the /i/ sound is much lower due to the difficulty PSS have in lifting the tongue to the required high position. This aligns with research by Lice et al., (2024), who found that PSS with damage to neural structures in the brain (cerebrum) exhibited a more severe lengthening of vowel duration on high sounds because of tongue muscle weakness. From an acoustic perspective, SMAR display a formant pattern typical of the vowel /i/, with a low F1 (~183 Hz) and a high F2 (~2533 Hz). However, in PSS, the F1 value increased (~142 Hz) and the F2 value decreased (~1817 Hz), indicating the tongue's inability to reach the proper high-front position. This pattern of vocal centralization is consistent with Mou et al. (2018), who reported that people with dysarthria tend to produce flatter, more centralized vowels, reducing clarity and distinction between vowels.

From the perspective of the place of articulation theory, pronouncing /li/ requires complex articulatory coordination. The phoneme /l/ is produced when the side of the tongue touches the upper molars, creating an airway on the side of the tongue. Simultaneously, the vowel /i/ requires a high and forward tongue position, approaching the hard palate with a narrow mouth opening (Arjmandi & Behroozmand, 2024). In SMAR, a shift in F2 values from around 1500 Hz to over 2500 Hz indicates rapid, precise tongue movements. However, in PSS, the F2 value only reached 1817 Hz, showing the tongue stopped in a mid-position. This suggests weakness of tongue-lifting muscles, such as the styloglossus and the genioglossus pars superior, caused by damage to upper motor neurons after a stroke (Puttanna et al., 2025). Spectrogram results also reveal a dispersed energy distribution in the voice, along with a broad, unstable formant bandwidth. This indicates that the tongue not only fails to reach the target position but also cannot maintain a stable one. These findings align with Ishikawa & Webster (2023), who stated that related formant bandwidth broadening is closely linked to decreased vocal clarity in post-stroke patients with neurological disturbances. The observed pattern of vocal centralization remains consistent with Mou et al. (2018) who noted that individuals with dysarthria often produce less-defined and more blended vowel qualities in their speech.

Based on manner of articulation, the /li/ phoneme shows disturbances that could be attributed to the complexities observed in the spectrogram. Voicing sound characteristic

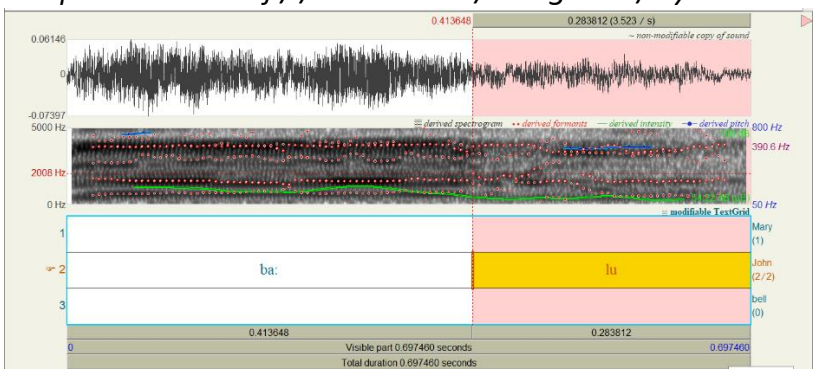
may be unstable in nature, however, the fluctuations in amplitude may be suggestive of the irregular movements of the voice box (Yang et al., 2025). The lateral articulation (nature that is characteristic to phoneme /l/ is of loss, resulting in disturbances that is heavy and clearly seen as a form of voice energy that is spatially diffused without a specified lateral constriction. The most notable disruption occurs during the transition of the phoneme's characteristic a low tongue position on /l/ to the tall position. Vowel /i / was not articulated and this is evident with F1 value which was also recorded to be on the extremely high side for vowels. Besides, articulation ease is disturbed with a 72% increase in duration suggesting that the movements, which are expected to be rapid, are instead slowed down and more rigid, thus the disturbance in ease. Allison (2017) indicates that lower precision in the sounding out of elements is a quality of overall dysarthria, particularly with respect to elements that require fast alterations in the positioning of the tongue, like /li/. Overall, the disruption of /li/ reveals inconsistencies compared to the patterns displayed by /la/. The subject, who has suffered a stroke, is left with a tongue that does not fully elevate, and he has disturbances that cause the sounds to become more centralized, and the processes of moving from consonants to vowels to be interrupted.

4.3 Acoustic Visualization of the Phoneme /l/ in the *Dammah* Vowel Variation /u/

The following shows a spectrogram illustrating of the phonetic review of SMAR and PSS who pronounce the phoneme /l/ with the /u/ vowel in the word */ ʔaldʒ͡ibaːlu/*

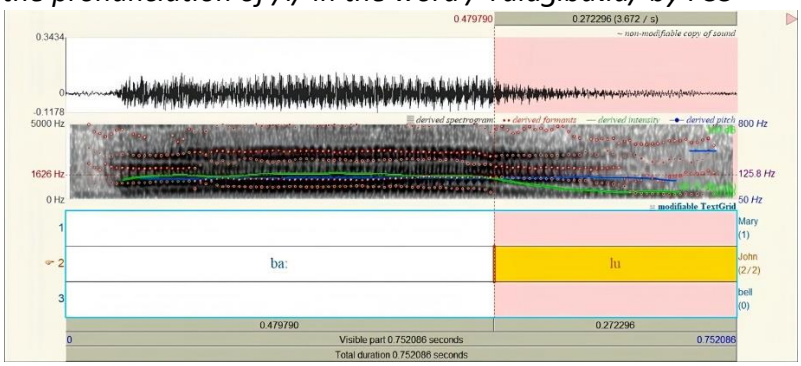
Spectrogram 5

Visualization of the pronunciation of /l/ in the word / ʔaldʒ͡ibaːlu/ by SMAR



Spectrogram 6

Visualization of the pronunciation of /l/ in the word / ʔaldʒ͡ibaːlu/ by PSS



In spectrogram 5, the duration of the vowel /u/ reaches 0.284 seconds with a stable and clear sound. In spectrogram 6, the duration is actually shorter, namely 0.272 seconds or about 4% faster. This shortening indicates that PSS are unable to maintain a complex tongue

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position for the sound /u/ for a long time, this is in accordance with the research of Liu et al., (2022) who explained that damage to the basal ganglia makes it difficult for PSS to maintain a tongue position that involves pulling back and lifting the back of the tongue. Acoustically, the Arabic/u/vowel has a low F1 (~390 Hz) and a low F2 (~2008 Hz), characteristic of high back vowels with rounded lips. In contrast, PSS exhibited very low F1 (~126 Hz) and lower F2 (~1626 Hz), indicating an inappropriate compensatory attempt to achieve a posterior tongue position, while failing to maintain a correct lip shape.

Kinematic coordination from a place of articulation view suggests that the /lu/ combination is the most complex of the three vowel contexts. The phoneme /l/ is produced by the tongue engaging the upper molar. Simultaneously, there is a requirement of the vowel /u/ that a tongue movement is back and up, while rounding the lips (labialization) (Maulani & Alwan, 2023). In this vowel context, SMAR exhibit the movement of the tongue backward, spectrographically visible, as F2 monotonically decreases from about 1500 Hz to 2000 Hz, along with a complete rounding of the lips. Conversely, PSS spectrographically exhibit a formant pattern which is F2 too low, and F1 too low and fluctuating. This indicates that there is, respectively, an impairment of the movement and positional maintenance of the tongue and lips. The post-subjects demonstrated weakness of the back tongue muscles (styloglossus and hyoglossus) and the lip muscles (orbicularis oris) which is indicative of upper motor neuron damage (Lice et al., 2024).

Considering the characteristic /lu/ representation there exist disturbances concerned with the definition of the value of the breadth of the definition. Although the Voicing (voiced) property is preserved, the sound, however, remains significantly lower and does not reach a stabile contour suggesting an incomplete closure of the vent of the vocal folds (Liu et al., 2022). The definition of the property under discussion, lateral articulation, (air stream deflection laterally towards the sides of the tongue) remains unidirectional, and the transition of the tongue from the position low tongue to a posterior position (back) is not completely and adequately carrid out. Moreover, ease of pronunciation is also shallow, and there is an impairment, however, of a lesser deficiency that the time spent on it is short, but PSS are unable to maintain this challenging position. As Allison (2017) explain, those people who have a diagnosis of dysarthria will not correctly reach a designated articulatory position, and it is also clear that they will not maintain this position for an appropriate period of time (Muscat et al., 2025). The sound /lu/ proves to have the greatest disturbances compared to /la/ and /li/, as there is a clear requirement for constant coordination of the back of the tongue, the lips, and the vocal tract. The articulatory demands just placed should also show that the vocal tract behind tall sounds represented by /u/ have the greatest vocal load that is an articulatory difficulty for the subjects of the study who have had a stroke.

4.4 Severity of Articulation Disorders in the Production of the Phoneme /l/ with Three Vowel Forms

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that each context of the vowel presents a different level of difficulty in the production of the phoneme /l/ in PSS. The vowel /lu/ shows the most severe impairment because it involves complex multi-articulator coordination and extensive neuromuscular control. The context of *kasrah* /li/ shows moderate impairment, with dominant weakness in front tongue elevation and vocal stability. Meanwhile, /la/ is classified as a mild impairment, where basic articulatory function is still relatively maintained, although there are problems with tempo and phonation efficiency.

In general, this pattern indicates that the greater the complexity of tongue movements and inter-articulator coordination required for a vowel, the more severe the impairment in PSS with post-stroke motor neuron damage. Therefore, acoustic and articulatory analysis in these three vowel contexts can provide an objective picture of the severity experienced by PSS. To clarify this comparison, the following table presents the severity of articulation disorders of the phoneme /l/across vowel contexts and key acoustic findings.

Table 3

Disorders of articulation in the production of the phoneme /l/ with three vowel forms based on Praat

Parameter	/la/	/li/	/lu/
SMAR Duration	0.294 seconds	0.387 seconds	0.284 seconds
PSS Duration	0.765 seconds	0.664 seconds	0.272 seconds
Difference in duration	+160% (2.6x fold)	+72% (1.7x fold)	-4% (shorter)
F1 SMAR	~2294 Hz	~183 Hz	~390 Hz
F1 PSS	~1626 Hz	~142 Hz	~126 Hz
F2 SMAR	~ 149.7 Hz	~2533 Hz	~2008 Hz
F2 PSS	~113 Hz	~1817 Hz (-28%)	~1626 Hz (-19%)

Considering results analysis, acoustic, articulatory, and clinical data across all three contexts, vocals can be arranged in a hierarchy of disorder severity, indicating that certain forms of vowel demand greater motor complexity than others. Hierarchy. This reflects the extent to which the subject's neuromotor system post-stroke is capable of maintaining stability, articulation, and quality phonation in each variation of vocals. To clarify the order mentioned, the following provides a table of articulatory disturbances at the phoneme level for the phoneme /l/across three contexts of the analyzed vowel.

Table 4

Level of disturbance articulation phoneme /l/ in Arabic by subject post-stroke

Vowel	Level of Disturbance
/la/ (*Fathah*)	Mild
/li/ (*Kasrah*)	Moderate
/lu/ (*Dammah*)	Severe

From the hierarchy mapping above, it is evident that the complexity of the movements of the speech organs strongly influences pronunciation difficulty. Sounds with a high position of the tongue and involving Lots of movements, as in / lu / and /li/, indicate more disturbances and are heavier compared to the /la/ sound, which is simpler. This shows that the more complex position of the tongue and lips that must be formed, the greater the possibility of errors in articulation in the subject post-stroke. This can serve as a basis for the gradual compilation step of therapy, starting with easy exercises, such as the pronunciation of simple sounds, and progressing to more difficult sounds.

5. Conclusion

This study finds that level disturbance dysarthria affects the pronunciation of the phoneme /l/ in different Arabic languages, depending on the accompanying vowel. The vowel/u/ in the phoneme /lu/ shows the most serious disturbance because the subject post-

stroke is capable of maintaining the proper position of the tongue and lips, as well as experiencing a weak and inaudible voice. Vowel /i/ in the phoneme /li/ classified as moderate, marked with difficulty lifting the tongue part front and sound shifted vowels to middle. Meanwhile, the /la/ is moderately disturbed, because even though the tempo of pronunciation is very slow, the form of his vocals is still relatively straightforward.

This is important for therapy talk on the subject post-stroke sequence level difficulty. This can serve as a base to gradually build a training program, starting with the easiest sound /la/, then the medium /li/, and finally the most difficult /lu/. Every sound has its own focus on different exercises: /la/ for regulating the tempo of speech, /li/ for strengthening the muscles of the front of the tongue, and / lu / for practicing coordination of the tongue and lips.

In a way, theoretical research shows that difficulty speaking is not only caused by the complex position of the speech organs, but also by disorders in the coordination of the brain and muscles following stroke. Complexity sounds reflect the burden the work system nerve imposes on controlling the fine movements of the speech organs. To expand the analysis to other Arabic phonemes, this study can also be extended to the subject post-stroke with different types of lesions, for example hemorhagic stroke or lesions in other areas of the brain to examine a distinct pattern of disturbance in articulation.

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DEBATE IN QS. 2:258 PERSPECTIVE OF RELEVANCE THEORY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR *KALĀM* LEARNING

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Abstract

This study analyzes communication strategies in the debate dialogue between Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258 using Sperber and Wilson's Theory of Relevance. This study aims to reveal how the cognitive mechanism in the Prophet Ibrahim's argument can achieve optimal relevance, namely, producing maximum comprehension effects with minimal processing efforts, and examining its implications for the development of the *Mahārah al-Kalām* learning model. The research uses a qualitative approach with a content analysis design, focusing on the text of Q.S. Al Baqarah, verse 258, as primary data, and studying it through the perspective of Relevance theory. The results of the study demonstrate that the Prophet Ibrahim's argument succeeded in fulfilling the principle of optimal relevance, thereby giving rise to a model of Qur'anic debate for the study of *Mahārah al-Kalām*. This model consists of four fundamental stages: first, opening with clear, rational basic premises; second, presenting objections that uphold communication ethics; third, grounding in concrete, irrefutable empirical evidence; and fourth, communicative closure by letting logic speak independently. These findings led to an integrated pedagogical framework that not only pursues linguistic fluency but also trains critical thinking, argumentation, and the ability to present relevant arguments in accordance with the principles of Relevance Theory. The novelty of this research lies in applying pragmatic analysis based on Relevance Theory to uncover the argumentative structure in Qur'anic debate and to transform it into a learning model for Mahārah al-Kalām, designed to cultivate logical, relevant, and ethical speaking skills.

Keywords: *debate; Kalām learning; relevance theory.*

1. Introduction

Arabic, with its status as the official language in 25 countries (Ali, 2021) and native speakers of more than 150 million people (Mualif, 2020), has proven its far-reaching influence on the global arena, not only in the fields of religion but also in politics, economics, and culture. This fact demands a learning approach that is no longer limited to mastering linguistic structures alone, but must answer the challenge of global readiness (Bakar & Alias, 2017). In this context, effective language education plays a crucial role in fostering intercultural dialogue, reducing prejudice, and supporting peaceful coexistence (Sopian et

al., 2025). Accordingly, debate methods can be integrated as part of 21st-century skills to train higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), while preparing learners to become competent communicators in a global environment.

In the Arabic rhetorical tradition, debates that feature argumentative dialogue play an important role because they can strengthen opinions and influence views (Cano-Basave & He, 2016) through logical, polite, and convincing language. Debate not only tests the truth but also trains critical thinking skills. Hatim (1990) stated that argumentation in classical Arabic rhetoric tends to support or reject a position without the need to make direct concessions to the opposing view, as well as in modern standard Arabic rhetoric, which prioritizes through-argumentation, although the classical tradition also recognizes a balanced form of counter-argumentation (Hatim, 1990; Hatim, 1991). The Qur'an, as the pinnacle of literary works, employs storytelling as a means of persuasion (Mohamed El-Baz El-Sheakh et al., 2023). One storytelling style is dialogue (Sopian, 2024), as seen in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258 which records the debate dialogue between Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud.

One major challenge faced by college students learning Arabic is low speaking proficiency and weak confidence in using Arabic as an active communication tool. This phenomenon stems from the lack of practical opportunities in authentic contexts, limited exposure to Arabic used in daily communication, and a learning environment that remains dominated by an emphasis on grammatical and morphological structures rather than the development of interactive competencies (Masnun et al., 2025). For example, research by Said & Saleh (2025) showed a significant positive correlation between students' confidence levels and their readiness to communicate in Arabic language learning, where low self-confidence is a significant barrier to active participation. This phenomenon shows that the ability to speak Arabic depends not only on linguistic factors but also on psychological factors such as self-confidence, as well as on learning strategies that foster a sense of courage in speaking Arabic and communication accuracy.

In learning Arabic, especially *Mahārah al-Kalām*, there is a learning method that emphasizes explicitly the development of confidence, the courage to argue, and the ability to express opinions, the debate method. Debate is an effective medium to train argumentative speaking skills because it involves active interaction. However, so far, debate practice has emphasized fluency and vocabulary mastery (Firdaus, 2024). To make debate learning more effective, it should focus on strengthening argumentation logic, language politeness, and communication relevance, ensuring that speaking skills are not only linguistically fluent but also solid in content and ethics. In the modern era, the practice of debate, especially in a religious context, is often no longer constructive and ends in confrontation or polarization with impolite language due to misunderstandings and differences of opinion (Azisi et al., 2023). This phenomenon can be seen in various religious discussion forums, both online and in real life, where differences of opinion actually worsen the situation and are accompanied by the use of unhealthy language (Asiah, 2017). Instead of emphasizing fact-based and logic-based arguments, the language of debate is often filled with personal attacks and emotional speech, so that the function of language as a medium of dialogue shifts into a tool of confrontation.

Therefore, an academic review is needed—one that not only examines contemporary practices of debate but also traces the intellectual model of scientific discourse embedded within the Islamic scholarly tradition and classical sources, particularly the Qur'an. Debate in

QS. Al-Baqarah, verse 258, which features a conversation between Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud, is one of the most authentic examples of classical Arabic texts that can be studied in depth. However, this verse has not been widely studied from a pragmatic perspective, especially using the framework of Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Within. With this theory, researchers can reveal the cognitive mechanisms and communication strategies that make the dialogue rhetorically and argumentatively effective. Therefore, a Relevance Theory-based analysis is important for understanding how the Qur'an constructs logical, relevant, and ethical arguments in the context of scientific debate. In addition, this study has direct implications for the learning model *of Mahārah al-Kalām*, as the text of the Qur'an debate can serve as an authentic model for students to practice argumentative speaking skills. By referring to the language strategies used by the Prophet Ibrahim, the learning *of Mahārah al-Kalām* is not only oriented towards fluency in speaking, but also trains students to deliver relevant, logical, and polite arguments.

Several previous studies have examined the debate dialogue in the Qur'an, especially related to QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258. Research by Ihya (2022) examined the story of the Prophet Ibrahim's debate with his people based on Tafsir al-Munir, and found that QS. 2:258 contains the pattern of rational argument that the Prophet Ibrahim used to dismantle Namrud's claim to divinity. Another study by Aulia (2022) uses *Ferdinand de Saussure's* semiotic approach to analyze the meanings of signs and symbols in the story of the debate between Prophet Ibrahim and Namrudz recorded in QS 2:258. Moreover, Al Jufri (2022) examined the verse through *the ma'nā maghzā* approach and found that Ibrahim's argument is *a fortiori* and reflects the Qur'an's model of inclusive dialogue.

In the context of learning, Darman (2022) proves that *the munazarah* method increases students' motivation to speak, while Mahdi et al. (2022) highlight the diction errors of Arabic scientific debate participants and offer improvements. However, two gaps remain. First, there has been no research explicitly examining QS. Al-Baqarah, verse 258, debates between Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud, using the Theory of Relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) to reveal the text's communication strategies. Second, although the debate method has been widely applied in the study of *Mahārah al-Kalām*, studies that connect the results of Qur'anic debate analysis to the development of relevance-based learning models remain very limited.

Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the effort to present a new understanding of the Qur'anic debate text through pragmatic analysis based on Relevance Theory and relate it to the implications for the learning of *Mahārah al-Kalām* to cultivate logical, relevant, and ethical speaking skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Debate

According to Ninoersy and Akmal (2020), debate is an activity in which opinions are expressed by two or more parties, both individually and in groups, to discuss and find solutions to a problem. Moreover, debate is also used to give each other reasons to defend each other's opinions (Astutik, 2021). It is also noted that the purpose of active debate in learning is to train students to express opinions, fostering communication skills and improving their learning achievement (Liliweri, 2011, in Ninoersy & Akmal, 2020). It is associated with language learning, especially Arabic. The debate has significant urgency, as

research by Bakar and Alias (2017) indicates that it is used in education to enhance the learning process and student development. This is because debate is an activity that involves direct communication; interactions are complex and demand the use of high-level thinking and discussion skills, such as those found in Arabic, which has millions of native speakers worldwide, especially in the western region. This Arabic debate training can serve as a readiness for non-native speakers to interact within the context of Arabic culture and the international world.

Debate has various main characteristics of communicative language learning (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003), and student-centered learning, namely creating an active learning environment, encouraging cooperation, collaboration, competition, and presenting meaningful and authentic interactions (Bakar & Alias, 2017).

2.2 Relevance Theory

The relevance theory used in this study is the relevance theory of Dan Sperber and Diardre Wilson. In the theory of relevance, there are characteristics of its principles; the first is that its applicability is not limited to communication but extends to cognition in general. Second, the embodiment of its economic characteristics is a direct consequence of the cognitive origin of this principle. Moreover, third, its capacity to both shape the speeches the speaker contributes to communication and influence how the listener begins to process them (Cummings, 2007). Relevance theory is one of the important theories introduced by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson through their monumental work Relevance: Communication and Cognition (1986, 1995 revised edition). Sperber and Wilson offer a single principle, the relevance principle, which states that every communication carries the assumption that the speech is relevant to the listener, that is, it provides maximum cognitive effects with minimal processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Thus, communication is not only a matter of language structure, but also of how the human mind processes information to achieve optimal interpretation. Cummings (2007) emphasized that relevance theory is inherently rooted in human cognition, so its basic principles can be used to analyze verbal and nonverbal communication. In this study, the researcher will analyze five main aspects to assess the level of relevance in the verse fragment, namely the context of communication, ostension, inference process, cognitive effects, processing efforts, and the achievement of optimal relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

2.3 *Mahārah Al-Kalām*

Arabic linguists explain that speaking skills (*Mahārah al-Kalām*) involve reciting a series of speeches in a structured and deliberate manner. In other words, speaking is not just making sounds. However, it is a conscious activity that is carried out to convey specific meanings and messages to the interlocutor (Ritonga & Febriani, et al., 2022, quoted in Wahyuni, 2023). This view emphasizes that the ability to speak Arabic is not only a mechanical matter of pronouncing sounds and words, but also involves cognitive skills such as organizing ideas, choosing the appropriate language structure, and adjusting the communication context. Speaking skills are among the most complex abilities because they involve mastering linguistic, psychological, social, and cultural elements simultaneously (Marlius et al., 2021). Speaking skills are not only about pronouncing sounds and words correctly, but also about organizing ideas and adapting messages to the communication context. Through speaking activities, a person can convey opinions, desires, and even

emotions effectively, enabling an exchange of meaning between the speaker and the listener.

Ghani et al. (2011) emphasized that speaking (Kalām) results from the integration of various complex factors, including physical, psychological, neurological, semantic, and linguistic factors. This means that speaking skills do not stand alone, but rather demand coordination between cognitive and physiological aspects. Meanwhile, Mahfudz's (2017) statement, as quoted in Marlius et al. (2021), highlights the social dimension of speech, which functions as a tool of social control and a means of shaping patterns of community interaction. Thus, mahārah al-kalām is not only a medium of communication, but also a vehicle for the formation of social and cultural character.

In practice, the teaching of mahārah al-kalām requires a supportive and communicative learning environment. Marlius et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of activating the language environment (bi'ah lughawiyyah) to help students become accustomed to using Arabic in both formal and informal contexts. Debate activities in Arabic teaching are among the most effective ways to improve mahārah al-kalām, as they require students to speak actively, defend arguments, and interact with the interlocutor in Arabic. For example, research by Abdilah & Holilulloh (2022) shows that Arabic-language debate activities make a significant contribution to improving students' mahārah al-kalām. The study found that participation in the Arabic debate community improved speaking skills by up to 61.5%, with notable improvements in pronunciation (84%) and fluency (82%).

3. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach, as explained (Bogdan & Taylor, 1982, as cited in Abdussamad, 2021), which is oriented towards obtaining descriptive data in the form of words, both oral and written, as well as observable behaviors. This approach positions the researcher as the primary instrument for understanding reality holistically, so it is appropriate to examine the meaning and context of the debate between the Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrūd in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258.

This research uses content analysis, focusing on QS Al-Baqarah 258 as the central unit of analysis. This design was chosen because content analysis allows researchers to examine a text objectively to obtain an accurate picture of its content, without being influenced by the researcher's personal views or interpretations. This approach emphasizes efforts to avoid bias, subjective biases, and personal constructions or interpretations (Ahmad, 2018).

The primary data source is QS. Al-Baqarah: 258, while secondary data include linguistic literature, Sperber & Wilson's theory of relevance as grand theory, as well as authoritative textbooks. Through an in-depth documentation technique approach to authoritative sources. Critical reading is applied to explore the textual and contextual meanings of the debate in Q.S. Al-Baqarah:258, with a focus on identifying debate practices using relevance theory.

Data analysis includes three stages: data reduction, is by selecting and grouping parts of verses that contain Ibrahim's arguments and Namrūd's rebuttals, data display, which is presenting findings through relevance analysis which then explains the context of communication, inference, cognitive effects, processing efforts, and optimal relevance, and drawing conclusions that formulate conceptual findings and pedagogical implications in the form of a debate learning model for *mahārah al-kalām*. The results of the analysis are then

verified by comparing the interpretation with relevant literature to ensure the data's validity.

Implicitly, the results of this study are expected to enrich the learning practice of *mahārah al-kalām* by emphasizing that debate activities in Arabic are not enough to focus only on fluency in speaking and vocabulary mastery, but must also train logical argumentation, selection of relevant diction, and linguistic politeness. Thus, QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258 can serve as a pedagogical model for developing argumentative speaking skills that balance fluency, content, and communication ethics.

4. Results and Discussion

QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258 tells the story of the fundamental theological debate between Prophet Ibrahim and the tyrannical ruler, King Namrud. Various classical commentaries, such as Tafsir ath-Thabari (2007) and Tafsir Ibn Kathir (2010), explain that Namrud bin Kan'ān was one of the four rulers of the world in his time. According to the historical record in Tafsir al-Qurthubi (2009), the four rulers are divided into two categories: two tyrannical rulers (Namrud and Bukhtanashar) and two righteous rulers (Prophet Sulaiman and Dzulqarnain).

Based on the consensus of the majority of scholars of interpretation, including Imam ath-Thabari (2007), Ibn Kathir (2010), and al-Qurthubi (2009), the background of the debate between Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud began with an oppressive policy where everyone who wanted to buy food in the market had first to answer the question "Who is your Lord?" if he answers "You (Namrud)" then it is allowed to shop, but if he says "other than him (Namrud)" then it will be forbidden to buy food and even be tortured, until the time when the Prophet Ibrahim who was firm in his monotheism was asked directly by Namrud about divinity, triggering a theological debate recorded in the Qur'an. Al-Baqarah verse 258.

4.1 Data 1

قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِيْ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُۙ

qâla ibrâhîmu rabbiyalladzî yuḫyî wa yumîtu

"Ibrahim said: " My Lord is the One Who has power to give life and cause death."

4.1.1 Context of Communication/Debate

At this stage, the Prophet Ibrahim's speech is an argumentative response to the statement King Namrud previously made. Although Namrud's dialogue is not explicitly stated in the text of the verse, in the commentary of Ibn Kathir (2010), it is explained that Namrud first asked the Prophet Ibrahim a question with his arrogance and opposition (Rashid & Anshori, 2025), namely, *"Who is your Lord, O Ibrahim?"* The question shows the arrogance of a ruler who refuses to acknowledge Divine power. Thus, the statement of the Prophet Ibrahim affirms that *"My Lord is the One Who has power to give life and cause death.*"

4.1.2 Speech/text Analysis

Linguistically, the sentence *"رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ"* (*My Lord is the One Who has power to give life and cause death.*) has the structure of the sum of ismiyyah (nominal sentences).

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The element رَبِّيَ(*rabbī*) functions as *mubtada'* (subject), as explained by the position of the word at the beginning *of the number of ismiyyah, which* is its position as *mubtada* (al-Ghulayaini, 2010), which means "my Lord", while الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ functions as *khabar* (predicate), which explains the nature of God as " The One Who has power to give life and cause death" (al-Darwish, 1999). Morphologically, the verbs يُحْيِي(*yuḥyî*) and يُمِيتُ(*yumîtu*) are forms of *fi'il mudhore* that denote repetitive and continuous actions, signifying God's constant power over life and death.

4.1.3 Relevance Theory Perspective

4.1.3.1 Ostensi

In the context of debate, the words of the Prophet Ibrahim function as ostension, which is a deliberate communicative action to attract the attention (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) of Namrud and direct his thought process towards the main message, namely the recognition of the absolute power of Allah (Ibn Kathir, 2010). The Prophet Ibrahim did not oppose directly; instead, he chose a cognitive communication strategy that had a dramatic effect, leading his interlocutor to realize his own limitations (Lalahwa et al., 2025). Linguistically, this ostension is manifested through a firm, rational declarative sentence structure (*Jumlah Khabriyyah*), which, in the science of balāghah, is called *kalām khabari,* a word that conveys information or news (al-Hasyimi, 1988).

4.1.3.2 Inference

After the ostensive stage carried out by the Prophet Ibrahim, an inference process occurs within the framework of Sperber and Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory. The inference process is the drawing of conclusions based on the relationship between speech and the context of communication (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). The saying *"My Lord is the One Who has power to give life and cause death"* explicitly affirms that Allah has absolute power over life and death (al Duwailah, 2018), as explained in Tafsir Ibn Katsir *(2010*), that this verse affirms the nature *of Allah's rububiyyah* as the only creator of life and death. And this verse prompted Namrud to realize the logical limitations of his power.

4.1.3.3 Processing Efforts and Cognitive Effects

Effective communication produces large cognitive effects with minimal processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). The argument presented by the Prophet Ibrahim, when viewed linguistically, is very simple, which only contains subjects and predicates (al-Darwish, 1999). So that the processing efforts carried out have reached a minimum level. Rhetorically, this statement guides the conversation toward the themes of power and life (Toriyono & Syahputra, 2021), a topic that is readily accepted by common sense.

4.1.3.4 Optimal Relevance

Optimal relevance is achieved when listeners acquire significant meaning with minimal processing effort. Prophet Ibrahim chose a communication strategy that was cognitively economical but conceptually productive. There was no long debate, not even the way Prophet Ibrahim was delivered was good (Budiono, 2020). However, a simple sentence was enough to force Namrūd to put forward a new argument, which showed that the cognitive effect had been achieved, prompting Namrūd to respond to the arguments

presented by the Prophet Ibrahim. Therefore, the initial argument of the Prophet Abraham was sufficient to reach the level of Relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

4.2 Data 2

قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ

qāla anā uḥyī wa umite

"Namrud said: " I give life and cause death."

4.2.1 Communicative Context/Debate

This statement by King Namrud appears to be a direct response to the Prophet Abraham's argument. He tries to match Ibrahim's statement by showing similar abilities to turn on and off, but in the context of human power (Rashid & Anshori, 2025). As explained in *Tafsir Ath Thabari,* Namrud interprets the concept of reviving and dying superficially and literally, namely by freeing a prisoner and letting him live as a symbol of reviving and executing or killing another person as a symbol of death (Ath Thabari, 2008). Thus, his statement is not an acknowledgment of Allah's power but rather arrogance and a rejection of arguments grounded in the divine logic conveyed by the Prophet Abraham.

4.2.2 Speech/text Analysis

Linguistically قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ has a structure that shows a form of direct statement full of self-affirmation. The word قَالَ is *fi'il madhi* (al-Ghulayaini, 2010) or in Indonesian it is called a past verb, which means *"he said"*, with the implicit subject returning to Namrud as the perpetrator of the speech. After that, the أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ clause appears which serves as the content of the word. In this clause, أَنَا is *a dhamir munfasil* (separate pronoun) that functions as *a mubtada'* (subject), while أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ is *fi'il mudhare marfu'* (present/future verb) which acts as *a khabar* (predicate) (al-Darwish, 1999). Thus, the sentence structure أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ forms the number of ismiyyah (nominal sentences) that are used as the content of speech in the structure of the total number of fi'liyyah (verbal sentences) as a whole. Semantically, this arrangement highlights the ego and superiority of the speaker through the use of the pronoun أَنَا at the beginning of the sentence, which indicates a form of self-claim and affirmation of power (Ariza & Kurniawan, 2024). The two verbs أُحْيِي (I turn on) and أُمِيتُ (I turn off) describe actions that are actually only worthy of being attributed to God, but are used by Namrud to show arrogance and opposition to the concept of divinity conveyed by the Prophet Abraham. This structure shows that Namrud's speech is declarative and confrontational, where the linguistic aspect is used not to seek the truth, but to maintain honor and self-power, so he throws agumen in the form of figurative examples so that Namrud can lie to his people (al Qurthubi, 2009). Thus, linguistically, this sentence not only contains semantic claims, but also contains pragmatic functions that challenge and reject the interlocutor's arguments.

4.2.3 Relevance Theory Perspective

4.2.3.1 Ostensi

Namrud's claim "أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ" can be seen as an act of ostentation that guarantees that his speech is worthy of attention (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). However, an in-depth analysis shows that this is illusory. Namrud's ostension does not aim to convey the truth, but to create cognitive disorders through language manipulation that creates the impression of

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pseudo-relevance, counterattacks, and aims to break the arguments of the Prophet Ibrahim (Budiono, 2020). Rhetorically, this is an example of how language can be used to create the illusion of relevance to give the impression that there is important new information, even though it is only a pseudo-repetition of an existing concept, as explained in Tafsir Ibn Katsir (2010), that Namrud does not really turn on or off.

4.2.3.2 Inference

At the level of inference, Namrud's speech fails to produce a meaning consistent with the context of established world knowledge, namely that the power of life and death is God's prerogative (Al Jufri, 2022). Instead of invalidating the theological premise of the Prophet Abraham, Namrud's argument actually creates cognitive confusion for his listeners. This process of drawing conclusions reveals the fundamental contradiction: the claim is incoherent with reality (Ar Razi, 1981). Thus, the inference formed reveals the weakness of Namrud's argument itself.

4.2.3.3 Processing Efforts

In terms of processing effort, Namrud's speech appears simple because it imitates the pattern of the divine claim made by the Prophet Ibrahim, making it easy to understand from a linguistic perspective. However, this simplicity is misleading and contains lies (al Qurthubi, 2009). Such ease of processing does not lead to a correct understanding, but to the acceptance of an erroneous claim. Therefore, this argument is inappropriate to counter the arguments presented by the Prophet Ibrahim (Toriyono & Syahputra, 2021) and is a form of communicative exploitation in which ease of processing is used to disguise the validity of arguments.

4.2.3.4 Cognitive Effects

Viewed in terms of impact and cognitive effects, Namrud's speech failed to produce positive and correct cognitive effects. As Sperber and Wilson, (1995) point out:

> "The concept of [contextual impact] is very important for the characterization of 'relevance'. We would like to make the argument that having a contextual impact is a necessary condition of 'relevance', and that if everything else is the same, then the greater the contextual impact, the greater the 'relevance'.

Based on this explanation, Namrud's argument fails to achieve a great contextual impact because the claim is not able to produce a form of contextual impact, in fact the argument weakens the correct belief in the power of God, the argument presented by Namrud also does not succeed in invalidating the theological premise of the Prophet Ibrahim, but instead gives birth to cognitive confusion to his listeners.

4.2.3.5 Optimal Relevance

Returning to the principle of relevance, Namrud's argument failed to meet the optimal relevance criteria. Although in terms of processing efforts it looks minimal due to its linguistic simplicity, this speech fails to produce adequate cognitive effects and contextual impacts, even if the resulting is negative by weakening correct beliefs and creating

confusion. Thus, Namrud's claim is a clear example of the exploitation of the principle of relevance, where ease of processing is used to disguise the validity of arguments, thus creating an illusion of relevance that exposes the logical flaws of his own divine claim.

4.3 Data 3

قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْتِيْ بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ

qāla ibrāhīmu fa inna llāha ya'tī bi al-syamsi min al-masyriqi fa'ti bihā min al-maghribi

"Abraham said: 'Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west."

4.3.1 Context of the Debate

The words of the Prophet Ibrahim in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 258 are a response to the claim of the divinity of King Namrud. The transition of the argument from the concepts of life and death to cosmological phenomena demonstrates the pedagogical approach of the Prophet Ibrahim, which adjusted the level of argument to the capacity of his interlocutor. Prophet Ibrahim's response to Namrud's claim was not only limited to the presentation of rational arguments, but also affirmed the inherent limits of human power in contrast to the absolute power that Allah has (Anisah, 2025). After Namrud delivered a counter-argument against Prophet Abraham, and Prophet Ibrahim heard the absurd answer, considering that the debate was going on fiercely, but what Prophet Ibrahim caught was only a logically wrong answer, so Prophet Ibrahim did not immediately refute it directly. Instead, he switched to a stronger, final postulate, a form of argument that is impossible for Namrud to either fulfill or refute in response to the challenge (Az-Zamarkasyi in al Qurthubi, 2009). After Namrud gave false proof of his claim to be able to live and die by killing one person and letting another live, Prophet Ibrahim was not caught up in a debate on the same level. He cleverly turned to the final cosmological and theological objection by challenging Namrud to reverse the law of nature that God had established: "My Lord is the One who sent forth the sun from the east. So, if you do have actual power, try to bring the sun out from the west (Ar Razi, 1981).

4.3.2 Speech/Text Analysis

Linguistically, this verse begins with the word قَالَ (*qāla*) *fi'il madhi* al-Ghulayaini, 2010) or in Indonesian it is a past tense verb meaning "he said," with an implied subject that goes back to the Prophet Ibrahim. The explicit subject is then mentioned through the word اِبْرٰهٖمُ, which serves as *fā'il* (doer). Furthermore, the clause فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْتِيْ بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ is the content of Ibrahim's speech. The letter فَ at the beginning serves as an explanatory that arises in response to an implied condition. That is, if you are capable, as you falsely and deceivingly claim (al-Darwish, 1999). The particle إِنَّ is used to provide affirmation, while اللّٰهَ becomes *ism inna* (the grammatical subject of the word "true"), and يَأْتِيْ is *fi'il mudhāri'* (present/future verb) meaning "to bring" or "to bring forth." The phrase بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ describes the object of the action, namely the sun coming from the east (al-Durrah, 2009). The second clause, فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ, is a challenge conveyed in the form of *amr*, "so bring it in or issue it from the west (al-Darwish, 1999)." Syntactically speaking, the use of this form of command has strong rhetorical value. It is not a command in the literal sense, but an argumentative strategy to expose the incompetence of the interlocutor. Semantically, the use of *amr* in this context is *iltifātī,* namely a change in language style (Noor, 2020) from

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descriptive to confrontational which marks a change in the speaker's position from explaining to challenging.

4.3.3 Relevance Theory Perspective

4.3.3.1 Ostensi and Inference

The Prophet Ibrahim's argument is a form of ostensive communication deliberately designed to attract the listener's attention and direct their inference process toward recognizing the absolute power of Allah (al-Duwailah, 2018). By making the sun the standard for universal, measurable, and undeniable natural phenomena, Ibrahim ensured that his theological message was directly connected to the audience's empirical experience. This ostension then triggers the first two levels of inference, the listener understands the literal fact that the sun rises from the east. Second, they concluded that the cosmic order indicated the existence of a divine power that governed the natural system. Through this multi-layered logic, Ibrahim emphasized that humans, including Namrud, use the natural system, not control it, thereby proving Namrud's claim to divinity to be pseudo-(Ar-Razi, 1981).

4.3.3.2 Processing Efforts and Cognitive Effects

Judging by the effort required, Prophet Ibrahim's communication succeeded in minimizing the audience's cognitive burden through simple yet effective delivery. By using the example of the sun, a natural phenomenon already very familiar in daily experience, the information conveyed becomes easily accessible and understandable (Toriyono & Syahputra, 2021). Straightforward sentence structure and concrete analogies allow messages to be digested with minimal processing effort. This approach is strategic, directing the listener's entire mental energy to the substance of the argument rather than to understanding linguistic complexity. As stated in the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995):

> "We assume that people have an 'intuition of relevance': they can distinguish between relevant information and irrelevant information, or in some cases, distinguish between more relevant or less relevant information."

If we look at the cognitive effects, in this context, the Prophet Ibrahim intelligently conveys an argument that directly utilizes the intuition of the relevance of his audience to produce significant cognitive effects. By giving the example of the sun rising from the east, a phenomenon that is already very familiar and verifiable to everyone, he presents information that will be recognized as highly relevant by his listeners, including Namrud. Therefore, the resulting cognitive effect is very high because the statement directly reveals the truth and exposes the opponent's lies.

4.3.3.3 Optimal Relevance

The speech has two layers of relevance that reinforce each other. First, conceptual relevance, because Ibrahim presents an undeniable empirical fact, namely that the sun always rises from the east (Lalahwa et al., 2025). Moreover, contextual relevance, because this statement is directly related to the subject of the debate over who actually has absolute power over life and the universe (Ridho, 1945). By presenting such clear natural evidence,

Ibrahim does not merely convey new information but also reinforces previous arguments (Ar Razi, 1981) and puts his interlocutor in a logical position that is impossible to maintain. For Namrud, this statement has a cognitive effect. To justify his claim to power, he must be able to reverse the direction of the sun, something impossible for humans to do (Thantawi, 1987). In other words, Ibrahim's speech forces the listener to confess the truth without the need for additional arguments. In one short but concise sentence, Prophet Ibrahim shattered the illusion of Namrud's power and established the truth about the absolute power of Allah.

4.4 Data 4

فَبُهِتَ الَّذِيْ كَفَرَۗ

fa-buhita alladhī kafar

"Then the one who disbelieved was confounded."

4.4.1 Context of the Debate

This verse explains the end of the dialogue between Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud in Surah al-Baqarah, verse 258. After Namrud tried to refute the Prophet Abraham's argument with the claim "*I give life and cause death*," Ibrahim then replied with a rational and empirical argument: *"Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west."* This challenge broke all of Namrud's claims to power because it exceeded the limits of human ability. The reaction shown by the phrase فَبُهِتَ الَّذِيْ كَفَرَ describes the State of Namrud being silent without a word, unable to give the slightest response or rebuttal to the logical arguments presented by the Prophet Ibrahim (Ath Thabari, 2008). According to Tafsir Ath-Thabari (2009), the word *"بُهِتَ"* indicates a State of silence due to confusion and loss of argument. Meanwhile, Al-Qurthubi (2009) interprets that Namrud was "astonished and silent" because the logic conveyed by the Prophet Ibrahim was too clear and undeniable. Thus, this verse describes not only physical silence but also an ideological defeat in which human pride collapses in the face of divine truth.

4.4.2 Speech/text Analysis

Linguistically, the phrase فَبُهِتَ الَّذِيْ كَفَرَ reveals a very dense and meaningful linguistic structure. The particle فَ serves as the letter 'athaf which shows a direct consequential relationship between the Prophet Ibrahim's earlier argument and Namrud's reaction. The word بُهِتَ as *fi'l madhi majhūl* (past passive verb) describes the state of silence and fixation that Namrud involuntarily experienced, as a direct result of the power of logic conveyed by the Prophet Ibrahim. The phrase الَّذِيْ acts as *Isim Maushul* which is also the *nā'ib al-fā'il* (subject of the perpetrator) of the passive verb, while كَفَرَ is *fi'l Madhi* with *fa'il* in the form *of dhamīr mustatir* which refers back to "الَّذِي", forming a definitive description of the identity of the perpetrator as a disobedient person (al-Darwish, 1999). This structure forms a passive sentence that means, " *Then the one who disbelieved was confounded*." The use of the passive form (*majhūl*) has an important rhetorical value because it removes the explicit perpetrator who caused the confusion. This shows that the state of confusion or surprise arises automatically and indisputably as a logical consequence of the truth of the Prophet Abraham's argument. In a syntactic context, this sentence serves as an answer to the previous argument, confirming the cause-and-effect relationship between the power of Prophet Ibrahim's logic and its effect on his opponent.

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4.4.3 Relevance Theory Perspective

This verse is a description of the conditions of the debate that reached the final stage. The Prophet Ibrahim has presented an argument that contains a logical challenge about the direction of the sun that has optimal relevance, namely producing maximum cognitive effects (revealing divine truth) with minimal processing effort (clear empirical facts) as explained in Sperber and Wilson's Theory of Relevance (1995):

"The processing efforts involved in achieving contextual impact are the second factor that must be considered in measuring relevance. Processing efforts are a negative f actor: all else is the same, the greater the processing effort, the lower the 'relevance'."

On the other hand, at this stage, the infidel person experiences a stalemate and fails to produce a relevant response (Kusnadi, 2016) because his cognitive system is unable to resist and refute the arguments presented by the Prophet Ibrahim within the framework of correct logic (Thantawi, 1987). The State *of* بُهِتَ indicates an inferential impasse, in which Namrud is stunned and confused, and loses the capacity to relate new information to the cognitive context he previously held (Toriyono & Syahputra, 2021). In the view of relevance, بُهِتَ is not merely an emotional reaction, but a representation of the old cognitive context based on the arrogance and illusion of human power in the face of a new, more relevant context of divine truth. This inferential process makes the words of the Prophet Ibrahim a deliberately designed means of communication, designed to trigger the listener's thought process and achieve maximum relevance, as it can change the interlocutor's mental representation even without the need for further debate.

4.5 Implications for Learning *Maharah Al Kalam*

Based on an in depth analysis of the dialogue between Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 258, it is possible to formulate a model of debate that is not only logically effective but also very polite in the use of language, which is in line with the principles of Relevance Theory. This model emphasizes the delivery of messages that achieve optimal relevance, where the processing effort required by the listener is minimized while the resulting cognitive impact is maximized (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), and all of this is expressed in good, polite language (Budiono, 2020). The Prophet Ibrahim began the debate by affirming a clear and indisputable basic principle of God's life-giving and deadly power (Thantawi, 1987), using a clear language structure (*the number of ismiyyah*), without reproach or harsh words, so that it is easy to understand without requiring complicated interpretation.

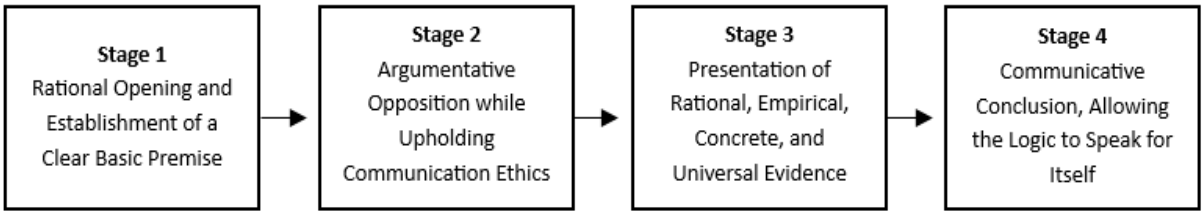
In the face of Namrud's erroneous and arrogant rebuttal (Thantawi, 1987), Prophet Ibrahim set an example of polite debate. He did not use harsh words, did not attack personally, and maintained communication ethics even though Namrud's claims were clearly contrary to common sense (Al Khumairi, 2019). Intelligently, he shifts his argument to the more concrete empirical realm of the phenomenon of sunrise, while maintaining neat, polite language (Ar Razi, 1981). The selection of cosmological examples that are universal and easy to understand makes Ibrahim's message almost unnecessary processing effort. It is precisely through this simplicity and clarity that the challenge of reversing the sun's direction exerts a powerful cognitive impact, destroying Namrud's argument while, at the same time, confirming that the politeness of language does not weaken the power of argumentation.

The final stage of this model is to let the power of logic speak for itself, which is manifested by Namrud's confusion and silence "فَبُهِتَ الَّذِيْ كَفَرْ" (Ibn Kathir, 2010), without the need for the Prophet Ibrahim to add words of contempt or triumph. This situation represents the total failure of Namrud's inferential process, which actually further strengthens the ethics of Prophet Ibrahim's argument. Thus, this model of the debate between Prophet Ibrahim offers an elegant and practical communication framework.

Based on what was explained earlier, the model of the Qur'anic debate between Prophet Ibrahim and Namrud can serve as a pedagogical model for the teaching of *maharah kalām*, which consists of four main stages that align with the previous analysis:

Diagram 1

Stages of Instructional Implications for *Mahārah al-Kalām*



The first stage, rational opening and determination of the topic and then speech must show a clear communication purpose, reflected in the firm statement of the Prophet Ibrahim "رَبِّيَ الَّذِيْ يُحْيِ وَيُمِيْتُ" which uses a simple but deeply meaningful language structure, according to the principle of relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) where information is conveyed with minimal processing effort but maximum cognitive impact. The second stage, the presentation of argumentative opposition, is evident when the Prophet Ibrahim confronts Namrud's claim "أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ" without resorting to rude language, but by maintaining communication ethics while preparing a more substantive response.

The third stage, the use of rational-empirical evidence, is manifested through the argument of the sun "فَإِنَّ اللهَ يَأْتِيْ بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ" where the Prophet Ibrahim chose natural phenomena that are easy to understand but undeniable (Thantawi, 1987), once again applying the principle of relevance by minimizing processing efforts through familiar examples but producing substantial cognitive impacts. The fourth stage, effective communicative closing, is illustrated in Namrud's reaction "فَبُهِتَ الَّذِيْ كَفَرْ" which shows how relevant arguments delivered in polite language can produce cognitive resolution without the need for coercive closing words.

The four stages form an integrated pedagogical framework that aligns with the concept of critical thinking-based learning in language education (Todorovska, 2024). This argument is relevant because the Qur'anic debate model not only focuses on linguistic aspects but is intrinsically designed to train higher-order cognitive skills, in accordance with the demands of 21st-century competencies (Todorovska, 2024). Each stage in this model genuinely reflects the integration of linguistic structures, pragmatic strategies, and cognitive relevance principles as thoroughly analyzed in this study. Through the implementation of this model, the learning of Mahārah al-Kalām not only trains speaking fluency in Arabic but also instills logical, critical, and ethical thinking abilities in argumentation according to Qur'anic values, where linguistic politeness does not compromise argumentative strength, and depth of meaning does not have to be sacrificed for simplicity of delivery.

5. Conclusion

An analysis of QS. Al-Baqarah verse 258, through the lens of Relevance Theory, successfully reveals the superiority of Prophet Ibrahim's communication strategy, which achieves optimal relevance by presenting arguments that minimize processing effort while maximizing cognitive effects. This dialogue offers not only a debate paradigm that combines logical sharpness with linguistic politeness but also an integrated, implementable model for developing Mahārah al-Kalām (Arabic-speaking skills). The model begins with a rational opening that clearly establishes basic premises, continues by presenting opposition while maintaining communication ethics, is strengthened by the use of concrete and undeniable empirical evidence, and concludes with a communicative closure that allows the power of logic to speak for itself. Pedagogically, integrating the wisdom of the Qur'anic text with a modern, pragmatic theoretical framework offers an alternative learning approach relevant to 21st-century challenges. This approach not only emphasizes linguistic fluency but also builds critical thinking capacity, creativity, and argumentative etiquette, core competencies in modern-era skills. Thus, this approach can produce communicators who are academically excellent, ethically mature, and prepared to navigate the dynamics of global dialectics.

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WEAVING IDEOLOGY THROUGH WORDS: THE ROLE OF METAPHORS IN THE NDC 2020 MANIFESTO

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Abstract

Metaphors are significant rhetorical tools that shape public perception and construct political identities (Charteris-Black, 2014). This study examines how metaphorical framing functions as an ideological instrument in the National Democratic Congress's (NDC) 2020 manifesto. It aims at uncovering how metaphorical framing functions as an ideological tool in political discourse. Using a descriptive content analysis and qualitative interpretive research design grounded in a Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) approach, the study identifies five dominant metaphorical constructs—building (most prevalent), growth, journey, war, and health metaphors—each serving distinct rhetorical purposes. Additionally, the study reveals five key ideological functions of metaphor in the manifesto: constructing legitimacy, projecting development and vitality, naturalizing crisis and delegitimizing the incumbent, mobilizing collective identity, and contesting power and framing opposition. The study provides unique insight into how opposition parties in African democracies strategically deploy metaphorical language in manifestos to critique incumbents, frame alternative visions, and mobilize public support.

Keywords: *critical metaphor analysis; Ghanaian politics; metaphor; political discourse; NDC manifesto; political ideology.*

1. Introduction

Language is never neutral and cannot be confined to a single phenomenon (Fairclough, 2015; Nawaz et al., 2013). This implies that language always carries meaning beyond just the words themselves; it reflects power dynamics, cultural values and assumptions. One area where language plays a key role is political discourse. According to Van Dijk (1998), political discourse is a class of genres that politics defines. It relates to the use of language in discussions, debates, and communication related to politics. Because language is inherently ideological, contextual, and multifaceted, its role in politics becomes more than just communication. In other words, political language is a carefully crafted instrument of persuasion, designed to frame issues, construct identities, and mobilize public sentiment (Fairclough, 2015; Nwaoboli, 2025).

As established earlier, language is inherently ideological, which means it is a vehicle through which ideologies are expressed, reinforced, and challenged. These ideologies are structured systems of dominant ideas and beliefs that shape and influence every aspect of human social interaction and organization, including the political, economic, scientific,

educational, and cultural spheres (Zajda, 2014). Through language, these ideologies become embedded in everyday discourse, subtly influencing how people think, speak, and act.

The communication of political ideologies relies on the use of specific linguistic and rhetorical strategies. One most potent rhetorical device in political discourse is the metaphor. Metaphors are universally acknowledged as powerful rhetorical tools in political discourse, which shape public perception, construct ideological positions, and influence political outcomes across global democracies. Scholars like Lakoff (1980) argue that political parties rely on deep-seated metaphorical frames to make abstract policies relatable. For example, an economy can be described as "broken" to imply a need for repair, while governance can be framed as "stewardship" to suggest responsibility and care.

Given the influential role of metaphors in shaping political meaning, extensive research has examined their use across diverse political genres, such as presidential speeches (Charteris-Black, 2014; Cox, 2012; Ngula, 2021; Wiredu, 2021), party manifestos (Charteris-Black, 2004; Kovar, 2019; Musolff, 2016; Ofosu & Washew, 2024), protest rhetoric (Hart, 2018), and media discourse (Semino, 2008). However, while analyses of political manifestos are predominantly centered on western democracies, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding how opposition parties in African contexts, specifically Ghana's NDC, strategically employ metaphors within manifestos to construct ideological narratives and promote counter-hegemonic discourses. This gap highlights the need for closer scholarly examination of political manifestos, which are key texts through which parties articulate their visions, negotiate political meaning, and engage in ideological contestation.

Election manifesto is defined as "the official statement of intended policy by political parties at the beginning of election campaign" (Robertson, 2004, p.295). Thus, manifestos set out the policies a political party would deliver if they were to win a general election. The 2020 Ghanaian election marked a pivotal moment in the nation's democratic trajectory, characterized by intense rivalry between the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP). The NDC's manifesto, therefore, emerged as a critical rhetorical instrument for articulating dissent, advancing alternative policy visions, and galvanizing electoral support. Titled "The People's Manifesto: Jobs, Prosperity and More", the manifesto was crafted in response to unique socio-political conditions, as the incumbent NPP government faced growing public discontent over economic management, rising unemployment, and the hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. As seen above, the subtitle of the manifesto – Jobs, Prosperity and More" – foregrounds its metaphorical framing: Ghana as a project in need of revival. This metaphorical frame aligns with the NDC's broader narrative of "rescuing" the nation from decline, a recurrent theme in oppositional discourse. By employing vivid and "weaponized" metaphorical language to legitimize the opposition's ideological position and contest the authority of the incumbent, the manifesto presents itself as a particularly compelling subject for scholarly analysis.

Building on global metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Charteris-Black, 2014), and addressing the contextual vacuum in Ghanaian manifesto studies, this paper aims to provide a detailed Critical Metaphor Analysis of the NDC's 2020 election manifesto. The study aims to unravel how the NDC employs metaphors to construct its vision of governance, frame policy debates, and position itself against its main rival, the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

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2. Literature Review

In this section, I first explain key concepts relevant to the discussion. I then discuss the theoretical framework—Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA)—that underpins this study, while also engaging with previous scholarship on metaphors in political discourse.

2.1 Key Concepts

Burkholder and Henry (2009) posit that metaphors compare two things that are from "different classes of experience", which in turn creates a new understanding through the specific use of language. This implies that metaphors connect unrelated ideas or experiences in a way that helps us understand one concept through the familiar features of another, using language creatively to shape meaning. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is a linguistic mechanism that allows abstract policies and ideologies to be communicated through familiar, emotionally resonant concepts.

The term 'ideology', within the framework of discourse analysis, is conceptualized as a set of shared beliefs, values, and assumptions that underpin group identities and justify social practices (Van Dijk, 1998). Ideology is realised through discourse, and it shapes how political actors frame reality, construct social identities, and legitimize particular actions or policies. In political genres like manifestos, metaphors function as powerful tools for the naturalisation and legitimation of ideological positions. For instance, they make abstract social and political concepts concrete, familiar, and seemingly self-evident, thereby rendering certain worldviews and value systems 'natural' or unquestionable. Thus, through metaphors, political parties are able to present their policies as logical, desirable, or inevitable, while simultaneously delegitimizing alternative perspectives. In this study, ideology is not used just as a background concept but is critically examined as a discursive effect produced and reinforced through strategic metaphor use in the NDC 2020 manifesto.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

As previously noted, this study is grounded in the framework of Charteris-Black's (2004) critical metaphor analysis. It is worth mentioning that, in this study, I view metaphor in its basic sense of conceiving one thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and also as a rhetorical resource that makes possible a recontextualization and reconceptualization of experiences (Cameron & Stelma, 2004). Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) posits that metaphors are not merely linguistic flourishes but reflect deeper, systematic ways in which individuals and communities structure their understanding of reality. Thus, CMT focuses on identifying recurring mappings between source and target domains, which reveal how abstract political concepts are conceptualized through more concrete or familiar experiences. It is important to state that, while CMT has been significant in exposing these underlying cognitive structures, it largely focuses on how metaphors shape thought, often bracketing out broader rhetorical and ideological concerns. Charteris-Black's (2004, 2014) Critical Metaphor Analysis builds on the foundation of CMT but goes beyond conceptual mapping to investigate the persuasive, ideological, and manipulatory functions of metaphors within discourse.

According to Charteris-Black (2004), critical metaphor analysis (CMA) is a blend of cognitive semantic and pragmatic approaches and can be defined as "an approach to metaphor analysis that aims to reveal the covert intentions of language users" (p.34). It helps in analysing metaphorical expressions, descriptions and categories in order to uncover ideologies underlying language (Charteris-Black, 2005). Consequently, CMA posits that

metaphor in political discourse serves specific ideological functions, such as creating illusions, enabling resistance, offering heuristic insights, and reinforcing political myths. It is important to mention that CMA consists of three primary stages: metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation. Charteris-Black (2005) maintains that metaphor identification is based on semantic tension caused by linguistic processes such as personification, de-personification and reification. Following metaphor identification is metaphor interpretation, which involves establishing a relationship between metaphors and the cognitive and pragmatic factors that determine them. The final stage of CMA, metaphor explanation, is concerned with identifying the social agency and social role of metaphor in persuasion. A central premise of CMA is that metaphor shapes thought, meaning its use in political discourse is deliberate and structured, rather than accidental or arbitrary.

The NDC's 2020 manifesto, like other forms of political discourse, is neither neutral nor value free – it is imbued with ideology. Thus, CMA is ideal for analysing the NDC manifesto's ideological metaphors as it combines linguistic scrutiny with critical discourse inquiry, exposing how language legitimizes policy agendas and constructs political enemies.

2.3 Previous Studies

Sabir (2015) explores the role of metaphors in political language. He aimed to investigate metaphors used in modern political discourse in the English language, proceeding from the cognitive point of view. Sabir identifies these functions of metaphors in political discourse: cognitive, communicative, pragmatic, and aesthetic functions. Thus, metaphors help simplify complex political ideas, enhance persuasion and emotional appeal, support strategic goals, and enrich the style of political language. Sabir's concept of metaphors as ideological reinforcement aligns with the present study as the present study explores how the NDC's 2020 manifesto utilizes metaphorical framing to establish and normalize its political worldview.

Using critical metaphor analysis, Nartey (2019a) explores the discourse of resistance in the rhetoric of Kwame Nkrumah. He demonstrates how war and conflict metaphors ("ruthless war," "monsters") functioned as discursive tools of resistance against colonial oppression. The findings reveal that Nkrumah strategically deployed metaphors to construct binary ideological identities—framing independence activists as heroic liberators and colonial forces as dehumanized "monsters". Although Nartey's work focuses solely on historical discourse without connecting to contemporary Ghanaian politics, it establishes critical precedents for understanding metaphor's political utility in Ghana, creating a scholarly basis for investigating how similar rhetorical strategies manifest in the NDC's modern manifesto discourse.

Similar to the study above is Nartey's (2019b) discourse-mythological analysis of Kwame Nkrumah's "Unite or Perish" rhetoric. The paper demonstrates how political leaders construct national identity through metaphorical storytelling. Specifically, Nartey explores how Nkrumah blended Pan-Africanist ideology with existential threat framing, using the conceptual metaphor NATION-AS-FAMILY to naturalize his vision of continental unity. The analysis reveals that Nkrumah strategically employs war, religious, and journey metaphors as part of a (de)legitimation strategy aimed at both opposing colonialism and imperialism, and promoting the idea of a Union Government of Africa. While the paper demonstrates how crisis framing ("perish") can be combined with unity appeals to create powerful political narratives, it also provides an opportunity to explore whether and how the NDC's 2020 manifesto adapts these nation-building metaphors for contemporary electoral politics.

While Nartey (2019b) focuses on the "Unite or Perish" mythology, Wiredu (2021) takes a broader approach by examining multiple metaphorical patterns across Nkrumah's oratory, including conceptualizations of nation-building as "construction work," independence as "awakening," and colonialism as "disease". Her findings reveal how Nkrumah strategically alternated between different metaphor systems depending on his rhetorical purpose and audience – a finding that enriches our understanding of how political metaphors operate in Ghanaian contexts. Although both studies converge in demonstrating how Nkrumah's metaphors served ideological functions, Wiredu emphasised their situational adaptability rather than their mythological consistency. Unlike Nartey (2019b) and Wiredu (2021) who foreground either mythological consistency or rhetorical flexibility, this study emphasizes the strategic deployment of metaphors by the NDC to both legitimize its platform and contest the dominance of the incumbent.

In another research, Ngula (2021) examines the range of (conceptual) metaphors used in the speeches of President John Dramani Mahama. Unlike qualitative-focused studies above, Ngula employs corpus linguistics to systematically identify and categorize metaphorical patterns in Mahama's 2016-2020 speeches, revealing how modern Ghanaian politicians adapt traditional metaphorical frameworks to current political realities. The study reveals that Mahama draws on many conventional metaphors but uses them in creative and unconventional ways to depict culturally relevant situations, and to convey his political ideologies to his audience. For instance, the study reveals that Mahama strategically uses "sports/competition" metaphors (e.g., "riding a lame horse into a race") to critique the incumbent NPP government's competence while positioning himself as a viable alternative.

Ofori et al. (2021) argue that the use of metaphors and similes is a subtle means by which citizens expose politicians and question their competence in handling national issues. Also, it enhances citizens' participation in the day to-day political discussions and contribute to the deepening of multiparty democracy in Ghana, without resorting to insults and vituperations. From the findings of Ofori et al., we can conclude that metaphorical discourse in politics operates dialogically - while politicians employ metaphors strategically, citizens similarly utilize figurative language to evaluate and challenge political leadership. On the part of politicians, the findings of Mensah (2012) demonstrate that features of conceptual sources can be manipulated by politicians to achieve positive rhetorical ends. He states that, in general, the use of metaphors can minimize direct vilification in Ghanaian political communication. This is in line with Taiwo (2010) who argues that metaphors help to shape the structure of political categorization and argumentation. According to Taiwo, a conceptual metaphor like POLITICS IS A GAME, for instance, shapes our perception about politics.

Sarfo-Kantankah et al. (2021b) explore the metaphorical conceptualisation of COVID-19 in parliamentary discourse. The study applies corpus linguistic techniques to examine how Ghanaian parliamentarians conceptualized the pandemic through three dominant metaphorical frames: war (fighting the invisible enemy), natural disaster (tsunami of infections), and journey (path to recovery). The study reveals the conceptualisation of COVID-19 in Ghanaian parliament is dominated by war metaphors, which aligns with global pandemic discourse patterns. The study's use of corpus-assisted methodology provides empirical rigor missing in earlier qualitative studies like Nartey (2019a), providing practical techniques that can be applied to the analysis of manifestos. However, the study's exclusive focus on parliamentary discourse limits its applicability to other political genres like manifestos, the focus of the present study.

Lastly, Sarfo-Kantankah (2021a) conducted a corpus-based functional analysis of the manifestos of two political parties in Ghana, examining the extent to which these texts prioritize policy issues over the persona of the political candidate. The study compares the NDC and NPP manifestos across six election cycles (1996-2016), which provides empirical rigor missing from previous qualitative analyses of Ghanaian political texts. The analysis reveals that while the NPP target both policy and the personalities of their opponent candidates, the NDC appear to focus mainly on policy. He concludes that, be it a focus on policy or personality, contextual relevance is the key. The study's theoretical framework, drawn from Benoit's Functional Theory of political campaign discourse, is valuable for analysing how manifestos serve dual purposes as both policy blueprints and campaign tools.

While existing studies highlight the role of metaphors in political discourse, Ghanaian party manifestos remain understudied, particularly the NDC's use of figurative language. Also, the literature reveals a limited application of Critical Metaphor Analysis in the exploration of political manifestos within the Ghanaian context. Furthermore, past research frequently underscores the predominance of war and journey metaphors in Ghanaian political speeches and discourse. However, there remains insufficient examination of whether and how different or additional metaphorical frameworks—such as building and family metaphors—are strategically featured in opposition party manifestos. This gap is significant because manifestos uniquely combine policy substance with persuasive appeals. By employing the CMA approach, the current study addresses this by analysing metaphors in the NDC's 2020 manifesto to reveal how opposition parties frame ideologies.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive content analysis and qualitative interpretive research design grounded in Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) to examine how the NDC used metaphors to convey ideological messages in their 2020 election manifesto. This approach is especially appropriate for systematically examining how metaphorical language in the NDC's 2020 manifesto functions to construct and legitimize ideological meanings.

3.2 Corpus and Data Source

The primary corpus for this study is the official 2020 manifesto of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), titled "People's Manifesto: Jobs, Prosperity and More.". The selection of the NDC 2020 Manifesto as the primary text for this study is informed by both contextual relevance and academic significance. First of all, political manifestos, as stated earlier, are key sites for ideological expression, particularly during election periods when parties seek to shape public perception, frame national issues, and persuade voters. Since the NDC was the main opposition party during the 2020 presidential election, they were tasked with presenting a counter-narrative to the ruling government (the New Patriotic Party). This oppositional stance offers fertile ground for the use of metaphor to critique existing power structures and articulate ideological position on key issues.

The manifesto was downloaded in pdf format from the official website of the NDC (www.ndc.org). For the purposes of this research, the entire manifesto text has been included, comprising approximately 35,263 words and covering all chapters and thematic sections relevant to party ideology, policy proposals, and rhetorical positioning. However, for manageability and depth, the study may focus on specific thematic sections such as

Economy, Health, Education, Governance and Leadership. These sections are often rich in metaphorical language and ideological framing.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was done in stages, combining manual reading with the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) established by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). First, the manifesto was read thoroughly to identify metaphorical expressions, with particular attention paid to linguistic patterns indicating conceptual mappings between source and target domains. In applying MIP, each lexical item and phrase was checked for its basic, concrete meaning, and its contextual meaning within the political discourse. An expression was classified as metaphorical if its contextual meaning contrasted with its basic sense yet could be interpreted through comparison to the basic meaning. Each metaphorical expression was systematically coded by mapping its linguistic form to an underlying source domain (e.g., BUILDING, JOURNEY, FAMILY, GROWTH, HEALTH). For instance, expressions such as “laying a strong foundation” were classified under the BUILDING domain.

Following identification, metaphor interpretation involved establishing links between the identified metaphors and the cognitive as well as pragmatic factors shaping their use (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 37). And finally, the social roles of these metaphors were evaluated, explaining how the embedded ideologies both position the NDC in opposition to its political rivals (specifically the NPP) and project the NDC’s vision of change or continuity for national development. In identifying the ideological functions, expressions that negatively framed the incumbent were classified as delegitimizing; those invoking communal concepts were seen as mobilizing collective identity; and metaphors presenting the NDC’s policies in constructive terms were marked as legitimizing.

To enhance the credibility of coding and interpretation, I employed the analytic triangulation procedure. Here, a colleague independently reviewed a sample of coded metaphors to check for consistency in identifying source domains and ideological functions. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved, strengthening the validity of the analysis.

3.4 Ethical Consideration

As per general ethical standards for discourse studies, this research analyses publicly available political texts and does not involve human subjects or confidential data. It is important to state that the study acknowledges the potential for subjective interpretations in metaphor analysis and commits to maintaining academic neutrality and rigor throughout the research process. For instance, the analysis is based on the established theoretical framework (CMA).

4. Results and Discussions

In this section, I present the findings of the metaphor analysis conducted on the NDC 2020 Manifesto. The analysis identifies and categorizes the various types of metaphors employed throughout the document, interprets their underlying conceptual frameworks, and examines their ideological significance.

4.1 Types of Metaphors Based on Their Conceptual Domains

The data revealed the following types of metaphors based on their conceptual domains: building, growth, journey, war, and health metaphors. The Table below illustrates both the frequencies and relative percentages of each metaphorical construct:

Metaphor Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Building	31	36.5
Growth	20	23.5
Journey	14	16.5
War	13	15.3
Health	7	8.2

The table presents the frequencies and relative percentages of the metaphorical constructs identified in the NDC 2020 manifesto. It is evident that building metaphors are the most prevalent, followed by growth, journey, and war metaphors, with health metaphors occurring less frequently. The prominence of building and growth metaphors underscores the manifesto's emphasis on construction and development as central rhetorical themes. Further analysis of these metaphor types and their ideological implications is provided below:

Building Metaphors

These metaphors draw from the conceptual domain of CONSTRUCTION/ARCHITECTURE to frame abstract concepts (such as society, governance, economy) as physical structure that require design, materials and maintenance. It is imperative to mention that the manifesto is dominated by building metaphors. The pervasive use of building metaphors enables the NDC to frame governance as a process of construction, stability, and collective progress. Also, it frames the NDC as competent architects or engineers of state progress, suggesting expertise, foresight, and the capacity to design and construct sustainable solutions. Examples:

1. In our quest to build a sustainable society with opportunities for all, we will continue to prioritise quality education and skills development as the cornerstone of progress. (p.1)
2. In addition, we will build an environment for digital transformation and domestic manufacturing to support job creation. (p.1)
3. Infrastructure development has always been important to the NDC as the foundational blocks needed to stimulate economic growth and improved quality of life (p.88).

Charteris-Black (2005) reveals that building/construction metaphors in manifestos imply competence, long-term vision, and communal labour. The dominance of building metaphors in the NDC manifesto, for example, both supports and extends observations in some studies of African political rhetoric where metaphors of construction and national development frequently symbolize competence, vision, and progress (Wiredu, 2021). It is imperative to mention that this strong emphasis on BUILDING metaphors contrasts with the global trend observed in the work of Musolff (2004), Nartey (2019b) and Semino (2008), where war metaphors often predominate—framing politics as conflict, competition, and struggle for power.

Growth metaphors

Growth metaphors represent the second most prevalent metaphorical construct in the manifesto. They frame abstract concepts (like economies, relationships, or knowledge) in terms of biological growth. In political discourses, growth metaphors are sometimes used to

signify that progress is natural, gradual, and requires nurturing. Also, the use of growth metaphors positions politicians as nurturing leaders who guide organic development, rather than authoritarian figures. Example;

4. We will build a Digital Innovation Ecosystem to support start-ups and encourage Ghanaian entrepreneurs to start, build and grow businesses in the digital space. (p.98)
5. A higher level of financial inclusion will not only benefit the poor, create jobs and reduce inequality but will also grow the formal sector. (p.99)

Journey metaphors

Rooted in the conceptual domain of MOVEMENT/TRAVEL, journey metaphors frame political progress, governance, or national development as a path or movement from one state to another. Cameron (2007) notes that journey metaphors frequently occur in English as highly conventionalized language. Examples:

6. Vote for John Dramani Mahama for President and let us, together**,** move Ghana forward. (p.9)
7. We will move Ghana from its current 19th Century social services to a forward-looking 21st Century Next-Generation system… (p.100).

War metaphors

War metaphors are rooted in the conceptual domain of CONFLICT/BATTLE as they frame political challenges, policies, or societal issues as battles, conflicts, or military campaigns. They frame these issues to imply a sense of urgency, moral duty and collective mobilisation. Example;

8. The next NDC government will resource and capacitate the Financial Intelligence Centre as well as other key agencies engaged in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing. (p.33).
9. The next NDC government will establish strict accountability and ethical measures to regulate State and individual activities in the fight against corruption and state capture. (p.110).

Health metaphors

Health metaphors, in political discourse, frame societal, economic, or political issues as medical conditions. Rooted in the conceptual domain of MEDICINE/BODY, these metaphors serve to communicate the perceived well-being or dysfunction of a system, which influences public perception and policy priorities. Example;

10. The COVID-19 pandemic has already made a tremendous impact on life in Ghana. It has exposed the deep weaknesses in our healthcare system and brought an inadequate system to its knees. (p.13)
11. The next NDC government will create and maintain healthy and resilient forests to support habitat for wildlife, carbon sequestration and opportunity for outdoor recreation. (p58).

4.2 The Ideological Roles of Metaphors in the Manifesto

In this section, I explore the underlying ideological functions of the various metaphorical constructs employed in the manifesto.

4.2.1 The BUILDING Metaphor: Constructing Legitimacy

Legitimization refers to making something legal or legalized. It is the process by which speakers accredit or license a type of social behaviour (Reyes, 2011). When legitimizing, we provide arguments that explain our social actions, ideas, thoughts, declarations, etc. Essentially, it is typically goal-oriented, often aiming to gain the support and approval of others. In its 2020 manifesto, the NDC deploys building metaphors as an ideological instrument to construct political legitimacy and cultivate voter approval. Examples from the data include:

12. **…**this this People's Manifesto lays the foundation for its tackling and the renewal of my resolve to deliver Jobs, Prosperity and More for all Ghanaians (p.5).
13. We must fully embrace digital technology, but with efficiency, in order to build a knowledge-based economy (p.96)**.**
14. The NDC resolves to build strong institutions by taking bold steps to ensure increased and adequate funding and engaging well-qualified and staff of proven integrity to manage and lead existing anticorruption agencies (p.108).
15. We also believe that Ghana can fully progress if we make integrity and transparency the cornerstone of our workforce at every level (p.108).

Examples 11-14 indicate instances where the NDC uses building metaphors to legitimize its policies. In example 11, for instance, "lays the foundation" frames the manifesto itself as the bedrock or starting structure for national progress. Also, "Build a knowledge-based economy" in Example 96 uses construction imagery to present economic transformation as a tangible, engineered project—one requiring expertise, effort, and vision. This metaphor positions the NDC as the capable architects of societal modernization, which legitimizes their policy proposals and paints them as forward-thinking leaders who can systematically create new opportunities. Expressions such as "build strong institutions," and making "integrity and transparency the cornerstone" serve to construct legitimacy by framing the party as skilled architects of national progress. These examples demonstrate how the NDC strategically employs metaphors to legitimize its claims and enhance their persuasive impact. In other words, the NDC positions its policies as the essential groundwork for sustainable development and prosperity. This aligns with Chilton (2004), who argues that metaphors in political discourse go beyond stylistic expression to actively shape reality and justify ideological stances and policy decisions.

4.2.2 The GROWTH Metaphor: Projecting Development and Vitality

According to Terban (2025), metaphors related to growth serve multiple purposes: they help clarify ideas, elicit emotional responses, and enrich the way we communicate. In the manifesto, growth metaphors utilise words such as "growth", "grow", "development", and "thrive" to describe policy outcomes and national progress as organic processes. Thus, these metaphors project the NDC's plans to imagery of gardens, plants, and harvest, representing the party as careful stewards of progress. Examples;

16. We, in the NDC, re-dedicate ourselves to the expansion of economic freedom and opportunities by providing incentives for small businesses to grow, as well as, encourage local community development (p.1).
17. …the next NDC Government from 2021 through to the medium-term, will redirect Government expenditure towards high growth areas to create the necessary and sufficient conditions for social spending to thrive (p.24).

18. We will strengthen the capacity of the National Board for Small-Scale Industries (NBSSI) to assist SMEs by facilitating their growth and development in every corner of the country (p.40).
19. A higher level of financial inclusion will not only benefit the poor, create jobs and reduce inequality but will also grow the formal financial sector (p.99).

The Examples above are instances of growth metaphors in the manifesto. The use of expressions such as "small businesses to grow," "community development," "redirect expenditure towards high growth areas," "social spending to thrive", "facilitating growth and development," and "grow the formal financial sector" project an image of ongoing vitality and advancement. The use language associated with organic growth, cultivation, and thriving enables the NDC to frame its economic and social policies as nurturing environments where prosperity naturally flourishes. Again, the use of these metaphors frames the NDC party as stewards committed to expanding opportunities, fostering improvement, and triggering positive change throughout the nation (Terban, 2025).

4.2.3 The JOURNEY Metaphor: Mobilizing Collective Identity

Charteris-Black (2005) states that metaphors can reveal "a shared system of belief as to what the world is, and culture-specific beliefs about mankind's place in it" (p.43). In political discourse, in particular, metaphors often frame shared struggles or goals to unite voters under a common purpose. In the NDC 2020 manifesto, metaphors are used to frame national development as a shared journey or mission, uniting citizens under a common cause. Specifically, journey metaphors use terms like "journey", "progress", and "move" to foster a sense of collective movement toward a shared goal. Examples:

20. We must build a knowledge-based economy and move faster into the new world of smart manufacturing and digital services. (p.4).
21. It is time to unite as one people, resume our journey towards building the future of Ghana. (p.20).
22. The next NDC government will set Ghana on the path to achieving production of one million barrels of oil per day (1mbpd) by 2030. (p.43).
23. … we promise a fair deal for persons with disabilities, greater opportunities for employment, productivity and the ability to contribute to the welfare of their families and the progress of our nation. (p.79).

'Move faster' in Example 19 positions national development as a forward-moving journey. Also, "resume our journey" in 20 metaphorically represents the nation's history and destiny as an on-going excursion. The call for unity encourages citizens to see themselves as fellow travellers with common goals, which reinforces a sense of collective identity and purposeful movement toward national growth. It also indicates that past progress was interrupted (by NPP governance), and so there should be collective action to restart it. Similarly, expressions like "set Ghana on the path," and "progress of our nation" are used to mobilize collective identity by framing national development as a shared voyage. In all, each citizen is portrayed as a contributor along the nation's journey, reinforcing solidarity and communal participation in the pursuit of progress and a better future.

4.2.4 The WAR Metaphor: Contesting Power and Framing Opposition

Flusberg et al (2018) opine that war metaphors are common in conversations about a wide range of issues, including political elections, struggles with cancer, efforts to fight crime, drug abuse, and poverty, and even debates over salad. In the manifesto, war metaphors use terms such as "struggle" and "fight" to frame political and social challenges as battles that require determination, resilience, and collective action. The choice of the language helps emphasize the seriousness of the issues at hand. Examples:

24. The NDC has always pursued good governance and accountability, having been borne out of the popular struggles for probity and accountability and in line with our firm belief in 'Freedom and Justice' (p.109)
25. We will fight the deleterious effects of the poor economic management of the Akufo-Addo Government (p.19).
26. The next NDC government will set up a system of legal aid for creative artistes to help fight creative/intellectual theft and plagiarism by others. (p.55).
27. As part of our commitment to the fight against corruption, we shall adequately empower and resource the office of the special prosecutor and other anti-corruption agencies to do their work effectively.

In the examples above, expressions such as "popular struggles," "fight the deleterious effects," "help fight creative/intellectual theft," and "commitment to the fight against corruption" serve to dramatize the contest for power and sharpen the distinction between the NDC and its opponents. Terms such as "struggles" and "fight" portray the NDC party as active, courageous participants in ongoing battles for probity, justice, and national well-being. Again, the promise to empower anti-corruption agencies and fight harmful practices further frames the NDC as determined defenders of the public interest, while implicitly portraying the incumbent government and wrongdoers as adversaries. Finally, through these metaphors, the NDC portrays itself as an agent of positive change, ready to contest power and confront opposition in the pursuit of justice, integrity, and progress.

4.2.5 The HEALTH Metaphor: Naturalizing Crisis and Delegitimizing the Incumbent

In political discourse, metaphors are sometimes used to present a situation as an urgent, inevitable crisis requiring immediate intervention. One significant effect of naturalizing crisis is that it makes a political response seem not only necessary but morally or logically imperative. Also, metaphors are used in delegitimizing political opponents. According to Bamigbade and Dalha (2020), delegitimization in political discourse is an act of linguistic hostility intended to discredit political opponents and influence electoral outcomes. Thus, in delegitimization, we present others negatively through strategies like insults, blames and accusations (Agyekum, 2004). In the manifesto, health metaphors, which utilize terms like "health", "healthy", "bleeding", "massage" and "recover" are used to naturalise crisis and delegitimize opponents. Examples:

28. The NPP massaged COVID-19 statistics to create a false sense of security and the impression of leadership. (p.14).
29. The NPP has left Ghana bleeding from reckless borrowing. (p.26)
30. …the NDC Government will offer several tax reliefs to the private sector, especially MSMEs to enable them to recover and get back to their full operating capacities. (p.23)
31. …an Assets Quality Review (AQR) exercise was launched in 2015 to ascertain the true State of health of banks in the industry. (p.28).

The metaphors used in Examples 28-31 strategically naturalize economic and social crises while delegitimizing the incumbent (NPP) government. For instance, by claiming that "The NPP massaged COVID-19 statistics to create a false sense of security" (28), the NDC portrays the crisis as a concealed illness, suggesting that the government's actions are akin to a misleading doctor, thereby undermining public trust in the incumbent's competence. Again, the expression "Ghana bleeding from reckless borrowing" (29) vividly presents the nation as a patient suffering internal injury, which implies that the government's fiscal mismanagement has inflicted real harm. In the same way, offering tax reliefs to help businesses "recover and get back to their full operating capacities" makes it seem like these businesses are sick and need help to get better. This, however, positions the NDC as the rightful healer who can restore economic vitality. Finally, the "Assets Quality Review … to ascertain the true state of health of banks" likens the financial system to a body subject to medical diagnosis. While this emphasizes transparency and care on the part of the NDC, it further critiques the incumbent's negligence. Otieno et al. (2016) posit that metaphors function as discursive mechanisms through which voters decode political narratives and crystallize ideological stances. Following this idea, the NDC party uses metaphors to make the opposing NPP party seem less trustworthy, hoping to gain more public support. Thus, through these metaphors, the NDC claims medical authority and presents itself as the only agent capable of curing the country's ailments.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the role of metaphors in the National Democratic Congress (NDC) 2020 manifesto, with particular focus on how metaphors function ideologically to construct political meaning and mobilize support. Drawing on the critical metaphor analysis approach, the study revealed five dominant metaphorical frames – building, journey, growth, war, and health metaphors – each serving distinct rhetorical purposes in shaping the party's narrative. This study demonstrates that metaphorical constructs, most notably BUILDING, GROWTH and JOURNEY metaphors, functioned as powerful rhetorical tools in the NDC manifesto. In particular, these metaphors serve to establish the NDC's legitimacy by framing the party as visionary architects and mobilizers of national progress, while simultaneously delegitimizing the NPP through representations of crisis, struggle, and exclusion.

Ideologically, rather than simply conveying information, metaphors actively shape the public's understanding of political reality by naturalizing crisis narratives, mobilizing collective identity, legitimizing the NDC, and delegitimizing its opponents. This corroborates Van Dijk's (1998) theoretical perspective, indicating how language is strategically employed to construct, mediate, and reinforce ideological meanings and power relations. It is evident that metaphors are not neutral; they are deeply implicated in the formation of public opinion and the normalization of party positions within the socio-political landscape.

This study fills a significant gap in the literature by applying detailed Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) to an opposition party's manifesto in West Africa. Thus, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of CMA in uncovering how metaphors not only structure policy narratives but also serve as tools for establishing legitimacy, delegitimizing opponents, and mobilizing collective identity.

These findings advance our understanding of how political language operates within opposition discourse, and open up avenues for future research in African and comparative political communication. Despite the valuable insights provided, this study is limited by its

exclusive focus on the NDC manifesto and a single election cycle. Future research could extend these findings by comparing metaphor usage in the incumbent NPP manifesto, helping to determine if rhetorical strategies vary between opposition and ruling parties. Additionally, audience reception studies could investigate whether the metaphorical framing identified actually influenced voter perspectives and behaviors. Finally, a diachronic analysis comparing NDC manifestos across multiple election cycles (e.g., 2012, 2016, and 2020) would illuminate the evolution of ideological metaphors in Ghanaian political discourse. In all, this paper establishes that Critical Metaphor Analysis is not merely an analytic tool but a crucial means for understanding and engaging with the evolving patterns of political representation and power in African democracies.

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EXAMINING OTTO ANDERSON'S EXISTENTIAL CRISIS IN THE FILM *A MAN CALLED OTTO*

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Abstract

The examination of existential crisis in film has gained increasing relevance as cinema provides a representational space capable of illuminating complex human struggles with meaning, suffering, and psychological disorientation. In this context, the present study aims to analyze the construction of existential crisis and psychological recovery experienced by the protagonist Otto Anderson in the 2022 film *A Man Called Otto*. Employing a qualitative approach through interpretive textual analysis, this study aims to analyze key scenes, dialogues, and character developments that depict Otto's existential rupture and subsequent transformation. The analysis is guided by Irvin D. Yalom's Existential Psychotherapy, which outlines the four fundamental existential conditions, and Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy, which emphasizes meaning reconstruction through creative, experiential, and attitudinal values. Findings reveal that the film portrays Otto's existential crisis through his encounters with loss, isolation, and diminished purpose, expressed in pervasive despair and withdrawal. The study further demonstrates that Otto's psychological recovery unfolds through the gradual restoration of meaning facilitated by relational connectedness, prosocial engagement, and the capacity to transcend personal suffering. This research highlights the potential of cinematic narratives to serve as interpretive sites for examining meaning-making processes and existential transformation within contemporary human experience.

Keywords: *a man called Otto; existential crisis; film analysis; logotherapy.*

1. Introduction

Film as a medium of visual storytelling has long been recognized as a significant site for examining psychological states and human meaning-making processes (Munawaroh & Guatri, 2023). The 2022 film "A Man Called Otto" is particularly relevant to existential and psychological studies because it foregrounds the lived experience of despair, purposelessness, and emotional disconnection, core dimensions of existential crisis. Through its portrayal of Otto Anderson, a widower struggling with profound loss and identity collapse, the film offers a narrative that mirrors key constructs in existential psychology and thus warrants systematic academic investigation (Almuslina, 2024).

Otto's emotional deterioration following the death of his wife and his involuntary retirement positions him not merely as a grieving individual but as someone experiencing a collapse of meaning structures (Farhat M. F., 2025). His recurring suicidal ideation reflects a deeper disturbance that extends beyond normative grief, signaling a crisis in purpose, agency, and relational belonging (Rayyani & Nugroho, 2025). His rigid behavior, irritability, and social withdrawal may be interpreted as defensive mechanisms rooted in a masculine ideal that valorizes emotional restraint and hyper-independence (Zahra R. A. Q., 2025). These psychological and cultural pressures collectively intensify his existential collapse, demonstrating how individual suffering intersects with broader social expectations.

The concept of existential crisis itself has been defined as a psychological condition characterized by emptiness, disconnection, and a loss of meaning (Deng *et al*., 2025). Their cross-cultural findings reveal that existential suffering emerges when individuals fail to reconcile internal meaning with external demands a pattern that closely parallels Otto's condition. However, while psychological studies have examined the universality of existential distress, few have connected these theoretical insights directly to cinematic representations of meaninglessness and recovery. This gap highlights the need to analyze how films like *A Man Called Otto* visualize abstract psychological constructs through narrative and character development.

From a broader socio-cultural perspective, Grant G. B. (2017) argues that contemporary Western societies are experiencing an "existential crisis at the peak of individualism," where weakened communal bonds contribute to growing loneliness and purposelessness. Otto's transformation in the film from isolation to renewed relational engagement, reflects this cultural transition toward what Grant identifies as an emerging collective search for purpose. While this context enriches the interpretation of Otto's journey, previous analyses of the film have not systematically linked his psychological transformation to existential theory.

Therefore, this study addresses the research gap by examining how Otto Anderson's existential crisis is represented and reconstructed within the film. Specifically, this study investigates how his experiences of despair, isolation, and disrupted identity illustrate the process of meaning reconstruction as conceptualized in existential psychology. Guided by Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy and Irvin D. Yalom's Existential Psychotherapy, this research aims to analyze how the film portrays Otto's movement from existential collapse toward renewed purpose through relational connection and self-transcendence.

2. Literature Review

Existential psychology provides a crucial lens for analyzing Otto Anderson's psychological deterioration and recovery because it directly addresses the human struggle with meaning, suffering, and isolation, the core tensions depicted in *A Man Called Otto*. This theoretical domain is particularly relevant to Otto's crisis, as his despair stems from the collapse of his existential structures following personal loss. While Frankl's logotherapy and Yalom's existential psychotherapy serve as conceptual foundations, previous studies applying these frameworks to cinematic narratives remain limited, especially in contemporary analyses (2020-2025). Therefore, this section synthesizes key existential theories and evaluates recent scholarship to establish a coherent analytical framework for interpreting Otto Anderson's crisis in the film.

2.1 Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy

Frankl conceptualizes human existence as driven by the will to meaning, a motivational force that enables individuals to transcend psychological suffering (Frankl, 1957). When this drive is obstructed, individuals experience existential frustration, resulting in an emotional void known as the "existential vacuum" (Nweke, 2022). This condition marked by apathy, disorientation, and purposelessness aligns closely with Otto's psychological paralysis after his wife's death.

However, scholars have extended Frankl's ideas by examining how meaning-making processes manifest in contemporary contexts, including digital and narrative media. These studies emphasize that cinematic characters often embody symbolic struggles for meaning, suggesting that logotherapy offers a productive interpretive tool for film analysis (Monteiro & Carvalhais, 2023).

Frankl proposes three pathways to meaning: creative values, experiential values, and attitudinal values (Nweke, 2022). In this study, these values function as analytical categories for interpreting Otto's behavioral and relational transformation across key scenes. Thus, rather than summarizing the theory, the present analysis operationalizes Frankl's constructs to evaluate how meaning reconstruction is cinematically portrayed.

2.2 Irvin D. Yalom's Four Givens of Existence

Yalom identifies four fundamental existential concerns death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness which shape human psychological experience (Kryuchkov, 2018). Contemporary studies expand this view by demonstrating how these existential givens manifest in modern psychological distress, particularly through narratives of grief and loneliness (Farzan *et al*., 2024). Despite this growing body of work, applications of Yalom's framework in film studies remain scarce, indicating a research gap that this study seeks to address.

Rather than merely summarizing Yalom's theory, this research uses the four givens as interpretive indicators for analyzing the film's depiction of Otto's despair. For example, Otto's repeated confrontations with death serve as cinematic triggers for existential anxiety, while his relational withdrawal illustrates isolation as a destructive psychological force. This approach positions Yalom's model not as a descriptive tool but as a systematic framework guiding the interpretation of existential conflict within specific scenes.

2.3 Existential Crisis in Modern Contexts and Research Novelty

Recent scholarship highlights the increasing relevance of existential crises in modern societies characterized by digital overload, weakened interpersonal bonds, and rising individualism. Youvan D. C. (2024) argues that constant exposure to global suffering without meaningful agency intensifies psychological emptiness among contemporary individuals. Similarly, Vyas K. (2024) emphasizes that existential needs for significance have become more pronounced in environments where collective identity structures deteriorate.

These insights contextualize Otto Anderson's crisis within broader cultural patterns. His emotional isolation and meaninglessness do not merely reflect personal trauma but symbolize a wider contemporary condition: the struggle to sustain purpose amid societal fragmentation. Therefore, modern research does not merely supplement the theoretical

foundation; it underscores the relevance of analyzing Otto's crisis as part of a broader existential phenomenon in 21st-century life.

Despite the theoretical richness of Frankl and Yalom, most previous analyses apply their frameworks either clinically or separately (Nweke, 2022; Farzan *et al*., 2024). Few studies integrate both perspectives to analyze narrative media, particularly film. The originality of this study thus lies in combining Frankl's *will to meaning* with Yalom's *four existential givens* as an integrated model for cinematic interpretation.

3. Research Method

This chapter outlines the methodological procedures employed to examine the existential crisis of Otto Anderson in *A Man Called Otto.* It explains the research design, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures used to ensure methodological rigor and interpretive depth. Each subsection is connected through a consistent emphasis on qualitative textual analysis as the primary method.

3.1 Research Design

To provide a clear foundation for how this study approaches the film, this subsection explains the qualitative framework that guides the interpretation of existential elements within the narrative.

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive textual analysis design, which is appropriate for analyzing films as cultural and psychological texts. As Brondolo (2021) notes, interpretive analysis enables researchers to uncover latent meanings embedded in narrative, dialogue, and visual composition. This approach is particularly suitable for examining existential themes because such phenomena-meaning, despair, freedom, and responsibility are not measurable through quantitative variables but must be interpreted through symbolic and narrative structures.

The object of this study is the 2022 film *A Man Called Otto.* The film was selected based on three criteria:

(1) its explicit portrayal of an elderly protagonist experiencing an existential crisis;
(2) its narrative emphasis on grief, meaninglessness, and interpersonal reconnection, elements that align with existential psychology; an
(3) its contemporary relevance, allowing analysis of modern expressions of existential distress within popular cinema.

Treating the film as a complex cinematic text, this study examines not only plot events but also cinematographic cues, emotional expression, and dialogic nuances that contribute to Otto's existential transformation. Thus, the research design provides a coherent methodological foundation linking existential theory, filmic representation, and interpretive analysis.

3.2 Data Collection

Before outlining how the data were analyzed, this subsection describes the structured procedures used to ensure that all relevant filmic elements were accurately captured and documented.

To ensure systematic and comprehensive data acquisition, the data collection procedure followed several structured stages. First, the film was viewed five times in full,

involving both initial holistic viewing and subsequent focused viewing sessions. This repeated and active viewing ensured familiarity with narrative progression, recurring motifs, and emotional dynamics, thus enhancing analytical rigor (Allsop *et al.,* 2022).

Second, relevant data were extracted in the form of explicit scenes, key dialogues, symbolic actions, and emotionally significant moments that depict Otto Anderson's existential crisis and recovery. A total of 42 scenes and 68 dialogue excerpts were documented. Each data point was transcribed verbatim and accompanied by descriptive annotations addressing visual framing, character expression, sound, and contextual significance.

To maintain consistency and reliability, the researcher employed a coding sheet with preliminary thematic categories derived from Frankl's and Yalom's frameworks (e.g., *death anxiety, isolation, loss of meaning, attitudinal values*). The coding process also incorporated reflexive memo-writing to track interpretive decisions. Additionally, supporting materials such as published scripts, film reviews, and scholarly commentaries were consulted to enhance data triangulation, ensuring that the interpretation did not rely solely on subjective impressions.

3.3 Data Analysis

To clarify how the collected data were transformed into interpretive findings, this subsection details the step-by-step analytic procedures used throughout the study.

The data analysis followed a multi-phase interpretive procedure, integrating theoretical coding, comparative reading, and thematic synthesis. This section describes the analytic steps rather than the theories themselves to avoid repeating the literature review.

1. Phase 1 Open Coding. All collected scenes and dialogues were coded using existential categories derived from both Frankl and Yalom. Codes included *despair, purposelessness, isolation, death confrontation, freedom avoidance,* and *attitudinal shifts*. This phase allowed the researcher to identify recurrent representations of Otto's existential condition (Elliot, 2018).
2. Phase 2 Theoretical Categorization. In this phase, the initial codes were organized into two structured frameworks:
   - Frankl's Logotherapy, focusing on manifestations of the existential vacuum, the will to meaning, and the three value pathways (creative, experiential, attitudinal).
   - Yalom's Four Givens, used to classify Otto's narrative moments related to death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness.
3. Phase 3 Comparative Existential Reading. The term "comparative" refers to the cross-examination of filmic data through both frameworks, not a comparison between films. Scenes were analyzed to determine how Frankl's and Yalom's concepts converged or diverged in explaining Otto's crisis. This enabled a layered interpretation, showing how different existential theories illuminate different aspects of the same narrative event.
4. Phase 4 Thematic Synthesis. Findings from both frameworks were synthesized to produce higher-order themes such as *rediscovered meaning through relational bonds* and *transformative confrontation with mortality*. This synthesis allowed the study to answer the research questions holistically.

To establish trustworthiness, the study employed credibility strategies through repeated analysis, confirmability through reflexive notes, and transferability by clearly documenting analytic procedures. Although the study analyzes publicly available film material, ethical considerations were observed by respecting intellectual property, refraining from unauthorized distribution of copyrighted content, and ensuring accurate representation of all sources cited.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

The qualitative analysis of *A Man Called Otto* identifies three core narrative findings:

(1) Otto's psychological decline following the loss of his wife and career, characterized by suicidal ideation, irritability, and social withdrawal;
(2) the emergence of relational catalysts particularly Marisol and her family, that gradually interrupt his destructive patterns;
(3) the development of renewed meaning through purposeful action, re-engagement with community life, and emotional transformation.

Several key scenes support these findings, including Otto's first suicide attempt where he states "I have nothing to do anymore", the flashback sequence of his accident with Sonya, his reluctant help toward neighbors, and the final scene depicting his emotional reintegration within the community. These scenes function as empirical anchors for applying Yalom's and Frankl's theoretical frameworks in the subsequent discussion (Menzies & Menzies, 2024).

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Confrontation with Death and Existential Isolation

Death emerges as the dominant existential given shaping Otto's crisis, manifested both in the loss of his wife, Sonya, and in his obsessive preoccupation with his own mortality. Otto's repeated suicide attempts through hanging, carbon monoxide poisoning, and the use of a firearm illustrate an intensified form of Yalom's "death anxiety" (Farzan *et al*., 2024), In one suicide scene, Otto whispers to his late wife, "Sorry Sonya… I can't do this without you", revealing his belief that life has become uninhabitable without her presence.

This trajectory reflects the process described by Heidenreich *et al.* (2021), who argue that death anxiety can gradually shift toward existential acceptance when individuals confront mortality directly rather than avoiding it. Otto's repeated encounters with death, though initially destructive, eventually open the psychological space necessary for an acceptance-oriented reorientation of his life.

Sonya's death fractures Otto's foundational worldview and plunges him into profound existential isolation, heightening his awareness of his fundamental separateness. In Yalom's terms, this isolation emerges not merely as loneliness but as an ontological rift in which Otto perceives himself as cut off from the shared fabric of human existence. Early scenes of Otto patrolling the neighborhood and admonishing residents are therefore not genuine forms of social engagement; instead, they represent defensive responses to this isolation, functioning as coping mechanisms aligned with Rayyani and Nugroho's (2025) description of control-seeking behaviors. By imposing rigid order on his surroundings, Otto

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attempts to regain psychological stability in a world that now feels foreign and devoid of coherence.

Figure 1

Sonya and Otto had an accident

At the same time, Otto's responses also reflect Frankl's notion of the existential vacuum, in which the loss of a meaningful attachment such as Sonya creates an internal void that the individual attempts to fill through habitual or compulsive behaviors. Otto's rigid routines, solitary meals, and refusal of Marisol's early attempts at connection demonstrate his struggle to find meaning beyond his grief. Frankl emphasizes that meaning is rediscovered not through withdrawal but through self-transcendence, the capacity to move beyond the self toward values, relationships, or responsibilities. Otto's inability to engage with others in these early scenes signals that he has not yet reoriented himself toward any meaningful external commitment, reinforcing the convergence between Frankl's and Yalom's viewpoints: existential isolation and loss of meaning operate simultaneously, each deepening the other.

4.2.2 The Burden of Freedom and the Experience of Meaninglessness

Otto's forced retirement marks a direct confrontation with Yalom's existential given of freedom. His life had previously been structured by clear routines and stable identities his profession as an engineer and his long-standing marriage to Sonya. With the dissolution of both anchors, Otto faces unstructured freedom, resulting in days empty of purpose and direction. This burden of unbounded freedom leads directly to the fourth existential given: meaninglessness. Deprived of his roles as husband and worker, Otto falls into what Frankl identifies as an "existential vacuum" (Nweke, 2022). Otto's lament, "I have nothing to do anymore, reinforces the collapse of his former purpose".

Figure 2

Otto's suicide attempt by hanging

This transition reflects Mickūnas's (2022) argument that existential crisis often occurs "between two life-worlds," as Otto oscillates between his former structured existence and the void of his post-retirement life. His irritability, rigidity, and compulsive behaviors surface as symptomatic expressions of an "emptiness syndrome" (Deng *et al*., 2025), grounded in his inability to locate stable meaning or self-worth.

Otto's gradual shift from passive resignation to active responsibility aligns with Frankl's notion that freedom is inseparable from responsibility. As Terao and Satoh (2022) explain, individuals find meaning when they consciously respond to life's demands rather than remaining immobilized by loss. Otto's later decisions helping Marisol, supporting Reuben, and re-engaging with his community represent a subtle but significant movement toward responsible action as the foundation for meaning reconstruction.

4.2.3 Otto's Existential Crisis Through Yalom's Framework

Otto's existential vacuum gradually begins to fill as he is compelled to re-engage with the world through purposeful action, demonstrating Frankl's notion of creative values. Marisol's persistent presence functions as a transformative catalyst that interrupts Otto's isolation and pushes him toward relational and practical involvement. During their driving lesson, Marisol confronts Otto directly: "You never listen! You always think you know everything!", a moment that forces him to acknowledge his relational barriers.

At the same time, each of Yalom's existential givens becomes observable in Otto's gradual behavioral shift. His early withdrawal reflects isolation, which begins to loosen as he forms meaningful bonds with Marisol's family. His willingness to teach Marisol and repair household items signals an emerging acceptance of freedom and responsibility, replacing the avoidance and rigidity that previously dominated his routine. Caring for the stray cat demonstrates a subtle confrontation with death, as Otto starts valuing life outside himself after repeatedly attempting to end his own. Finally, meaninglessness initially represented by his purposeless routines begins to dissolve as his actions acquire direction and relational significance. These shifts culminate when Otto uses his engineering expertise to prevent Reuben's eviction, symbolizing his rediscovery of competence and social purpose key steps in mitigating his existential crisis (Binder, 2022).

Figure 3

Otto taught Marisol how to drive

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4.2.4 Finding Meaning in Suffering (Attitudinal Values)

The deepest dimension of Otto's recovery unfolds through attitudinal values, which Frankl (1957) identifies as the highest form of meaning when suffering is unavoidable. Otto's transformation becomes evident in how he reframes his relationship with past trauma. Initially, memories of Sonya appear only as sources of grief that reinforce his despair. However, as Otto opens up to Marisol, these memories shift from isolating pain to shared humanity. The scene where he recounts Sonya's miscarriage exemplifies this shift: the memory ceases to be private sorrow and becomes a moment of empathetic connection. Otto evolves from the stance of "I cannot live without her" to a more life-affirming commitment to honoring her memory through his continued existence.

Otto's shift in attitude aligns with broader psychological insights on how individuals reconstruct meaning through suffering. Grant G. B. (2017) argues that contemporary existential crises often stem from a collapse of previously held sources of purpose, and that recovery depends on the individual's ability to reorient suffering into a purposeful direction. Otto's willingness to reinterpret his grief not as an endpoint but as a moral and emotional obligation to honor Sonya's memory illustrates this attitudinal transformation. His grief becomes a catalyst that pushes him toward renewed engagement with others, demonstrating that meaning-making emerges not from the removal of suffering but from a conscious decision to confront it. Otto's developing ability to face pain with intentionality highlights the broader existential principle that suffering gains value when integrated into a framework of purpose.

4.2.5 The Ultimate Meaning Through Relationships (Experiential Values)

Otto's existential reconstruction culminates through experiential values, particularly those anchored in love and relational presence. The narrative explicitly charts Otto's movement from existential isolation, in Yalom's terms, toward Frankl's concept of self-transcendence, where meaning is realized beyond the boundaries of the self.

Figure 4

Otto's friends (Marisol and her husband)

His relationship with Marisol and her family evolves into a new emotional foundation, providing the relational depth necessary for existential renewal. The final scenes depicting Otto as "Abuelo Otto", symbolize his attainment of higher meaning through generativity and

connection. These findings resonate with studies identifying "social concern" (IzzulHaq *et al*., 2025) and shifts in "relational dynamics" (Anjani & Suastini, 2025) as central to Otto's transformation. Viewed through the lens of logotherapy, Otto's relational integration is not merely behavioral but reflects the fulfillment of the will to meaning through acts of genuine self-transcendence (Frankl, 1957).

4.2.6 The Ultimate Meaning Through Relationships (Experiential Values)

Otto's emotional trajectory illustrates a gradual transition from existential despair toward acceptance, a process that reflects interplay between Yalom's death-centered anxieties and Frankl's emphasis on meaning reconstruction. As Heidenreich *et al*. (2021) observe, individuals confronted with mortality may develop acceptance when they integrate the reality of death into their meaning system rather than resisting it. Otto's eventual willingness to form new bonds and assume responsibility for others demonstrates the logotherapeutic principle that meaning emerges through action, responsibility, and relational presence (Terao & Satoh, 2022). This transition is further illuminated by Vos (2022), whose findings suggest that overcoming existential isolation is a precondition for the reestablishment of psychological coherence. Together, these perspectives help contextualize Otto's transformation within a broader existential framework that bridges both theoretical traditions.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *A Man Called Otto* (2022) effectively addresses the research objective by illustrating how an individual's existential crisis can be understood through Yalom's existential psychotherapy and resolved through Frankl's logotherapy. The analysis shows that Otto Anderson's confrontation with death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness aligns closely with Yalom's four existential givens, while his gradual movement toward purpose reflects Frankl's three pathways to meaning. Rather than merely depicting the character's emotional decline, the film articulates the psychological mechanisms underlying existential suffering, including the emergence of an existential vacuum, the burden of radical freedom, and the isolating effects of grief. Otto's journey ultimately reveals that meaning reconstruction is not the removal of suffering, but the reinterpretation of suffering through agency, relational bonds, and attitudinal transformation.

Beyond its narrative function, the film provides a valuable model for understanding how existential theories operate within contemporary cinematic storytelling. By integrating Frankl's and Yalom's frameworks, this research contributes to expanding the academic discussion on how film can visualize psychological struggles and demonstrate pathways of human resilience. The findings underscore that cinema can serve as a meaningful medium for exploring universal concerns about purpose, mortality, and connection, offering insight relevant not only to film scholars but also to psychological practitioners and future research on grief, identity, and existential recovery.

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INCLUSION OF THE SEHANANWA DIALECT IN GRADE 10 LEARNERS' SEPEDI ACADEMIC WRITING: AN ANALYSIS OF DIALECTAL INTERFERENCE

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Abstract

Home Language learners always face multiple challenges in their formal writing activities. One of these is the frequent inclusion of dialects in their academic writing. There seems to be an unresolved argument regarding whether dialects should be included in the academic writing of a standard language or not. This article aims to analyse how Sehananwa-speaking learners include their dialectal orthography in the Sepedi academic writing. This is a qualitative study located within the interpretivism paradigm. Essays from 4 learners were purposefully sampled using a document review as a data collection method. Thematic steps were incorporated to analyse the collected data. Findings demonstrate that spoken variety plays a great role in differentiating Sehananwa as a dialect and Sepedi as a standard language. Speech sounds and lexicons reflect some gap between Sehananwa and Sepedi, notwithstanding the fact that both languages are sociolinguistically bound. It is also noted that Bahananwa-speaking learners are rigid in maintaining and sustaining the linguistic features of their dialect. The question remains: how is a language deemed officially standard while its dialectal orthographies are not recognised in formal discourses? For language development, vocabulary enhancement and learner academic performance, this study recommends that the incorporation of dialects such as Sehananwa should be allowed in formal settings like educational spaces.

Keywords: *academic writing; dialect; language development; learners; Sehananwa; Sepedi; speech sounds*

1. Introduction

Sepedi Home Language learners appear to encounter several challenges whenever writing formal essays (Maledu et al., 2023). Apart from other crucial essay components such as content, structure, coherence, and orthography, to mention but a few, one conspicuous challenge seems to be the inclusion of their regional dialects. As it stands, it is not clearly instructed by both home and additional language teachers whether learners should utilize their dialects in formal writing or not. Disheartened, when learners include their dialects in academic writings, they are often marked as “errors” or rather “non-standard usages” by language instructors. This brings to the fore the issue of language standardization. According

to Mojela (2008), the majority of the Sesotho Sa Leboa (Sepedi in the case of this study) dialects were excluded in the standardization of the language. He cites factors such as the influence of colonialism, lack of government coordination, the influence of early writers and publications, and missionary activities, which led to the Sepedi dialect of the Sekhukhune district being elevated and seen as 'prestige' over others. Mojela further opines that other dialect speakers are forced to accept the foreign standard language. Similarly, Rakgogo and Zungu (2022) reveal that the elevation of Sepedi from a dialect to an official standard language was perpetuated by qualitative variables such as the arrival of the first Sepedi speakers in Ga-Sekhukhune, the missionary activities that started in 1860, the codification of the Sepedi and Sekopa dialects, and the translation of the Bible and other religious texts into Sepedi. On the other hand, Mphahlele (2013) maintains that all dialects form part of the standard language. He further submits that dialects are the foundation of the standardized languages. Reading between the insights of the above three sociolinguists, Mojela (2008), Mphahlele (2013), and Rakgogo & Zungu (2022), it is evident that linguistic justice has never been done to the dialects of Sepedi language. As it stands, other dialects are not allowed in formal contexts except Sepedi-related varieties. For instance, dialects such as Khelobedu, Sepulana, Seṭlokwa, and Sehananwa are deemed as "errors" when learners attempt to incorporate them into their formal classroom activities. These learners are prohibited from writing and speaking the language they practice at home. Little do we forget that the spoken language influences the written language in the sense that a person normally writes what he/she actually speaks, in the spoken language that does not apply the grammar or the syntax rules of the language (Botlholo & Makgato, 2025).

Having said this, we are of the opinion that Sepedi as an official language should not be static; thus, it should allow for multiple regional languages to form its development. As Ntseli and Mokala (2023) opine, non-standard languages should be utilised in formal settings such as by learners in the classroom, in order to bridge the gap between informal and formal languages. Therefore, this article aims to pedagogically scrutinise how Bahananwa-speaking learners incorporate their dialectal speech sounds and words in a Grade 10 Sepedi Home Language formal essay writing.

2. Literature Review

Dialects face negative criticism when they are supposed to be incorporated into South African classroom discourses (Ramothwala, Cekiso & Mandende, 2025). According to Probyn (2009), dialects are prohibited in classroom contexts. This is a matter caused by the South African government's ignorance of the non-standard languages in the classroom contexts (Department of Basic Education, 2011), thus leading to teachers in some provinces and districts discrediting the dialects. On a lighter note, Majola (2022) heard that teachers wish for the inclusion of the isiXhosa dialect isiBhaca into the formal classroom. He suggests that this would greatly lead to the academic improvement of learners who seem to struggle with receiving instructions from isiXhosa language. In a study conducted by Botlholo and Makgato (2025), it was found that urban contact varieties such as Sepitori and Tsotsitaal are posing a serious threat to Setswana as a standard language, leading to poor learner academic performance. On an interesting note, they ultimately suggest that urban contact variety words should be adopted into Setswana to improve learners' academic performance. In making reference to Sepitori as a mixed language, Wagner, Ditsele and Makgato (2020) submit that Sepitori has a significant influence on the writing system among Setswana learners. This is merely because these learners ordinarily speak Sepitori on a daily basis. In

drawing reference from the essays of isiBhaca learners, Majola (2024) submits that no matter what, dialects will always influence the orthography of the standard language. What is raised by the above scholars is not an exception to Sehananwa-speaking learners. On an ordinary basis, they speak Sehananwa at home and on the streets; however, they are compelled to speak and write Sepedi when at school. This is reflected during oral presentations and formal writings, wherein teachers regularly mark their dialect as "language error"; therefore, unfairly deducting marks from learners.

Textual errors in Sepedi essay writing for learners are mainly caused by the usage of dialects (Rakgogo & Mandende, 2022). Various dialects such as Khelobedu, Sepulana, and others spoken across Limpopo and Mpumalanga influence how learners write in Sepedi, and change the official script taught in schools (Ramothwala, Segabutla, Rwodzi & Thokwane, 2021). These dialects differ considerably in terms of phonology, morphology, and lexicon, which contributes to orthographic inconsistencies in students' writing. Ramothwala and colleagues (2021) looked at the challenges that Grade 8 Sepedi-speaking learners face when writing Sepedi Home Language words. They say learners are unable to write Sepedi because it is not their mother tongue. They further reveal that learners are not failing because they do not read, but they are failing because they are only doing Sepedi in school. They point out that learners, when writing in their essays, make mistakes such as changing the suffix "-ng'' to "-ni", for example, "sekolong" (Sepedi) and "Sekoloni" (Khelobedu). This is able to show us that learners are writing the wrong spelling as they are writing -ni instead of -ng, which in Sepedi is a locative suffix. Mphahlele (2013). Mahlangu (2022) support this view, as they investigated the influence of Khelobedu dialect on Sepedi essay writing among Grade 8 learners in Mopani District. Their study reveals that Khelobedu-speaking learners often apply certain dialect rules and elements to their writing, leading to writing errors. Their study is shedding light on the current research, focusing on Grade 10 learners as it reveals the root causes of dialect-influenced spelling errors among Sehananwa-speaking learners.

Letsoalo (2021) focused on the influence of Khelobedu on the writing output of Sepedi Home Language. He was investigating how learners fail to write Sepedi because they speak Khelobedu as a mother tongue, and end up writing non-Sepedi words in Sepedi activities. This means that Khelobedu leads learners to make spelling mistakes because they write non-Sepedi words. However, the present study is of the view that Khelobedu dialectal words should not be deemed incorrect, but rather should be accepted to accommodate non-standard languages in educational space. Similarly, Kgari (2022) researched the influence of the Sepulana dialect on Sepedi learning in the Sabie area of Mpumalanga province in South Africa. Their findings indicate that learners are accustomed to using specific Sepulana phonetic structures in the writing of their Sepedi essays. For example, learners replace "*rata"* with "*lata*" based on dialect, resulting in incorrect writing in formal essays. This implies that pronunciation patterns from learners' dialects are highly influential within Sepedi Home Language writing. This brings to the realization that learners who speak Sepulana dialect face writing challenges when they start writing in the Sepedi language. These challenges are particularly evident in spelling, where dialect-based approaches have become more apparent after years of using home languages in schools. In all cases, failure to distinguish Sepedi from dialects increases the frequency of spelling errors. The two studies by Letsoalo (2021) and Kgari (2022) will be handy to the present study, which focuses on the inclusion of the Sehananwa dialect in the writing of Sepedi essays. While the above studies focused on the influence of dialects, Makgabo and Makgobatlou (2024) conducted an imperative study on a language interfering with another. Their study focused on

independent schools in Tshwane schools wherein Sepedi learners seem to confuse Setswana words with Sepedi words. It is said in the study that this is caused by the Tshwane environment, wherein both Setswana and Sepedi are dominant languages. This proves that not only dialects interfere in the standard language's academic writings, but also other recognized languages do so.

Rakgogo and Zungu (2022) maintain that all official standard languages were dialects before. This view is more parallel to that of Mphahlele (2013), who suggests that dialects are the foundation of all standard languages. That being said, Ramothwala (2024) in his imperative article articulates that learners whose languages were not fortunate enough to be elevated to official status are compelled to take one of the official languages as home languages; hence, the term 'home language' seems problematic in the Basic Education system. This implies that such learners are prohibited from writing their dialects in formal writing activities. This leads to learners such as Sehananwa speakers being imposed on the use of Sepedi. This brings unfairness to the speakers of these dialects, in particular, learners who receive academic punishment for including their home dialects in educational discourses.

As for Mojela (2010), Sepedi is one of the underdeveloped languages due to its lexicon as compared to European languages like English. To improve the language from its present position, this study shall recommend that non-standard varieties be recognized in order to increase Sepedi vocabulary and remove the stigmatization of the dialects.

Theoretically, this study is underpinned by Weinreich's (1953) model of bilingual interference. According to the model, there are phonetic, grammatical and lexical interferences among bilinguals. Simply put, there is usually an occurrence of these three linguistic elements among learners learning different languages. The challenge posed in this study is on the phonetic and lexical interferences of the Sehananwa dialect on Sepedi academic writing. The present study did not detect any grammatical interference between the two languages. It is only speech sounds and vocabulary (words) that Sehananwa-speaking learners incorporate into their Sepedi essays.

3. Research Method

This article followed a qualitative approach as it focuses on analysing data from the written discourses rather than from the numerical discourses. It is located within the interpretivism paradigm, which was useful in critically engaging the learners' writing skills, focusing on the prototypes of the inclusion of the Sehananwa dialect in their formal Sepedi academic writing. The study population arises from a school in Malebogo West Circuit in the Limpopo province of South Africa. This site is purely relevant to the nature of this study because the society speaks Sehananwa, a dialect spoken by Bahananwa ba Malebogo in the Senwabarwana sub-district. A purposive sampling technique was applied to choose essays from 4 Grade 10 learners for the purpose of this study. Scripts from the four learners were sampled because of their rich information on the inclusion of their dialect. The selection criteria were applied through the assessment given to all learners in the Grade 10 classroom. Document analysis is a method of gathering information by looking at what learners have produced in writing. The document analysis was done by giving Grade 10 learners essay titles to choose one of which to write an essay. The researchers monitored learners in the classroom to verify that the writing is done by them; then focused on identifying dialectical aspects in their essays. This data collection method provided strong evidence of pupils' dialectal orthography (Guba & Lincoln, 2020). Data were analyzed within a thematic lens.

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Chivanga and Monyai (2021) state that data analysis entails organising, breaking down data into manageable units, coding and interpreting data in order to have a better understanding of a phenomenon. The nature of this article allows a thematic approach as a method of data analysis, thereby categorising the phonetic (speech sounds) and lexical (words) interferences per learner. A tabular form is used as a method of demarcating participants' data. Ethically, the study followed all the ethical protocols and was granted permission number TREC/955/2025: PG from the affiliated university.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the *Sehananwa sa Malebogo* dialectical words which are written by learners in their formal essay activities. Results will be presented in a tabular form, with the first column displaying the dialects, the second column showing their Sepedi equivalents, and the third column providing translation equivalents.

Table 1
Learner 1

Sehananwa Dialects	Sepedi Equivalents	Literal translations
hapeleja	**g**apele**tš**a	*forcing*
hae	**g**ae	*home*
diya	di**r**a	*doing*
ikereya	**ikhwetša**	*Finding oneself*
tlhorisiwa	**hl**ori**š**wa	*Being terrorised*
tlaiswa	tlai**š**wa	*Being abused*
mahayeng	ma**g**aeng	*Rural villages*
thusiwe	thu**š**wa	*Being assisted*
bua	**bolela**	*speaking*
emisiwa	emi**š**wa	*Being stopped*

The table above shows that Bahananwa and Bapedi vary in the pronunciation and writing of certain speech sounds. On the first two examples given, Bahananwa pronounce the velar sound /g/ as the glottal sound /h/. The sound /r/ is often silent. Few examples show that Bahananwa pronounce and write the alveolar ridge /s/ in the place of the palatal of /š/.

Table 2
Learner 2

Sehananwa Dialects	Sepedi Equivalents	Literal translations
ntše	**du**tše	*Staying/sitting*
Itlwa/etlwa	I**kw**a/e**kw**a	*Hearing oneself*
kwadile	kwa**t**ile	*angry*
tshwanetše	**sw**anetše	*Must/should*
mathada	mathat**a**	*problems*
buwe	**bolele**	*talk*

Learner 2 also writes how he/she speaks, retaining all the features of his dialect. Commonly known as "*dula*" in Sepedi, it is known and written as "*nna*" in Sehananwa-present tense of "*ntše → dutše*". What is pronounced from the velar as /kw/ in Sepedi will be pronounced and written as an alveolar ridge sound /tl/ in Sehananwa, as reflected in the

words "*tlwa→kwa*". The /t/ from Sepedi speakers is the same as /d/ for Bahananwa speakers, considering words such as "*kwadile→kwatile*" and "*mathada→mathata*". The verb representing speaking in Sehananwa is "*go bua*" rather not "*go bolela*" for Sepedi language speakers.

Table 3

Learner 3

Sehananwa Dialect	Sepedi Equivalents	Literal Translations
moo yena	Mo **go** yena	*On him/her*
Mo mosadi	Mo **go** mosadi	*On a woman*
Papa o	papa**go**	*His/her father*
Yena a nyake	Yena **ga** a nyake	*He/she does not want*
Ntwe nnyane	**Selo** se sennyane	*A small thing*

In most cases, Bahananwa ignores the velar sound /g/; sometimes replacing it with the glottal sound /h/. The four examples from learner 3 in the above attest to this. The sound or letter /g/ was ignored altogether. Referring to any unnamed thing, Bahananwa utilised the words "*nto/ntwe*" while Bapedi speaks of "*selo*".

Table 4

Learner 4

Sehananwa Dialects	Sepedi Equivalents	Literal Translations
otlwesa	**G**o kwe**š**a	*To feel*
nkhadimotja	Nk**g**adimo**la/tša**	*Shouted me*
Tlwesana botloko	**Kw**e**š**ana bo**hl**oko	*Hurt each other*
O ya	O **a**	*He/she is…*
beya	be**a**	*To place*

Learner 4, as observed in almost all scripts read, does not include the sound /g/ in their writing. They write "o", leaving out "g", which according to standard language (Sepedi) should have come initially. One other conspicuous speech sound that differentiates Sehananwa and Sepedi is the lateral fricative /tlh-hl/. While in Sepedi it is pronounced and written as it is, in Sehananwa it is pronounced and written as /ṭl̥/. Sehananwa also makes use of semi-vowel insertion as reflected in the last two examples.

Considering the above data from the four learners when writing Sepedi Home Language essays, it appears that indeed there is always dialectal interference in the academic formal writing. Data shows that, among others, the phonetic and lexical interferences from Sehananwa dominate the Sepedi essays. Speech sounds and words written by Sehananwa-speaking learners reflect their environmental influence within the standard language. As it stands, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for learners who do not use Sepedi speech sounds in their homes and streets to utilise them in the classroom. The environment always plays a major role in determining language usage in the classroom (Makgabo & Makgobatlou, 2024; Botlholo & Makgato, 2025).

5. Conclusion

The fact that some dialects are not allowed in Sepedi academic writing proves the claim that dialects are being side-lined and stigmatized in formal contexts like educational spaces. Literature read in this study established that dialects receive unfair treatment from the elevated dialects (now official standard languages). Dialects such as Sehananwa,

Selobedu, Seṭlokwa, Sepulana, Sekone, SeMoletši, Sehlabini, and Sepitori to mention but a few, remain unrecognised in Sepedi educational spaces. In this study, we commend Sehananwa-speaking learners who seem patriotic in their language, and thus call for the South African government, through statutory bodies like PanSALB and Basic Education ministry, to revisit the inclusion and utilization of non-standard varieties of schools. The notion of diversifying and pluralizing Sepedi academic writing by allowing and recognising the inclusion of dialects in educational spaces should be enhanced for the sake of language development, vocabulary improvement, and learner academic performance. While this study attempted to cover the empirical gap between a dialect (Sehananwa) and the standard language (Sepedi), future studies may critically close the theoretical and methodological gaps in dialectal interference scholarship. This study might have collected limited data, but a light was shed on the mistreatment of dialects in educational spaces.

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THE CLASSROOM SOCIAL INTERACTION INFLUENCE ON THE NON-EFL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASS

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Abstract

Social interaction is one important factor that influences the process and resulting quality of non-EFL students in English-speaking classes. It could both support and decrease them. This study investigated the social interaction influences on the non-EFL college students' English-speaking process and results. It aims to find out which social determinants cause students to engage communicatively in speaking tasks. The research was conducted by applying the qualitative descriptive design that involved observing classroom conduct, making field notes, and analyzing interactional processes to explore how students and lecturers built a social environment. The findings reveal four main data points that affected the quality of interaction, including the student noise and side-talk, non-routine greetings and leave-takings, mobile phone interference beyond control, and the lecturer's management techniques in the classroom. The condition had an impact on the atmosphere of emotions through how students feel confident, focused, attentive, and motivated to talk. In general, the results emphasize the necessity of transparent social routines, behavioral guidance, and regulation in digital use to foster a good speaking environment in Indonesian higher institutions. It is suggested that mastering these non-pedagogical phenomena will be crucial for minimizing affective barriers and achieving speaking betterment, particularly in the case of developing communicative confidence among non-English majors.

Keywords: *management class; non-EFL students; social interaction; speaking class .*

1. Introduction

Speaking skills are one of the main factors in communicative competence, and students need them to express ideas, clarify meaning, and construct meaning they need for purposeful social interaction. The speaking skills tend to construct the communication skills that need to be trained and developed in various programs. According to the study by Amiruddin and Iffati Chaira (2023), developing speaking skills in intensive programs, including English Camp, enhances fluency, vocabulary knowledge, and communication preparedness among students in an EFL setting. The correlation between speaking skills and communication competencies cannot be avoided by influencing each other. Wang et al. (2024) highlight the relation between speaking proficiency and communication competence because they claim that fluency is linked to strategic thinking skills, as well as to managing

interactions. The skills need practice rather than being full of theoretical study. Furthermore, it was revealed in the study that application of direct methods had a significant impact on students' spoken English, as the mean score went up from 30.6% to 71.3% following two cycles, and is more productive than theoretical study alone (Rahayu, 2022). The skills require demonstrative performance. It is a productive skill that requires both students and instructors or lecturers to be active.

One factor that influences the process and result of speaking practice and class is the social interaction among students in a class program. Speaking activities require interaction; students' success in carrying out the activity highly depends, apart from their linguistic competence, on the management of social interaction in the classroom (Intang et al., 2023). It is caused by the position of the speaking activity, which requires good social interaction. On the other hand, it requires good preparation from both lecturers and students. A positive social environment enhances peer cooperation, casual interaction, and regard for one another—all of which are vital for communicative competence (Setiyono et al., 2024). Students' motivation increases, and they attain greater fluency in speaking when teachers implement social constructivist principles, including techniques such as pair work, small-group discussions, and reflective dialogue (Komaruddin et al., 2021). This demonstrates that two-way communication is not an additional optional element but a fundamental necessity of success in a speaking class.

The social management of the speaking classroom is one of the main factors that professional English lecturers need to prepare. It requires both the program and management to be conducted in all sections by the lecturers across all sections, even within a campus or study program. The position of social management concerns anticipating the potential unfavorable conditions of speaking practice in social interactions. Management is critical and should be handled by both the lecturers and the study program. Social management is a crucial step in providing reasonable accommodation for students (Ahmed, 2024). The social management system for social interaction could be implemented through a well-prepared program or through the lecturers' spontaneous actions. Both of the action types could be carried out in a coherent process. Successful social control in the speaking classroom depends on guiding tactics and sensitive direction from the lecturers to create a productive learning environment (Jones et al., 2014). This management involves anticipating potential social liabilities, empowering students with positive things to say, and nurturing students to speak and consider how they might interact. Besides, the teachers are also controllers and initiators in shaping classroom interaction to keep students motivated and actively participating, thereby creating good learning conditions. This indicates that social management is crucial for appropriately catering to learners' varying needs and achieving optimal speaking practice outcomes.

The social interaction problem and its management are also necessary for non-EFL students in the English-speaking class. The nature of speaking classes in non-EFL university contexts, where English is not the students' main discipline of study, varies from common EFL or ESL contexts for a great deal (Devlin et al., 2024). Students in Non-EFL classes are likely to go through extensive periods with less proficiency, lower motivation, and little experience of authentic English spoken exchange, so that the social domain has become a more influential factor on students' achievement (Zakarneh et al., 2021). These features produce special social situations where students must depend on peer behaviour, class climate, and lecturer instructions to feel comfortable participating (Saleh & Darwis, 2024).

Furthermore, non-EFL students occasionally import communication norms from their home social world into the classroom that do not necessarily fit English-based ways of speaking and interacting. Due to these dissimilarities, findings from the EFL/ESL mainstream setting may not be fully applicable, hence emphasizing why non-EFL environments need to be studied.

Initial observations indicated that some non-academic social factors were affecting classroom interaction; there was too much student noise, students used cell phones consistently during speaking activities, and there was a lack of basic social routines like greeting each other. These factors affected the feeling of comfort in the students and therefore, also caused low participation in speaking-promoting practices (Hagerman, 2020). Recent studies indicate that effective management enhances classroom engagement and participation and intrinsically drives motivation (Aziza et al., 2024). The English lecturers of the study program need to involve a social interaction strategy based on the social study discipline to ensure a good plan that will minimise management failure. As class management is an ever-evolving approach, lecturers need to adapt spatial arrangements, design speaking activities, choose relevant topics, and influence class morale to achieve the goals of the speaking programme (Muluk et al., 2021). In this research, the management of speaking classes is the focus of the observation, intending to reveal the causes, effects, and implications of the system. The speaking class management also needs to be managed very well. Class management is a dynamic process, so the lecturers must adapt the class environment to the speaking program. While previous research has addressed teaching and pedagogical methodology in other areas of speaking classes, a minimal amount seems to be known about non-pedagogical educational social factors, such as general classroom noise, technology distractions, barren social routines, etc., which is crucial information, especially when stepping outside the EFL realm into higher education.

The problems of social interaction in non-EFL students in the speaking class need to be investigated deeply. According to the research conducted by Suryadi, (2023), students' participation in speaking classes is directly limited by several obstacles related to social involvement, like shyness, worry of speaking, and unwillingness. It could reveal how to improve their maximum speaking skills by removing the disturbing factors. In line with the findings of Haniyah et al. (2024) that identifying disturbances – such as domination of some students, noise in the room, and non-supportive interaction - has a significant impact on students' ability to speak optimally. The lecturers should be able to recognize the problem inside the English-speaking class as a means for their future improvement prospects. Lecturers' understanding of classroom social dynamics, lecturers' sensitivity to reading the atmosphere in the class, is essential for developing responsive and enhancing teaching strategies for speaking and learning (Khasinah, 2017). The problems need to be formulated in a comprehensive understanding for both lecturers and students, so that it is a good input for improvement. In addition, the social interaction problem inside the speaking class is a potential academic and scientific area to be investigated deeply by the researchers of this research.

This study attempts to investigate the principal social factors affecting students' learning comfort and speaking achievement in non-EFL students in the speaking class. The analysis addresses classroom noise, cell phone utilization, and social schedules that channel conduct in the classroom explicitly. This study hopes to enrich grounded guidelines for

lecturers in handling social dynamics in classes to produce a sociable, supportive, and successful learning space. The field research was implemented through empirical methods like: direct classroom observation, interviews, and study of students' speaking behavior to describe what really happens in the classroom, to provide some practical guidelines for enhancing speaking instruction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Interaction in non-EFL Students' Speaking Class

Social interaction in the English-speaking classroom is one of the determining factors for the quality of the process and result in the non-EFL speaking class. Social interaction is indeed a fundamental catalyst for second-language development, as it provides contexts in which learners negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and co-construct knowledge, all of which directly contribute to improved speaking skills (Devlin et al., 2024). According to (2022), social affordance, meaning meaningful interaction opportunities with peers and teachers, boosts learners' willingness to communicate and encourages more genuine oral language production. Technology-enhanced social spaces, as moderated social groups and collaborative platforms, serve as valuable extensions of classroom interactions (Sasabone et al., 2024). When these platforms are well scaffolded, they increase learner engagement and provide informal practice opportunities beyond face-to-face sessions, thus enriching language exposure and use (Zakarneh et al., 2021). The social interaction factors are essential to determine how the non-EFL speaking class will flow effectively. The social factor condition refers to the position of how a lecturer can manage the class effectively.

Nevertheless, social interaction in foreign-language learning settings is not free from challenges. Sociocultural constraints, such as status differences among participants, learner anxiety, and entrenched classroom norms, can limit productive interaction. The non-EFL students' various personality influences the learning conditions (Fitria, 2024). On the other hand, the absence of real-life opportunities to practice English, so it is recommended to apply close real material, such as videos, to help the non-EFL students to practice their English-speaking skills (Saber, 2025). Teachers need to explicitly address these dynamics by managing power relations and fostering a supportive affective climate to ensure equitable participation. These insights imply that interactional tasks should be thoughtfully designed to create low-pressure conditions that encourage negotiation of meaning. The free-stress environment influences the success of the students' progress and learning results (Dewitt & Moosavi, 2022). The social interaction problem could be determined by social interaction.

2.2 Speaking Classroom Process

The speaking classroom is a complex dynamic process in which task design, teacher facilitation, peer models, and assessment methods interact to shape learning (Komaruddin et al., 2021). Some research emphasises that procedural elements (task types, grouping, timing, teacher feedback) are as essential as content. Task-Based learning (TBLT), role playing, and digital storytelling are among the most effective methods for achieving rich, meaningful outcomes in recent classroom research (Fitri et al., 2022). These approaches promote authentic exchange and scaffolded practice, leading to improved fluency and complexity. Classroom management, seating arrangements, rotation policies, and teacher support influence how interactive tasks are produced; good management increases opportunities for equitable allocation of time for conversation and informal feedback from

peers (Atunnisa et al., 2024). The speaking classroom always needs continuous development.

The speaking classroom needs special preparation from the lecturers or instructors. The lecturers must process it in the productive class. The class is a dynamic system to be developed because it could follow the condition of the students, which could always change at any time. CLT or communicative language teaching is one method that is recommended to construct a good speaking classroom condition (Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021). The condition of the speaking class requires specific conditions that could be carried out by the lecturers in a proper manner. The construction of cultural use of English could create an atmosphere of using English properly (Hossain, 2024). The speaking process in a classroom for non-EFL students requires both English linguistic and non-linguistic maintenance. The promotion of intercultural communication and material is recommended for non-EFL students (Hossain, 2024). The process of the English class is dynamic.

2.3 Speaking Skills

Based on (Nurkhofifah et al., 2023), speaking is conceptualized as a multifaceted skill composed of several interrelated subskills, such as fluency, accuracy, complexity, and interactional competence, rather than a unitary ability. These subskills respond differently to various instructional strategies. Studies from Sayow and Marsevani (2024) consistently show that pedagogies focus on role-play, repeated performance, and combined with feedback. These task cycles include planning time and peer review protocols, which reliably improve fluency and students' willingness to communicate. However, improvements in accuracy tend to require more explicit instructional focus and structured corrective feedback cycles.

Recent innovations in assessment leverage automated and e-assessment tools, refined rubrics, and self- and peer-assessment methods to deliver timely, formative feedback to students (Faisal et al., 2024). While Sulastriana et al. (2024) highlight the promising potential of automated scoring systems, especially for providing rapid feedback, they also raise caution about the validity and reliability of these tools when evaluating complex interactional competence in speaking. Moreover, contextual factors like students' motivation, sociocultural attitudes, and classroom climate play a crucial role in mediating how instructional interventions translate into observable improvements in speaking skills. This deep understanding encourages educators to adopt differentiated instructional and assessment approaches tailored to the specific subskills and learner contexts to optimise speaking skill development.

2.4 Classroom Management as a Social-Interactive Tool

Management of speaking classes as a social-interaction process can be seen to contribute to creating predictable structures and routines on one hand, and social rules, psychological safety, and opportunities for the learners to take interpersonal risks in the other. Studies find that carrying out speaking activities develops students' oral skills, encourages them to cooperate during the performance of a task, and raises their level of interest, so communication of objectives can enhance class participation in oral work (Hue, 2024). Furthermore, the well-organized arrangement of students can contribute to their feeling secure and understanding as a member of the social group, so that it also decreases social anxiety. Classroom management also includes immediate interactions of the teacher,

for example, praising contributions and redirecting disruptiveness, along with reminding students of the rules for interaction; these kinds of behaviors express respect, trust, and psychological safety, which are essential antecedents to communicative risk-taking (Gunersel et al., 2023). The English lecturers take a critical position as managers to manage and reduce any negative potential impact in English English-speaking classes.

In addition, well-run classes also reduce the occurrence of non-academic interruptions, which are detrimental to speaking practice. For instance, specifying rules for interaction and developing a respectful speaking environment can minimize off-task chat and disruptive noise that disrupts classroom conversations (Australian Education Research Orgnisation, 2023). There is evidence to suggest that anxiety in these situations is lower, and that students are more likely to take up speaking opportunities (Lin et al., 2025). Moreover, the implementation of individual classroom management strategies related to students' choices and interaction styles helps teachers construct more inclusive speaking opportunities, which in turn increases the quality of engagement and willingness to communicate.

2.5 Non-Pedagogical Social Considerations: Phones, Noise and Social Rhythms

Meanwhile, in contemporary speaking classrooms, mobile phone use presents itself as a non-pedagogical social factor that can interfere rather disruptively with interaction. Research suggests that when using smartphones, students may practice non-task-related activities (social media, texting), distracting them from speaking (Deng et al., 2025). Such diversions interrupt the cognitive presence of students, diminishing meaningful social presence, disintegrating sequences of interaction, and lowering the total number of times they speak orally (Ochs et al., 2024). Beyond external distraction, personal reasons cause off-task phone use, resulting in emotional and cognitive disengagement (Rozgonjuk et al., 2019).

Another important social factor is classroom noise, due to both task-related movements and unmanaged peer conversation. The loud noise disrupts students' listening to one another, comprehending and constructing their talk, establishing a shared understanding of content, all of which challenge the continuity of the speaking context. Although there is limited direct research on L2 speaking class noise, the general mobile use literature indicates that classes are regularly interrupted every few minutes, and such uncontrolled social behavior increasingly undermines interaction quality (Kim et al., 2019). Efficient control of these behaviors, thus, is necessary to sustain interactional progress. Management of facing the noise could be trained by the students by using a mask, which makes them accustomed to ignoring the noise positively (Pycha et al., 2022). The English teachers or lecturers also have an important task to prepare the students' minds to face the noisy classroom when practicing English speaking.

Also, practices happening at the beginning of class (e.g., greeting and answering questions) and in the classroom contribute a lot to relationship building and decrease student anxiety. Especially greetings as adjacency pairs, such as "Good morning" —"Good morning," form culturally patterned sequences for establishing psychological closeness and social unity (Sultan, 2020). Thus, the routine also helps students to feel a stable social structure and to have little unknown, which obviously lowers their affective filter, making them more willing to join in. The English teachers must apply various principles, such as the principles of creating a learning environment, constructing interest, providing guidance, and communication practice, to create good English learning conditions (Han & Lee, 2024).

Without these classroom routines, students might feel socially isolated, which causes an increase in speaking anxiety, and they will be less motivated to participate (Kurniawati & Lintangsari, 2024). The training of basic speaking in simple rounds or in pairs is a possible solution to prepare students' mental condition.

2.6 Challenges in Non EFL Contexts: Social and Emotional Barriers

Sociocultural and affective challenges that specifically influence speaking performance are even more pronounced when learners are not English majors in Non-EFL contexts. In these academic situations, English has become a compulsory or optional subject that may contribute to lowering the learners' intrinsic motivation and naturalistic exposure to use English (Putra & Suparni, 2023). Furthermore, a study among non-English major students in Indonesia shows that socio-cultural factors (e.g., class status, identity, and peer perception) have a significant relationship with a high level of speaking anxiety (Vanalestari & Setyarini, 2025). These students might be perceived to lack the cultural capital and environment to express themselves in English purely; all these take down their engagement level when participating in class discourse.

Moreover, a study on speaking anxiety for foreign language speaking for non-majors indicates that fear of negative evaluation, also communication apprehension, and low self-efficacy are some typical emotional obstacles. For instance, anxiety in speaking has been reported among non-English major students. According to Nuralika et al. (2023), due to the fear of being judged by friends and a lack of confidence in their language skills. The anxiety is magnified in classrooms that do not have structured social routines (e.g., students who are not engaging in rapport-building strategies like greeting and buddy checking)—the absence of these touch points can increase the sense of isolation and reduce participation. Code-switching is one solution to reduce non-EFL students' anxiety in English-speaking practice (Sholikhah & Isnaini, 2024). In addition, the use of technology could help to reduce the students' anxiety in practicing English speaking (Nguyen, 2024). The solution to reduce anxiety must consider the ethical conditions and their impacts.

Lastly, the sociocultural characteristics of the students in non-EFL settings add another level of complexity to speaking dynamics. Research demonstrates that attitudes of social status, identity, and culture lead to speaking anxiety (Vanalestari & Setyarini, 2025). The students tend to represent multi-fluent socio-cultural backgrounds; their emotional challenge is more than linguistic and heavily framed within its social practices; thus, the teacher needs to bring into play classroom management and socially responsive routines to construct a psychologically safe speaking environment (Zahid & Ghani, 2018).

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

The design of this research is an observational case study in the schema of descriptive qualitative research. The qualitative design is a research approach that aims to understand a phenomenon by observing and examining the meaning of a person's behaviour and the ways people interact, without using statistics (Nowell et al., 2017). This study adopted this design since the goal was to discover social factors that are complex and context-specific about how students behave in speaking engagements. Instead of quantifying variables statistically, this method enabled the researchers to engage in

meaning-making that was inherent in students' actions, peer interactions, and classroom discourse through direct observations and interpretation.

3.2 Research Participant

The participants are all 24 first-semester students of Class 2 of the S1 Economic Development Study Program of the Faculty of Economics in the odd semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. They were getting English as a general subject in their bachelor's degree program. This class was deliberately chosen because it comprised the non-English major learning setting in which students are usually encountered with communicative confidence, classroom interaction, and speaking comfort issues. The choice of this context allowed the researchers to directly examine how real social processes that take place in speaking activities have an impact on student engagement and learning outcomes within an actual teaching setting.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

The process of collecting data was conducted on 08 September 2025 by applying classroom observation as the primary technique. The researchers applied a non-participant classroom observation borrowed from Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen (1982) to obtain data. Before the observation session, the researchers communicated with the English lecturer to secure his formal consent and arrange for the research protocols to be consistent with the classroom schedule. In the context of this classroom session, the researchers attended a class and observed social interactions that took place during instruction, including side talk among students, student noise (i.e., overhead conversations involving more than one group), mobile phone use, peer response to such behaviour, and lecturer's reaction to these activities. Field notes were systematically taken in a research journal to document verbal and nonverbal interaction. Photographs were made to aid the data collection of the classroom environment and enhance the accuracy of observations. Post-session reflective notes were documented to capture important social situations and interaction dynamics remembered from the class. The principal data collection tools used in this study were the researchers' field notes and a camera.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed based on the interactive qualitative model that Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., and Saldaña (2018) recommended. First, the raw observational data were sifted and arranged to concentrate on the information about classroom social interaction and communicative behaviour. The organised data were then written in a descriptive narrative format to assist the researchers in determining patterns and themes that emerged within students' interactions. The data were subsequently categorised, and categorisations were labelled according to the type and purpose of each interaction: supportive interactions, disruptive behaviour, and avoiding interactions. Finally, the authors constructed interaction patterns, confirmed emergent findings, and related the patterns to already established theories of social interaction and developed speaking skills to make meaningful conclusions.

3.5 Trustworthiness of the Study

Qualitative validation techniques were employed to maintain the credibility of the results. Reliability was improved through in-depth systematic observations and the

application of photographic evidence to unclothe field notes. Reliability was established through the use of systematic data collection and analysis, with the research process being transparent and traceable. To ensure confirmability, all interpretations were grounded in empirical data and related to theory to minimize researchers' bias during the interpretation process. Furthermore, methodological triangulation was used by cross-referencing field notes and visual collection data with classroom observations, making the findings more reliable and verifiable, thus ensuring that each social factor which emerged from our analysis was grounded in multiple sources of references.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on this research, the steps of collecting and analysing the data are presented, along with the data and its discussion. They are presented one by one in a stratified order. It reflects the study's empirical findings.

4.1 The Students' Noise

The students' noise broke the conformable situation for the students who were performing their conversation. Students' noise before and after their pair conversation is one of the disturbing factors in social interaction (Miles et al., 2023). Throughout observation, it was noted that *"a few students at the back of the classroom chatted casually while two other students were performing their dialogues and created clear distractions to the presenters."* Such context made learners who did speaking activities uncomfortable, diminishing their self-assessment and confidence. The process of the before-pair conversation needs to be managed. The lecturer's mistake was not to give a soft warning to them. The lecturer must have been finishing the soft warning before starting the classroom session. In this case, the students must first be given an understanding. They need to correlate the situation with the conduciveness (Nguyen, 2024). Noise is a troubling issue because it can indicate a lack of knowledge of appropriate student behaviour in the classroom. Several studies have found that noisy classrooms during speaking lessons can reduce students' concentration and increase anxiety in students with low abilities, which ultimately affects their speaking performance (Murgia et al., 2023). The noise also discouraged the students' confident to present their best performance. The noise is one crucial problem that encourages the lecturer to manage the situation to be calm.

In transition periods, particularly post-speaking performances, the problem became worse. The observation notes reported that *"Following the completion of the pair performance, student groups immediately began talking over and above one another in an unrelated way, and within a minute from finishing the activity, the class was out of control."* It is because students tend to chat with their friends after the pair conversation, which creates a distraction (Deng et al., 2025). The lecturer must give soft direction before allowing students to have their pair conversations. This step will have a significant impact because unstructured moments can lead students to misbehave, resulting in a decline in student discipline (Yuliana & Park, 2024). This is a crucial situation because they need to be aware of their role in creating classroom chaos. Students need to be recognised by lecturers for their contributions to classroom conduciveness (Dunn, 2023). Students must be able to manage their attitude rather than make a blind statement about their contribution. Students are active participants in maintaining a conducive classroom environment. Building a sense of

shared responsibility between teachers and students has successfully created a cooperative learning environment (V. Fernandes, 2024). The post-speaking performance was disturbed because of the students' noise. It also disturbed the lecturer's effort to review the classroom condition and the students' performance.

4.2 Lack of Social Routines

The forgotten greeting and leaving-taking also contribute to minimal classroom-conducive interaction. The researchers saw in classrooms that *"most of the student presenters just started their performance right away and did not say 'Hi how are you doing?' or, at the end, 'Thank you for watching me,' so that nobody would be interested in listening to them and their friends made side comments".* It is because the students tend to give soft comments to the presenters. So, maintaining classroom conduciveness is a challenging task; students may spontaneously make comments that are not supportive of the lecturer, which can affect the level of effectiveness (Wildan Solihin et al., 2025). In this case, the students tend to practice it unconsciously. The use of greetings and leave-taking is a crucial step in maintaining the audience's attention from the beginning to the end of the pair's conversation performance, which also helps maintain classroom conduciveness (Shields-Lysiak et al., 2020). The students need to realise that giving greetings and leaving-taking is a must in a social interaction. The position of greeting and leaving-taking performance requires students to be more active and interactive in the classroom (Algharabali et al., 2019). Before speaking, using opening and closing greetings also demonstrates cultural politeness norms that foster students' interpersonal sensitivity. Based on the latest research, teaching skills such as delivering opening and closing greetings play a role in creating good relationships in the classroom and instilling respect among peers (Wubbels et al., 2012).

The greeting and leaving-taking hold a crucial role in representing the speakers' respect for their audience. It is why the audience tends to get chaotic when they do not receive the greeting and leave-taking. The presenters or all class members need to be given a soft warning before the class begins (Asuro & Gurindow M-minibo, 2014). The greeting and leaving-taking are strategies to show direct respect and gain the audience's sympathy. It is helpful as a communication skill that shows students' readiness and closure in interactions. This relates to Maslucha et al. (2024), which explains that politeness can foster cooperative communication and social balance in educational environments. The use of greetings and leave-taking must be continually reminded to the lecturers or instructors of every English-speaking program.

4.3 The Use of Mobile Devices

The presence of a mobile phone in the classroom had a dual effect, which was manifested in social interactions and oral participation. During classroom observations*, "it was noted that some students were observed surfing social media or viewing short videos while their partners practised speaking to each other."* The use of mobile phones for entertainment creates an environment that is not conducive to learning in the classroom. The mobile phone tends to make students less attentive to their classmates' performance. Mobile phone use in the proper portion could help students prioritize the appropriate action. The mobile phone application requires the lecturer to be more aware of the classroom conduciveness and the students' attention (Yusuf & Anwar, 2019). It is a challenging task for the lecturer to keep the students from using their mobile phones in the

proper portion. Mobile phone use is a crucial condition for maintaining discipline in students' attitudes. This also negatively affects the use of mobile phones, which, if misused, can lead in a loss of respect and inappropriate behavior (Pariyatin et al., 2023).

However, the observations also raised some positive uses of mobile phones. In one class period, "many students recorded their speaking and played it back on their phone to self-assess after the activity." This finding indicates that mobile devices can help metacognitive development and reflective learning when managed adequately. Yusuf and Anwar (2019) pointed out that teacher-controlled use of smartphones increases autonomous learning and task-based reflection. Likewise, Consoli et al. (2025) conclude that organized digital integration promotes creative learning cultures without losing discipline. Deng et al. (2025) highlighted that balanced digital policies support in turning technology from a distraction into an instructional tool. The results of this study establish that mobile phones are not intrinsically disruptive, but their effect is contingent on clear classroom digital norms and practice monitoring. The positive effect must be kept for the use of the mobile phone so that it will not decrease social interaction in the class. The use of the mobile phone must also be managed so that it will not make the students individual.

4.4 The Lecturer's Classroom Management Strategies

The most significant mediating variable on the general socio-emotional climate of the speaking class was the lecturer's classroom management. Observational notes indicated that *"in response to student noise, the lecturer only interjected a curt 'ssst', no follow-up instruction or strategy was attempted"*. The lecturer must be responsible for controlling classroom conditions because they are the class leader. Control management is the first thing to be given attention to. The lecturers must be wise enough to make a spontaneous decision to manage the classroom. The classroom management can also be included as an official regulation to be kept for the main activity. Students need to have wise lecturers to meet their basic need for controlling classroom conduct (Algharabali et al., 2019). Teachers' emotional intelligence and abilities can contribute to effective classroom management in resolving conflicts quickly. Providing examples of leadership styles—such as empathy, fairness, and consistency—to students will encourage them to be ready to work together (Alex, 2025). The classroom control must be managed wisely by the lecturer to encourage the students to give sympathetic and cooperative responses.

The results also revealed that *"students became visibly more on task when the teacher walked within proximity to noisy students, which connects with clear behavioral routines."* This is consistent with Algharabali et al. (2019) found that physical closeness and the power of connection to enhance both student adherence and emotional safety. Yusuf and Anwar (2019) reported that psychologically informed classroom management creates an environment that feels safe, which reduces communication apprehension. Such a condition is essential for speaking growth because low-anxiety environments enhance fluency, taking risks, and interactional competence. Considering that in well-managed classrooms, learners begin to feel freer to experiment with the language (Atika, 2020). The adaptation could be carried out effectively. Positive control not only creates order in the school but also fosters student independence, instilling in students the initiative to take responsibility for their group interactions. This approach is in line with constructivist theory

in education, which encourages a sense of shared responsibility and reflective learning (Anis et al., 2025; Widodo, 2025).

4.5 Documentation

The documentation of the observation process is presented in two pictures below. It was taken directly in the classroom. The writers would like to show the empirical process of getting the data.

Picture 1
Documentation

Picture 2
Documentation

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that social interactions in the classroom significantly influence students' learning efficiency in English lessons. The findings conclusively indicate that success in non-EFL speaking classes depends not only on teaching strategies, but critically on the effective management of non-pedagogical social factors. The results show that factors affecting the learning atmosphere in the school include student noise before and after speaking activities, the absence of routine greetings and farewells, inappropriate use of cell phones, and lecturers' control of classroom management. These elements directly affect students' concentration, motivation, and confidence in speaking. When these social factors are not adequately addressed, they create a high-anxiety context that is damaging to language learning and that results in reduced speaking performance. A supportive classroom environment can only be created when both students and lecturers are aware of their social responsibility to maintain discipline and respect during the learning process.

This study focuses on the vital role of instructors in leading the class and managing and controlling students through preventive measures and psychological awareness. This research contributes to social practice and theory by serving empirical data from the Indonesian non-EFL university context, where empirical studies on classroom management

and speaking comfort are scarce. This can be done by taking steps to create a classroom atmosphere that supports learning, such as issuing warnings, establishing routine communication rules, and modeling respectful interactions. Well-managed social interaction patterns not only strengthen language skills but also support the development of positive attitudes, cooperation, and confidence in communication among students. Such limitations are not standing; the study is qualitative and based on a single classroom context, so it cannot be generalized.

This research reveals suggestions for English lecturers or teachers and future researchers. The English lecturers must be able to manage the classroom conditions to be conducive to avoiding negative social interaction disturbances. One of the suggested methods is to conduct the commitment of classroom management with the students. The commitment must be managed and reminded continually and softly. The students must be encouraged to give respect to the commitment. In the second position, the future researchers also get an important suggestion. For future research, it would be helpful for researchers to run experimental studies to verify the impact of various classroom management practices, especially controlling cell phone use and strengthening social rituals on speaking effectiveness, and large-scale quantitative studies investigating the relationship between the speaking achievements of students and the classroom social climate.

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PEDAGOGICAL CHANGE IN THE AI ERA: INDONESIAN EFL TEACHERS' VOICES AND CONTEXTUAL CONSTRAINT

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Abstract

This study examines how Indonesian English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers perceive and negotiate pedagogical change arising from the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into language instruction. This research uses an interpretive qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with seven teachers from diverse institutional backgrounds in Sumatera. Thematic analysis identified six key themes: (1) pedagogical change through AI integration, (2) evolving teacher identity, (3) reflective professional agency, (4) contextual constraints, (5) students' engagement and critical awareness, and (6) the need for instructional support and teacher training. Findings indicate that AI tools, such as ChatGPT and Grammarly, have facilitated a shift toward more student-centered, project-based, and reflective teaching practices. Teachers reported a redefinition of their roles from content transmitters to facilitators and mentors, with an increasing emphasis on assessing learning processes rather than outcomes. However, AI integration was hindered by infrastructural limitations, unequal access to technology, and a lack of AI literacy. The study reveals that technological transformation in ELT is not merely technical but also shaped by contextual realities and teacher identity. It highlights the need for context-sensitive professional development and inclusive policy support that enhance teachers' adaptive capacities in an AI-mediated learning environment.

Keywords: *artificial Intelligence; contextual; pedagogical change; teacher; technology integration.*

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most significant developments in education, reshaping instructional and learning practices across disciplines. In the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT), AI-powered tools are increasingly employed to personalize learning, automate assessments, and facilitate language input and interaction (Kovalenko & Baranivska, 2024; Ma & Chen, 2024). While these developments have sparked optimism about enhancing learner engagement and instructional efficiency, their integration also raises substantial pedagogical implications, particularly in settings marked by systemic and infrastructural constraints (Alghamdy, 2023).

In Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language and digital access varies across regions, integrating AI represents more than a technological innovation. It signifies a fundamental shift in how teachers design instruction, support learners, and negotiate their professional roles (Setyaningsih et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of literature discussing the integration of AI in education, most of it focuses on the technological aspects or student outcomes, particularly in the context of language acquisition (Umar, 2024). While these studies offer substantial insights, the experiences of educators, who are pivotal in implementing pedagogical changes related to AI (Celik et al., 2022) and mediating student interaction, are frequently neglected. In Indonesia, where resources are scarce, implementing AI in English Language Teaching (ELT) poses a multifaceted challenge (Prasojo et al., 2020), encompassing institutional, infrastructural, and cultural dimensions (Kizilcec, 2024; Setyaningsih et al., 2024). These challenges significantly influence teachers' decision-making processes, instructional methods, and professional self-perception. There exists a paucity of research on how English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Indonesia perceive and navigate their evolving pedagogical change in the context of AI. Neglecting teachers' perspectives can limit our understanding of educational transformation and overlook the emotional, ethical, and epistemological issues associated with emerging technologies. It is crucial to understand how Indonesian educators address the challenges posed by AI in teaching.

Although previous studies discuss AI integration in education, research rarely examines teachers' lived experiences and pedagogical adjustment, especially in resource-constrained EFL contexts such as Indonesia. The absence of such perspectives limits our understanding of how AI-driven change is negotiated at the classroom level.

Therefore, this study aims to explore Indonesian EFL teachers' perspectives and lived experiences in adapting their pedagogical practices to AI integration, with particular attention to the contextual constraints, instructional shifts, and professional considerations that shape their engagement with AI in ELT.

2. Literature Review

Pedagogical change is generally understood as a deliberate and sustained transformation in teachers' and lecturers' orientations, beliefs, and teaching practices, especially in the context of technology integration and a shift toward more participatory, student-centred learning (Wengrowicz, 2024). These changes extend beyond the adaptation of digital tools and encompass a reevaluation of the Teacher's role, teaching style, instructional goals, and their autonomy in making pedagogical decisions. Within this framework, teaching style plays a central role as a bridge between professional identity and perceptions of transactional distance across various learning environments, whether face-to-face, online, or blended.

However, this change process is often hindered by habitual dispositions embedded in the Teacher's habitus. True transformation, therefore, requires contextual interventions and socio-professional support through reflective communities, such as Faculty Learning Communities. Pedagogical change should be seen as a reflective, contextual, and identity-oriented process that not only changes how teachers teach but also redefines who they are within the 21st century learning ecosystem.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English as a foreign Language (ELT) teaching has opened up new opportunities while also presenting complex challenges, as

highlighted in several recent studies. Al-Khresheh (2024) notes that AI, such as ChatGPT, can offer personalized learning experiences, instant feedback, and contextual simulations that facilitate both independent and interactive learning. In this context, AI serves not only as a tool but also as a catalyst for pedagogical transformation, particularly by enhancing the learning autonomy and engagement of traditionally passive students. However, alongside these benefits, researchers have also identified significant obstacles, including curriculum incompatibility, technological gaps, and ethical and linguistic concerns, that threaten teaching quality. Lai and Lee (2024) further observed that large language model (LLM)-based Chatbots influence not only students' language skill but also their cognitive and affective aspects. Nevertheless, the use of conversational AI in ELT still faces challenges related to dependability, accuracy, and academic integrity, underscoring the need for policy intervention and overall institutional preparedness. Moreover, several studies have begun to explore how integrating AI redefines the Teacher's role.

Beyond the technical challenges, some researchers have explored how AI can support deeper pedagogical aims, such as promoting social justice in language education. A social justice-based pedagogical approach, utilizing AI-generated storytelling, as described by Ramezanzadeh and Ebadi (2025), expands the role of AI in ELT from linguistic aspects to encompass ethical and emotional dimensions. By utilizing platforms such as *StoryNest*, students are encouraged to reflect on social issues, including discrimination and marginalization, through multimodal storytelling. This approach triggers deep emotional engagement, establishes a safe space for self-expression, and strengthens motivation and learning retention.

Grounded in Fraser (2009) social justice theory, AI supports the redistribution of digital access, cultural recognition, and political representation in the language learning context. Thus, recent literature suggests that AI in ELT not only enhances the technical effectiveness of language learning but also creates space for a more inclusive, reflective, and humanistic pedagogical transformation, provided that adaptive educational policies and comprehensive teacher training are in place.

While a growing number of studies have explored the integration of AI in English language teaching, much of the existing literature focuses predominantly on AI's functional capabilities or learner outcomes, particularly in well-resourced contexts. This focus often overlooks teachers' lived experiences in settings where infrastructural, cultural, and pedagogical constraints intersect. Few empirical works offer in-depth, teacher-centred insights into how AI shapes classroom practices and reconfigures teachers' pedagogical identities. Moreover, the interplay between technological innovation and contextual constraints, such as limited access, weak institutional support, and policy ambiguity, remains underexplored in AI-in-ELT scholarship. Addressing this gap, the present study shifts the focus from technological efficacy to teachers' professional meaning-making, offering a holistic perspective on AI integration that situates pedagogical change within localized, resource-limited environments.

In response to the aforementioned gaps, this study aims to investigate how Indonesian EFL teachers perceive and navigate pedagogical change amid the growing presence of AI in language education. Rather than focusing solely on technological adoption, this research foregrounds teachers' voices by exploring how they interpret, negotiate, and make sense of their shifting pedagogical roles in relation to AI-mediated instructional

practice. Specifically, the study aims to (1) examine teachers' conceptions of pedagogical identity in the context of AI integration and (2) identify the contextual constraints that shape their professional adaptation within the classroom and institutional environments. Specifically, this study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. How do Indonesian EFL teachers perceive the impact of AI integration on their pedagogical change and professional identity?
2. What contextual factors shape Indonesian EFL teachers' experiences in integrating AI into their teaching practice?

By adopting a qualitative approach, the study prioritizes depth over breadth, aiming to uncover the nuanced, often underrepresented experiences of teachers in resource-limited yet pedagogically dynamic contexts. Ultimately, the research aims to contribute not only to theoretical discussions of teacher identity and educational change but also to the design of more context-responsive professional development and policy support for teachers facing AI-driven pedagogical transformations.

What distinguishes this study from prior research is its deliberate focus on teachers' pedagogical identity as a dynamic construct that is continuously shaped and sometimes disrupted by the emergence of AI in English Language Teaching (ELT). Rather than treating technology as a neutral instrument, the study critically explores how AI becomes entangled with teachers' beliefs, values, and professional agency. This nuanced perspective enables a deeper understanding of how innovation is interpreted and enacted in situated practice, particularly within the constraints of the Indonesian educational landscape. Furthermore, by highlighting the voices of teachers operating in diverse institutional contexts, the study offers insights that are often underrepresented in global discourse, which remains dominated by perspectives from technologically privileged environments. It is anticipated that the findings will inform not only scholarly discussions on AI and pedagogy but also policy frameworks and teacher development initiatives that are sensitive to the cultural, ethical, and infrastructural realities on the ground. As such, this research makes a timely and necessary contribution to the field by repositioning teachers as active sense-makers in an era of accelerating technological change.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative design to examine Indonesian EFL teachers' perspectives on pedagogical change and the contextual challenges of integrating AI into English Language Teaching. Grounded in an interpretive paradigm (Gichuru, 2017; Pervin and Mokhtar, 2022), the research emphasizes participants' subjective experiences and meaning-making processes in response to AI-mediated instructional changes. This approach is considered suitable for capturing the complex, context-specific, and evolving nature of teachers' professional identities and agency.

3.2 Participant and Sampling

This study involves seven English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers from various educational settings in Sumatra, Indonesia. Participants were chosen through criterion-based purposive sampling, ensuring they met two essential criteria: (1) active teaching status in either public or private primary or secondary school, and (2) prior or ongoing engagement

with AI-related tools in classroom practice. The sample comprised teachers from national, representing a wide range of pedagogical and institutional contexts. The participants' teaching experience spanned from 5 to 20 years, offering diverse perspectives on the evolution of professional identity over time.

Regarding gender distribution, the participants included five female and two male teachers, mirroring the gender dynamics prevalent in the Indonesian teaching profession. The deliberate inclusion of participants from diverse institutional types was based on the understanding that institutional culture and administrative structure significantly influence teachers' pedagogical changes, access to digital infrastructure, and openness to innovation. By capturing this diversity, the study aimed to reveal nuanced differences in how teachers navigate the integration of AI and identify variations in pedagogical transformation across localized contexts.

3.3 Materials and Instruments

The primary research tool in this study was a semi-structured interview protocol designed to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of pedagogical change and the contextual challenges they encounter when incorporating AI into language instruction. The interview guide was crafted using conceptual indicators derived from established frameworks on educational technology integration, ensuring alignment with the study's theoretical foundation and research objectives. To begin the discussion, the researchers posed the following questions:

(1) What is your understanding of AI technology in the context of English language education? (Holmes et al., 2019; Miao et al., 2021).
(2) Have you ever used AI-based tools in teaching? If so, which ones and how did you use them? (Luckin et al., 2016; Selwyn, 2019).
(3) What impact has the use of AI had on the way you deliver English material? (Ertmer et al., 2010; Mishra and Koehler, 2006).
(4) How do you evaluate the effectiveness of learning when using AI assistance? (Holmes et al. 2019; Zhang and Aslan, 2021).
(5) Do you notice any changes in your role as a teacher after integrating AI into your teaching? (Hattie, 2021; Kiril, 2020).
(6) What are the main challenges you face when using AI in English Language instruction? (Selwyn, 2019; Yakob et al., 2023).
(7) How do students respond to the use of AI in the process of learning English? (Blume, 2020; Zemliakova & Shakhmatova, 2023).
(8) Do you feel the need to adjust the curriculum or assessment due to the use of AI? (Mishra & Kohler, 2006; Kimmons, 2016).
(9) In your opinion, can AI replace the role of teachers in teaching English? Why? (Selwyn, 2019; Holmes et al., 2019).
(10) What form of support or training do you need to optimize the use of AI in teaching? (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Miao et al.,2021).

Interviews were conducted using two methods: (1) an online format with open-ended responses, which allowed for asynchronous participation and flexibility, and (2)

individual written interviews, where participants elaborated in narrative form. All responses were collected over two weeks in June 2025.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative data (Byrne, 2022), using a six-phase framework. This process began with familiarization through repeated reading of the interview responses, followed by initial coding to identify meaningful units of information. Codes were developed inductively, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data rather than being imposed a priori. Subsequently, codes were organized through axial coding into broader thematic categories related to pedagogical change, teacher identity, professional agency, and contextual barriers. These themes were then reviewed, refined, defined and named to ensure internal coherence and theoretical relevance.

Data were analyzed manually without the use of qualitative software to facilitate close textual engagement. To bolster the analysis's trustworthiness and credibility, a second researcher independently reviewed and coded approximately 25% of the data. Discrepancies were addressed and resolved through collaborative dialogue, thereby supporting intercoder reliability and the validity of thematic interpretation. This iterative, reflective process ensured that the findings accurately reflected the nuanced perspectives of the participating teachers.

4. Results and Discussion

This study examined how Indonesia EFL teachers perceive and navigate pedagogical changes and shifts in their professional identity resulting from the integration of AI in the classroom, along with the contextual factors influencing their experiences. The findings provide valuable insights into both the transformative potential of AI in teaching practices and the complex challenges that hinder its effective adoption in under-resourced educational settings.

4.1 Results

The data analysis revealed six primary themes that encapsulate pedagogical change and contextual constraints. These themes likely represent key areas where educational practices have evolved or adapted in response to various challenges or limitations within the teaching environment. The identification of these themes suggests a comprehensive examination of the complex interplay between pedagogical approaches and the contextual factors that influence their implementation.

Further exploration of these six themes would provide valuable insights into the specific nature of the pedagogical changes observed and the particular constraints that educators face. This information could be crucial for understanding how teaching methods are evolving, identifying the obstacles that impede progress, and determining which strategies might be effective in overcoming these challenges. Additionally, examining the relationship between these themes could reveal patterns or trends in educational transformation, potentially informing future policy decisions and professional development initiatives for educators.

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Theme 1: Pedagogical Change through AI Integration

The integration of AI has reshaped classroom practices, enabling more student-centered and project-based learning. The teachers reported utilizing tools such as Grammarly, ChatGPT, and Duolingo to scaffold students' writing and speaking tasks. These tools enhanced instructional flexibility, enabling a shift from direct content delivery to more personalized learning experiences. As one Teacher the Teacher emphasized:

> *"I'm more flexible, able to give more project-based assignments, and I use AI tools to help students structure or refine their work."*

This finding aligns with Ertmer et al., (2010), who argue that technology use becomes transformative when it supports pedagogical innovation. In this context, AI functions not merely as a tool but as a catalyst for pedagogical shift, encouraging teachers to rethink classroom engagement and instructional design.

Theme 2: Negotiating Teacher Identity in the Age of AI

The teachers noticed a significant transformation in their professional identity. Instead of merely serving as a content provider, she now embraces the roles of the facilitator and mentor, as echoed by Setyaningsih et al., (2024) and Hattie (2021). With AI handling technical tasks like grammar correction and providing instant feedback, the teachers can focus on guiding students toward a deeper understanding and application.

> *"I now take on more of a role as a facilitator or mentor rather than just a material presenter."*

This transformation illustrates that teacher identity is not static but continuously shaped by evolving pedagogical relationships, reflecting Fraser's (2009) framework of recognition and voice in education.

Theme 3: Professional Agency and Reflective Adaptation

The teachers demonstrated strong professional agency in adapting their assessment practice. They no longer focus merely on the final product but emphasized students' learning processes, including the rationale behind AI-assisted work. This changed in perspective reshaped how they evaluates students' work. Instead of focusing only on the final result, she now pays attention to how students learn and develop their ideas. She's interested in understanding why and how students use AI tools in their assignments. This approach demonstrates that the interviewee is actively involved in the overall learning experience.

> *"I focus more on assessing the process and creativity, not just the final result".*

This reflective stance demonstrates their initiative in maintaining pedagogical integrity while embracing AI. It also aligns with Mishra and Koehler's (2006) TPACK framework, which emphasizes the thoughtful integration of technology, pedagogy, and content. The teachers were deliberate and reflective in ensuring that the use of AI aligned with sound teaching practices and subject matter knowledge. Their approach exemplifies the balance advocated by the TPACK model, where effective teaching with technology requires

coherence between technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical methods, and disciplinary understanding.

Theme 4: Contextual Constraints to AI Implementation

While perceptions are generally positive, several contextual challenges have surfaced. These challenges include unequal access to digital tools among students, limited AI literacy, and occasional inaccuracies in AI outputs.

"*Not all students have adequate devices or know how to use AI properly.*"

These findings align with Selwyn (2019) and Kizilcec (2024), who highlight issues of digital divides and institutional preparedness in low-resource settings. This evidence reinforces the view that AI integration is not only a technical process but also a socio-political challenge that reflects broader inequities in access, infrastructure, and policy support.

Theme 5: Student Engagement and Critical Awareness

Students, particularly those with a penchant for technology, generally showed enthusiasm for AI-assisted learning. However, teachers also raised concerns about students' overreliance on AI and emphasized the importance of fostering critical digital literacy.

"Most are enthusiastic…but there are also some who become too dependent, so I have to remind them to keep thinking critically."

This finding illustrates teachers' dual responsibility: to foster engagement and cultivate critical digital literacy, echoing the social justice lens of Ramezanzadeh and Ebadi (2025) and Blume (2020), which foregrounds student agency and reflective judgment in AI-mediated learning.

Theme 6: Need for institutional support and professional development

Teachers emphasized the importance of practical training, user-friendly platforms, and locally relevant guidelines to support the effective integration of AI into classroom practice

"I need practical training, not just theory, but how to actually use it in the classroom."

This finding aligns with Miao et al. (2021), who recommend structured, hands-on, and context-sensitive professional development programs to empower teachers in the digital age. Such initiatives are essential for strengthening teachers' confidence, pedagogical competence, and adaptive capacity when engaging with AI-based tools.

4.2 Discussion

This study examined how Indonesian EFL teachers perceive and navigate pedagogical changes and shifts in their professional identity resulting from the integration of AI into the classroom, along with the contextual factors that influence their experiences. The findings provide valuable insights into both the transformative potential of AI in teaching practices and the complex challenges that hinder its effective adoption in under-resourced educational settings.

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4.2.1 Interpreting the finding concerning RQ1: Pedagogical Change and Identity Negotiation

The data revealed that teachers' pedagogical roles are undergoing significant transformation with the integration of AI. Participants reported shifting from content transmitters to facilitators and mentors, adopting more student-centered and process-oriented approaches. These findings resonate with the theoretical perspective asserting that pedagogical identity is not fixed but dynamic and contextually constructed (Fraser, 2009).

The redefinition of roles aligns with the TPACK framework (Mishra and Koehler, 2006), which emphasizes the integration of technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge. The implementation of AI tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly has facilitated differentiated instruction and promoted students' autonomy and creativity. Educators have noted a shift in focus toward formative assessment and critical thinking, indicative of a more reflective, process-oriented approach to teaching. This transformation in role perception aligns with Hattie's (2021) assertion that technology should enhance, rather than supplant, teachers' professional judgment. The increasing sense of professional agency among teachers, evident in their adaptation of teaching strategies, assessment criteria, and engagement with the limitations of AI, demonstrates an emerging capacity to negotiate pedagogical identity rather than passively conform to technological change.

The evolution of pedagogical identity also encompasses the moral and emotional dimensions of teaching, particularly when faced with rapidly changing expectations. As Setyaningsih et al. (2024) suggest, integrating AI often disrupts established teaching routines, compelling teachers to reassess their self-perception, purpose, and classroom dynamics. This transformation is especially pronounced in under-resourced settings, where technological adaptation is not merely optional but is laden with emotional, institutional, and epistemological tensions.

4.2.2 Interpreting the finding concerning RQ2: Contextual constraints.

While participants generally had a positive attitude toward AI, they identified several contextual constraints that limit its effective implementation. These include limited digital infrastructure, unequal access to devices, insufficient AI literacy among students, and occasional inaccuracies in AI outputs. These challenges highlight ongoing digital divides (Selwyn, 2019) and institutional unpreparedness. They also align with Kizilcec's (2024) observation that infrastructure and school culture play a decisive role in shaping the trajectory of educational technology adoption.

The Teacher also expressed concern about students' overreliance on AI tools, emphasizing the urgent need to promote critical digital literacy alongside the adoption of technology. This finding resonates with Blume (2020) and Zemliakova and Shakhmatova (2023) concerns about the ethical and epistemological risks associated with uncritical AI use.
Institutional support was found to be limited, particularly in terms of practical training and access to user-friendly, context-sensitive guidelines. These findings align with Miao et al. (2021) recommendations, which emphasize that professional development should be structured, hands-on, and localized to facilitate effective AI integration in diverse educational contexts.

4.2.3 Comparison with previous studies

The findings corroborate and extend existing research on the transformative role of AI in teaching practice. In contrast, much of the extant literature focuses on student learning outcomes or technical punctuational (Umar, 2024). This study emphasizes the pedagogical changes and identity-based dimensions associated with AI adoption. Consistent with Ramezanzadeh and Ebadi (2025), it suggests that AI can foster inclusive and reflective pedagogies, provided that institutional and pedagogical conditions are conducive. Moreover, it challenges the techno-optimist narrative and perceives AI solely as a tool for efficiency, revealing the nuanced tensions and reflective practices that arise during its implementation.

4.2.4 Implications for the theory, practice, and policy

Theoretically, this study contributes to our understanding of pedagogical change as a dynamic construct socially and contextually negotiated rather than static or individually determined. In practice, these findings underscore the need for teacher education programs and in-service training to extend beyond technical instruction by incorporating modules on pedagogical reflection, the ethical use of AI, and adaptive assessment strategies. For policymakers, this study emphasizes the urgency of addressing infrastructure gaps and of designing an inclusive, responsive framework for integrating AI into schools tailored to each context.

4.2.5 Limitations

This study has its limitations. The sample size was relatively small and geographically restricted to the Sumatra region, potentially limiting the applicability of the findings to broader Indonesian or global contexts. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported narratives, while rich and reflective, may be influenced by social desirability bias. Future research could incorporate classroom observations or longitudinal designs to complement self-reported data and capture evolving practice over time.

Future research should explore the intersection of AI, pedagogy, and identity across various educational levels and regions in Indonesia, drawing on insights from pre-service teachers, administrators, and policy actors. Examining how students interpret and internalize AI-supported learning could further illuminate the broader pedagogical ecosystem. Finally, experimental or mixed-method studies could evaluate the measurable impact of AI-related professional development programs on teacher practice and student outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the perceptions and adaptations of Indonesian EFL teachers to pedagogical changes and shifts in their professional identity resulting from the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as well as the contextual constraints that impact their practice. The findings indicate that teachers are experiencing a substantial transformation in their instructional roles, transitioning from knowledge transmitters to facilitators and reflective practitioners. AI tools, such as ChatGPT and Grammarly, have enabled more student-centered approaches, personalized learning, and process-based assessment, highlighting a redefinition of pedagogical identity in the era of AI. Nevertheless, this transformation is accompanied by challenges. Limited digital access, unequal student readiness, and a lack of

structured institutional support have emerged as significant contextual barriers impeding the optimal integration of AI in English language teaching.

The study offers important theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, it supports the view that the teacher's identity is dynamic and continuously negotiated within evolving technological landscapes. In practice, the research underscores the need to develop context-sensitive teacher training programs that prioritize not only technical proficiency but also the ethical, pedagogical, and reflective aspects of AI use. For policy, the findings call for more inclusive and equitable educational reforms that ensure access to digital infrastructure and ongoing professional development in under-resourced settings.

While this study offers important insights, it is limited by its small, regionally specific sample and its reliance on self-reported accounts, which may not fully reflect the dynamics of classroom implementation. Future research could adopt a more comparative orientation, for instance, examining how teachers in different institutional settings or regions negotiate AI-related pedagogical change. Studies could also trace teachers' agency trajectories over time to understand how their beliefs, practices, and identity evolve as AI becomes more embedded in ELT. Incorporating classroom observations or multimodal data would further capture how AI is enacted, resisted, or recontectualised in everyday practice.

Overall, this research elucidates the intricate experiences of Indonesian EFL teachers as they engage with AI integration within a multifaceted educational environment. By prioritizing teachers' perspectives, the research offers a contextualised account of how technological innovation intersects with pedagogical identity, professional judgement, and systemic constraints. These findings provide an empirical basis for developing more nuanced, human-centred AI frameworks that recognise teachers not merely as technology adopters but as active agents shaping the future of ELT.

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TEMPORAL ETHICS AND THE PARADOX OF SCIENTIFIC RESPONSIBILITY IN CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S *TENET*

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Abstract

Amid growing concerns over the ethical risks of accelerating technological development, this study examines how Christopher Nolan's *Tenet* confronts the tensions of temporal ethics and scientific responsibility through a narrative and visual design that functions as a critical reflection on time, agency, and moral consequence. Using a qualitative interpretive design, the study employs film-textual analysis based on Knight's methodological framework and Strano's concept of the "ludic space," while grounding its ethical argument in Hans Jonas's ethic of responsibility. Data were generated through repeated close-viewing of temporally inverted sequences and interpretive mapping of narrative causality. The analysis yields three central findings: *Tenet* transforms determinism into an ethical condition where human agency persists within inevitability; the film reconfigures Hans Jonas's ethic of responsibility by inverting its direction from present-to-future obligation to future-to-present retaliation driven by ecological trauma; and the cognitive struggle of the spectator to comprehend the film's nonlinear story world represents an ethical act in itself, simulating the characters' moral dilemmas under temporal uncertainty. The finding is not merely a science fiction narrative but a critical philosophical allegory for contemporary moral responsibility, challenging the direction, burden, and mandate of technological power across time.

Keywords: *determinism; scientific responsibility; temporal ethics; Tenet.*

1. Introduction

The rapid acceleration of scientific and technological power in the twenty-first century has produced an unprecedented ethical crisis: human actions in the present now possess the capacity to generate irreversible, catastrophic consequences for generations yet to come. This condition foregrounds the contemporary urgency of temporal ethics, the field concerned with long-range, intergenerational moral responsibility. Hans Jonas's seminal Ethic of Responsibility provides a foundational framework for this dilemma, arguing that modern technological civilization demands a new moral imperative one in which the present adopts guardianship over the future in order to prevent existential harm. Jonas warns that technological power, once unleashed, often exceeds the scope of human foresight, making the ethical burden of anticipating future outcomes both imperative and precarious.

Christopher Nolan's Tenet (2020) emerges as an especially potent text for examining this crisis, not simply as a work of time-travel fiction but as a cinematic thought experiment on the inversion of ethical responsibility. While Nolan's earlier films frequently interrogate time, memory, and human agency (Vučković, 2023), Tenet uniquely extends these concerns through its mechanism of temporal inversion, a process in which the entropy of objects and persons is reversed so that they move backward through time. Unlike conventional time travel, inversion renders causality bidirectional, allowing effects to precede their causes. This mechanism is not merely a narrative device but a philosophical provocation that inverts Jonas's ethical model, instead of the present holding responsibility for the future, Tenet depicts a future generation retaliating against its past, reframing responsibility as a conflict moving from future to present. This temporal structure intensifies the dilemma between determinism captured in the film's mantra "what's happened, happened" (Fatkhurridho & Rusdiarti, 2024) and the possibility of moral agency within seemingly inevitable causal loops.

Recent scholarship on Tenet has explored several key dimensions of the film. Studies such as Quinn (2022) analyze its aesthetics of reversed motion and temporal image-making, while Fatkhurridho and Rusdiarti (2024) investigate its deterministic narrative logic. Other commentators, such as Singh (2023), highlight the ecological trauma embedded in the film's premise of a dying future Earth. However, scholarly work has not yet systematically examined Tenet as a philosophical reconfiguration of Hans Jonas's framework of scientific responsibility, nor has it fully analyzed how the film's inverted causality functions as a critique of intergenerational ethics. Although determinism, aesthetics, and physics have been addressed independently, a coherent textual-philosophical analysis linking the film's temporal mechanics to a theory of temporal ethics remains underdeveloped. This absence indicates a critical gap in both film studies and contemporary ethical theory.

This study contributes by offering a film-textual analysis of *Tenet* that reveals how narrative inversion transforms deterministic temporality into an ethical condition a perspective not addressed in existing scholarship. Unlike prior studies that emphasize physics or aesthetics, this research introduces a novel reframing of the paradox of scientific responsibility through the lens of ecological trauma. By examining how the film reverses the directional flow of responsibility from future to present, this paper argues that Tenet offers a powerful philosophical allegory for the escalating moral burdens of scientific and technological power. As technological advancement increasingly blurs the boundaries of causality, agency, and accountability, the film provides a crucial interpretive framework for understanding how the threats of the future are already inscribed within the choices of the present offering an urgent ethical warning for contemporary policy, scientific innovation, and intergenerational justice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Nolan's Philosophical Auteurship and Temporal Aesthetics

Scholarship on Christopher Nolan's filmography consistently frames him as a philosophical auteur whose works interrogate the limits of time, agency, and epistemology. Vučković (2023) reads Nolan through postmodernism, emphasizing his deliberate destabilization of linear narrative to foreground ambiguity as a philosophical condition. In contrast, Doğan (2024) positions Nolan's cinema especially *Tenet* as a defense of modernity, arguing that its structural complexity ultimately restores rational order rather than dissolving it. This tension between postmodern ambiguity and modern reconstruction forms the

aesthetic foundation of *Tenet*, where temporal experimentation becomes an ethical inquiry rather than a mere stylistic maneuver. Quinn (2022) further supports this by analyzing the film's reverse-motion visuality as a temporal aesthetic that reconfigures narrative causality, prompting the viewer to confront time as an active philosophical force.

2.2 Temporal Narratives and Ethical Agency in Cinema

Situating *Tenet* within the broader corpus of non-linear and temporally experimental cinema reveals that temporal structures frequently serve as reflections on agency and determinism. Curry (2023) conceptualizes such films as "time-traveling images," framing temporal distortion as a philosophical instrument for probing consciousness and the limits of human action. Fatkhurridho and Rusdiarti (2024) describe *Tenet* as a closed-loop narrative in which "what's happened, happened," articulating a deterministic ontology that nevertheless requires ethical decision-making. Within this tradition, *Tenet* diverges from earlier works such as *12 Monkeys* or *Minority Report* by forcing characters to resist reverse causality, positioning agency not against the future but against the future's intrusion into the present. This reversal becomes essential for understanding how the film constructs ethical stakes through temporal mechanics.

2.3 Hans Jonas and the Principle of Responsibility

Hans Jonas's *Ethic of Responsibility* provides a foundational theoretical lens for interpreting *Tenet*'s temporal and moral paradoxes. Jonas argues that modern technology possesses an "unprecedented causal reach into the future," thereby dissolving traditional ethical boundaries and creating a new object of moral concern: the continued existence and dignity of future generations (Jonas, 1981, p. 45). Karagjozi (2025) interprets this framework as grounding long-term responsibility in both human and ecological continuity, emphasizing that modern ethics must be preventive rather than reactive. When positioned within this conceptual structure, *Tenet* becomes a narrative thought experiment on the paradox Jonas leaves unresolved: How can responsibility be exercised when the future is already determined or more radically when the threat originates from the future itself? Read through Jonas, determinism in *Tenet* does not negate moral agency; instead, it expands the temporal horizon in which responsibility must operate, binding present action to inverted futurity.

2.4 Methodological Approaches to Film and Philosophy

Because *Tenet*'s ethical argument is inseparable from its narrative complexity, the study employs methodological tools that address both its structural and philosophical dimensions. Knight's methodological framework, which emphasizes systematic mapping between textual features and theoretical constructs, enables a precise alignment between temporal mechanics and ethical interpretation. Likewise, Strano's concept of the "ludic space" clarifies the film's demand for active, game-like viewer engagement, wherein uncertainty and cognitive struggle become part of the interpretive process. These approaches are essential for this study because they reveal how *Tenet*'s inverted temporality enlists not only the characters but also the spectators in ethical labor: comprehension itself becomes an enactment of agency under temporal constraint.

2.5 Scientific Responsibility, Ecological Trauma, and the Research Gap

The intersection between temporal determinism and scientific responsibility frames *Tenet* as a contemporary allegory of ecological and technological crisis. Burri (2018) characterizes science fiction as a cultural medium for projecting technoscientific futures, while Singh (2023) identifies ecological collapse as the film's underlying trauma motivating temporal warfare. In *Tenet*, the crisis emerges not from the reckless misuse of technology but from its desperate mobilization to reverse planetary death. Existing scholarship has examined the film's temporal complexity (Fatkhurridho & Rusdiarti, 2024) and its ecological anxieties (Singh, 2023). However, no study has yet undertaken a sustained philosophical-textual analysis that links *Tenet*'s inversion of causality to a critical inversion of Hans Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility. This gap reveals the necessity of interpreting the film not merely as a puzzle of temporal mechanics but as a direct philosophical confrontation with the limits of forward-looking ethics when futurity turns back upon the present.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a Qualitative Textual–Philosophical Analysis using a close-reading methodology. This design is appropriate because the objective is not empirical measurement, but hermeneutic interpretation, uncovering the latent philosophical and ethical structures embedded in Tenet's narrative construction, temporal inversion, and visual rhetoric. The interpretive orientation draws on Knight's (1993) methodological argument that film analysis should avoid "all-embracing" theoretical closure and instead function pragmatically, allowing theory to emerge from the internal logic of the text. Thus, theoretical models are not imposed deductively, but mobilized as flexible analytical tools responsive to the film's temporal mechanics.

Strano's (2023) conception of the mind-game film as a ludic space further supports this paradigm. Tenet compels the spectator into active epistemic participation through reversibility and narrative opacity, making cognition itself a methodological requirement. Accordingly, the qualitative design treats Tenet not merely as narrative, but as a self-reflexive methodological object whose temporal form dictates how ethical meaning is produced and interpreted.

3.2 Data Source and Unit of Analysis

The primary data of this study consist of the film text *Tenet* (2020), examined through Repeated Close-Viewing and Annotation as the core technique of qualitative textual-philosophical analysis. To strengthen methodological rigor, all annotated scenes, key dialogues, and inversion sequences were systematically coded and organized using a structured spreadsheet, allowing the researcher to classify temporal patterns, ethical themes, and narrative inversions with timestamp-based precision. To ensure analytical clarity, the unit of analysis is specified not at the level of the entire film, but across three distinct textual components that directly articulate the film's temporal and ethical structures.

First, the narrative structure is analyzed through the segmentation of scenes containing inverted causality, chronological disruption, or recursive temporal loops such as the Freeport sequence, the highway inversion, and the final temporal pincer movement. These segments are treated as critical narrative units for tracing how reversed time

functions simultaneously as a structural device and an ethical mechanism. Second, key dialogue and monologues form the discursive unit of analysis, particularly utterances that articulate determinism, agency, and futurity. These lines foreground how the film frames moral responsibility within the constraints of temporal inevitability. Third, the study analyzes visual and aural rhetoric, focusing on mise-en-scène, framing, sound design, and editing rhythm elements that construct the spectator's cognitive struggle with temporal uncertainty.

Data collection follows a three-stage procedure. (1) Initial viewing maps the general narrative and temporal architecture. (2) Systematic thematic close-viewing focuses on sequences involving inversion and ethically charged decision-making, functioning as a process of data reduction. (3) Transcription and time-coding document key dialogues and visual moments with exact temporal markers to support verifiable interpretation. This iterative procedure accords with Knight's (1993) concept of interpretive "interanimation," in which method evolves dialogically with the film rather than imposing a rigid external framework. Likewise, Strano (2023) demonstrates that *Tenet* places the spectator in a "ludic space" that requires active cognitive reconfiguration. Data collection is not passive extraction but an interpretive act compelled by the film's own temporal logic.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis is conducted recursively to mirror *Tenet*'s palindromic temporal structure, allowing meaning to emerge through return, reorientation, and reinterpretation rather than linear progression. This approach reflects Knight's (1993) critique of methodological closure emphasizing open, responsive interpretation and Strano's (2023) argument that the spectator's cognitive labor within the film's ludic opacity is integral to its meaning. Thus, temporal form is treated as an ethical framework: the viewer's interpretive struggle is itself an analogy for acting under conditions of determinism. The analysis proceeds through four interpretive phases.

a. Phase 1 Philosophical Premise (Jonas). Although Jonas is not cited in this subsection, this phase situates the film's future-to-present threat and ecological trauma within the framework of the ethic of responsibility.
b. Phase 2 Textual-Philosophical Mapping (Knight, 1993). Knight's (1993) methodological orientation guides the mapping of narrative causality, especially how the maxim "what's happened, happened" operates both as a deterministic plot logic and as an ethical limit on agency.
c. Phase 3 Spectatorship and Ludic Cognition (Strano, 2023). Using Strano's (2023) concept of the ludic space, this phase interprets how the spectator's effort to reconstruct the inverted timeline becomes a cognitive simulation of the characters' ethical struggle under temporal uncertainty.
d. Phase 4 Synthesis. The final phase synthesizes structural, discursive, and ethical findings to demonstrate how *Tenet* constructs scientific responsibility across bidirectional temporal flows.

4. Results and Discussion

A textual-philosophical analysis of *Tenet*, conducted through Knight's (1993) interpretive methodology and Strano's (2023) "ludic space," demonstrates that the film transforms temporal inversion from a narrative device into an ethical architecture. Rather

than simply representing the paradox of scientific responsibility, *Tenet* makes the paradox experientially felt: through characters who must act ethically within deterministic constraints, through a future that retaliates against the past, and through spectators who must cognitively struggle to understand nonlinear causality.

4.1 The Narrative of Necessity: Inverting Causality and the Persistence of Agency

Building on Burnett's (2022) concept of a "nonlinear storyworld," *Tenet* does not merely rearrange chronology; it constructs a world in which causality itself is bidirectional. This ontological deviation marks the film as a "puzzle film" (Gabelica, 2024; Khouri, 2025) and establishes the deterministic condition under which agency must operate. A central piece of textual evidence is the film's recurring maxim: "What's happened, happened." This line spoken by Neil after the highway inversion and later echoed by the Protagonist anchors the film in a closed temporal loop. The line's placement in key moments confirms that the characters understand the future as fixed and unavoidable, yet they continue acting with urgency.

Figure 1

Poster of Tenet illustrating the concept of a 'nonlinear storyworld'. Source from Tenet (theatrical poster), by Warner Bros. Pictures, 2020.

For example, in the highway sequence, the Protagonist realizes that he himself moving inverted was the masked driver who attacked him earlier in the timeline. Even after realizing the event cannot be changed, he still acts to prevent Sator from obtaining the Algorithm. Similarly, during the temporal pincer movement at Stalsk-12, both Red and Blue Teams must execute their parts of the mission despite already knowing its predetermined outcome. Agency persists not by altering the future, but by choosing one's moral position within inevitability.

This fulfills the paradox central to the film's ethical proposition: determinism does not negate responsibility; it creates the conditions in which responsibility becomes ethically necessary. Thus, *Tenet* transforms linear cinematic ethics where choice is tied to open futures into ethics under constraint, establishing the first major finding: determinism becomes an ethical condition rather than a fatalistic barrier (Bezruchko & Federova, 2024).

4.2 Retaliation from the Future: Reconfiguring Hans Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility

Tenet's temporal conflict originates from ecological collapse, what Singh (2023) terms the "trauma of a dying Earth." This future environmental devastation is the catalyst that

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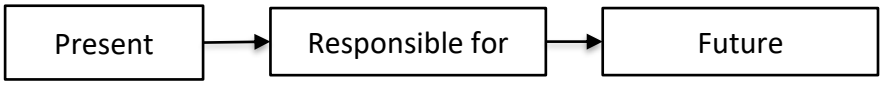
activates and simultaneously transforms Hans Jonas's ethical model. Jonas (1981) argues that modern technological power creates an "unprecedented causal reach" into the future (p. 45), obligating the present to preserve the conditions for future human life. His ethic is inherently forward-facing in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Standard Direction of Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility



The film initially depicts this model through the future scientist who invents the Algorithm. Recognizing its catastrophic potential, the scientist dismantles the device and hides its pieces in the past an act consistent with Jonas's preventative ethic (Karagjozi, 2025). However, Tenet goes further by inverting Jonas's ethical vector. The future, rather than being a passive recipient of our moral obligations, becomes an active, hostile agent attempting to annihilate the present. Sator serves as the relay point: receiving instructions and technology from future generations who believe the only way to survive ecological collapse is to reverse entropy, even if it destroys their ancestors.

Figure 3

Scene Tenet visualizing the concept of ecological trauma and moral responsibility. Source From Tenet Film, by Warner Bros. Pictures, 2020.

By literalizing the future as a moral antagonist, the film forces viewers to confront ecological responsibility not as a distant theoretical concern, but as an immediate threat that "returns" to the present. The determinism articulated in "what's happened, happened" (Fatkhurridho & Rusdiarti, 2024) thus becomes the battlefield upon which two temporal generations confront each other. Tenet reconfigures Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility by reversing its direction, making ecological trauma the engine of future-to-present retaliation.

Table 1

A New Ethical Structure

Jonas's Etchical Direction	Tenet's Ethical Direction
Present → Future	Future → Present
Responsibility as protection	Responsibility as retaliation
Future is voiceless	Future is agential and violent

4.3 The Spectator's Cognitive Struggle as Ethical Act: The Ludic Space of Tenet

Strano's (2023) concept of *Tenet* as a "ludic space" is best understood through the film's formal construction, which deliberately imposes high cognitive demands on the viewer. The confusion often reported by audiences sometimes described as narrative fatigue (Khouri, 2025) is not a flaw but a methodological design. Cinematic techniques enforce this cognitive work:

- Freeport sequence (forward vs. inverted). The Protagonist fights an inverted version of himself, with choreography and sound patterns reversed. The spectator must reconstruct causality manually.
- Highway inversion. The silver Saab moves inverted while the Protagonist moves forward. Dialogue from Neil ("You're not catching the bullet, you're catching it") forces conceptual inversion.
- Battle of Stalsk-12. Editing collapses two timelines one forward-moving, one inverted into a single chaotic battlefield, demanding continuous re-evaluation.

Figure 4

The Battle of Stalsk-12 Scene in Tenet. Source From Tenet, by Warner Bros. Pictures, 2020.

These nonlinear, disorienting structures activate Strano's ludic space. The spectator is compelled into active problem-solving rather than passive viewing. This cognitive effort is ethically analogous to the Protagonist's own struggle. Just as characters must think ethically within a temporally inverted world, spectators must think interpretively within a narrative that violates traditional causality. The viewer's attempt to produce coherence from temporal chaos becomes an ethical enactment: an experiential simulation of acting responsibly under incomplete or contradictory temporal knowledge.

4.4 Key Findings a Synthesis of Temporal Ethics

In synthesis, this analysis identifies three key findings that distinguish *Tenet* as a case study in temporal ethics:

- Determinism as an Ethical Condition. This research finds that the film's determinism ("what's happened, happened") does not negate agency but rather reinforces it. Knowing that something will happen does not change the moral responsibility to see it through, positioning ethics as an act of affirmation rather than free will.
- The Inversion of Jonas's Ethic. The film not only applies Jonas's ethic of responsibility (present for the future) but also inverts it (future against the present). This creates a

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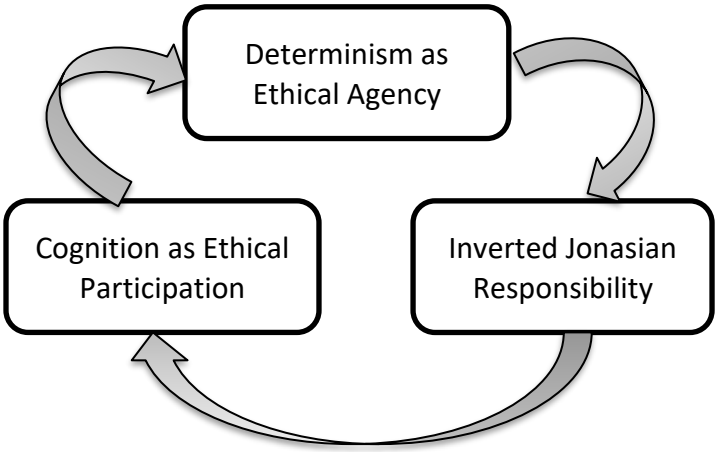
reciprocal model of responsibility driven by ecological trauma, where the present is responsible for creating the trauma and the future is responsible for its retaliation.

- Cognition as an Ethical Act. The most significant finding is that *Tenet* uses its formal complexity as an ethical mechanism. The spectator's cognitive struggle to understand the film (Khouri, 2025) is a simulation of the characters' struggle to act ethically within the nonlinear "storyworld" (Burnett, 2022). Thus, understanding the film becomes an ethical act in itself.

Ultimately, *Tenet* functions not merely as science fiction, but as a philosophical allegory that challenges unidirectional assumptions about time and responsibility. The film warns that scientific and ecological responsibility is no longer a matter of safeguarding the future because the consequences of our actions are already returning to confront us.

Figure 5

Conceptual Diagram of Temporal Ethics in Tenet



5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Tenet* operates as a cinematic thought experiment that exposes the limits of linear moral reasoning in an age of catastrophic technological and ecological risk. Through a nonlinear storyworld characterized by deterministic loops, temporal pincer movements, and inversion mechanics, the film transforms temporal structure into ethical architecture. The analysis confirms three central findings: first, that determinism articulated through the maxim “what’s happened, happened” functions not as a denial of agency but as the condition under which ethical action becomes necessary; second, that the film radically inverts Hans Jonas’s forward-facing ethic of responsibility by depicting a future that retaliates against the present for inherited ecological trauma; and third, that the spectator’s cognitive struggle to reconstruct meaning from nonlinear causality constitutes an ethical simulation, mirroring the characters’ efforts to act responsibly under temporal uncertainty.

These findings position *Tenet* as more than a science-fiction narrative; it is a philosophical allegory that reconfigures intergenerational ethics and reframes scientific responsibility as an act performed within constraint rather than directed toward an open future. The film compels the audience to confront ecological and technological consequences as immediate, recursive pressures rather than distant possibilities. This interdisciplinary contribution demonstrates how complex cinematic forms can serve as

ethical laboratories and suggests future research comparing Nolan's broader temporal corpus or empirically examining how different audiences experience the film's cognitive and ethical demands. Future research may also explore how *Tenet* can be used pedagogically in ethics or film studies courses to help students engage with concepts of ecological responsibility and nonlinear causality.

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ELEMENTARY EFL TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES IN FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY

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Abstract

Learner autonomy is essential in young learners' language development, yet its implementation remains limited at the elementary level, particularly in contexts rooted in teacher-centered traditions. This study examined the understanding of elementary EFL teachers and the strategies they use to foster learner autonomy in EYL classrooms in Indonesia, employing a sequential mixed-methods design. The study commenced with a survey of 34 teachers, followed by semi-structured interviews with four selected teachers. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze survey data, while thematic analysis was applied to interview transcripts. The findings revealed that most teachers have a positive understanding of learner autonomy, with a particular emphasis on their role as facilitators and motivators. Teachers applied various strategies to foster autonomy, such as providing choice in learning activities and giving positive feedback. However, this positive orientation was contrasted by the presence of teacher skepticism regarding young learners' readiness for autonomy. These findings suggest that while the conceptual understanding of learner autonomy is present, its implementation still requires targeted professional development focusing on age-appropriate pedagogical scaffolding and practical tools to move teachers beyond conceptual understanding to consistent autonomous practice.

Keywords: *EFL teachers; learner autonomy; young learners.*

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy (LA), first conceptualized by Holec (1981) in the context of foreign language learning, refers to the learner's capacity to take control of their own learning; setting goals, choosing strategies, monitoring the process, and evaluating progress. Holec emphasizes that this capacity should be developed with expert guidance, not considered an innate trait. David Little (1991) positioned LA as the essential goal of all education, stating that LA is not a method of teaching, nor a luxury for a few, but rather a fundamental dimension of human development. In contemporary language education, LA is increasingly recognized not only as a pedagogical choice but as a normative goal that empowers learners to become reflective and self-regulating agents. This perspective aligns with a broader educational commitment to lifelong learning, in which learners cultivate the critical

awareness and adaptive capacity needed to navigate the ever-evolving linguistic and social demands outside the classroom.

LA, although often associated with adult learners, can also be developed in young learners (Little, Dam, & Legenhausen, 2017). However, English learning at the elementary level has distinctive challenges as children are still developing cognitively, socially, and metacognitively, making them highly dependent on clear direction and concrete activities. Short attention spans and the need to learn through games often encourage teachers to use a teacher-centered approach, even though children do show an early desire to make choices and negotiate (Pinter, 2011). In this context, fostering LA becomes increasingly important because early experiences in making decisions, managing simple tasks, and reflecting on the learning can shape long-term learning attitudes. However, children's developmental needs and their strong reliance on teacher guidance make implementing LA in EYL classrooms a complex process that requires carefully planned strategies and thoughtful scaffolding.

Examining LA in the context of EYL in Indonesia is relevant because of the pedagogical characteristics that have been going on for a long time. Learning in many primary schools was still dominated by a teacher-centered approach, while students are often placed as recipients of knowledge (Firmansyah & Jiwandono, 2022). In addition, the demands of standardized exams encouraged teachers to focus on accuracy, material completion, and hands-on teaching, rather than making room for student-led exploration (Ramadhani, 2017; Abdulah, 2017). Although the latest policy, the plan to return English as a compulsory subject in elementary schools starting from the 2027/2028 school year (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2025), opens up strategic opportunities, many teachers do not yet have practical provisions to implement LA meaningfully. Teacher training programs were also still limited in providing practical strategies to foster LA in young learners (Mujahida & Rus'an, 2019). These conditions make Indonesia an important context for investigating how EYL teachers understand and apply LA in daily practice.

The implementation of LA in the classroom is also greatly influenced by teacher cognition, which encompasses teacher knowledge, beliefs, and experiences (Borg, 2003; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019). In addition, teachers' beliefs about students' ability to be autonomous greatly influence how they design learning activities (Intraboonsom, Darasawang, & Reinders, 2020; Ismail, Yunus, & Zahidi, 2020). In the Indonesian context, teachers' understanding of learner autonomy is still developing. Lengkanawati (2017) found that although many teachers were not yet familiar with the full concept of autonomy, those who had a clearer understanding emphasized that autonomy should not be equated with learning without a teacher. They interpret autonomy not as independent learning, but as giving students opportunities to choose or participate in decision-making. However, these conceptual understandings do not always translate into classroom practice, particularly within environments shaped by rigid curricula, time constraints, and limited methodological training. This discrepancy indicates a knowledge-practice gap that warrants deeper investigation.

Existing studies have investigated the methods or strategies for fostering LA in young learners (Hossain, Manzoor, & Hashmi, 2023; Suharto, Damayanti, & Lengkanawati, 2025; Yeh & Lan, 2018). Furthermore, studies by (Bhattarai, 2021; Nur Yusof, 2021; Saraswati, Dasar Bosowa, Insani, & Bogor, 2019; Ya-Hui Chang, 2020) have examined teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy in secondary level, then (Van Tuyen & Thi An, 2019) have explored learner autonomy practices and challenges at the tertiary level. While those studies have

identified teachers' beliefs about LA, there is a paucity of research that qualitatively explores the specific strategies used by elementary EFL teachers in Indonesia and investigates the factors underlying their skepticism regarding young learners' readiness for autonomy. Therefore, the study aims to examine the knowledge and practical strategies employed by elementary EFL teachers in Indonesia to foster LA and to provide a foundation for targeted professional development that moves beyond theoretical understanding to effective classroom scaffolding techniques.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Learner Autonomy Concept

Learner autonomy is defined by Holec (1981) as the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning. In the context of language learning, autonomy involves students' ability to set learning goals, select materials, and evaluate their learning outcomes (Benson, 2011). Holec emphasized that these abilities are not innate, but must be developed through formal mentorship and learning. Little (1991) then developed this concept by viewing LA as a psychological capacity that involves critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action in learning. LA is not just learning without a teacher, but a process in which learners are empowered to take control with the role of the teacher as a mentor and facilitator. This understanding establishes the ideal foundation that teachers should encourage in language learning.

2.2 Learner Autonomy in the Elementary EFL Context

The application of LA to early childhood demands a different approach from the adult context, given the characteristics of their cognitive and emotional development. According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory, children learn most effectively in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) the range between what they can do on their own and what they can achieve with the help of an adult or a more capable peer. Within this framework, autonomy is not something that arises naturally, but is built through scaffolding, that is, temporary support that is gradually reduced as the independence of the learner increases. The theories of Piaget (1970), Vygotsky (1986), and Bruner & Watson (1985) support this by emphasizing the importance of active interaction, scaffolding, and social guidance in building autonomy.

Experts such as (Pinter, 2011) and Little, Dam, & Legenhausen (2017) emphasized that autonomy needs to be introduced from an early age, as learning attitudes and habits formed from childhood are difficult to change in adolescence or adulthood. At the age of EYL (6–12 years), children are not yet able to fully manage learning, but they have the initial potential for autonomy such as the desire to make choices, express preferences, and negotiate (Pinter, 2011). Therefore, LA in EYL should be understood as guided independence, where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator who provides structure, limited choices, and reflective feedback. This approach does not contradict the child's natural dependence, but instead uses it as a starting point to cultivate learning responsibilities gradually.

2.3 Teacher Beliefs vs Classroom Practice in LA

A number of cross-contextual studies show a consistent pattern: EFL teachers widely recognize the importance of learner autonomy, but its application in the classroom remains limited. In Taiwan, teachers agreed that LA is important for lifelong learning and motivation,

but their actual practices, such as meaningful choice or student involvement in curriculum planning are minimal, mainly due to the pressures of exam-based curriculum and the perception that students are less motivated (Chang, 2020; Lin, 2024). Similar findings emerged in Iran, where university instructors valued LA as the foundation of learning responsibility, but were hesitant to implement it due to students' passive attitudes, low motivation, and strict curricular burdens (Mansooji et al., 2022). In Vietnam, although teachers used strategies such as self-assignment and group work, they faced significant obstacles from students' low language skills, extreme dependence on teachers, and a lack of training and resources to support LA (Van Tuyen & Thi An, 2019). In Indonesia, research at the secondary level also revealed that although teachers understand their role as facilitators, practices remain dominated by a teacher-centric approach due to a learning culture that emphasizes obedience, large class sizes, and a lack of practical training opportunities (Ramadhiyah & Lengkanawati, 2019). Collectively, these findings underscore that the gap between belief and practice is not the failure of individual teachers, but rather the result of a complex interaction between student factors (motivation, readiness, dependency), institutional factors (rigid curriculum, exam pressure), and professional factors (lack of concrete pedagogical models for implementing LA early and contextually). External factors such as dense curriculum pressures, large class sizes, and a lack of resources reduce the space for pedagogical experimentation. Internal factors such as doubts about student readiness, teacher-centered teaching habits, or lack of confidence in designing autonomous activities are also significant barriers (Borg, 2003; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019).

2.4 Teachers' Role in Fostering Learner Autonomy

Teachers can encourage student autonomy in a number of ways, such as: Giving pupils a choice, letting them select a project or activity. Cooperation: Promoting shared accountability through group projects. Using technology: Promoting self-directed learning using digital resources like online learning environments or language learning applications (Reinders & White, 2011).

2.4.1 Providing Choice

Based on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), giving learners choice reinforces a sense of psychological autonomy, which in turn increases intrinsic motivation. In EYL, the choice can be choosing a project topic, work partner, or type of activity (e.g. coloring vs. singing). Pinter (2011) shows that children respond positively to control over the learning process, as long as the choices are clear and relevant.

2.4.2 Effective Feedback

Feedback that supports LA is not only correction from teachers, but also mechanisms that encourage self-reflection such as self-correction or peer-correction. By accustoming students to evaluate their own work (e.g. through a simple checklist), teachers instill metacognitive skills that are essential for autonomy (Little, 1991).

2.4.3 Scaffolding Techniques

Early childhood scaffolding for LA involves three principles: (1) providing clear models (e.g., examples of how to set simple goals), (2) providing gradual support (e.g., visual or verbal guidance), and (3) slowly shifting responsibility to the student (Wood, Bruner, & Ross,

1976). This strategy allows children to "try" independence in a safe and structured environment.

Then the approaches than can be applied in the classroom are: The first is a resource-based approach by providing opportunities for students to learn independently through interaction with various learning resources, both physical, human, and digital. This approach is more effective and suitable for those who already have a high level of autonomy. Next, the student-based approach aims to provide direct skills to students so that they can manage their own learning. Then the classroom-based approach prioritizes student involvement in planning and evaluating learning in the classroom, which has been proven effective when supported by collaboration and assistance from teachers. Furthermore, the curriculum-based approach gives students more freedom to control their learning, but its success depends on the support of structures that help them in decision making. Finally, the teacher-based approach emphasizes the importance of changes in the role of teachers in supporting student autonomy, where teachers must have skills and commitment to the idea of autonomy. Teacher education programs that integrate direct experience and reflection on autonomy strategies as students and teachers can increase the effectiveness of this approach. Overall, the effectiveness of each approach depends heavily on student readiness, teacher support, and existing learning structures (Benson, 2011).

Overall, the literature confirms that LA is an important goal in language education, that its implementation in EYL requires ZPD-based scaffolding, and that teachers often face tensions between ideal beliefs and practical realities, especially in contexts with teacher-centered teaching traditions such as Indonesia. While numerous studies document the LA-practice gap globally, a detailed mixed-methods investigation into the specific interplay between teachers' conceptual knowledge, their expressed skepticism, and their observed strategies within the elementary EFL context in Indonesia remains necessary. This study addresses that gap by providing context-specific empirical data.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a Sequential Mixed-Methods Design where a quantitative phase (survey) is conducted first to obtain an overview of the teacher's knowledge and belief in LA, which then informs the selection of participants for the qualitative phase (in-depth interview). This design was chosen because the survey allowed researchers to identify variations in knowledge levels and practices among a number of teachers, while interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the reasons behind the gap between knowledge and practice, including doubts about early childhood readiness to learn autonomously. The integration of these two phases strengthens the validity of the findings through methodological triangulation.

3.2 Research Participants

The research was conducted mostly in the West Sumatra area. Participants came from more than 10 public and private elementary schools, and were teachers who have direct experience in teaching young learners. There were 34 elementary English teachers involved in completing the questionnaires, 28 females and 6 males. Only 2 participants have teaching experience of more than 4 years, and 32 participants have teaching experience in

the range 0-4 years. All participants held a bachelor's degree. Out of these, 4 teachers were purposively selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews based on their questionnaire responses and willingness to participate further.

Group 1 (N = 34): Consisting of 34 elementary English teachers (28 females, 6 males) selected through convenience sampling, taking into account accessibility and willingness to participate. The average teaching experience is 0-4 years, and the average class size is 15-25 students per class. All participants have a minimum educational background of S1, mostly in the field of English Language Education.

Group 2 (n = 4): Four teachers were selected from the survey group through purposive sampling, based on different response patterns in the questionnaire:
Teacher A: High score on knowledge and practice
Teacher B: High score on knowledge, but low on practice
Teacher C: Moderate score on knowledge and practice
Teacher D: Scores moderately on both aspects, but expresses explicit doubts about early childhood readiness for autonomy
This selection allows for an exploration of the variety of perspectives and reasons behind the implementation (or non-applicability) of LA in the EYL class.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument and Procedures

Data collection was carried out in two stages using the following instruments:
Survey (Quantitative Phase): The survey consisted of Likert-scale items assessing teachers' conceptual knowledge of Learner Autonomy (LA) and their self-reported frequency of LA-promoting practices. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: (1) demographic data; (2) 10 items for teachers' knowledge about learner autonomy, adapted from (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Seddiq, 2019), and (3) 13 items for the strategy that teachers apply in promoting learner autonomy constructed by Seddiq (2019). Section two was slightly modified to suit the context of young learners. The questionnaire was administered online using Google Form.

Semi-Structured Interview (Qualitative Phase): Based on questionnaire responses, a subset of teachers was selected for semi-structured interviews using an interview guide adapted from Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012). The four selected teachers were interviewed online for 15-20 minutes. The interview guide covers four thematic areas:(1) Knowledge of Learner Autonomy (2) Perceptions of early childhood readiness for autonomous learning, (3) Specific examples of strategies used to encourage LA, (4) External and internal barriers in fostering learner autonomy. Interviews were conducted individually, either via video call or chat/audio, depending on participants' availability, and with their informed consent. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data: Survey data were analyzed using SPSS version 21. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize the level of knowledge and frequency of LA practice among the 34 teachers. These results became the basis for the selection of interview participants. Qualitative Data: Interview transcripts were analyzed through Miles and Huberman model approach. The process includes: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, (3) conclusion drawing/verification. Data Integration: Qualitative findings are used to explain and deepen quantitative patterns.

3.5 Trustworthiness

To ensure the reliability and credibility of the research, several trustworthiness strategies are implemented: Methodological triangulation: The combination of quantitative and qualitative data reinforces the validity of the findings. Member checking: A summary of the interview findings is shared back with all four participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretation. Anonymity: All participants, especially the four interview teachers, were coded (Teachers A–D); The name of the school and specific location were not disclosed. Informed consent: Written consent is obtained from all participants after a full explanation of their objectives, procedures, and right to withdraw at any time.

4. Results and Discussion

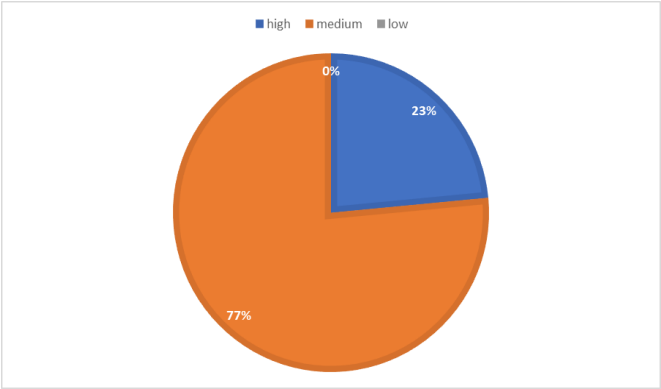
This section presents and discusses the research findings regarding teachers' knowledge and practices of learner autonomy in EYL classrooms derived from surveys and semi-structured interviews. Findings are organized thematically to highlight key patterns, tensions, and pedagogical implications.

4.1 Teachers' Familiarization with Concepts and Practices of Learner Autonomy

Figure 1 below reveals the proportion of teachers' knowledge and practices levels regarding learner autonomy in EYL classrooms, categorized into high, medium, and low.

Figure 1

Teachers' Familiarization with Concepts and Practices of Learner Autonomy



A combined analysis of knowledge and practice scores (Figure 1) revealed that 77% teachers demonstrated high levels of understanding and application of LA, while 23% teachers showed moderate levels and none scored low. This indicated a generally strong foundational awareness of LA among participants, though implementation depth varies.

4.2 Teachers' Knowledge about Learner Autonomy

Table 1 showed the descriptive statistic for the responses in section 1 of the questionnaire.

Table 1

Teachers' knowledge about learner autonomy

Questionnaire Item	Mean	SD	Rank
The importance of teachers' role in supporting LA	3.62	.493	1
Evaluating learning by students enhances LA	3.50	.615	2
Developing LA at early age facilitates future language learning	3.44	.613	3

Using learning resources (library, internet) develops LA	3.35	.597	4
LA can be applied within the current educational system	3.32	.638	5
Learners' confidence enhances LA	3.29	.836	6
Setting learning goals by students enhances LA	3.29	.719	7
Co-operative group work supports LA	3.26	.567	8
Learning strategies are a crucial feature of developing LA	3.26	.567	9
Choosing activities by students enhances LA	3.18	.716	10
LA allows language learners to learn more effectively	3.00	.778	11
Learning to work alone is central to developing LA	2.94	.832	12
It is easier to promote LA in children than in adults	2.71	.790	13

The quantitative findings from the questionnaire revealed that elementary EFL teachers generally possessed a moderate to high level of understanding regarding learner autonomy. Following are the three highest scores:

a. Understanding Teacher's Role

This was further supported by interview data, as explained by T1 "without a teacher who provides motivation and direction for learner autonomy, a students' learner autonomy will not work". A similar opinion was expressed by T4 "children still do not know how to learn well, the right strategies, that is where the teacher's role is".

These viewpoints align with Little's (1991) argument that autonomy does not imply learning devoid of a teacher, but rather a process in which the learner is empowered to assume control, with the teacher serving as a guide and facilitator. The teacher's role in demonstrating solutions, providing scaffolding for tasks, and cultivating a supportive environment is essential, especially for young learners (Dam, 1994). In addition, it resonated with findings from Lengkanawati (2017) study in Indonesian EFL contexts, where teachers similarly rejected the notion of autonomy as teacher-independent learning and emphasized scaffolding as essential.

The pattern mirrors findings in Taiwan (Chan, 2001) and Saudi Arabia (Seddiq, 2019) where teachers similarly believed autonomy requires structured teacher facilitation. However, unlike those contexts, Indonesian teachers in this study place stronger emphasis on emotional support and modelling strategies, suggesting an emerging culturally responsive understanding.

b. Early Development and Self-Evaluation

Based on the interview, T1 stated, "they will summarize what they like and what they have just learned, and the mistakes they often make". The similar idea shared by T4 "by giving the feedback, the students are invited to reflect and evaluate their work".

These align with Little's (1991) notion of autonomy, which incorporates learner reflection as a fundamental component. It also aligns with Benson (2011), prompting learners to evaluate their own development fosters accountability and a sense of ownership regarding their educational experience. The emphasis on student self-evaluation resonates strongly with Yusof (2021) in Malaysia, where 87.5% endorsed self-evaluation as essential. This cross-national similarity suggests a regional pedagogical trend that views metacognitive engagement, not just taking independence, as the core of autonomy in the ASEAN EFL context.

c. Early Introduction of Learner Autonomy

Teachers explained the importance of fostering learner autonomy since young learners, as T1 shared "... by creating learner autonomy since elementary school, it will make it easier for students in the learning process in the next stage because they have recognized their learning style early on which can make it easier to absorb the information given by the teacher". Similarly, T3 mentioned "the importance of fostering autonomous learning for elementary school students is very influential in their learning process. The results they will get from fostering autonomous learning can help the learning process and achieve the goals they want to achieve." While T4 emphasized "in my opinion, it is very important because students need to learn to be confident and not depend on others or teachers".

This corresponds with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): young learners can perform beyond their independent level as long as adequate scaffolding is provided. Yusof (2021) findings corroborated this perspective, emphasizing three primary benefits of early autonomy: assisting learners in recognizing their learning preferences, fostering confidence, and promoting sustained academic achievement. The teachers' acknowledgment of these advantages indicates a transition towards more learner-centered methodologies in elementary language courses.

d. Hesitation About Age and Autonomy

Although this was the lowest-rated item, interviews revealed productive skepticism rather than rejection. The teacher assessed that elementary school students were not ready to learn independently because they were still very dependent on instruction and guidance. This can be seen from T2 and T3 statement, "most elementary school students still need guidance... They're used to being told what to do." T4 explained that elementary school students are generally not able to show learner autonomy because they have not been able to determine what they want to learn, monitor the learning process, choose methods, or evaluate themselves. As said, "how can elementary school children learn on their own... Except for grades 5/6, but the ones below seem not to be," although they can be directed to be independent in doing assignments with many examples and guidance.

The main obstacles include students' need for many examples, additional explanations, and limited study time. T3 said "learners need more examples and explanations... Time is also often an obstacle." T2 reinforced "the obstacles are a lack of motivation and limited time". Then, T2 believed that learner autonomy is important but it is difficult to realize in practice because of the demads in completing the material.

These findings are in line with cross-contextual studies showing that teachers in various settings in Taiwan (Lin, 2024; Chang, 2020), Iran (Mansooji et al., 2022), Vietnam (Van Tuyen & Thi An, 2019), and Indonesia (Ramadhiyah & Lengkanawati, 2019) which consistently recognized the value of learner autonomy, but doubted the readiness of young students to apply it independently. Teacher skepticism about young learners' readiness for autonomy can be understood using Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This theory suggests learners move from dependence to autonomy by receiving appropriately scaffolded support. Skepticism arises not because LA is inherently impossible for young learners, but because teachers lack strategies to scaffold autonomy effectively for this developmental stage. Teachers recognize the ideal of LA but are uncertain how to translate it into practice without practical scaffolding techniques.

4.3 Teachers' Beliefs about their Promoting Role of Learner Autonomy in EYL Classrooms

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the sample responses in section 2 of the questionnaire.

Table 2

Teachers' Beliefs about their Promoting Role of Young Language Learner Autonomy in the Classroom

LA Promoting Practices	Item Description	Mean	SD	Ranking
Communication and collaborative learning	Using authentic materials to stimulate verbal communication	3.47	.563	1
Making decisions	Involving students in deciding on classroom rules	3.38	.739	2
Safe environment	Giving positives feedback and focusing on achievement	3.35	.734	3
Setting goals	Helping students identify their levels, needs, and interests	3.35	.646	4
Safe environment	Raising students' awareness of time and practice required for language learning	3.15	.744	5
Making decisions	Giving students a list of options to choose among	3.15	.558	6
Independent learning	Teaching study skills and language learning strategies	3.15	.744	7
Reflection	Asking students reflective questions about their learning process	3.12	.686	8
Independent learning	Referring students to external resources (websites, apps, books)	3.03	.790	9
Making decisions	Involving students to create their materials and self-access center	3.00	.953	10

Table 2 revealed that elementary EFL teachers generally possessed a moderate to high level of beliefs about their promoting role of young language learner autonomy. All statements have an average above 3.00 (3.00 to 3.47), indicating that respondents generally support strategies that promote student independence.

4.3.1 High Frequency Strategies

1) Using authentic materials

Teachers frequently use videos, songs, and real-life materials. According to the interviews, T1 mentioned "i use videos and songs to avoid boredom and keep students interested".

This technique corresponds with Benson (2011) focus on utilizing authentic resources to augment learner motivation and communicative competence, two essential elements of learner autonomy. The frequent use of songs and videos in this study aligns with Yuzulia & Yusuf (2019) observation that Indonesian teachers most commonly recommend listening to English songs and practicing with friends as out of class autonomous activities.

2) Involving students in decision-making processes

Teachers involve learners in rule-making or choosing activities. T1 remarked, "i invite students to make rules in class, and they agree on the rules together. I try to give students the freedom to choose the topics they want to learn", T3 also mentioned "I give the list of options to choose by the students, like storytelling or singing". However, T4 expressed selective involvement:"I do not involve students in making rules, but I provide them with a list of activities, there are some activities to choose among, such as storytelling, drawing, or writing, whatever they like".

Holec (1981) conceptualized learner autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's own learning, which includes making decisions about learning objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. Offering learners choices directly supports this principle by enabling them to participate in decision-making processes and exercise control over aspects of their learning. Allowing students to participate in pedagogical decisions and co-create classroom norms represents a change from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction, encouraging independence in a controlled setting. Furthermore, Yusof (2021) discovered that students are more likely to be involved and self-assured in their own learning when they are given choices and responsibilities. Thus, the information indicates that even at the elementary school level, giving kids options and involving them.

3) Providing positive, constructive feedback

Teachers use supportive feedback to build independent learning in students. T1 provided praise, such as "good job" or "well done", to increase students' motivation, and provided constructive feedback when students made mistakes without directly providing answers or solutions. Likewise, T4 added "if they are wrong, I still give good feedback, like 'you are almost right'", T3 added "given rewards and small notes or stars, the more rewards there are, the more pride there is, and it makes students more enthusiastic in learning".

Little (1991) underscores that autonomy develops through reflective engagement, where learners actively monitor and evaluate their learning. Constructive feedback plays a crucial role in this process, as it guides learners in identifying strengths, addressing weaknesses, and making informed adjustments thereby strengthening their capacity for self-regulation. This encouraged the development of self-regulation and resilience, both critical components of autonomous learning (Ahmed & Hossain, 2024). Teachers provide affective support to enhance learner motivation, using strategies like verbal encouragement and goal-setting. This supportive feedback fostered self-confidence and encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning, ultimately contributing to the development of learner autonomy (Işık & Balçikanli, 2020)

The need for emotive support in fostering learner autonomy is continuously emphasized by research**.** Işık & Balçikanli (2020) For example, contended that goal-setting and verbal support increase learner motivation and foster a sense of responsibility for learning. According to Maulana & Singh (2023) Teachers in Indonesia were crucial in encouraging autonomy in their students by keeping an eye on them, evaluating them, and providing them with constructive criticism. This helps students become more self-assured, critical, and self-directed in their English language study. Furthermore, Jiang, Vauras, Volet, Salo, & Kajamies (2019) stressed that recognizing students' emotional states and offering justifications increases their level of participation and strengthens their sense of autonomy.

4.3.2 Emerging or Limited Practices

Teachers hesitate to involve young learners, T4 stated, "I never ask the students to make their learning materials, because they are still young". Additionally, T4 expressed skepticism about the young learners' capabilities, asserting that an educator must be knowledgeable about things that align with the students' needs. A little bit different insight from T1: "I ask students to find small examples, like 'I like bananas.'"

These responses reveal that while teachers acknowledge the value of student involvement in learning, many remain hesitant to fully implement autonomy-supportive practices such as material development or self-access centers, particularly at the elementary level. This hesitation is not uncommon; as Benson (2011) notes, the implementation of learner autonomy must be adapted to learners' age and developmental stage. For young learners, full independence in designing materials may indeed be unrealistic, but limited involvement, such as contributing examples or choosing content, can serve as a scaffold toward autonomy (Reinders & White, 2011). Additionally, Dam (1995) argues that even minimal participation in classroom decision-making fosters a sense of responsibility and ownership, gradually building the learners' capacity to work independently. The difference in approaches between T4 and T1 highlights the varying levels of confidence and readiness among teachers in integrating autonomy-supportive strategies in early language education.

Overall, the findings indicate that elementary EFL teachers hold moderately to highly supportive beliefs regarding their role in promoting learner autonomy, and they implement several practical strategies that reflect these beliefs. Although some variation exists in the extent to which teachers apply autonomy-supportive practices, particularly in areas like involving students in creating materials, many demonstrate a growing awareness of how to adapt autonomy principles to the developmental needs of young learners. These practices are aligned with established research, suggesting that autonomy can be nurtured through scaffolding, choice, and emotional support. The observed gaps and hesitations also signal areas where further professional development could strengthen teacher confidence and capacity in fostering learner autonomy more comprehensively at the primary level.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that EFL teachers at the elementary school level in Indonesia generally have a positive and adequate understanding of learners' autonomy and apply various strategies to encourage their development in the classroom. Teachers widely recognize LA as a valuable goal, affirm their role as facilitators and routinely employ supportive practices such as using authentic materials, offering limited choices and providing positive feedback. However, there are still doubts among some teachers about the readiness of early childhood students to become autonomous learners, especially in practices that demand high levels of independence, such as creating their own teaching materials or managing independent learning resources. This bridges the observed knowledge-practice gap, revealing that the core challenge lies not in belief, but in pedagogical capacity.

The unique contribution of this research is its empirical grounding for urgent reform in Indonesian teacher education. It provides clear evidence that current pre-service and in-service professional development (PD) programs overemphasize theoretical definitions of LA while neglecting the demonstration and practice of concrete, manageable techniques suited to early childhood learners. To address this, the curriculum and PD frameworks must be overhauled to shift focus from what LA is to how to scaffold LA in grade 1-6 classrooms.

Finally, this study has certain limitations. The qualitative component involved only four interview participants, which constrains the generalizability of the findings, particularly regarding the prevalence and nature of teacher skepticism. Future research should involve:

1. Large-scale quantitative surveys to assess how widespread these beliefs and practices are across diverse Indonesian regions.
2. Longitudinal intervention studies that evaluate the effectiveness of newly designed teacher training programs focusing on scaffolding-based autonomy instruction.

Such future work would deepen the understanding of how learner autonomy can be sustainably developed in Indonesian EYL classrooms and provide stronger empirical grounding for national-level pedagogical reforms.

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EFFECTS OF MULTIMODAL LITERACY ON INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION AMONG STUDENTS FROM PERIPHERAL AREAS

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Abstract

Addressing low student engagement is critical, particularly in peripheral schools serving low socioeconomic status (SES) populations. This study aims to investigate the effect of multimodal literacy on students' motivation to learn English in a school with a low socioeconomic background. Using a mixed-methods strategy with a quasi-experiment pre-post design, 39 students participated in learning with multimodal literacy in three weeks of interventions. Students' motivation was measured before and after the intervention using a questionnaire adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). Results of the t-test showed a slight: 0.176 in intrinsic and -.956 in extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation showed no significant difference, and extrinsic motivation saw a statistically non-significant increase. Qualitative observations showed off-task behavior, low self-regulation, or inconsistent engagement. The extrinsic factors, multimodality and socioeconomic background, influenced students' motivation simultaneously. This study concludes that short-term interventions using multimodal media have not been able to sustainably effect motivation. This non-significant effect emphasizes the importance of long-term strategies and family involvement as the necessary next steps for practitioners and policymakers in peripheral areas to capture the more stable impact of multimodality on students' internal and external motivation.

Keywords: *extrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation; language teaching; motivation; multimodal literacy; socioeconomic background*

1. Introduction

Learning motivation is one of the most important factors determining the success of the educational process in schools. In the context of learning English as a foreign language, motivation is the main foundation that often demands high concentration and long-term commitment. Previous research confirms that without motivation, both extrinsic and intrinsic forms of learning will not produce meaningful change, as students tend to become passive and struggle to achieve optimal academic outcomes (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Selimovic, 2022). Intrinsic motivation arises from personal interest, curiosity, and internal satisfaction in learning, whereas extrinsic motivation is shaped by external factors such as parental expectations, academic grades, and future aspirations (Gan, Liu, & Nang, 2023; Morris, Grehl, Rutter, Mehta, & Westwater, 2022). Therefore, efforts to enhance students'

learning motivation are an essential component of developing effective instructional practices in school.

In many educational contexts, especially in urban areas or areas with less advantaged economic conditions, learners generally come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Andriani, Izzati, Syakira, Pertamana, & Rosmala, 2025). Most of their parents work part-time in seasonal jobs, reflecting limited economic stability and access to educational resources. In this situation, education is often seen as a formality rather than a strategic means to achieve social mobility. This view has a direct effect on students' low motivation to learn, both from intrinsic and extrinsic aspects (Anggrisia & Islami, 2024). In addition, low school attendance also becomes a common problem. Many students have to help their parents work, trade or engage in other family economic activities. Some students also show low academic engagement due to a lack of internal drive. Covering this situation, teachers need to design teaching strategies that are not only visually appealing but also personally meaningful (Supit, Manongko, & Kandori, 2021). In this context, the use of a multimodal approach has become relevant as a potential alternative to bridge this motivation gap.

Considering both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of motivation, multimodal literacy strategy offers a strong pedagogical opportunity to enhance both at the same time. Multimodal literacy allows students to engage through multiple modes of representation, such as image, sound, text, and interaction, which can capture the attention and learning interest of students from different backgrounds (Fedorenko, Svitlana. Kravchenko, 2023; Zaidi & Sah, 2024). For the intrinsically motivated students, multimodality provides a space to express their self-understanding and identity, while for the extrinsically motivated students, this strategy demonstrates the relevance of learning to practical goals such as academic grades and social acceptance (Ahmed, 2024; Tan, Thomson, Koh, & Chik, 2023). It confirms that multimodal literacy can be an effective medium for building students' affective engagement with foreign language learning by reinforcing both internal drives and external expectations (Selimovic, 2022). Thus, the application of multimodal literacy can not only increase students' motivation but also develop personal and instrumental connections to their learning materials.

In-depth use of multimodal literacy allows students not only as recipients of information but also as creators of meaning. Multimodal strategies also explore students to write for expressing their experiences and identities through various forms of text (Quintiliani, 2016). In this context, multimodality becomes a medium for deep reflection on students' personal and social values. Multimodal inputs such as images and audio can improve students' working memory and information retention (Mansouri, Hassaskhah, & Salimi, 2024). This shows that multimodality not only impacts cognitive aspects but also affects affective and motivational aspects.

Previous studies have discussed the importance of motivation in English language learning, both intrinsic and extrinsic (Gardner R. C. & Moorcroft, 1985; Selimovic, 2022). Some have applied multimodal literacy strategies to increase student engagement (Girón-García & Gargallo-Camarillas, 2020; Tan et al., 2023). These studies have not focused on a certain situation of students' background. So, it was not known how multimodal literacy can be treated appropriately for students with low socioeconomic backgrounds in peripheral schools. In fact, teachers need to understand the dynamics of both to design learning strategies that are adaptive and responsive to students' needs (Supit et al., 2021). However, most of these studies have not specifically distinguished how multimodal literacy affects

each type of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, separately and measurably. Many studies still use a qualitative descriptive strategy without quantitative analysis based on valid theoretical instruments such as the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The AMTB is a measurement tool developed by Gardner and Lambert (1985) to assess the dimensions of motivation in second language learning, especially integrative and instrumental motivation. It has high reliability and validity and has been widely used in language motivation studies (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Further, it has rarely been used in previous studies in the context of multimodal literacy. In addition, students' social conditions as contextual factors are still often ignored, even though the social and economic environment has been proven to influence the effectiveness of learning strategies (Ahmed, 2024). A study highlighted that learning will only be impactful when materials and strategies are truly connected to the reality of students' lives (Tan et al., 2023). Thus, the study gap is even more evident because the student population comes from a suburban environment with very low motivation to learn, minimal support from family, and the perception that education is only a formality.

Based on the theoretical description and previous study results, this study aims to verify a question: Does multimodal literacy have an effect on motivation to learn English, both in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, of high school students with low socioeconomic backgrounds. This question is important to answer the effect of multimodal literacy on the two dimensions of motivation based on the AMTB model. Given the social background of students from the suburbs and the limited multimodal interventions provided, this study is expected to make theoretical and practical contributions in the development of more inclusive and effective multimodal literacy-based English language learning (Andriani et al., 2025).

2. Literature Review

In theory, motivation is divided into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the internal drive that comes from a personal interest in learning such as the desire to interact with the native-speaking community can boost their intrinsic motivation (Gardner R. C. & Moorcroft, 1985). Students' participation in learning reflects their experience and identity to increase emotional engagement. Through the application of the Attitude/Motivation Text Battery (AMBT) model, the importance of contextual learning is to increase students' intrinsic motivation (Selimovic, 2022). Internal motivation in learning process will convey students to success (Anggrisia & Islami, 2024).

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from outside the student, such as parental expectations, social involvement, academic achievement, or career possibility (Mansouri et al., 2024; Morris et al., 2022; Supit et al., 2021). Motivation that is utilitarian in nature is referred to as useful motivation. External motivations, which are often associated with practical hopes for the future, were often associated with suburban students in this study, although sometimes not fully internalized (Gan et al., 2023). Recognizing the use of audio and visual media can increase students' extrinsic motivation (Girón-García & Gargallo-Camarillas, 2020). Furthermore, connecting the subject matter to students' real life is able to develop extrinsic motivation. This can be a good way to encourage students to learn because literacy has been proven to be related to students' real life communication skills, which encourages their extrinsic motivation (Nucifera, Saputra, & Yakob, 2023).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has a complementary relationship in the learning process. Complementary extrinsic and intrinsic motivation towards a strategy of strengthening students' motivation requires an understanding of students' socio-economic background (Gan et al., 2023; Greenwald et al., 2023). Intrinsic motivation drives students to learn due to personal interest in the material, whereas extrinsic motivation arises due to external influences such as rewards or social expectations. When both function in balance, students tend to show more consistent and deep engagement in learning. However, in the context of peripheral schools with low socioeconomic backgrounds, many students do not get motivational support from their surrounding environment. Most of their parents view school as a formality rather than a means for social change or future improvement (Chen, Kong, Gao, & Mo, 2018; Li & Primecz, 2023). This leads to students not having an idealized picture of the importance of learning, which results in weak extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Kotera, Taylor, Fido, Williams, & Tsuda-McCaie, 2023). A teaching strategy stimulates both types of motivation can increase students' confidence and ownership of learning (Zaidi & Sah, 2024). One strategy can answer this challenge is multimodal literacy, which is able to combine different forms of communication to activate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at the same time(Suwastini, Marantika, Adnyani, Mandala, & Artini, 2021).

Multimodality has the ability to generate new thinking and communication processes to increase students' curiosity and internal engagement in the foreign language learning process (Nucifera et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2023). Furthermore, the development of technology and visual culture has given many ways to the concept of multimodal literacy, which is the ability to understand and create "meaning" through various modes of communication such as text, image, sound, video, and gesture. Multimodal literacy is believed to increase learning engagement and motivation as it combines students' various learning styles and presents material in a more interesting and contextualized manner (Andriani et al., 2025). In an EFL context, this strategy gives students space to express ideas, build understanding, and connect the subject matter to their personal experiences (Zaidi & Sah, 2024).

Considering both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of motivation, multimodal literacy strategy offers a strong pedagogical opportunity to enhance both in at the same time. Multimodal literacy allows students to engage through multiple modes of representation, such as image, sound, text, and interaction, which can capture the attention and learning interest of students from different backgrounds. For the intrinsically motivated students, multimodality provides a space to express their self-understanding and identity, while for the extrinsically motivated students this strategy demonstrates the relevance of learning to practical goals such as academic grades and social acceptance. It also confirms that multimodal literacy can be an effective medium for building students' affective engagement with foreign language learning by reinforcing both internal drives and external expectations. Thus, the application of multimodal literacy can not only increase students' motivation but also develop personal and instrumental connections to their learning materials.

Previous studies have discussed the importance of motivation in English language learning, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Some have applied multimodal literacy strategies to increase student engagement (Fedorenko, Svitlana. Kravchenko, 2023; Tan et al., 2023; Zaidi & Sah, 2024). These studies have not focused on certain situation of students' background. So, it was not being known how multimodal literacy can be treated appropriately to students with low socioeconomic backgrounds in peripheral schools. In fact, teachers need to

understand the dynamics of both to design learning strategies that are adaptive and responsive to students' needs. However, most of these studies have not specifically distinguished how multimodal literacy affects each type of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, separately and measurably. Many studies still use a qualitative descriptive strategy without quantitative analysis based on valid theoretical instruments such as the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The AMTB is a measurement tool developed by Gardner and Lambert (1985) to assess the dimensions of motivation in second language learning, especially integrative and instrumental motivation. It has high reliability and validity and has been widely used in language motivation study (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011). Further, it has rarely been used in previous study in the context of multimodal literacy. In addition, students' social conditions as contextual factors are still often ignored, even though the social and economic environment has been proven to influence the effectiveness of learning strategies (Ahmed, 2024). It highlighted that learning will only be impactful when materials and strategies are truly connected to the reality of students' lives. Thus, the study gap is even more evident because the student population comes from a suburban environment with very low motivation to learn, minimal support from family, and the perception that education is only a formality.

3. Research Method

3.1 Study Design

This study used a mixed methods strategy with an explanatory sequential design (Lindstrom & Niederhauser, 2016). In this design, data collection and analysis are carried out sequentially, starting with quantitative methods, then continued with qualitative methods to deepen the initial findings. Quantitatively, this study used a pre-experiment design with a one-group pre-activity and post-activity model, without a control group. The aim is to find out the changes in students' learning motivation levels before and after the implementation of multimodal literacy in EFL classroom. Data were collected through questionnaires given before and after the implementation, and analysed using descriptive statistics with inferential hypothesis testing.

After the quantitative data was analysed, a qualitative strategy was taken to explore more deeply how the learning process took place and how students responded to the multimodal-based materials. This strategy was conducted through field observations by recording students' learning behaviour directly using field notes. The study recorded students' interactions with the learning media, their responses to the tasks given, as well as the classroom dynamics during the teaching and learning process. By using this design, the qualitative data helps explain and interpret the findings from the quantitative data, resulting in a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of students' learning motivation in the context of multimodal literacy practices.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study were 39 high school students (N=39) located in the suburbs of Jember Regency. The sample selection was carried out by purposive sampling, which represented the following characteristics. The socioeconomic background of the participants was low, where the majority of parents worked as half time workers. Education in their families is largely regarded as a formality, not the main means of social mobility. As a result, many students have low attendance rates and have to help their parents at work. This

condition has an impact on the low focus and consistency of student learning, and is an important consideration in the interpretation of the findings. This sample selection made the study relevant for examining the application of multimodal literacy in students with motivational barriers based on socioeconomic context.

3.3 Instruments

This study uses two main types of instruments: a motivation questionnaire to see the extent of students' motivation, and a field observation sheet to record students' behaviour during the learning process. The questionnaire instrument was developed based on Gardner Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which was adapted into a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire consists of 12 statement items covering two aspects, namely intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Some items were taken and adapted from Prapphal's Attitude Test (1981), as well as the structure from Selimovic study, to expand the scope of measurement. The reliability test results showed by Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$. So, the instrument was declared reliable in the context of Indonesian high school students. Meanwhile, the observation instrument was a non-participatory observation sheet to record student behaviour during learning. The observed aspects included students' involvement in discussion, response to multimodal media, expression of enthusiasm, and active participation in learning activities.

3.4 Procedure

The study was conducted through two main sections: quantitative and qualitative data collection. The initial stage started with a pre-activity, which students filled in via Google Form to measure their initial motivation towards learning English. After that, students participated in multimodal-based learning activities for three meetings with a total duration of 135 minutes. Learning was conducted using a multimodal literacy strategy, using various media such as educational videos, audio materials, visual texts, and interactive infographics. Each session was designed to stimulate students' cognitive and affective engagement and to suit diverse learning styles. During the learning process, field observations were conducted by directly recording the dynamics of student behaviour. After the treatment, students were asked to complete a post-activity to measure their motivation changes. The observation findings were followed up with narrative notes as part of the qualitative data to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative results.

3.5 Data analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the survey results were analysed using descriptive statistical methods to provide an overview of student learning motivation changes before and after implementation. The analysis focused on the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation categories, and t-test result. The results of this study analysis are presented in the form of bar charts to facilitate the visualization of pre-activity and post-activity data comparison.

Qualitative data obtained through field observations were analysed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The interpretation process was reviewed and validated by lecturers with expertise in educational psychology and English language teaching to ensure the credibility and contextual relevance of the study findings. The analysis was conducted by carefully reading and reviewing field notes to describe student behaviour during the learning process. The main focus of this analysis includes observations of student participation, enthusiasm for

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learning media, and affective expressions that appear during learning activities. The results of the analysis are compiled in the form of descriptive narratives to thoroughly and contextually describe the tendency of student behaviour. This qualitative data complements the quantitative findings, so it can provide a deeper understanding of changes in student learning motivation in the context of multimodal literacy-based learning.

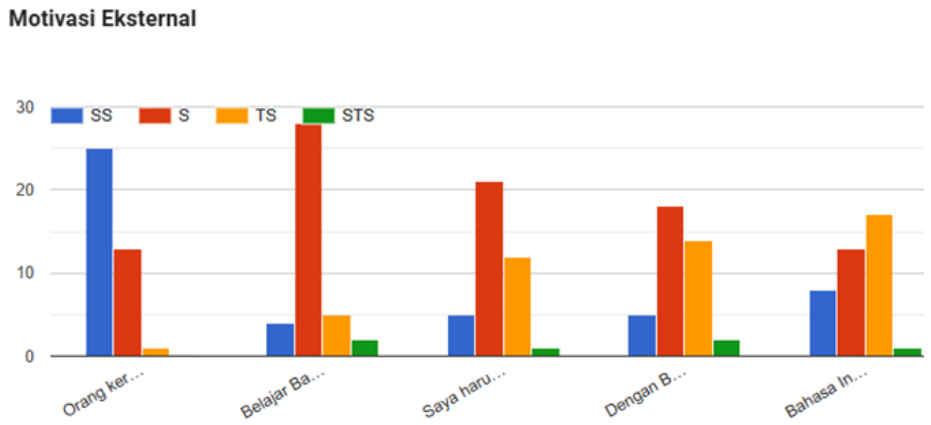
4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Two types of statistical data support the analysis of students' learning motivation: descriptive data and inferential data. To see the effect of multimodal literacy on students' extrinsic motivation, it is necessary to analyse extrinsic motivation data before and after implementation. The following is a presentation of the results of the data analysis.

Figure 1

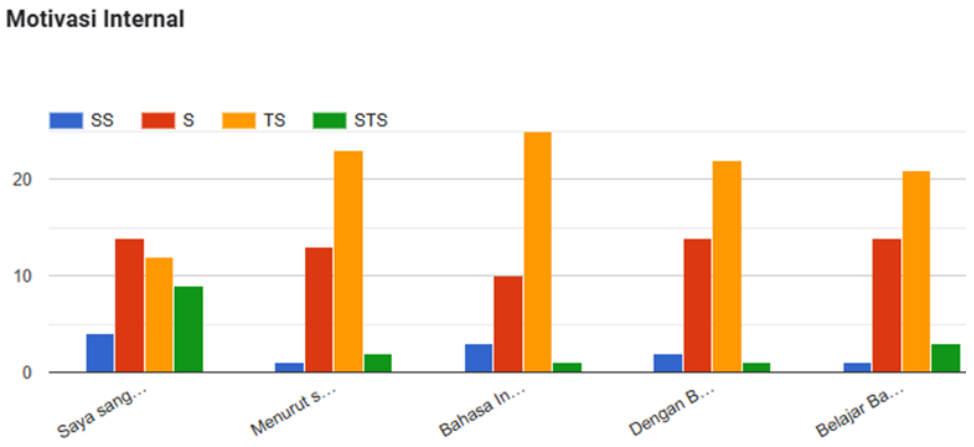
Data of students' external motivation before multimodal literacy practices



Students have gotten some aspects of external motivation before the treatment of multimodal literacy is given, as shown in the figure. The external motivation provide five statements: 1) cool people are those who are good in English; 2) English can expand my knowledge; 3) I will need English for my job in the future; 4) English makes me able to talk some interesting issue with foreigner; 5) English can convey me to find better success. The statements of students' external motivation show qualification "agree and strong agree" in almost all aspects of external motivation. The students' internal motivation is also covered in the questionnaire. The result is displayed in the following figure.

Figure 2

Data of students' internal motivation before multimodal literacy practices

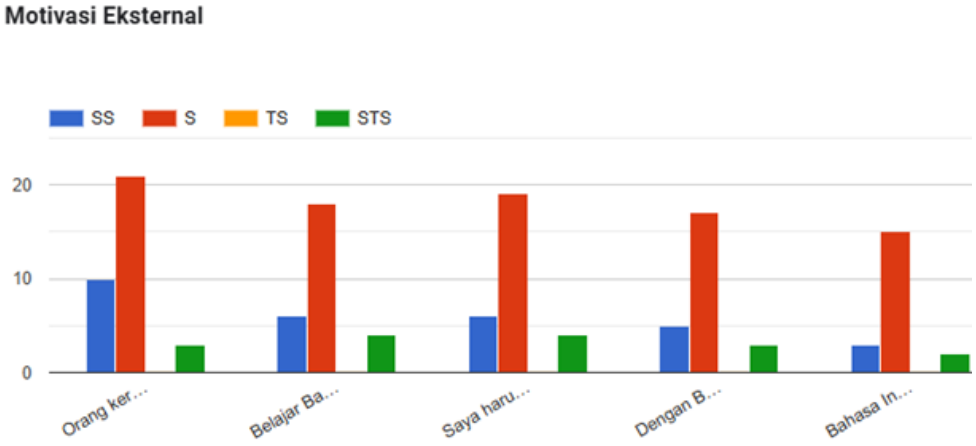


There are some statement aspects given to record students' internal motivation. The statements are 1) I like English very much; 2) English can help me to know somebody else from different country; 3) English helps me to learn other foreign languages; 4) English helps me to understand the content of video, film, TV program, and radio; 5) English is important to help me understand the content of book, newspaper, novel, and magazine. The data actually shows that the students have strong disagreement of internal motivation. The percentage of strong disagreement is higher than strong agreement in students' internal motivation.

Giving several practices of multimodal literacy in English classroom, students explore many learning experiences and provide different or better perception of English. Those convey students to express their external motivation and internal motivation in different qualification of statement. The questionnaire given after and before multimodal literacy practices provides the same aspects of external and internal motivation. The students' external motivation after the practices of multimodal literacy is presented in the figure below.

Figure 3

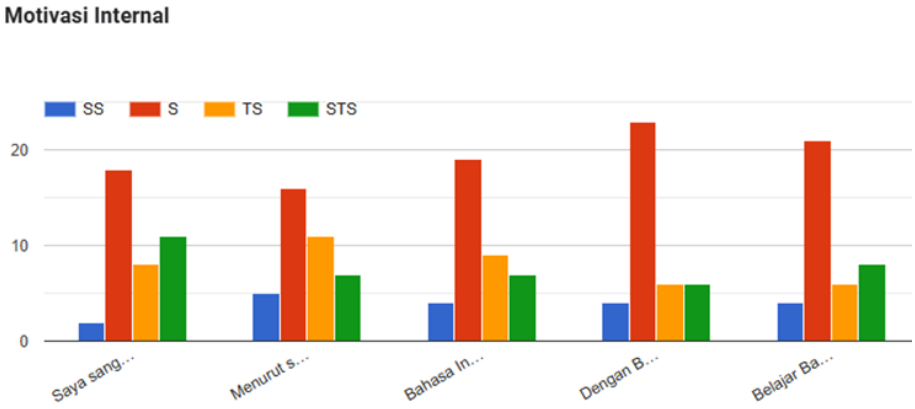
Data of students' external motivation after multimodal literacy practices



The data shows that after getting multimodal literacy practices in English classroom activity, the students are being more motivated. The statement to be agree and strongly agree are expressed dominantly. Each aspect of external motivation provides students' acceptance on the agreement of multimodal literacy practices. How about students' internal motivation after multimodal literacy experienced by students? The following figure display it.

Figure 4

Data of students' internal motivation after multimodal literacy practices



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The students' internal motivation expresses their interest in learning English. The data shows how they agree the importance of English after learning through multimodal. Even though each aspect of internal motivation has disagreement statement, but the students' agreement still has higher percentage in it.

To confirm the changes before and after the treatment of multimodal literacy practices, the data is also displayed in the graph. The graph shows the differences of students' responses of external motivation and internal motivation. The data is provided in the figure below.

Figure 5

Statistical data of Pre-Activity and Post-Activity Extrinsic

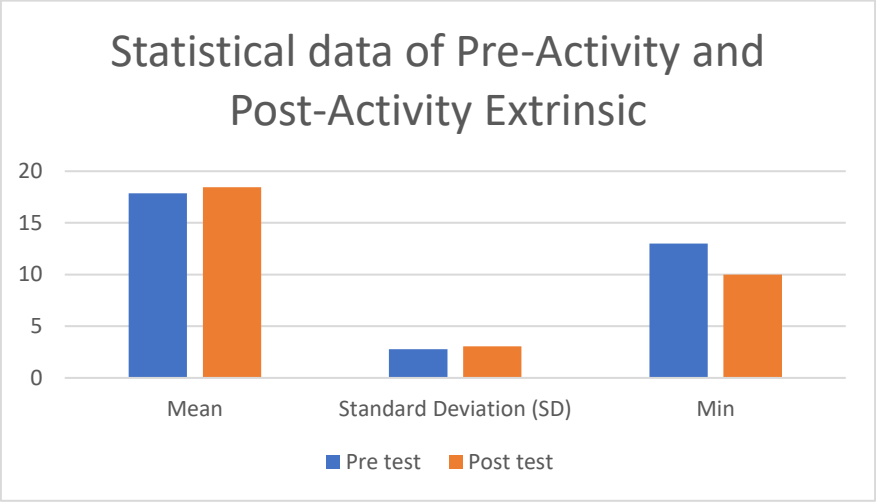

Figure 5 shows the statistical data of the students' external motivation in pre- and post-activity of multimodal literacy. It displays descriptive statistical data comparing students' extrinsic motivation based on the pre-activity and post-activity results. From the graph, it can be seen that the mean extrinsic motivation score has increased slightly, from around 17.5 in the pre-activity to close to 18 in the post-activity. This increase indicates a positive change in students' extrinsic motivation after being treated with multimodal literacy in English learning.

Furthermore, the standard deviation (SD) values for both measures were almost identical, hovering around 3, indicating that the distribution of students' scores remained consistent and showed no significant increase or decrease in terms of response diversity. However, in contrast to the intrinsic aspect, in extrinsic motivation, there was a decrease in the minimum (min score), from around 13 in the pre-activity to 10 in the post-activity. This decrease indicates that some students experienced a decrease in extrinsic score indicated the decrease in the minimum score indicates that the change in extrinsic motivation was not evenly distributed among all participants, and there may be other factors that influence individual students' extrinsic perception or orientation towards the applied learning. These results support their opinion that changes in learning motivation require consistent, intensive, and contextualized interventions rather than just using various learning media (Ahmed, 2024).

Figure 6

Statistical data of Pre-Activity and Post-Activity Intrinsic

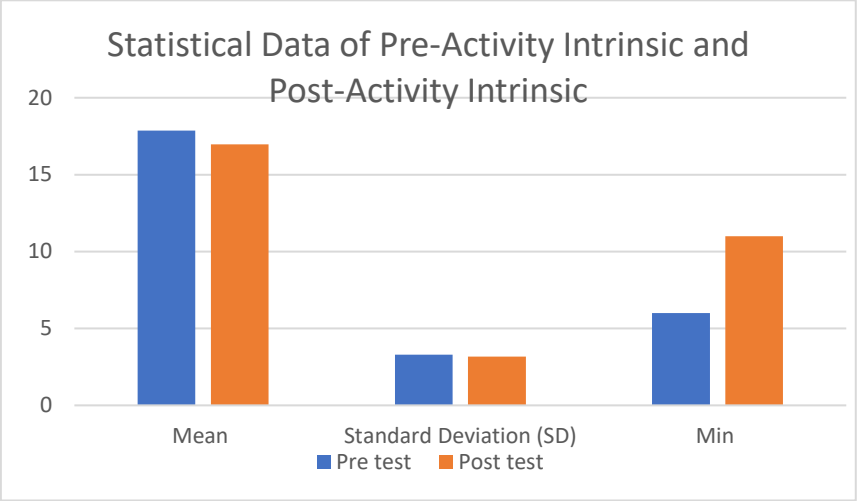

Figure 6 shows the statistical data, which represents descriptive statistical data regarding students' intrinsic motivation based on the pre-activity and post-activity results. Based on the bar chart, the min value of intrinsic motivation during the pre-activity was recorded at 6, while in the post-activity it change to around 11. This increase indicates that, in general, there is significant increase in the aspect of intrinsic motivation after the implementation was given. However, the standard deviation (SD) values for both measurements were almost identical at around 3, indicating that the level of dispersion or variation in scores among students was relatively consistent both before and after the intervention.

One aspect of interest is seen in the minimum (min) score, where in the pre-activity the minimum score was around 6, while in the post-activity it increased to around 11. This increase in the minimum score suggests that the students with the lowest intrinsic motivation showed improved performance after implementation, so although the average score decreased slightly, the intervention likely had a positive impact on the group of students who were previously at a very low level of motivation. This can be interpreted as a signal that the learning strategy used in this case, based on multimodal literacy, can lift the motivation of less motivated students, even if it does not significantly affect the overall class average. This is consistent with Gardner theory, which states that intrinsic motivation is closely related to students' self-concept pf learning and cannot be improved only through a visual strategy for a moment (Selimovic, 2022).

The analysis then used t-test. The result of t-test in intrinsic motivation is 0.176, and -.956 in extrinsic motivation. The result of t-test is displayed below.

Figure 7

Statistical data of t-test result

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Intrinsic (Pre) - Intrinsic (Post)	.12821	4.54903	.72843	-1.34642	1.60283	.176	38	.431	.861
Pair 2	Extrinsic (Pre) - Extrinsic (Post)	-.56410	3.68350	.58983	-1.75815	.62995	-.956	38	.172	.345

The results of the inferential analysis using the t-test showed a p-value of 0.176, which is above the conventional significance limit of $\alpha = 0.05$. This finding indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the compared groups or between the pre- and post-treatment conditions. In other words, the statistical evidence is not strong enough to reject the null hypothesis (H_0).

Furthermore, the observations' results showed various limitations that had a big influence on students' learning motivation, especially in English subjects. The school is located in a suburban area and has only five active classes. Each class consists of a relatively small number of students, ranging from 10 to 18 students. However, student attendance in learning activities is very fluctuating and relatively low. In direct observation, the number of students present in class each day was on average only half of the total registered students. In fact, on one occasion, a class with 13 registered students was found, but only three students attended the lesson.

This situation is made worse by the lack of discipline and awareness of student learning. Before learning begins, teachers often have to pick up students one by one from various locations in the school environment, such as the canteen, parking area, wudhu place, or even from other classes where there is no teaching teacher. When asked why they did not go to class immediately, some students showed indifference and a lack of urgency towards the learning process. Statements such *as "ngapain aku belajar Bahasa inggris, aku kan gak mau ke luar negeri* (Why should I learn English? I don't want to go abroad)" are a clear illustration of their low intrinsic motivation towards English subjects. In addition, some students expressed very limited future expectations that were not related to further education. For example, some said, *"Aku lulus SMA mau nikah , aku gak mau lanjut sekolah* (I graduated from high school and want to get married, I don't want to continue my studies)" or *" aku setelah lulus juga mau langsung kerja ikut bapak ku kerja di sawah (*After graduating, I also want to work directly to follow my father working in the fields)". These statements illustrate their perception of school not as a means of self-development, but as a formality to get a school certificate. Even when they attend school, most of them do not bring learning equipment such as stationery or bags. When asked about their parents' response to this, their answers also reflected the lack of family involvement in the education process*: "Aku gak bakalan ditanya sama ibu ku, yang penting aku lulus dapet ijazah udah.* (My mother won't ask me, the important thing is that I graduate and get my certificate.)"

During the learning process, it was found that most students showed a low level of attention to the teacher and the material presented. When the teacher explained the material in front of the class, many students seemed unfocused. This unfocused is reflected in their habit of looking out of the window, especially students who sit near the window often stand up to peek out, as if looking for the whereabouts of their friends outside the classroom. In addition, some students were also seen playing games on their gadgets, making short videos using cell phone cameras, looking in the mirror using the front camera, drawing in notebooks, or chatting with their classmates without paying attention to the teacher. These activities took place openly and repeatedly during the learning session.

Not only did students show a lack of focus, but they also often engaged in other activities that were not related to the lesson at hand. For example, during an English learning session, some students would open textbooks from other subjects such as economics or culture and read or do assignments from those subjects. Similar phenomena were also observed during other lessons, indicating students' low engagement and attention to the lesson being taught.

Undisciplined behaviour also appears quite dominant in the classroom, such as some male students choosing to sleep at the back of the class during the teacher's explanation. On the other side, female students were seen actively talking with their friends during the learning process, which caused the classroom atmosphere to become noisy and less conducive. In addition, it is not uncommon to find students going in and out of the classroom in the middle of the lesson without asking the teacher for permission first, showing a lack of respect for classroom rules. Students' responses to direct interaction from the teacher also show a negative trend. When teachers try to engage students in discussions or ask questions, only a few students show interest or respond well. Instead, some students give disrespectful reactions, such as looking at the teacher with a cynical or indifferent expression. Even in some cases, when students are reprimanded or given warnings, they retaliate with inappropriate behaviour such as imitating animal sounds directed at the teacher.

These behaviours that did not reflect discipline and politeness tended not to be handled by the teachers. This is likely due to the socio-economic background of students from families with low levels of education, where education is not considered an important need, but only as a formality. Most of the students' parents work as farm labourers, small traders, or construction workers, so their attention to their children's academic and character development is minimal. The lack of family contribution in shaping students' character contributes to their negative attitudes and behaviours in the school environment. Under these conditions, educational interventions at school will face great challenges if they are not matched by support from the family environment.

These field facts reinforce the finding that students' learning motivation in this school, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is at a very low level. The lack of expectations from the family environment and the lack of long-term educational goals are the main factors that hinder their engagement in learning English. This condition presents a major challenge for the implementation of any learning strategy, including multimodal-based strategies, as the intervention has to compete with the social and cultural reality that views education as a secondary need.

4.2 Discussion

As the introduction explains, student motivation is a key factor in successful language learning, both in intrinsic dimensions such as curiosity and enjoyment of learning, as well as in extrinsic dimensions such as value, achievement, and social expectations (Kotera et al., 2023). Multimodal literacy has been introduced as an strategy that is considered to be able to address the needs of students in the 21st century, by using various text modalities such as visual, audio, and kinaesthetic to increase student participation and engagement (Kholis & Azmi, 2023; Suwastini et al., 2021). However, previous literature shows the positive impact of multimodal literacy on motivation (Gan et al., 2023; Kotera et al., 2023; Selimovic, 2022). This is also confirmed that the concept of multimodal literacy in the independent curriculum provides a great opportunity to strengthen motivation to learn English in diverse social contexts (Andriani et al., 2025).

This study examines the effect of multimodal literacy on students' English learning motivation with a focus on two main dimensions, namely extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Based on descriptive data from the pre-activity and post-activity results, extrinsic motivation showed an increase in average from 17.5 to close to 18, but the minimum score decreased from 13 to 10, indicating a decrease in the external factor in influencing students' motivation. The standard deviation values on both dimensions remained stable at around 3,

indicating that the distribution of students' scores tended to be consistent before and after the treatment. In contrast, the average intrinsic motivation decreased slightly from 18 to 17, but the minimum score was increased from 6 to 11, indicating an improvement of internal motivation in low-motivated students. Overall, the changes show an improvement. The multimodal literacy strategy shows the potential to increase motivation, especially in student groups with initially low levels of motivation (Fedorenko, Svitlana. Kravchenko, 2023; Selimovic, 2022; Tan et al., 2023). This is consistent with the research which emphasizes student motivation increases when learning media is aligned with their personal experiences (Anggrisia & Islami, 2024).

One of the factors influencing these results is the socio-economic context of the students. The majority of learners in this study come from low-income families living in suburban areas. Family support for education, especially in foreign languages such as English, is also minimal. During classroom observations, it was found that many students lacked focus, were busy with personal activities such as playing games or drawing during lessons, and some even slept in class or left the classroom without permission. This reflects a deep crisis of learning motivation and cannot be directly addressed only by a multimodal media-based pedagogical strategy (Gan et al., 2023; Kholis & Azmi, 2023), but also family support as an external factor motivation. As explained that home environments and family values that do not place education as a top priority can reduce the impact of innovative learning strategies in schools(Supit et al., 2021).

In this context, the Gardner theory of motivation becomes relevant. Gardner explains that motivation to learn a second language is influenced by students' intrinsic and extrinsic orientations, as well as social support from the surrounding environment (Gardner R. C. & Moorcroft, 1985). When students do not have a strong internal understanding or drive towards the importance of English, they are less likely to respond positively to learning strategies, even if they are visually appealing or interactive (Morris et al., 2022). It was also corroborates that students from marginalised backgrounds tend to have greater motivational barriers due to a lack of emotional, economic, and cognitive support from their social environment (Ahmed, 2024; Selimovic, 2022).

In addition, students' socioeconomic background is also an important factor. As stated in previous study, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have obstacles in accessing multimodal learning resources optimally, both due to limited devices and learning environment support (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Gan et al., 2023; Supit et al., 2021). Therefore, although the multimodal strategy has been implemented, it is not necessarily able to fully overcome the structural motivational gap. Low motivation to learn in students from economically weak backgrounds is not only temporary, but also structural and systemic (Fedorenko, Svitlana. Kravchenko, 2023). They do not see English as a tool for social mobility because their life reality does not place higher education as a major aspiration. Therefore, a multimodal strategy that is not integrated with students' values and life experiences will find it difficult to penetrate the affective layer necessary to generate true motivation (Mansouri et al., 2024). De-contextualized learning will only reinforce the distance between students and teaching materials, even if delivered multimodally. Moreover, digital literacy plays an important role in motivating English-language learners, so integrating multimodal strategies with digital literacy practices can strengthen learning motivation (Nucifera et al., 2023).

The insignificant increase in student motivation can be attributed to various external and internal factors. Internally, Gardner's theory of motivation distinguishes between

intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, where students may show improvement in certain aspects, such as interest or confidence, but not in others, such as grades or instrumental drive (Gan et al., 2023; Selimovic, 2022). This finding is in line with the study which showed that multimodality integration can improve certain aspects of motivation, such as engagement and learning comfort, but the effect is not always immediately significant on overall motivation.

In another instance, the multimodal strategy requires a short period of adaptation. Media and technology-based learning requires familiarization (Syafrizal & Syamsun, 2023), so that students are able to access and understand the information presented (Girón-García & Gargallo-Camarillas, 2020; Kholis & Azmi, 2023; Suwastini et al., 2021). Without intensive assistance, students tend to see learning media as mere entertainment, not as a cognitive tool. In class observations, some students seemed more interested in making videos and drawing, not for assignments, but because it was an escape from academic demands. This phenomenon points to the importance of learning design that engages students in the production of meaning, rather than just being passive recipients of visual content (Tan et al., 2023).

Thus, the potential of multimodal strategies cannot be completely ignored. This study confirms several studies with positive results of treating this strategy in other contexts. For example, in a study by Gan, the use of interactive videos and infographics was shown to increase students' motivation and comprehension of English texts. This is also supported by the study of Sari, and Quintiliani who found that visualization and interactivity were able to strengthen understanding of meaning and increase students' confidence in using English (Gan et al., 2023; Quintiliani, 2016). However, this effectiveness is highly dependent on the teacher's success in linking the content to the students' real world. The success of multimodal strategies depends not only on the media used but also on the process of aligning the learning content with students' identities and aspirations (Greenwald et al., 2023; Zaidi & Sah, 2024). When students feel that they have no relevance or value to the material being learned, their motivation to learn will remain low, even if the delivery of the material is interesting and varied.

The findings also show that the duration of the intervention greatly influences the outcome. In this study, the intervention was conducted in only three meetings (135 minutes), which is certainly not enough to form study habits or change study attitudes significantly. Meanwhile, other studies, show that transforming students' motivation requires sufficient time, emotional engagement, and continuous reflective learning. When compared with previous studies, such as those by Mansouri, it was found that students who received visual and audio-based learning had significant increases in learning engagement and motivation (Mansouri et al., 2024). However, these results differ from the findings in this study, which showed that multimodal-based interventions of limited strength were not strong enough to change the motivation structure of students. The effectiveness of multimodality is greatly influenced by the connection between learning content and students ' real lives. In the context of students who come from family backgrounds that do not support education optimally, as found in this study, the stimulus from multimodal media has not been able to overcome psychosocial barriers and inherent cultural values (Tan et al., 2023; Zaidi & Sah, 2024).

Nevertheless, this study has several explanations that need attention. First, the relatively short duration of treatment included only three meetings of 135 minutes, so it was not enough to restore balance or reflection in the student (Suwastini et al., 2021). Second,

the low level of student attendance and the lack of parents ' role in carrying out the learning process result in this learning being very contextual and cannot be widely realised. Third, the instruments used only contain quantitative data, while the understanding of motivation is also a quantitative strategy. For future studies, it is proposed to apply multimodal interventions in the long term and combine them with narrative or reflective education in order to be able to realize motivational transformations more sustainably. The multimodal literacy practices, which are carried out instantly and without integration with the reality of students, have not been able to increase intrinsic and extrinsic motivation optimally.

The implications of these findings are very important for school students with low socioeconomic status. First, teachers need to realize that learning strategies, including multimodal literacy, will not be effective if they are not based on a deep understanding of students' social and psychological conditions (Morris et al., 2022; Supit et al., 2021). Secondly, teacher training programs should include pedagogical strategies based on social empathy and contextual instructional design (Mansouri et al., 2024; Zaidi & Sah, 2024). Third, schools in peripheral areas need additional support from the government or nonprofits in terms of technology facilities, digital training, and family assistance. Furthermore, if the use of multimodal can become a habit in students' daily learning, it has great potential to significantly increase their motivation to learn. This habit not only enriches the learning experience but can also foster students' interest, engagement, and confidence in learning English. Therefore, future study is recommended to implement the intervention in the long term and integrate it with reflective activities and family involvement. It is also worth exploring students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who exhibit low motivation and attitudes to learning. This attitude is not only visually appealing, but also touches students' values and builds emotional connections with learning materials. A longitudinal strategy with a combination a quantitative and qualitative method is highly recommended to understand motivation transformation more comprehensively.

The multimodal literacy practices, as stimuli of external factors, are beneficial for students to have English learning motivation. The benefit can be seen in how the external motivation brings the students to have internal motivation. The analysis proves how the students respond the external stimulus. In general, this study shows that multimodal literacy has the potential to influence students' motivation in learning English, especially its effectiveness is very high on the social context, the duration of the intervention, as well as the emotional connection between students and learning. Taking into account these findings, it can be concluded that learning strategies, however innovative, must still be carried out slowly towards student life and adapted to the needs and social conditions faced. This study provide the effective learning is always born from students in the face of whoever the students themselves are, and how best to change them with teaching materials.

On the whole, the results of this study make an early contribution to understanding the dynamics between multimodal literacy and motivation to learn in a context of low socio-economic background. Although it was not yet showing statistical significance, the influence trend found confirms the importance of further exploration and development of more adaptive and inclusive pedagogical strategies. For future study, it is recommended that interventions are conducted over a longer period of time and involve a greater variety of media and social contexts in order to reveal the true potential of multimodal strategies in increasing students' motivation to learn.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that although multimodal literacy interventions only provide limited improvements in overall learning motivation, extrinsic motivation has been shown to play an important role in activating students' intrinsic engagement. The study confirms that while a short-term Multimodal Literacy intervention can minimally address Extrinsic Motivation (due to novelty), it is insufficient to create significant change in Intrinsic Motivation within the specific context of low-SES, peripheral high schools. Core Argument states that the study validates the hypothesis that contextual barriers (SES, low family support) function as overriding constraints that nullify the positive pedagogical effects of MML.

These findings emphasize that contextual and visually supported learning materials can enhance personal engagement, especially among students with low intrinsic motivation (Ahmed, 2024; Kholis & Azmi, 2023; Suwastini et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2023). This mechanism is consistent with the findings of Gan, which explain that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation function complementarily in maintaining student learning consistency. Additional evidence is also seen in the study, which highlights that the use of a multimodal approach can help build the engagement of students from low literacy backgrounds.

In addition, the study's findings confirm that the effectiveness of multimodal literacy is shaped by students' socio-psychological contexts, particularly among those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Further support comes from (Suwastini et al., 2021) who demonstrate that social perceptions of the school and students' academic identities influence their learning engagement, as well as from Bachore, who argues that multimodal approaches are especially beneficial for students in rural communities with limited access to literacy resources. Future research is recommended to employ long-term strategies and family involvement as the necessary next steps to more comprehensively capture motivational development and to evaluate the sustained impact of multimodal literacy interventions.

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DEVELOPING A DIGITAL VIDEO SERIES TO ENHANCE MEDICAL ENGLISH SPEAKING PROFICIENCY

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Abstract

This study investigates the design, development, and implementation of a Digital Video Series (DVS) aimed at enhancing Medical English speaking proficiency among health-science students. Using a Research and Development (R&D) approach adapted from the Borg and Gall model, the study followed seven systematic stages including needs analysis, planning, product development, expert validation, field testing, and final revision. A one-group pre-test–post-test design was employed with 109 Nursing, Midwifery, and Pharmacy students to measure speaking improvement after the implementation of the DVS, which features authentic clinical communication scenarios. The results demonstrated a substantial increase in speaking performance, with mean scores rising by 13.49 points and a statistically significant difference confirmed through a paired-sample t-test ($p < .001$). Students also reported highly positive perceptions of the videos' clarity, relevance, and usefulness for supporting communicative practice. Overall, the study provides empirical evidence that systematically developed video-based materials can effectively strengthen communicative competence in English for Medical Purposes (EMP). The DVS offers a feasible and contextually grounded model for integrating multimedia learning resources into EMP curricula, particularly in settings with limited access to authentic clinical exposure.

Keywords: *Medical English; speaking proficiency; digital video series; multimedia learning; R&D design.*

1. Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively in English has become increasingly important in global healthcare, where professionals must collaborate across countries, access international medical information, and interact with diverse patient populations. For health-science students, strong Medical English speaking skills are essential because they help prepare them for clinical discussions, patient care tasks, and professional communication in the workplace. However, many students still struggle with speaking fluently and confidently in medical situations, particularly when they have limited exposure to authentic communication models (Outemzabet & Sarnou, 2023; Pan, 2025).

In the Indonesian context, previous studies have shown that medical, nursing, and allied health students recognize English—especially speaking—as a crucial competence for

their future careers (Hidayati & Royani Meisani, 2023; Solihin, 2024). Yet, despite this awareness, many students experience hesitation, anxiety, and difficulty producing natural spoken language in clinical scenarios. Several factors contribute to this problem, including limited opportunities to practice spontaneous communication, insufficient exposure to real clinical interactions, and instructional approaches that tend to emphasize grammar rather than communicative use (Durrani, 2024; Hamad et al., 2025). Other studies also note that the lack of contextualized materials and teacher preparation in EMP classrooms can further restrict students' speaking development (Nguyen, 2025; Zoraya & Azhar, 2024). These challenges suggest a need for more engaging, realistic, and pedagogically grounded resources that support students' communicative competence.

Digital video materials have been widely recognized as effective learning media because they combine visual and auditory elements that help learners understand language in context. Prior studies found that video-based materials improve students' fluency, motivation, and comprehension of authentic language use (Habibi et al., 2024; Julita & Isna, 2025; Kurniawati, 2022). videos are particularly useful as they can simulate doctor–patient interactions, clinical procedures, and teamwork communication. These simulations provide learners with realistic models of how language is used in clinical environments, aligning with Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory, which emphasizes that learning is more effective when information is processed through both visual and verbal channels (Asrilawaly et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025).

However, although previous studies highlight the potential of multimedia learning, few have specifically developed digital video materials tailored to Medical English speaking needs. Most existing EMP studies focus on reading, vocabulary, or listening, and only a limited number integrate structured video-based instruction to improve speaking skills. Furthermore, few video-based interventions in health-science programs are developed through systematic Research and Development (R&D) procedures that include expert validation and field testing (Codron et al., 2025; Dira & Kuswandono, 2024). However, although previous studies highlight the potential of multimedia learning, few have specifically developed digital video materials tailored to Medical English speaking needs. Most existing EMP studies focus on reading, vocabulary, or listening, and only a limited number integrate structured video-based instruction to improve speaking skills. Furthermore, few video-based interventions in health-science programs are developed through systematic Research and Development (R&D) procedures that include expert validation and field testing.

To address this gap, the present study aims to design, develop, and evaluate a Digital Video Series (DVS) intended to support health-science students' speaking skills in clinical communication. The objectives of this study are to:

1. Develop a set of digital videos that model common medical communication scenarios;
2. Conduct expert validation to ensure the quality and relevance of the DVS; and
3. Evaluate the effectiveness and student responses to the DVS in improving speaking performance.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to offer an accessible and effective learning resource for institutions that lack opportunities for authentic clinical exposure. By integrating multimedia-based models into EMP instruction, the DVS can

support communicative confidence, enhance speaking proficiency, and strengthen the quality of English learning in health-science education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English for Medical Purposes (EMP)

English for Medical Purposes (EMP) is a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that focuses on the linguistic and communicative demands of healthcare settings. Foundational scholars such as Hutchinson & Waters (1987); Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) , and Basturkmen (2010) emphasize that ESP instruction must be needs-based and grounded in the specific discourse practices of a professional field. In EMP, this includes patient interviews, giving explanations, reporting symptoms, and interprofessional communication (Candlin & Candlin, 2003).

Speaking proficiency in EMP is generally defined as the ability to communicate clearly and appropriately during clinical interactions. Scholars describe it as a combination of linguistic accuracy, fluency, pragmatic competence, and the ability to respond spontaneously in real-time (Basturkmen, 2010). Unlike general EFL speaking, EMP speaking requires the ability to interpret symptoms, ask follow-up questions, and negotiate meaning with patients and colleagues. This makes speaking proficiency a core skill for health-science students preparing for clinical placements or professional practice.

Recent studies show that ESP courses can enhance learners' speaking performance when the content aligns with their professional needs (Outemzabet & Sarnou, 2023; Pan, 2025). Indonesian studies similarly highlight that nursing, midwifery, and medical students require contextualized EMP materials to support their clinical preparation and professional readiness (Hidayati & Royani Meisani, 2023; Solihin, 2024). Thus, EMP is a critical foundation for students in health sciences to perform effectively in internationalized medical environments.

2.2 Instructional Challenges in Developing EMP Speaking Skills

Although the need for Medical English speaking skills is well recognized, several instructional challenges continue to limit students' development. Many EMP classrooms rely heavily on grammar-based instruction or textbook dialogues, offering few opportunities for spontaneous interaction (Nguyen, 2025; Zoraya & Azhar, 2024). Studies in Indonesia and other EFL contexts note that students often experience speaking anxiety, lack exposure to authentic medical discourse, and have limited chances to observe real clinical communication (Durrani, 2024; Hamad et al., 2025).

A number of studies also highlight methodological issues in EMP instruction. Materials are often not tailored to clinical contexts, teachers may not have medical backgrounds, and assessment tends to rely on self-report surveys rather than performance-based tasks (Codron et al., 2025; Solihin, 2024). These weaknesses make it difficult to determine whether students truly improve in spoken performance. Taken together, these challenges underscore the need for instruction that is contextualized, interactive, and grounded in real clinical communication practices. This naturally leads to the use of digital videos as potential instructional support.

Digital Video-Based Learning in ESP and EMP Contexts

Digital videos have gained prominence in language learning because they present multimodal input that helps learners interpret meaning through both visual and auditory cues. Studies on ESP and general EFL contexts report that videos enhance learners' motivation, comprehension of authentic language, and speaking performance by providing clear models of interaction (Habibi et al., 2024; Julita & Isna, 2025; Kurniawati, 2022).

In EMP specifically, videos can simulate common clinical encounters such as history taking, explaining procedures, or giving instructions. These simulations allow students to observe pragmatic features—tone, politeness strategies, turn-taking patterns, and nonverbal communication—that textbooks cannot easily convey (Asrilawaly et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025).

However, while many studies demonstrate benefits for vocabulary and listening comprehension, fewer investigate how video materials influence speaking performance, particularly in medical contexts. Most available research still relies on short-term interventions or self-reported perceptions, leaving uncertainty about long-term improvement in productive skills.

Theoretical Perspectives Supporting Video-Based Speaking Instruction

The design of video-based EMP materials is informed by several theoretical frameworks. Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory explains how learners integrate visual and auditory information, making video a powerful medium for reducing cognitive load and supporting comprehension. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes meaningful communication, interaction, and functional language use—principles that align well with video simulations of clinical exchanges.

From an ESP perspective, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) highlight the importance of authenticity, genre knowledge, and discourse awareness in ESP learning materials. Video-based models expose learners to these discourse patterns in a contextualized format. Situated Learning Theory also supports the use of videos, as it argues that learning becomes meaningful when learners observe and participate in realistic social practices.

Together, these theories explain why digital videos can serve as effective tools for improving speaking proficiency: they present multimodal cues, model authentic discourse, and help learners practice communication aligned with real-world medical contexts.

Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

Although multimedia learning has been widely studied, empirical research that develops and validates video-based speaking materials specifically for Medical English remains limited. Only a small number of studies employ systematic Research and Development (R&D) procedures with expert validation, iterative refinement, and performance-based evaluation (Codron et al., 2025; Dira & Kuswandono, 2024). Furthermore, many studies focus on motivation or comprehension rather than measurable improvement in speaking performance.

This gap indicates a specific need for instructional media that:

1. present authentic clinical communication models;
2. are validated by experts in both language and healthcare fields; and
3. are evaluated using performance-based assessments rather than self-reported perceptions.

The present study addresses this need by developing a Digital Video Series (DVS) grounded in Multimedia Learning Theory, CLT principles, and ESP pedagogy. The conceptual framework guiding this study links:

1. the communicative demands of EMP,
2. the challenges learners face,
3. the theoretical foundations supporting video-based instruction, and
4. the role of DVS as an empirically validated intervention designed to enhance Medical English speaking proficiency.

3. Research Method

Research Design

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach adapted from the Borg and Gall model (Borg & Gall, 1984). The model was simplified into seven stages to align with the scope and practical constraints of classroom-based EMP research: (1) research and information gathering, (2) planning, (3) product development, (4) preliminary field testing, (5) revision, (6) main field testing, and (7) final product revision. This adapted sequence maintained the essential cycle of developing, testing, and refining instructional media while allowing the procedures to be implemented efficiently within the academic setting.

The adaptation also ensured that each stage remained pedagogically meaningful. Needs analysis, conducted during the research and information-gathering phase, helped identify learners' challenges in Medical English speaking. Preliminary field testing enabled a small-scale try-out of the initial DVS draft, while main field testing involved implementation with the full participant group. Expert feedback and learner responses were incorporated throughout the revision stages to improve content accuracy, clarity, and usability.

A one-group pre-test–post-test design was integrated into the model to examine improvements in students' Medical English speaking proficiency after using the Digital Video Series (DVS). This design allowed the study to capture measurable changes in performance while supporting the developmental focus of the R&D approach.

Participants

The participants were 109 students enrolled in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses across three health-science programs: Nursing (n = 41), Midwifery (n = 35), and Pharmacy (n = 33). They were selected using purposive sampling based on their course enrollment and willingness to participate. All participants provided informed consent, and ethical approval was obtained from the university's ethics committee.

Instruments

Three instruments were used to collect data:

1. **Speaking Test:** An analytic rubric assessed fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and communicative appropriateness. Two raters evaluated the performances to ensure scoring reliability.
2. **Expert Validation Checklist:** Three experts—specializing in ESP, medical communication, and educational technology—reviewed the draft videos for accuracy, clarity, and relevance.

3. **Student Perception Questionnaire:** A 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire measured students' engagement, perceived usefulness, clarity of the videos, and confidence improvement.

Development Procedures

The DVS was developed in seven main stages:

1. **Research and Information Gathering**: Needs analysis through questionnaires, interviews, and observations identified issues such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and lack of contextual speaking practice.
2. **Planning**: Learning objectives were developed, and clinical communication scenarios were selected. Scripts and storyboards were drafted to reflect common medical interactions.
3. **Product Development**: The preliminary DVS was produced in simulated clinical environments, edited, and refined to ensure clarity and linguistic accuracy.
4. **Preliminary Field Testing**: A small group of students reviewed the videos to identify issues related to pacing, comprehension, and technical quality.
5. **Revision**: Expert feedback and initial student responses informed revisions to improve clarity and accuracy.
6. **Main Field Testing**: The revised DVS was applied in four ESP sessions featuring pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing tasks. A pre-test and post-test measured students' progress.
7. **Final Product Revision**: Findings from expert validation, preliminary testing, and classroom implementation guided the final refinement of the DVS.

Data Collection

Data sources included pre- and post-test speaking scores, expert validation results, questionnaire responses, and classroom observation notes. All data were anonymized.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the speaking rubric were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests. Questionnaire results were interpreted using descriptive statistics. Qualitative comments were examined through thematic analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality was maintained through data anonymization. Ethical approval was granted by the university's institutional review board.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the results of students' speaking scores before and after using the Digital Video Series.

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Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Scores

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-test	109	57.25	71.25	62.08
Post-test	109	57.00	83.00	75.57

The results show a clear upward trend. Students' mean speaking score increased from 62.08 in the pre-test to 75.57 in the post-test, reflecting a substantial gain of 13.49 points. Both datasets met normality assumptions according to the Shapiro–Wilk test ($p > .05$). This improvement indicates that after undergoing the intervention, students demonstrated higher levels of fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence.

To verify whether this improvement was statistically meaningful, a paired-sample t-test was conducted. It confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant, $t(108) = 18.42$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.76$). These findings offer strong empirical evidence that structured exposure to authentic video-based learning materials can accelerate skill development in an English for Medical Purposes (EMP) context.

2. Speaking Skill Categories

To further illustrate changes in speaking performance, Table 2 displays the distribution of students across speaking proficiency categories before and after treatment.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Speaking Score Categories

Category	Before (%)	After (%)
Good	0.00	66.06
Fair	9.17	33.94
Poor	90.83	0.00

Table 2 presents notable shifts. Initially, nearly all students (90.83%) were categorized as "Poor," highlighting their limited speaking ability and lack of exposure to communicative Medical English. Only 9.17% fell under the "Fair" category, and none demonstrated "Good" proficiency. These distributions were based on rubric aligned cut off points (Good ≥ 70; Fair = 60–69; Poor < 60).

3. Student Perceptions

Students' perceptions were also highly positive. The questionnaire, which demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha = .89$), indicated high levels of engagement ($M = 4.41$), relevance to medical communication needs ($M = 4.36$), and perceived improvement in speaking confidence ($M = 4.29$). The overall perception score was 4.32, suggesting that the DVS was well received and perceived as beneficial for EMP learning.

These results demonstrate that students not only benefited cognitively but also responded positively on an affective level. The perceived relevance of the content suggests strong alignment between the video materials and students' professional expectations in healthcare settings.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Overall Improvement in Speaking Proficiency

The findings of the study indicate substantial gains in students' Medical English speaking proficiency following the implementation of the Digital Video Series (DVS). The statistically significant increase in speaking scores, paired with a large effect size, suggests that the DVS contributed meaningfully to students' learning outcomes. These results support previous research demonstrating that multimedia-based instruction enhances fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence among ESP learners (Habibi et al., 2024; Julita & Isna, 2025).

4.2.2 Development of Communicative Competence in EMP

The shift in proficiency categories from predominantly Poor to predominantly Good reflects meaningful development in students' communicative competence. This change highlights the effectiveness of the DVS in addressing long-standing challenges in EMP instruction, particularly the lack of contextualized speaking models. Consistent with Nguyen (2025), the availability of authentic or semi-authentic discourse samples enables learners to internalize interactional routines commonly used in clinical encounters.

4.2.3 Multimodal Input and Cognitive Processing

Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the observed improvements. The combination of audio and visual cues supported dual-channel processing, helping students retain new vocabulary and expressions more effectively. The simulated clinical scenarios in the DVS allowed learners to observe professional communication strategies and integrate them into their own spoken output.

4.2.4 The Role of Noticing and Input Enhancement

The DVS also facilitated noticing, a key process in language acquisition according to Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis. Through guided viewing tasks, learners' attention was drawn to specific linguistic features such as question forms, intonation, and clarification strategies. This input enhancement likely contributed to students' improved accuracy and appropriateness in speaking tasks, allowing them to replicate target patterns in subsequent role-plays.

4.2.5 Learner Perceptions and Affective Engagement

Students' positive perceptions further reinforce the effectiveness of the intervention. Many reported increased confidence and reduced anxiety when speaking English, which parallels the findings of Dira & Kuswandono (2024), who noted that video-based tasks help reduce affective barriers. The structured pre-viewing and post-viewing activities offered additional scaffolding, supporting learners at varying proficiency levels.

4.2.6 Authenticity and Relevance to Clinical Contexts

The clear relevance of the video content to real clinical practice contributed to high levels of engagement. Students recognized that the expressions and communication sequences presented in the videos mirrored interactions they expect to perform during internships. This authenticity aligns with Li et al. (2025) argument that materials grounded in actual workplace contexts enhance the transferability of language learning.

4.2.7 Persistent Difficulties and Pedagogical Considerations

Although overall improvements were notable, some students continued to experience challenges with spontaneous responses, pronunciation, and rapid turn-taking. These difficulties align with observations by Codron et al.(2025), who argue that video-based input enhances modeling but cannot fully replace interactive communicative practice. Therefore, the DVS should be used alongside simulations, pair work, and real-time speaking activities to strengthen students' communicative autonomy.

4.2.8 Individual Differences and Variability in Learning Outcomes

Despite the absence of students in the Poor category after the intervention, it is important to acknowledge individual variation. Learners may differ in the amount of support needed to internalize complex medical expressions or communication strategies. Some may benefit more from repeated video exposure, while others may require more practice-based interaction. These differences highlight the necessity of differentiated instructional approaches in EMP classrooms.

4.2.9 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings strengthens the claim that the DVS was effective across cognitive and affective domains. The improvement in test scores aligns with students' self-reported gains in confidence, clarity, and perceived usefulness of the videos. This alignment suggests that the DVS supported both skill development and learner motivation, which together contribute to sustained improvement in speaking proficiency.

4.2.10 Contribution to EMP Pedagogy and R&D-Based Material Development

The study contributes to EMP pedagogy by demonstrating the value of systematically developed multimedia materials. The iterative R&D process, which included needs analysis, expert validation, revisions, and testing, ensured that the final DVS addressed learners' actual communication needs. The findings also highlight the potential for locally produced video materials to support the global movement toward digital, contextualized language instruction, bridging the gap between classroom learning and authentic clinical communication.

4.3 Implication

4.3 Implication

The results of this study provide several practical implications for teaching Medical English and developing learning materials for health-science students.

1. Implications for Teaching

The improvement in students' speaking scores shows that digital videos can support teachers in providing clearer examples of real clinical communication. Teachers may not always have time or ability to model authentic doctor–patient interactions, so using videos can help students:

a. observe real expressions and communication patterns,
b. reduce their speaking anxiety, and
c. practice speaking with better preparation and confidence.

EMP instructors are encouraged to include video-based activities—such as watching, repeating, and role-playing videos—during speaking lessons.

2. Implications for Curriculum Development

The findings suggest that EMP curricula should incorporate multimedia materials, not only textbooks. Digital videos can make learning more relevant to clinical practice by showing:

a. realistic medical scenarios,
b. how professionals use English in real contexts, and
c. how to explain symptoms, give instructions, and interact with patients.

Curriculum designers should consider adding structured video modules to strengthen students' readiness for real workplace communication.

3. Implications for Media and Instructional Design

Using an R&D approach proved effective for producing high-quality learning media. This means that future video development should:

a. involve experts in medical communication and ESP,
b. include validation and revisions, and
c. ensure the videos are simple, accurate, and easy to follow.

Such procedures help ensure that multimedia resources are pedagogically appropriate for students.

4. Institutional Implications

The study highlights the importance of institutional support for digital learning. Universities may:

a. provide resources to produce educational videos,
b. train teachers in multimedia-based teaching, and
c. encourage collaboration between language lecturers and health-science departments.

This support can help improve the quality of EMP instruction across programs.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

The study's design has several limitations. The one-group pre-test–post-test model makes it difficult to confirm that the improvement was caused solely by the intervention, because there was no control group for comparison. Future studies should use experimental designs to strengthen causal conclusions.

In addition, the assessment only measured outcomes immediately after the intervention. Long-term follow-up is needed to see whether the improvement in speaking skills lasts over time. The participants were also limited to students from Nursing, Midwifery, and Pharmacy programs, so future research involving other health fields—such as Medicine, Dentistry, or Physiotherapy—would help improve the generalizability of the findings.

Possible directions for future studies include: (1) integrating the video series with virtual exchanges involving native-speaking healthcare professionals; (2) adding gamified features to increase student motivation; and (3) using automated speech analysis tools to provide personalized feedback and monitor learners' progress more accurately.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the development, feasibility, and effectiveness of a Digital Video Series (DVS) for improving Medical English speaking proficiency. For Research Question 1, the DVS was successfully developed using the Borg and Gall R&D model, ensuring a systematic process from needs analysis to expert validation and refinement. Regarding Research Question 2, both expert evaluations and student perceptions indicated that the DVS was feasible, clear, and relevant to clinical communication needs, supporting its pedagogical appropriateness for EMP contexts. For Research Question 3, the significant improvement in speaking scores demonstrated that the DVS was effective within the scope of this study, aligning with principles of multimedia learning and ESP instruction.

Although the findings were positive, the conclusions must be viewed in light of the one-group design and limited participant scope. Future studies could employ experimental designs, involve broader health-science programs, and evaluate long-term retention. Overall, the study suggests that a systematically developed DVS can serve as a practical and contextually grounded model for enhancing speaking proficiency in Medical English courses.

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T. S. ELIOT'S *THE WASTE LAND* THROUGH POSTMODERN LENS

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Abstract

Conventional readings T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* interpreted it as a poem of utter cultural degeneration, spiritual collapse and mental disillusionment. Its dialectical mode of exchange and opposition between the past and the present invokes complicity to Hegelian dialectical approach that blends thesis (tradition), antithesis (disillusionment) — leading to an anticipation of a final synthesis as a ground of stability in truth and reality. However, the narrative structure of the poem remains resistant to any final synthesis, since the promise of the anticipated *renewal* does not materialize in any form of final resolution —a state that draws on the postmodern aporia of postponement of meaning supported by Derrida's Deconstruction. This study thus contends that Eliot's *objective correlative* and *polyphonic* voices support what Adorno (1973) calls "determinate negation of opposites", thus framing a cultural decline of the present into self-awareness as opposed to the fragmented history of the past. By analyzing unresolved tensions within the poem, the study demonstrates how it enacts *différance,* positioning Eliot at a critical cusp of the postmodern epistemological departure.

Keywords: *Hegelian dialectic; negative dialectic; objective correlative; postmodernism; The Waste Land.*

1. Introduction

T. S Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) remains as a defining work of modernist literature/poetry, known mostly for its fragmented structure and dark allusions. While scholars have often viewed Eliot's fragmentation as either an aesthetic innovation (Brooks, 1939; Smith, 1956) or an indicator of modernist crisis (Levenson, 1984, p. 176), this paper applies a different theoretical framework. We examined the poem's narrative structure through a *Hegelian dialectical model*—where a thesis (tradition) clashes with an antithesis (disillusionment)—to demonstrate that the key energy stems from the deferral, not from the resolution, of a final synthesis. This reading uses Adorno's concept of 'determinate negation' to argue that the poem's contradictions are a form of cultural critique, and aligns its unresolved state with Derrida's postmodern concept of *différance*. Adorno's idea of determinate negation—the process by which critique reveals "the contradiction in the thing itself" and leaks the historical forces sedimented within cultural forms (Adorno, 1973, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 5)—provides a powerful framework for understanding the fractured structure, intertextual method, and epistemological instability of *The Waste Land*. This paper

argues that through techniques like intertextuality and the "objective correlative," Eliot stages a collision between literary tradition (thesis) and postwar disillusionment (antithesis). This tension generates a virtual synthesis—a new poetic form that preserves cultural memory while subtly anticipating postmodern approaches to text and meaning. Conversely, instead of reading the poem as a reproduction of cultural despair in post-war Europe, we argue that its anticipated synthesis is permanently delayed. This state of lack of resolution prefigures Derrida's concept of difference where meaning is continually deferred without giving any final meaning.

Eliot himself laid the groundwork for this reading. In his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1921), he insists that new art must force the "existing order" of tradition to reorganize itself (p. 44). *The Waste Land* embodies this principle. Its splintered voices and disjointed scenes—far from being artistic failures—become tools for historical insights, building on the 'social truth content' of art arising from its form as 'determinate negation' (Adorno, 1966/1973, p. 32), fragmentation challenges the crisis of modernity while also performing what Jameson (1981) refers to as a 'symbolic act' of confronting history (p. 81). Crucially, we reinterpret this crisis not as mere despair but as dialectical energy. This aligns with Hegel's Science of Logic: 'Contradiction is the root of all movement' (Hegel, 1812/1991, p. 379), where Eliot's polyphony performs contradiction as a generative force. The poem's polyphonic structure and layered references dismantle conventional narrative authority, laying bare modernity's spiritual emptiness while hinting at future aesthetics of open interpretation and indeterminacy.

2. Literature Review

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* resists conventional narrative cohesion, presenting a fragmented poetic terrain that mirrors its time's spiritual and cultural disintegration. Rather than a mere aesthetic of chaos, this fragmentation functions as a dialectical strategy—a philosophical confrontation between past and present, tradition and disillusionment. Published in 1922, in the aftermath of World War I, the poem did not merely "confuse" its audience, but rather demanded a radical realignment of interpretive frameworks. The structural difficulty, polyphonic layering, and mythic detritus embedded in the text are essential dialectical elements: they negate narrative linearity and epistemological certainty while constructing a provisional space of renewal through contradiction.

This disjunctive form serves as a dialectical negation of Victorian poetic tradition, in which coherence and moral clarity were central. In contrast, Eliot's work distills the cultural collapse into a lyrical crisis, not as terminal despair, but as the moment of "determinate negation" (Hegel, 1991, p. 54), where loss paradoxically generates the conditions for philosophical progression. The poem's diverse voices embody what Adorno referred to as the 'crisis of meaning in society' (1973, p. 32). Pound's editorial choice—summarizing the poem with the Sanskrit term 'Shantih'—heightens this dialectical tension. As Gupta observes, this 'halted synthesis' reveals 'modernity's inability to incorporate non-Western knowledge systems' (2023, p. 21), foreshadowing postcolonial criticism (Said, 1993, p. 51).

His choice to distill its message into the *Sanskrit* benediction "Shantih shantih shantih" is not simply a mystical flourish, but a moment of suspended synthesis. These final words represent the unresolved yearning for peace—not as a restored unity, but as a gesture toward transcendence without resolution. The Sanskrit phrases—DA (Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata)—are drawn from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and inserted by

Eliot as cultural antitheses that interrupt the Western narrative frame. Their presence disrupts the hegemony of Western rationalism, positing instead a dialectical counterpoint: The Eastern as Other, not subsumed but dialogically opposed. Pound's reading of the poem through this lens, as well as his analogy with Pre-Raphaelite precision, reinforces the idea that Eliot's poem navigates the labyrinth of historical and textual memory not to reaffirm the past but to destabilize and reconstitute it.

At the most literal level, Eliot's poem responds to the paralysis and spiritual disillusionment of the early twentieth century. Though he dismissed it as 'a rhythmic complaint' and 'a personal and entirely trivial complaint against life,' *The Waste Land* crystallizes what Gupta terms 'dialectical exhaustion'—a condition where postwar London becomes 'a palimpsest of cultural memory and historical rupture' (Gupta, 2023, p. 14). This exhaustion manifests as a collective crisis of modernity. Through characters like the typist and the clerk, Eliot portrays the mechanization of human intimacy and the erosion of genuine emotional and spiritual connection. Sexuality, once a source of symbolic renewal in fertility myths, becomes transactional and sterile. This represents not only ethical decay but a deeper dialectical collapse: the negation of eros as the life-affirming force in myth, transformed into an emblem of modern alienation.

Eliot's invocation of the 'heap of broken images' alongside 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust' (1922, lines 19-22, 30) stages a dialectical epistemology. These images refuse nostalgia for tradition while negating modernity's redemptive claims—enacting Adorno's principle of determinate negation—where form critiques social crisis (Adorno, 1973, p. 32). Dust here symbolizes not despair but immanent critique: the reduction of metaphysical hope to material contingency.

The juxtaposition of 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins' and the closing 'Shantih shantih shantih' (Eliot, 1922, lines 430, 433) performs dialectical suspension. As Kim argues, this pairing creates 'a rupture between cultural salvage and unattainable transcendence' (Kim, 2020, p. 62), refusing synthesis while pointing to Derrida's différance (1967/2016, p. 89). It embodies a dialectical pause—a cessation that does not synthesize, but holds opposing forces in tension. In this, *The Waste Land* aligns with what later poststructuralist theorists would term différance: a meaning deferred, never realized, always contingent.

Moreover, *The Waste Land* reflects London itself as a dialectical city: postwar London, both symbol and setting, emerges as a space of cultural exhaustion and mythic overlay. The poem's invocation of the Thames, the "Unreal City," and Eliot's movement through time, space, and voice maps a disoriented historical consciousness, defined not by coherence but juxtaposition. The British context, while specific, becomes generalized—London is metonymic for modernity itself, situated between cultural memory and historical rupture.

Attempts to position *The Waste Land* as a postmodern text are therefore not misplaced. The poem's resistance to closure, rejection of singular authorship, and decentered structure exemplify what will later be formalized in postmodern theory. Yet Eliot's methods are rooted in dialectical modernism: the fragmentation is not celebratory but diagnostic. The poem does not abandon meaning; it interrogates its very conditions of possibility. Thus, in its aesthetic of negation and its philosophical posture toward contradiction, *The Waste Land* exemplifies a dialectical poetics that bridges modernism and the postmodern turn.

2.1 Cultural Disintegration and Narrative Experimentation in *The Waste Land*

Eliot's *The Waste Land* exemplifies a dialectical narratology wherein fragmentation is not an aesthetic defect but a philosophical strategy to mirror and interrogate cultural disintegration. Modernist narratology, as theorized through both literary form and philosophical critique, signals a rupture from traditional narrative coherence and offers a platform for experimental structures. This rupture is especially evident in Eliot's dialectical engagement with myth, intertextuality, and time. The poem's structure enacts a synthesis, not of harmonious reconciliation, but of antagonistic juxtapositions that reveal the contradictions of modernity. Fragmentation becomes the site where oppositional energies—past and present, sacred and profane, coherence and collapse—coexist without resolution, echoing Hegelian dialectics where contradiction propels historical transformation (Hegel, 1991, p. 379).

The defining features of Eliot's technique—mythic substitution, temporal dislocation, and narrative discontinuity—are themselves dialectical mechanisms. Rather than depict a unified cultural reality, The Waste Land stages the collapse of such unity through fissures in modernity's façade (Adorno, 1973, p. 145). Eliot's poetic method enacts what Hegel calls "determinate negation," in which cultural forms are not erased but recontextualized to reveal their internal contradictions. Thus, Eliot's invocation of myth is not a nostalgic restoration of order but a dialectical deployment—a symbolic counterweight to modern nihilism. The classical and biblical allusions, drawn from fertility myths, Dante, and the Upanishads, are not stable anchors but dialectical provocations: they heighten the dissonance between a once-coherent cosmology and a disintegrated modern subjectivity.

The lines "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, / You cannot say…" (Eliot, 1922, lines 22) articulate this dialectic of loss. The metaphor of "stony rubbish" recalls a landscape evacuated of growth—cultural, spiritual, or poetic. It reflects the absence of grounding narratives and gestures toward what Hegel would call a historical moment of alienation. The rootlessness signifies more than despair; it is the philosophical terrain upon which a dialectical reconstruction might begin. This alienation is further intensified by the poem's disjunctions, which mimic a consciousness fragmented by modernity's rapid shifts and its disavowal of metaphysical purpose.

Eliot's declaration "I will show you fear in a handful of dust" (line 30) powerfully encapsulates the dialectical negation of transcendence. Dust—symbolizing mortality, futility, and entropy—evokes existential dread, yet also underscores the material conditions from which spiritual insight may arise. In dialectical terms, the poem does not resolve the tension between meaning and void but keeps them suspended, mirroring the way Hegel envisions truth as the movement through contradiction rather than a static conclusion (Beiser, 2005, p. 168).

The poem's fragmentation becomes an intentional aesthetic that performs cultural critique. As the poem progresses, its allusions to Shakespeare, St. Augustine, Ovid, and Baudelaire enact a layered intertextuality that dismantles the illusion of narrative authority. The multiplicity of voices generates a form of collective utterance—what Rabaté (2014) calls a "linguistic dialectic"—where meaning emerges not through clarity but through polyphony and rupture. This technique also highlights Eliot's rejection of authorial singularity, favoring instead a pluralistic chorus that embodies historical discontinuity and epistemic instability.

Lines like "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (line 430) make Eliot's dialectical project explicit: fragments are not remnants of destruction alone, but intentional assemblages that point to the possibility of cultural critique and reconstitution. In Hegelian

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terms, this act is neither regression to tradition nor utopian transcendence; it is the recognition of contradiction as constitutive of historical consciousness.

Finally, the poem's famous ending—"Shantih shantih shantih" (line 433)—serves as a dialectical paradox. The invocation of peace does not resolve the preceding turmoil; instead, it opens an ethical and spiritual horizon that remains unfulfilled. As Kim (2020) notes, this closing line enacts a "dialectical rupture," where the tension between despair and longing is neither negated nor synthesized. It encapsulates the proto-postmodern sensibility of indeterminacy and suspended meaning. By refusing closure, Eliot transforms fragmentation into an ethical imperative: to dwell within contradiction, to confront the ruins of civilization, and to consider—however uncertainly—the possibility of renewal.

3. Research Method

The study employed a qualitative and theoretical method based on a close reading technique of the poem The Waste Land. A comparative, structural synthesizing technique for critiquing the poem is used as the primary tool, which draws on the Hegelian and post-Hegelian theory to examine the underlying narrative and structural logic of the poem. The process was structured in three steps — construction of the theoretical framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2016), textual analysis through close reading technique (Byron, 2003; Ohrvik, 2024), and comparative study of modern and postmodern theories in relation to the text.

The key task was to construct a conceptual framework for the study. It was built on the logic of juxtaposition of Hegel's dialectical model (thesis-anti-thesis-synthesis) and its later critiques, chiefly Theodor Adorno and his concept of "determinate negation" and Derrida's central thesis of deconstruction difference. This device was not used mechanically but was applied in an experiential manner to interrogate the logic of the poem and its resistance to conventional hermeneutic closure. The fundamental stage of the method involved close teaching and analysis of each and every element and implied logic and resistance. It focused on its formal narrative properties along with unearthing structural fragmentation through examining the poem's disintegrated moments, abrupt scenes and images, movement of voices, and most importantly, the lack of linear narrative that creates tension between the present and the past rather than surface level chaos. At this stage, it also analyzes myriad allusions — literary, cultural, religious and mythic — and its polyphonic voices as an antithesis that challenges the absolutism of the Western canon. Then, it focused on the recurrent images of the poem, such as "heap of broken images "and" a handful of dust" and other signs of fragmentation and degeneration enlisted as modernist implications. Finally, this analysis reaches a point where the poem's final statement, "Shantih shantih shantih", is poised against the earlier instances of fragments to exhibit the principle of suspension of the synthesis and thus the final meaning.

Then, their findings from the application of the close reading technique are interpreted through a theoretical framework grounded in comparative textual analysis in relation to Adorno's "determinate negation"—in order to argue the central tensions of the poem, whereby the form itself becomes a social criticism—and Derrida's deconstructionist concept différance, in which meaning is perpetually suspended. The findings of the theoretical interpretation were again put into context within this critical framework of the poem with the critique of Michael Levenson. In order to construct a strong case for the poem's proto-postmodern gesture, the technique thus triangulated between The Waste Land, the fundamental philosophical theories, and secondary literary criticism.

4. Discussion

4.1 Modernist Dialect to Postmodern Turn

To fully grasp the philosophical scaffolding of *The Waste Land*, one must understand "dialectic" as more than a rhetorical or stylistic gesture—it is the engine of Eliot's poetic logic. Here, dialectic refers to the Hegelian process of *meaning-making* through contradiction: the dynamic synthesis that arises from the confrontation between thesis and antithesis. In Hegel's view, truth is not a static proposition but the evolving result of negations—truth emerges only through a continual engagement with contradiction (Beiser, 2005, p. 168). This idea is central to Eliot's poetic method. He stages contradictions—between tradition and disintegration, myth and modernity, coherence and collapse—not to resolve them but to hold them in productive tension.

Hegel famously asserts, "Contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality… Something moves only insofar as it contains contradiction" (Hegel, 1991, p. 379). In *The Waste Land,* contradiction animates the structure of the poem itself. The modern world, fragmented by war, loss, and spiritual decay, functions as an antithesis to the cultural and literary traditions Eliot both reveres and critiques. The poetic act becomes the synthesis—not a restoration of unity, but a provisional gesture toward future meaning. In this sense, the poem enacts a dialectical process in real time: it does not present a static vision of modernity but dramatizes the collapse of meaning in order to make space for new conceptual configurations.

Fredric Jameson (1981) captures this structure by asserting that the symbolic act of modernist literature "begins by generating and producing its context in the same moment of emergence in which it steps back from it, taking its measure with a view toward its projects of transformation" (p. 81). Eliot's work fits this model precisely. In *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1921), he affirms that a new work must reorganize the "existing order," not by rejecting the past but by retroactively altering its significance (Eliot, 1921, p. 44). This is a fundamentally dialectical position: the new work of art (synthesis) emerges from a collision between inherited tradition (thesis) and the demands of the present moment (antithesis). The poem's nonlinear temporality and layered voices perform this philosophical interaction, continually forcing the reader to oscillate between memory and dislocation, depth and surface.

Critics like Cleanth Brooks (1939) recognized the dialectical structure in the poem's mythic framing, noting that its "incoherence is resolved into a complex unity" (p. 167). However, this resolution is unstable, provisional, and ultimately elusive. Later critics such as Maud Ellmann (1987) challenge the assumption of resolution, arguing instead that Eliot's juxtaposition of myth and sterility "enacts a dialectical tension, where the past interrogates the present without resolution" (p. 109). This unresolved dialectic marks the poem's transition toward postmodern aesthetics: the synthesis never arrives, meaning is never stabilized, and the self becomes a site of historical ambivalence.

Eagleton (1976) interprets this dynamic more constructively, suggesting that The Waste Land enacts "a dialectic of cultural decay and renewal," wherein its very fragmentation "gestures toward a possible, if elusive, unity" (p. 148). The poem becomes a palimpsest of broken narratives, each simultaneously negating and remembering the others. It performs what Hegel calls "a new concept... higher and richer than the preceding," but refuses to make it visible in totality (Hegel, 1991, p. 54). Eliot's aesthetic does not reconstruct the world—it allows the contradictions of modernity to reverberate through form, language, and structure.

Levenson (1984) underscores the poem's dialectical instability: "The poem's shifting voices and allusions create a dialectical tension between despair and hope, sterility and fertility—a tension that resists synthesis, embodying the modernist crisis of meaning" (p. 176). Moretti, reading through a Marxist lens, sees in the myth-modernity juxtaposition "a dialectical image... exposing the contradictions of capitalist modernity" (Moretti, 2013, p. 242). The Fisher King myth, which haunts the poem, becomes a dialectical counter-narrative to modernity's spiritual decay, a figure in which death and rebirth are co-implicated but never resolved (Singh, 2021, p. 112).

This inherent contradiction resonates with Adorno's perspective on modernist art as 'the specific negation of tradition' (1973, p. 32). Eliot's paradoxes ('life-in-death, fire-and-water') enact negative dialectics—challenging totality through continuous tension (Adorno, 1966/1973, p. 145). Other critics emphasize the intertextual implications of this dialectic. Davidson (1985) reads the poem's allusions as a "hermeneutic dialect" that "destabilizes fixed meaning," situating the poem at the threshold of postmodern inquiry (p. 67). Said's Culture and Imperialism identifies in Eliot's Eastern allusions 'a contrapuntal critique of Eurocentric hegemony' (Said, 1993, p. 51); we extend this to argue the Upanishadic fragments enact what Ndlovu (2018) terms 'dialectical disruption of the colonial unconscious' (p. 89), resisting synthesis to expose modernity's imperial logic. The layering of polyglot fragments—German, French, Sanskrit, Latin—forms a "linguistic dialectic" (Rabaté, 2014, p. 115) that gestures not toward Babel-esque collapse, but toward a new, emergent collectivity of utterance.

This dialectical reading also explains why *The Waste Land* cannot be fully contained within modernism. While it bears the hallmarks of the modernist ethos—myth, fragmentation, impersonality—it simultaneously anticipates the postmodern. The poem's lack of resolution performs différance: a deferral of meaning where 'the signified never fully transcends the signifier' (Derrida, 2016, p. 89), prefiguring postmodern epistemology—surpassing modernist dialectics to foreshadow postmodern ambiguity. As Rabaté (2014) points out, this 'linguistic dialectic' undermines the concept of authorship (p. 115), positioning Eliot as a trailblazer for deconstructive interpretation. The poststructuralist reader finds in Eliot not a prophet of despair, but a diagnostician of conceptual transition.

Thus, Eliot's The Waste Land operates as both culmination and rupture. It completes the modernist project by pushing its techniques to the edge of incoherence and, in so doing, initiates a new aesthetic logic: a dialectical poetics in which fragmentation, contradiction, and allusion do not hinder meaning, but produce it in absentia. This movement from modernist dialectic to postmodern indeterminacy is neither accidental nor residual—it is the consequence of Eliot's radical experiment with poetic form as philosophical structure.

4.2 Rethinking *The Waste Land*: From Fragmentation to Postmodern Vision

Eliot's use of disintegration—fragmented tones, rushed alterations, and a collection of cultural references—imitates the fractured reality of the early 20th century after the First World War. This method, while representative of modernism, also suggests postmodernism's embrace of diversity, obscurity, and the collapse of grand narratives (Rajbhandari, et al. 2023). For years, critics have grappled with the puzzles of The Waste Land: its fragmented form as opposed to its supposed search for unity. Early readings, following Eliot's own references to Weston and Frazer, celebrated the poem's mythic framework as its organizing principle. Cleanth Brooks (1939) famously claimed the poem's "incoherence is resolved into a complex unity" (p. 167), positioning it as a modernist search

for spiritual order in chaotic times. This approach treated fragmentation as a problem to solve, forcing coherence onto a text that resists it. Later critics like Smith (1956) saw the poem as a "scourge of utter destruction and disillusionment" (pp. 93-95), while Levenson (1984) identified the "dialectical tension between despair and hope" as embodying "the modernist crisis of meaning" (p. 176). Despite their insights, these interpretations still sought resolution—whether through myth, morality, or historical context. What these readings miss is how the poem's contradictions and linguistic instability aren't flaws but features. This is where Adorno and Derrida help us see differently. Adorno's concept of "determinate negation" (1973, p. 32) reveals how the poem's fragmentation actively critiques society without offering false reconciliation. Similarly, Derrida's différance (2016, p. 158) explains how the poem's endless allusions and shifting voices deliberately defer meaning rather than failing to achieve it.

The Waste Land not only depicts a catastrophe—it enacts what I call a "suspended synthesis." In spite of resolving the contradictions in its narrative akin to the Hegelian synthesis, the poem upholds them productively. This repositions the poem from High Modernism to postmodern, anticipating a world where truth isn't a destination but an ongoing tension. This reading through negation and deferral requires us to reconsider the poem's historical periodization, recognizing its postmodern qualities long before postmodernism emerged as a recognized movement.

5. Conclusion

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* reaches its deep philosophical significance not by resolving its famous tensions, but by carefully sustaining them. This analysis contends that the poem's narrative style performs a deliberate operation of what Theodor Adorno termed "determinate negation" (Adorno, 1973, p. 32). In this framework, the dialectical clash between a revered past and a dislocated present is enacted to close out the synthetic resolution a quintessential Hegelian reading might anticipate. The poem cultivates what can be understood as a strategic failure—a conscious negation of synthesis that actively generates the postmodern aporia of endlessly postponed meaning, mirroring Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance* (Derrida, 2016, p. 158). This is powerfully encapsulated in the poem's final movement, where the speaker's assertion of having "shored these fragments against my ruins" meets the unresolved benediction of the Sanskrit "Shantih" (Eliot, 1922, p. 64). This "suspended synthesis" is not an aesthetic flaw but the poem's central, groundbreaking achievement, situating it on the threshold of a new epistemological landscape.

This interpretation forces a significant reevaluation of the poem's place in literary history. The core contribution of this paper is thus a decisive re-periodization of *The Waste Land*. By revealing its critical resistance to modernist closure, we argue for relocating the poem from its accepted status as a pinnacle of High Modernism to a pivotal juncture heralding postmodern thought. Our reading provides an essential new framework that recasts the poem's celebrated difficulties not as mere symptoms of cultural despair, but as the engine of a sophisticated, proto-deconstructive critique. In this, our argument finds resonance with Hernández's (2019) concept of a "dialectical narratology" (p. 45), while also pushing further. We extend Ndlovu's (2018) insight into the "dialectical disruption" (p. 89) of imperial logic by demonstrating how the poem's formal architecture itself performs a parallel disruption of totalizing philosophical systems.

The critical framework advanced here—of a "suspended synthesis" driven by Adornian negation—clearly bears implications beyond Eliot's work. It offers a powerful lens through which to re-examine other major modernist texts defined by radical fragmentation. Scholars might productively apply this framework to the sprawling, wide-ranging disarray of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, where historical and linguistic elements similarly accumulate without yielding a unified vision. Similarly, the narrative experiments of Virginia Woolf, which dissolve the certitudes of linear time and unitary consciousness, could be seen as another site where this refusal of final synthesis operates. Applying this concept across a wider modernist body of literature will justify whether this "strategic failure" is a unique feature of *The Waste Land* or a defining, under-theorized characteristic of the period's troubled passage toward a postmodern sensibility, ultimately enriching our grasp of modernism's complex historicity. In sum, Eliot's *The Waste Land* is not merely a representation of cultural collapse—it is a poetic mechanism that enacts dialectical confrontation across narrative, language, temporality, and metaphysics. By refusing synthesis and embracing contradiction, Eliot stages a philosophical inquiry that traverses modernist crisis and anticipates postmodern forms of aesthetic consciousness. Fragmentation here is not an endpoint, but a method—a proto-postmodern gesture that invites readers into the active labor of interpretation, where ruins are not dead ends, but sites for possible renewal. This study's dialectical model opens pathways for applying Badiou (2005) 'eventual rupture' (p. 212) to modernist poetry—where formal breakdowns reconfigure historicity or Spivak's (1988) subaltern gaps—extending the dialectic into contemporary critical terrains.

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A COGNITIVE METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP'S SPEECHES

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Abstract

Metaphorical expressions carry layered meanings and serve a range of persuasive functions, especially within the political sphere. Their strategic use often aims to influence public perception and reinforce a speaker's credibility. Donald Trump's presidential campaign speeches during the 2016–2017 U.S. election cycle offer a compelling corpus for examining such rhetorical choices. This study analyzes the metaphors in these speeches by categorizing them into three types: structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors. Using a qualitative descriptive design grounded in cognitive metaphor theory, the analysis draws on Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). Operating within a post-positivist paradigm, the researcher serves as the primary instrument in interpreting the data. The findings show that structural metaphors allow Trump to frame abstract ideas through more concrete conceptual structures; ontological metaphors provide moderate conceptual grounding by attributing entity-like qualities to abstract phenomena; and orientational metaphors offer minimal conceptual structure while shaping spatial or directional understandings. Across these categories, Trump's metaphors function to evoke emotion, shape audience perception, and construct a particular persona. Taken together, the metaphors project a worldview centered on resilience, national pride, and assertive leadership—features that contributed to the persuasive force of his political messaging.

Keywords: *Donald Trump; image schema; metaphor types; speech.*

1. Introduction

Speech holds a distinctive perspective and significant role within social and political events. It is a public act of expression through which individuals convey opinions, emotions, and ideas with the intention to influence or inspire others. Before assuming leadership, whether as a candidate or as the head of state, a president's speeches and public performances are designed to persuade citizens, raise morale, and strengthen public trust. To achieve these aims and leave a positive impression on the audience, presidents carefully select their words and refine their delivery through rhetorical skills and strategic communication.

Language, as the primary instrument of human interaction, becomes a powerful tool in the hands of those who possess or seek authority. It serves not only to express and disseminate ideologies but also to challenge opposing beliefs. Consequently, influential leaders must develop advanced discourse skills to navigate opposition, criticism, and complex political challenges. The role of language in shaping human thought, beliefs, and behavior is profound—and potentially perilous—since language operates across multiple levels of human experience: as both a mental system and a verbal product, in everyday communication as well as in the refined expressions of literature, religion, and politics (Khaldun, 2007).

Besides showing communication strategies, politics also reflects cultural differences across nations as language is a manifestation of culture and the leaders are representatives of their nations and hence their culture. Not only do metaphors are rooted in culture, but they are also one of the most effective communicative tools in politics to move the audience's feelings as well as to convey ideologies in a transparent and clear way that the speakers wish their audience to see and listen to. Hence, the focus of this study is the usage of metaphors in political speech become one of the influential aspects. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "Metaphors are pervasive in daily life, not just in language but also in thought and action." The cognitive view on metaphor proposes the metaphorical theory, which means that people can express a concept in terms of another, thus enabling to understand some abstract concepts much clearer and easier by using words that have concrete referents.

Meanwhile, the use of metaphors in politics has complicated aspects, abstract, and far from people's daily experience. Otherwise, politicians can make those abstract political concepts more concrete for people to accept and understand easily. Moreover, Jeffery and Katz say that metaphors offer solutions to political problems or events. "They offer a course of action, and politicians hope their metaphors persuade the public to follow the prescription suggested by the metaphors" (Jeffery & Katz, 1996). Therefore, it will be of great significance to investigate the three kinds of metaphors that are employed in the speeches by presidents and to show how these metaphors are revealed.

Political speeches have been carefully made by talent before they are delivered to the public, thus it is not hard to see that most of the speeches of the president are inspiring, courageous, and claiming the promise of better days, even though some of them are addressed in the darkest days of America. In addition, the president will also use various rhetorical devices to create and grow the emotional impact, and to attain the goal of persuading people to support him, such as antithesis, parallelism and metaphor. In politics, the use of cognitive metaphors is deeply embedded in the human mental system, influencing how we conceptualize the world, and involves mapping an abstract "target" domain (emotion) to a more concrete "source" domain (such as a physical force or substance). Through experience, abstract concepts are often based on direct experience, sometimes indirectly through a series of metaphors that connect abstract concepts to concrete ones. Therefore, metaphors seem to be used more widely and demonstrate goals more effectively, which, to a greater extent, increases the power and clarity of language. As Jeffery and Katz (1996) state, "Metaphors in politics are applied to convey policies, convince or persuade the public to act or to characterize political opponents."

This study focuses on Donald Trump's speeches in the period 2016-2017, as a figure to the cognitive view which brings out the metaphor theory. Controversy often arises due to his statements, which may sound harsh or aggressive in diction, but in his speeches, he delivered his ambitions' firefly. The theory helps explain how people conceptualize their

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reality and can provide new perspectives on familiar concepts. By making metaphorical thought patterns explicit, it can be used to explore new possibilities and generate new ideas. This section mainly deals with theoretical issues on the expression of metaphor in the view of cognitive linguistics and kinds of metaphors such as structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors of Donald Trump's speeches and relevant studies. Donald Trump said, "While America's infrastructure has fallen into despair and decay," they underlined that dropping posture typically goes along with the feeling of unhappiness or depression. Metaphor is conventionalized to the extent that it is automatic, effortless and generally established as a mode of thought among members of a linguistic community (Lakoff and Turner, 1989).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cognitive Semantics

Cognitive linguists view metaphor as important and not marginal at all, emphasizing the construct of meanings and our embodied understanding of the situation. Lakoff (1987), Cognitive Semantics, is a new approach to the study of language which views linguistic knowledge as part of general cognition and thinking.

2.2 Figurative Language

Figurative language as a language that uses words or expressions with a meaning is different from the literal interpretation. Figurative language is usually rarely used in our daily conversation. Figurative language is often found in literary works, such as articles in newspapers, advertisements, novels, poems, etc.

2.3 Metaphor

Metaphor is loosely defined as a figure of speech in which we compare the common property shared by two quite different things. Metaphor is at the nexus of mind and language to define metaphor and understand its functions in language, thought, and culture. The late 20th century has witnessed an explosion in the study of metaphor, especially within cognitive science, where linguists, philosophers, and psychologists have offered a variety of proposals on metaphorical thought and language. (Gibbs, 1994). The nature of metaphor has been studied for quite a long time from different perspectives. Traditionally, metaphor is treated as part of figurative language such as simile.

2.4 Structural Metaphor

A structural metaphor arises when the source domain provides rich knowledge structure for the target concept (Kövecses, 2010). The source target projects easily perceived and comprehensible mappings that deliver the metaphor to the target source in a comprehensible way. The conceptual metaphor can be represented as a mapping: "TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT." The observer has a steady position and the things, objects, are moving towards him. In contrast, the following mapping can arise. In the aforementioned metaphorical expressions, time gains a steady fixed position and the observer is moving towards it. The understanding of both source domain and target domain make the metaphor clear and more comprehensible. One concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

2.5 Ontological Metaphor

Ontological metaphor is less transparently projected from the source domain to the target concept. Their task is to provide new ontological status to general categories of abstract target concepts. The abstract notions can be referred to as entities. This can be achieved through the introduction of ontological metaphors that might serve the purpose of quantifying, identifying, referring, setting goals etc. In other words, they contribute to the comprehension of nonphysical objects as an entity. An abstraction, such as an activity, emotion, or idea, is represented as something concrete, such as an object, substance, container, or person. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980) provide the following examples to manifest the use of ontological metaphors:

a. I can't keep up with the pace of modern life. Life course is perceived as speed of some physical object. His emotional health has deteriorated recently. The pressure of his responsibilities caused his breakdown. Health, emotional state of a person or work appears to adopt some physical abilities not usual to the abstract notions.
b. He went to New York to seek fame and fortune. I want to find true happiness in this life. (p.27). Fame and happiness are apprehended as physical objects that could be lost, found, moved etc. A physical object is mapped to the target domain as a human being. Such mappings allow us to perceive non-human entities through human characteristics, motivations, actions, etc.
c. Inflation is eating up our profits. This fact argues against the standard theories. Life has cheated me. (p.33). The conceptual metaphor is built into the source domain is not just "INFLATION IS A PERSON" (as in the previous set of examples), but rather "INFLA-TION IS AN ENEMY". Such mapping contributes to the better understanding of not just the behavior of inflation but of the potential actions against it. Personification provides for the use of one of the most accessible and close to the human being source domains, namely, our own existence.

2.6 Orientational Metaphor

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "Orientational metaphors can be opposed to structural ones in such a way that they do not build the metaphorical structure of one concept in terms of another, but rather "…organize a whole system of concepts with respect to one another." The nature of orientational metaphors lays deeply in our physical structure or culture. Thus, it is common to relate most positive feelings to movement up, and negative ones – to moving down. This could be due to the physical specifics of our body being straight up in reference to a positive state, and drooping posture manifesting sadness or unhappiness. The examples below illustrate the theory:

• I'm feeling up. My spirits rose. He's in high spirits. – I'm feeling down. He's really low these days. My spirits sank. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Conceptual metaphors designating the use of orientational metaphors could be "HEALTH AND LIFE ARE UP" and "SICKNESS AND DEATH ARE DOWN". The common examples, such as "He is in top shape", "He is at the peak of health", and "He came down with the flu", "His health is declining" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) are explained by the physical basis common to everyone, i.e. "during an illness we tend to take lying position, while getting better suggests getting up and taking upward position".

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2.7 Metaphorical Mapping

Metaphor is not just the notion of similarity or comparison between the literal and figurative meanings in an expression. The transference of metaphor in meaning is realized by constructing mapping between two domains. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The cognitive process that relates literal meanings to extended meanings is known as mapping. As Radden and Dirven once pointed out that mapping is the projection of one set of conceptual entities onto another set of conceptual entities (Radden & Dirven, 2007). They take the sentence "The microprocessor is the brain of a computer for instance." The metaphorical mapping is as follows: The brain is the organ inside your head that controls how you think, feel, and move. But it is obviously used in another sense. The shifting meanings from "organ inside your head" to "microchip of a computer". In this sentence we no longer talking about people but computers. People and their brains belong to the conceptual domain "human being", which comprises human aspects such as consciousness, rationality, emotions, etc. Microchips belong to the conceptual domain "electronics" which comprises computer technology and other digital equipment such as mobile phones and DVD. The structure of the domain "human being" is mapped onto the structure of the domain "electronic" and, as part of the structures, the "brain" as a body part is mapped onto "microchip" as a part of a computer. Thus, the way a microprocessor function in a computer is understood in terms of the way a brain functions in a human beings. Chen (2005) said that, "the words which express human body parts are easily to be mapped onto other semantic domains by the metaphor". The human's metaphor includes three types:

1. The structured mapping from the body part domain to the non-body domain. Example: <u>He lives in the foot of the hill</u>. This sentences uses metaphor of the part of human body on the word "foot". The image of foot in above sentence is used to express of the position of place where someone lives.
2. The mapping from the non-body domain to the body part domain. Example: <u>He is such a snake</u>. This sentences uses metaphor of the animal on the word "snake". The image of snake in above sentence is used to express language which used for hurting or destroying the feeling of someone with the words.
3. The mapping between two organs in the human part domain. The mapping relationship between the source domains to the target domain is relative. They can be mapped each other not only from the source domain to the target domain, but from the target domain to the source domain (Lu, 2005).

Metaphorical mappings from a source domain to a target domain are inherently partial. In each conceptual metaphor, only certain aspects of the source domain are utilized — a phenomenon known as *partial metaphorical utilization*. This partial structure of the source highlights and provides conceptual organization for only specific parts of the target concept. The aspects of the target that fall outside this highlighted region are considered *hidden* (Kövecses, 2010). "AN ARGUMENT IS A CONTAINER" means your argument has a lot of content. "AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY" means we will proceed in a step-by-step argument. Concepts in general, source and target, are characterized by a number of different aspects. When a source domain is applied to a target, only some (but not all) aspects of the target are brought into focus.

2.8 Image Schemas

An image schema is a recurring structure within our cognitive processes which establishes patterns of understanding and reasoning the abstract outside world. As Lakoff (1987), points out that image schema are directly meaningful ("experiential" & "embodied"), preconceptual structures, which arise from, or are founding in, human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptions, and ways of manipulating objects. Johnson (1987) argues that image-schematic structures possess two key characteristics: they are *non-propositional* and *imaginative* in nature. According to him, "they are preconceptual schematic structures that emerge from our bodily experience and operate continuously in our perceptual interactions, bodily movements through space, and physical manipulation of objects." The *path schema*, for instance, derives from our understanding of an object's movement from one location to another. It consists of a starting point, a goal, and a sequence of intermediate points that link the two.

3. Research Method

This study applies a qualitative descriptive method which focuses on the metaphorical cognitive approach as the objective. The collected data were analyzed using the cognitive approach proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The following procedures show how the data were collected to accomplish the objective of the study. Phase 1: Identification phase. In this phase, to read Trump's speeches and select the most appropriate ones for analysis. Phase 2: screening phase. To decide which speeches contain many metaphors by selecting words per sentence; classifying the data on metaphors; Phase 3: analyzing phase. The interpretation of data is based on three types of metaphors: "structural, ontological and orientational metaphors"; and finally drawing conclusions after the completion of the analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what the researcher will tell others". Mouton (1996) describes methodology as the means or methods of doing something.

The 2016-2017 speech was chosen based on Donald Trump's political year in the presidential election. As a public figure with a contemporary cognitive perspective and metaphorical expressions, and a controversial figure in his country, his speeches sounded harsh, cruel, and ambitious through the diction of his statements. The speeches conveyed by Donald Trump are taken from the internet, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Trump. The reason behind giving the speeches is that they are designed not only to state the president's political visions and missions, but also to return the spirit of nation to rebuild their country to be a free and successful country. Therefore, the president always gives the most beautiful and persuasive words to grasp people's sympathy and take advantage of emotional appeals. The data found are analyzed using the cognitive approach proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1993).

4. Results and Discussion

This section focuses on identifying the use of metaphorical expressions based on linguistic features, sentences, phrases, and words, and their classification. Based on the four speech manuscripts, a total of 31 data points were found, with the following percentages of

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expressions: 1 structural metaphor (3.2%), 19 ontological metaphors (61.3%), and 11 orientational metaphors (35.5%).

Structural Metaphor

1	This week gives our country a special reason to take pride in that example, we are celebrating the 230th anniversary of our beloved Constitution – the oldest constitution still in the use in the world today.	**This week** gives our country a special reason to take pride.	The sentence refers to an action which is giving something which usually does by a human but in the this data that means the week has given a special reason for American taking pride and "this week" of the sentence as a motion of the constitution of the country.

Ontological Metaphor

		Sentence/ Phrase/**Word**	
1	Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like **tombstones** across the landscape of our nation.	Tombstones	The word refers to the tombstones which cannot make a move but in this data the tombstones as barrier that surrounds and sometimes stops American people to get their right.
2	Drugs that have **stolen** too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.	stolen	The word refers to an action which is taking something without permission which does by human or animals. But in this data expression that means the drugs have made people died.
3	Drugs that have stolen too many lives and **robbed** our country of so much unrealized potential	robbed	The word refers to an action which is taking something with carry away from someone. But in this data that means the drugs have broken chance of country.
4	Now **arrives** the hour of action.	arrives	The word refers to an action which does only if someone has or makes a trip. But in this data that means the time for doing something is coming.
5	A new national pride will **stir** our souls, lift our sight, and heal our division.	stir	The word refers to an action which does make or mix something in a container. But in this data that means a new national pride will handle all of country's spirit.

Speech 2
(Remarks by President Trump in Joint Address to Congress)

No	Data	Linguistic Features	Meaning
6	We are a country that **stands** united in condemning hate and evil in all of its very ugly forms.	*stands*	The word refers to an action which does by feet. But in this data that means they are facing, fighting and surviving in all situations whereas in bad conditions and situations.
7	Each American generation passes **the torch of truth**, liberty and justice in an unbroken chain all the way down to the present.	the torch of truth	The phrase refers to a thing which can ilume the dark room. But in this data that means good chance of any problems will passes by American.
8	and we will use it to **light up** the world.	light up	The phrase refers to an action which is giving lighting. But in this data that means they will use the torch as a good chance for opening the way to rebuild their country.
9	A new national pride is **sweeping** across our nation.	sweeping	The word refers to an action which is cleaning room or place. But in this data that means American pride will clean their country from any oppression.
10	Finally, the chorus became an **earthquake**, and the people turned out by small and large, all across our country.	earthquake	The word refers to a calamity which can smash some places. But in this data that means as the voice of poor people will be listened.
11	**America is willing to find new friends**, and to forge new partnerships, where shared interest align.	America is willing to find new friends.	The sentence refers to an action which is searching person for being a friend. But in this data that means America want to have cooperation with other country or with the world to rebuild their country.
12	America is willing to find new friends, and **to forge new partnerships, where shared interest align**.	To forge new partnerships, where shared interest align.	The sentence refers to an action which does only to an iron. But in this data that means America try to have relationship with another country which have same vision and mission with them to rebuild their country.

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Speech 3
(Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations)

No	Data	Linguistic Features	Meaning
13	This is the **beautiful** vision of the institution, and this is foundation for cooperation and success.	beautiful	The word refers to something looks good. But in this data that means as the good plan for the institution.
14	This is the beautiful vision of the institution, and this is **foundation** for cooperation and success.	foundation	The word refers to something as basic of a building. But in this data that means as the good plan will be the basic and strength of cooperation and success.
15	In America, we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it **shine** as an example for everyone to watch.	shine	The word refers to an action which does by sun for shining world. But in this data that means the life style of American will become an example for the world.
16	This timeless document has been the **foundation** of peace, prosperity, and freedom for the Americans and for countless millions around the globe whose own countries have found inspiration in its respect for human nature, human dignity, and the rule of law.	foundation	The word refers to something as basic of a building. But in this data that means the timeless document will be a basic and strength of successful of America.
17	That was the moment when America **awoke**, when we looked around and understood that we were a nation.	awoke	The word refers to an action which does after sleep. But in this data that means America is back for returning the togetherness.
18	It is time for the entire world to join us in demanding that Iran's government end its **pursuit** of death and destruction.	pursuit	The word refers to an action which does by running. But in this data that means It is time for making free country from defeat.

Speech 4
(Donald Trump's election victory speech)

19	Now it's time for America to **bind the wounds** of division, have to get together.	bind the wounds	The phrase refers to an action which does for uniting something. But in this data that means covering the weakness.

Orientational Metaphor

Speech 1

Inaugural Address

No	Data	Linguistic Features	Meaning
1	While America's infrastructure has **fallen into** disrepair and decay.	fallen into	This phrase refers to something is going down. But in this data that shows a state of being unhappy or depressed.
2	I will fight for you with every breath in my body and I will never, ever let you **down.**	down	This word refers to a position. But in this data that means never give up for their country.
3	We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared **over** the horizon**.**	over	This word refers to a position. But in this data that means the chance for America has lost.
4	The time for empty talk is **over**.	over	The word refers to something ends. But in this data that means there is no time for making something useless, this time to hardworking to rebuild the country.

Speech 2

(Remarks by President Trump in Joint Address to Congress)

No	Data	Linguistic Features	Meaning
5	Each American generation passes the torch of truth, liberty and justice in **an unbroken chain all the way down to the present.**	An unbroken chain all the way down to the present.	The sentence refers to a form of chain which is all the way of them is down. But in this data that means the chance and justice of country will not disconnected for American generations.
6	And Ryan is **looking down**, right now – you know that – and he is very happy because I think he just broke a record.	looking down	This phrase refers to an action for looking which is pointing to down. But in this data that means Ryan was shy when Donald Trump told about him.
7	And our neglected inner cities will see a **rebirth** of hope, safety and opportunity.	rebirth	The word refers to a second or new birth which does and feels by human or animals. But in this data that means there will come a new time for America to get free from oppression.

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Speech 3
(Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations)

8	It is entirely up to us whether we lift the world to new heights, or let it **fall into** a valley of disrepair.	fall into	The phrase refers to a dropping posture. But in this data that means feeling of sadness or depression because fall into defeat and failure.
9	We will stop radical Islamic terrorism because we can not allow it to **tear up** our nation, and indeed to tear up the entire world.	tear up	The phrase refers to an action which does for something can easily tearing up. But in this data that means breaking up the nation.
10	We will stop radical Islamic terrorism because we can not allow it to tear up our nation, and indeed to **tear up** the entire world.	tear up	The phrase refers to an action which for something can easily tearing up. But in this data that means separating the nation.

Speech 4
(Donald Trump's election victory speech)

11	First, I want to thank my parents, who I know are **looking down** on me right now.	looking down	The phrase refers to an action for looking which is pointing down. But in this data that means Donald Trump's parents underestimated Donald Trump.

The Interpretation of Meanings By Kinds of Metaphors

The data will be analyzed by categorizing according to the speeches which has been used and symbolized by **D** as data and **S** as speech. For example, D1, S3, which means the first data taken from the third speech.

Structural Metaphors

Structural Metaphors is a concept in which two concepts, one more abstract that the other, are interrelated. The time gains steady fixed position and the observer is moving towards it. On the finding analysis, there is found one datum which containing structural metaphors from four speeches.

D1, S3: *"This week gives our country a special reason to take pride in that example, we are celebrating the 230th anniversary of our beloved constitution – the oldest constitution still in the use in the world today"* The sentence is concluded as structural metaphors because the sentence tells that time is structured based on the motion and space. The sentence refers to an action which is giving something which usually does by human but in this data that means the week has given a special reason for American taking pride and "this week" of the sentence as a motion of the constitution of the country.

Ontological Metaphors

Ontological metaphors is a metaphor in which an abstraction, such as an activity, emotion, or idea, is represented as something concrete, such as an object, substance, container, thing or a person. On the finding analysis, there are found nineteen data which containing ontological metaphors from four speeches.

D2, S1:

*"Mothers and children trapped in the poverty cities: rusted- out factories scattered like tombstone**s** across the landscape of our nation. "*The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells about a thing which is represented as something concrete that refers to the tombstones which cannot make a move but in this data the tombstones as barrier that surrounds and sometimes stops American people to get their right.

D3, S1:

"Drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential." The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete that refers to an action which is taking something with carry away from someone that means the drugs have broken chance of country.

D4, S1:

"Drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential." The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete that refers to an action which is taking something with carry away from someone that means the drugs have broken chance of country.

D5, S1: *"Now arrives the hour of action. "*The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete that refers to an action which does only if someone has or makes a trip that means the time for doing something is coming.

D6, S1: *"A new national pride will stir our souls, lift our sight, and heal our division. "*The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete that refers to an action which does make or mix something in a container that means a new national pride will handle all of country's spirit.

D7, S2: *"We are a country that stands united in condemning hate and evil in all of its very ugly forms."* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete. The word refers to an action which does by feet that means they are facing, fighting and surviving in all situations whereas in bad conditions and situations.

D8, S2: *"Each American generation passes the torch of truth, liberty and justice in an unbroken chain all the way down to the present. "*The phrase is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells a thing which is represented as something concrete that refers to a thing which can illume the dark room that means good chance of any problems will passes by American.

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D9, S2 : *"And we will use it to light up the world"* The phrase is concluded as ontological metaphors because it tells an activity which is represented as something concrete that refers to an action which is giving lighting that means they will use the torch as a good chance for opening the way to rebuild their country.

D10, S2: *"A new national pride is sweeping across our nation."* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete that refers to an action which is cleaning room or place that means American pride will clean their country from any oppression.

D11, S2: *"Finally, the chorus became an earthquake, and the people turned out by small and large, all across our country.* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete. It refers to a calamity which can smash some places that means as the voice of poor people will be listened.

D12, S2: *"America is willing to find new friends, and to forge new partnership, where shared interest align."* The sentence is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete. The sentence refers to an action which does only to an iron that means America try to have relationship with another country which have same vision and mission with them for rebuild their country.

D13, S2: "*America is willing to find new friends, and to forge new partnership, where shared interest align.***"** The sentence is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity is represented as something concrete. It refers to an action does only to an iron that means America try to have relationship with another country which have same vision and mission with them for rebuild their country.

D14, S3: *"This is the beautiful vision of the institution, and this is foundation for cooperation and success."* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors because it tells an idea is represented as something concrete that refers to something looks good but in this data that means as the good plan for the institution.

D15, S3: *"This is the beautiful vision of the institution, and this is foundation for cooperation and success."* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors that tells a thing which is represented as something concrete. The word refers to something as basic of a building that means as the good plan will be the basic and strength of cooperation and success.

D16, S3: *"In America, we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it* ***shine*** *as an example for everyone to watch."* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors that tells an activity which is represented as something concrete. The underlined word refers to an action which does by sun for shining world that means the life style of American will become an example for the world.

D17, S3: *"This timeless document has been the foundation of peace, prosperity, and freedom for the Americans and for countless millions around the globe whose own countries have*

found inspiration in its respect for human nature, human dignity, and the rule of law." The word is concluded as ontological metaphors that tells a things which is represented as something concrete. The word refers to something as basic of a building that means the timeless document will be a basic and strength of successful of America.

D18, S3: *"That was the moment when America awoke, when we looked around and understood that we were a nation."* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete. The underlined word refers to an action which does after sleep that means America is back for returning the togetherness.

D19, S3: *"It is time for the entire world to join us in demanding that Iran's government end its pursuit of death and destruction."* The word is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete. The underlined word refers to an action which does by running that word means time for making free country from defeat.

D20, S4: *"Now it's time for America to bind the wounds of division, have to get together."* The phrase is concluded as ontological metaphors which tells an activity which is represented as something concrete which refers to an action which does for uniting something that means covering the weakness.

Orientational Metaphors

Orientational metaphor derives from the fact that most metaphors that serve this function have to do with basic human spatial orientations, such as up-down, center-periphery, and the like (Kovecses, 2010:40). Lakoff and Johnson (1980), supported by saying, "We call them orientational metaphors because most of them have to do with spatial orientation: up-down, front-back, in-out, on-off, deep shallow, central-peripheral." There are found eleven data which containing orientational metaphors from four speeches.

D21, S1:*"While America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay."* The phrase is concluded as orientational metaphors, because the phrase does the activity with spatial orientation. The underlined phrase refers to something is going down that shows a state of being unhappy or depressed.

D22, S1: *"I will fight for you with every breath in my body and I will never, ever let you down".* The underlined word is concluded as orientational metaphors, because the word does the activity with spatial orientation. It refers to a position that means never give up for their country.

D23, S1: *"We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon".* The word is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The word refers to a position that means the chance for America has lost.

D24, S1: "*The time for empty talk is over"* The word is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The underlined word refers to something ends that means there is no time for making something useless, this time to hardworking to rebuild the country.

D25, S2: *"Each American generation passes the torch of truth, liberty and justice in an unbroken chain all the way down to the present."* The sentence is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The sentence refers to a form of chain which is all the way of them is down that means the chance and justice of country will not disconnected for American generations.

D26, S2: *"And Ryan is looking down, right now – you know that – and he is very happy because I think he just broke a record."* The phrase is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The phrase refers to an action for looking which is pointing to down that means Ryan was shy when Donald Trump told about him.

D27, S2: *"And our neglected inner cities will see a rebirth of hope, safety and opportunity."* The word is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The underlined word refers to a second or new birth which does and feels by human or animals that means there will come a new time for America to get free from oppression.

D28, S3: *"It is entirely up to us whether we lift the world to new heights, or let it fall into a valley of disrepair."* The phrase is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The underlined phrase refers to a dropping posture that means feeling of sadness or depression because fall into defeat and failure.

D29, S3: *"We will stop radical Islamic terrorism because we cannot allow it to tear up our nation, and indeed to tear up the entire world."* The phrase is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The phrase refers to an action which does for something can easily tearing up that means breaking up the nation.

D30, S3: *"We will stop radical Islamic terrorism because we cannot allow it to tear up our nation, and indeed to tear up the entire world."* The phrase is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. The word refers to an action which for something can easily tearing up that means separating the nation.

D31, S4: *"First, I want to thank my parents, who I know are looking down on me right now."* The phrase is concluded as orientational metaphors which shows the activity with spatial orientation. On the underlined phrase refers to an action for looking which is pointing down. But in this data that means Donald Trump's parents underestimated him.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that metaphors function as a strategic linguistic tool to shape audience perception, reinforce ideological messages, and express individual or collective ambitions, particularly within the domain of political and leadership discourse. The findings reveal that metaphorical expressions—structural, ontological, and orientational—constitute powerful rhetorical devices that reflect the cognitive framing of thought and persuasion. Each type of metaphor contributes differently to meaning construction. Structural metaphors organize abstract concepts through the mapping of

concrete spatial or temporal structures, allowing complex political ideas to be more accessible to the audience. Ontological metaphors transform intangible notions such as actions, emotions, or ideas into concrete entities, thereby humanizing and simplifying abstract realities. Meanwhile, orientational metaphors frame experiences in spatial terms—up, down, in, out—illustrating how physical orientation underlies emotional and ideological positioning. Taken as a whole, the study supports Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, confirming that metaphor is not merely a stylistic ornament but a fundamental mechanism of human cognition and communication. Through metaphorical language, Donald Trump's speeches effectively construct persuasive narratives of strength, unity, and national pride, which contribute to his political persona and rhetorical influence.

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IMPACT OF TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES ON CHARACTERIZATION AND SUBTITLE QUALITY IN *THE GOOD DOCTOR (2017)*

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines a key challenge in Audiovisual Translation (AVT): balancing technical constraints with the stylistic fidelity required to represent characters with distinctive communicative traits, focusing on Dr. Shaun Murphy, a character with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in *The Good Doctor* (2017). The study analyzes English source dialogues and their Indonesian subtitles across seasons 1–4, employing a descriptive qualitative method with a stylistic approach. The analysis identifies the types and functions of repetition, the translation techniques used, and subtitle quality based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Expert focus group discussions were conducted to validate the findings. Results show that deletion, reduction, and discursive creation frequently remove repetitions, reducing emotional nuance and weakening ASD-related speech features, thus diminishing character distinctiveness. Conversely, preserving repetitions maintains character integrity and enhances subtitle quality. Theoretically, this study contributes to AVT by highlighting the importance of stylistic fidelity in translating neurodivergent discourse and recognizing repetition as a marker of character identity. Practically, the findings underscore the need for preservation-oriented techniques to prevent character erasure and to support authentic representation of ASD characters.

Keywords: *autism spectrum disorder; characterization; repetition; translation quality.*

1. Introduction

Audiovisual Translation (AVT), particularly subtitling, is a complex translational practice characterized by stringent technical constraints, including spatial limitations, reading-speed regulations, and the requirement to maintain rhythm with visual content. These constraints often necessitate reduction or deletion of linguistic material to ensure viewer comprehension. However, when the source dialogue encodes stylistically marked or character-specific discourse features, such reductions risk diminishing essential narrative information. This challenge becomes especially critical when the dialogue reflects atypical communicative traits linked to neurodivergence. In such cases, the subtitler must balance the need for brevity with the imperative of stylistic fidelity to preserve the speaker's voice, identity, and narrative function.

The character of Dr. Shaun Murphy in the medical drama *The Good Doctor* (2017) represents a compelling case for examining this dilemma. As a young surgical resident diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) of the savant syndrome type, Dr. Murphy's discourse marked by literalness, directness, and frequent repetition constitutes a central component of his characterization. Repetition is not merely a rhetorical device but a communicative trait reflecting his cognitive processing, emotional regulation, and interactional patterns. It becomes more salient under pressure, when conveying crucial medical information, or when managing anxiety. Treating repetition as redundant "noise" in the subtitling process thus risks misrepresenting both his neurological condition and his narrative identity. Consequently, subtitling choices that reduce or omit repetition may compromise the accuracy, visibility, and authenticity of autistic representation in translated media.

Theoretically, this study draws on Keraf's (1994, as cited in Sumarlam, 2019) typology of repetition such as epizeuxis, tautotes, anaphora, epistrophe, symploce, mesodiplosis, epanalepsis, anadiplosis, and complete repetition each of which contributes distinct stylistic functions. Johnstone (1994) emphasizes the cognitive, emotional, and interactional functions of repetition, while Aitchison (1992) highlights its role in cohesion and identity construction. These insights underscore the importance of retaining repetition in contexts where it operates as a marker of personality, affect, and neurocognitive difference.

Existing AVT scholarship has extensively discussed subtitling constraints, quality standards, and translation strategies, including the application of models such as those proposed by Nababan et al. (2012). However, previous studies have rarely examined how technical subtitling practices intersect with disability discourse or characterological fidelity. Research on autistic characters in Indonesian media (e.g., Wijayanti & Utami, 2022) tends to focus on stereotypes rather than linguistic representation. Studies by Fadhilah (2024) and Rakhmanita (2020) examine echolalia but do not relate it to narrative characterization. Investigations into Shaun's speech patterns (Dwiyanti, 2022; Rokhim & Nur Indah, 2022) identify repetition as a salient trait but overlook its translation and its implications for character presentation. Meanwhile, Anggraini et al. (2025) demonstrate that ASD-related speech behaviors in literary translation often undergo simplification, leading to meaning shifts.

The research gap, therefore, lies in the lack of systematic analysis connecting translation techniques applied to repetitions in subtitles, the consequences for characterological fidelity, and the resulting impacts on subtitling quality. No prior study integrates linguistic, translational, and narrative perspectives to evaluate how the treatment of repetition affects the representation of a savant autistic character in Indonesian subtitles.

Accordingly, this study aims to systematically analyze the translation techniques applied to repetitions in Dr. Shaun Murphy's dialogue and evaluate their impact on character fidelity in the Indonesian subtitles of *The Good Doctor* (2017). It further assesses the accuracy, acceptability, and readability of the translated repetitions.

Theoretically, the study contributes to AVT scholarship by demonstrating that stylistic features such as repetition are not merely linguistic ornaments but essential components of character construction, especially in disability-centered narratives. Practically, it offers recommendations for subtitlers on how to preserve meaningful repetitions within the technical constraints of subtitling, ensuring more accurate and ethically responsible representation of autistic characters in translated audiovisual media.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and Subtitling Constraints

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is defined as the translation of multimodal texts in which linguistic meaning interacts with image, sound, and temporality (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2014). Subtitling, as one major AVT mode, is governed by non-negotiable technical norms that shape the translator's choices. Spatial constraints limit the number of characters per line, typically to a range of thirty-five to forty-two characters, while temporal constraints regulate the duration subtitles appear on-screen, which must align with reading speed standards such as one hundred fifty to one hundred eighty words per minute (Gottlieb, 1992). Subtitles must also synchronize with shot changes, scene transitions, and time codes, making temporal precision an operational requirement (Gambier, 2003). These constraints compel subtitlers to condense and reduce linguistic material, particularly elements considered redundant in natural-language use, including repetition. The tension between AVT norms and the stylistic functions of repetition is therefore structural: the need for spatial–temporal efficiency frequently conflicts with the narrative and psychological function of repeated utterances in character construction. In the case of Dr. Shaun Murphy, whose identity is linguistically marked by echolalic features and epizeuxis, these AVT pressures risk erasing essential dimensions of his characterization.

2.2 Repetition in Linguistics and Stylistics

Repetition is a stylistic and discourse feature defined as the recurrent use of sounds, words, or structures to reinforce meaning, enhance cohesion, and generate rhetorical effect (Keraf, 1994 in Sumarlam, 2019). From a stylistic perspective, repetition is multifunctional: it signals emphasis, structures discourse, conveys emotional intensity, and facilitates oral processing. Johnstone (1994) explains that repetition performs cognitive, interactional, and affective functions, enabling speakers to negotiate stance, maintain alignment, and manage interpersonal dynamics. Aitchison (1992) similarly asserts that repetition supports lexical access and discourse coherence. In narratives involving neurodivergent characters, repetition often functions beyond stylistics; it conveys processing strategies, sensory management, and emotional regulation. In The Good Doctor, repetition is a deliberate narrative device encoding Shaun's cognitive load, anxiety, and communicative differences. Consequently, the reduction or erasure of repetition in translation alters not only the linguistic form but also the psychological framing of the character.

2.3 Translation Techniques Affecting Repetition

Translation techniques describe micro-level strategies for transferring meaning from a source text to a target text (Molina & Albir, 2002). In the context of repetition, several techniques directly manipulate quantity, form, and presence of repeated elements. Preservation retains the repetition either fully or nearly fully, aiming to maintain stylistic authenticity and characterological accuracy. Reduction condenses repeated phrases while maintaining propositional meaning, whereas deletion removes repeated elements deemed unnecessary within the target-language context. Discursive creation replaces the repetition with a reformulated expression intended to replicate its narrative or emotional impact without repeating linguistic material. These techniques are consistent with reduction-oriented strategies described by Newmark (1988) and condensation procedures noted in subtitling research (Díaz Cintas & Anderman, 2014). Focusing on repetition-related techniques is essential because manipulating quantity directly affects the portrayal of

Shaun's ASD speech features. The selection of preservation, reduction, deletion, or creative reformulation constitutes the primary mechanism through which subtitlers reinforce or weaken character fidelity.

2.4 Translation Quality Assessment (TQA)

This study adopts the TQA model developed by Nababan et al. (2012), which comprises the dimensions of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Accuracy refers to semantic equivalence between the source and target texts, including denotative meaning and pragmatic force. In subtitling repetition, accuracy involves preserving both the literal content and the discourse function of repeated sequences; deletion may convey the same propositional meaning yet compromise pragmatic nuance. Acceptability refers to the conformity of a translation to linguistic and stylistic norms of the target language. Indonesian norms tend to avoid excessive repetition, which may appear unnatural or childlike in ordinary discourse. However, the criterion becomes theoretically complex when evaluating neurodivergent speech: maintaining stylistically "unnatural" forms is essential for preserving character verisimilitude. Acceptability therefore becomes a site of conflict between target-language norms and representational ethics. Readability concerns the cognitive ease with which viewers process translated subtitles, shaped by length, syntactic load, and timing. Because repetition increases textual density, it may reduce readability under strict spatial–temporal constraints. The interaction between readability constraints and character fidelity underscores the central tension of this study, as subtitlers must negotiate between technical demands and narrative accuracy in portraying ASD speech.

2.5 Linguistic Characterization and ASD Discourse

Characterization in narrative discourse is constructed through a character's actions, thoughts, and speech style (Chatman, 1978). For autistic individuals, linguistic markers such as repetition, echolalia, literalness, and atypical prosody are integral components of identity and cognitive expression. Research in ASD communication demonstrates that repetition can serve as emotional grounding (Sterponi & Shankey, 2014), a processing strategy for managing cognitive load (Prizant, 1983), and a means of regulating anxiety in socially demanding contexts. In media narratives, such as The Good Doctor, repetition is intentionally scripted to signal Shaun's sensory overload, internal conflict, or difficulty transitioning between tasks. This makes repetition both a psychological cue and a narrative tool. From a stylistics perspective, the removal of repeated forms constitutes a loss of characterological fidelity because speech patterns directly encode personality, neurotype, and narrative authenticity. When subtitling suppresses or alters these repetitions, the resulting translation shifts the audience's perception of Shaun's cognitive and emotional world.

2.6 Previous Studies and Research Gap

Prior research on The Good Doctor has examined medical ethics, narrative dilemmas, communication disorders, and general ASD portrayals. Dwiyanti (2022) and Rokhim (2022) analyzed Shaun's speech patterns, while Fadhilah (2024) and Rakhmanita (2020) studied echolalia as a linguistic phenomenon. However, these studies did not address subtitling practices or their consequences for character representation. Indonesian studies such as Wijayanti and Utami (2022) highlighted media stereotypes rather than linguistic specifics, and Anggraini et al. (2025) examined ASD-related dialogue in prose translation, which does

not involve audiovisual constraints. No prior work has systematically mapped the subtitling techniques applied to repetition, nor assessed how these choices shape the portrayal of ASD-related communicative behaviors. This research therefore fills an essential gap by situating repetition within the intersecting frameworks of AVT constraints, translation techniques, and characterological fidelity.

3. Research Method

This study employed a Qualitative Descriptive Content Analysis design with Focus Group Validation. This design was chosen because it systematically mapped the linguistic features of repetition in the source text and the subtitling techniques applied to them, while also enabling an interpretive analysis of how these techniques shaped characterization and translation quality. The descriptive aspect allowed the researcher to examine how the subtitler's choices affected meaning transfer, emotional nuance, and the portrayal of autistic traits, whereas the content-analytic component ensured the systematic identification, categorization, and comparison of repetition across the source and target texts.

The data for this research were taken from the English dialogues and official Indonesian subtitles of *The Good Doctor* Seasons 1–4. These seasons were selected because they represent the period in which Shaun's repetition-based speech patterns appear most consistently and prominently, particularly as he develops as a young surgical resident with ASD. In these seasons, Shaun frequently encounters emotionally intense and cognitively demanding situations that naturally trigger repetition as a form of processing, self-regulation, and anxiety management. Subtitling practices within these seasons also remain stable, while later seasons show shifts in character focus and production that may affect subtitle consistency. Limiting the sample to Seasons 1–4 therefore ensures a coherent and methodologically controlled dataset. The corpus consisted of forty episodes, from which all instances of repetition in Shaun's dialogue were identified. The Unit of Analysis was defined as any dialogue segment containing explicit lexical or phrasal repetition paired with its corresponding Indonesian subtitle, ensuring clarity and replicability in coding.

Data were collected through documentation and transcription. The researcher systematically reviewed all episodes and identified spoken lines that contained repetition. The identified segments were transcribed, aligned with their Indonesian subtitle equivalents, and assigned episode and timestamp information to maintain traceability. The first stage of data processing involved the identification of repetition instances in the source text. In the second stage, each corresponding subtitle was extracted and paired with its source utterance. In the third stage, the researcher conducted initial coding by identifying the translation technique applied to each pair, such as preservation, reduction, deletion, or discursive creation. These procedures ensured a consistent movement from raw audiovisual material to analyzable coded data.

The research relied on two primary instruments. The first instrument was the researcher, who functioned as the primary coder and interpreter. The second was a Coding Protocol containing operational definitions for repetition types, repetition functions, translation techniques, and the scoring rubrics for Translation Quality Assessment (TQA). Repetition types were categorized based on Keraf (1994) and Sumarlam (2019), while functions were identified following Johnstone's (1994) framework. Translation techniques were determined using the taxonomy proposed by Molina and Albir (2002). The TQA scoring sheet contained the three criteria of accuracy, acceptability, and readability adopted from Nababan et al. (2012), each rated using a three-point Likert scale.

Data analysis proceeded in three analytical layers. The first involved identifying and classifying repetition according to its type and communicative function in the source text. The second involved examining the translation techniques used in the subtitles and interpreting how each technique affected meaning, emotional tone, and stylistic features. This stage also incorporated a stylistic analysis that linked the presence or removal of repetition to the representation of Shaun's ASD communicative characteristics, particularly functions such as self-regulation, cognitive processing, and anxiety signaling. The third layer involved assessing translation quality. The TQA evaluation was carried out by three raters with expertise in translation studies and linguistics. Each rater scored accuracy, acceptability, and readability independently. Their scores were then aggregated by averaging to produce the final quality score for each data item.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used strictly for validation rather than primary data collection. The researcher presented ambiguous or borderline cases particularly those in which translation techniques substantially altered the communicative function of repetition to an expert focus group consisting of professional translators and linguists. The FGD served as a triangulation procedure to confirm or refine the researcher's initial interpretations regarding how subtitling strategies influenced character fidelity and translation quality. Through this validation step, the credibility and interpretative reliability of the findings were strengthened.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

This section presents the findings of the study on the repetition patterns in the speech of Dr. Shaun Murphy and the techniques used to translate these repetitions into Indonesian subtitles. The analysis also evaluates how the retention or omission of repetition affects subtitling quality in terms of Accuracy, Acceptability, and Readability (AAR). All interpretations in this section follow the scoring scale used in the Methodology chapter.

Following Nababan et al. (2012), this study adopts a three-point scale to evaluate the quality of translation, in which a score of 3 indicates a high-quality translation, 2 represents a medium-quality translation, and 1 reflects low-quality output. For analytical clarity in this research, scores equal to or above 2.5 are categorized as high-quality translations, while scores below 2.5 are classified as low-quality, indicating the presence of meaning distortion, stylistic loss, or reduced readability.

A. Frequency of Repetition and Translation Techniques

A total of 128 repetition instances were identified in the speech of Dr. Shaun Murphy. These repetitions hold rhetorical, emotional, and cognitive functions consistent with Johnstone (1994), Keraf (1994), and Sumarlam (2019). The translation yielded 515 techniques (because each segment may employ more than one technique). Table 1 displays the distribution of techniques, functions, and repetition types.

Table 1

Translation Techniques, Functions, and Types of Repetition

Translation Technique	Frequency (%)	Function of Repetition	Frequency (%)	Type of Repetition	Frequency (%)
Established Equivalent	330 (64.07%)	Emotional Expression	75 (58.59%)	Full Repetition	85 (66.41%)
Variation	107 (20.78%)	Emphasis	53 (41.41%)	Anaphora	23 (17.97%)

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Translation Technique	Frequency (%)	Function of Repetition	Frequency (%)	Type of Repetition	Frequency (%)
Deletion	20 (3.88%)	–	–	Epizeuxis	9 (7.03%)
Pure Borrowing	26 (5.05%)	–	–	Epistrofa	5 (3.91%)
Modulation	6 (1.17%)	–	–	Simploke	3 (2.34%)
Addition	4 (0.78%)	–	–	Anadiplosis	3 (2.34%)
Explicitation	5 (0.97%)	–	–		
Calque	2 (0.39%)	–	–		
Implicitation	8 (1.55%)	–	–		
Reduction	1 (0.19%)	–	–		
Linguistic Compression	4 (0.78%)	–	–		
Discursive Creation	2 (0.39%)	–	–		
Total	**515 (100%)**			**128 (100%)**	

B. Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) per Technique

To maintain academic rigor, the Results must present numerical TQA values. Table 2 summarizes the average Accuracy, Acceptability, and Readability (AAR) scores per translation technique.

Table 2
Average AAR Scores per Technique

Technique	Accuracy	Acceptability	Readability	Quality Interpretation
Established Equivalent	2.92	2.88	2.95	High
Variation	2.75	2.80	2.90	High
Addition	2.60	2.70	2.85	High
Explicitation	2.70	2.65	2.80	High
Pure Borrowing	2.40	2.50	2.60	Medium
Modulation	2.30	2.70	2.80	Medium
Reduction	2.00	2.50	2.70	Low
Linguistic Compression	1.90	2.10	2.30	Low
Implicitation	2.10	2.30	2.40	Low
Deletion	1.70	2.10	2.00	Low
Discursive Creation	1.20	2.00	2.00	Very Low

These numbers demonstrate that preservation techniques (Established Equivalent + Variation) consistently achieved the highest AAR scores, while repetition-removing techniques (Deletion, Reduction, Discursive Creation) received the lowest scores, confirming that omission impairs translation quality.

C. Effects of Deletion on AAR Scores and Characterization

Deletion was the most damaging technique, with low scores across all AAR dimensions.

Example: DEL/008/S01E03
SL: "No. No. He… He promised me! He promised. He promised me! He promised me!"
TL: "Tidak! Dia sudah berjanji!"

The translation removes all instances of repetition such as "No. No." and the fourfold phrase "He promised me!", which results in the loss of both the emotional functions fear, panic, and denial and the self-soothing function commonly associated with ASD communication patterns. Although the core propositional meaning is transferred, the emotional and pragmatic force is significantly reduced, yielding an accuracy score of 2, categorized as less accurate. The translation remains linguistically natural in Indonesian; however, the intensity of the character's emotional expression is weakened, leading to an acceptability score of 2. In terms of readability, the sentence is easy to understand, but the emotional nuance becomes flattened, resulting in a medium readability score of 2. The removal of repetition ultimately erases Shaun's autistic communication style, thereby reducing narrative authenticity and confirming that the loss of repetitive elements directly contributes to the loss of characterization in the translated version.

D. Effects of Reduction on TQA: Loss of Urgency and ASD Traits
Example: RED/003/S01E01
SL: "No. His heart. It's his heart."
TL: "Tidak, jantungnya."

The use of reduction removes the repeated phrase "his heart," which consequently weakens the sense of urgency embedded in the original utterance. While the core message is conveyed, the pragmatic intent is diminished, resulting in an accuracy score of 2, categorized as less accurate. Despite this loss, the translation maintains a natural Indonesian structure, earning an acceptability score of 3. Its clarity and conciseness also contribute to a high readability score of 3. However, although reduction enhances readability, it simultaneously eliminates the urgency that serves as an important emotional cue, particularly tied to Shaun's ASD-related communicative immediacy.

E. Effects of Discursive Creation: Most Severe Distortion
Example: DC/017/S01E06
SL: "No. No, I don't. I don't want love."
TL: "Ya. Aku tidak butuh cinta."

The translation inverts the intended meaning by changing "No" to "Yes," while simultaneously removing the original repetition, which renders Shaun's emotional refusal unclear. This distortion results in an accuracy score of 1, indicating an inaccurate translation because the core meaning is reversed. Although the sentence remains grammatically correct in Indonesian, the semantic contradiction makes it less acceptable, reflected in its acceptability score of 2. Likewise, the conflicting message requires additional effort to interpret, leading to a moderate readability score of 2. Overall, this technique is the most damaging, as it alters the meaning, diminishes the emotional force, and disrupts the accuracy of character portrayal.

4.2 Discussion

The findings confirm the arguments of Johnstone (1994), Keraf (1994), and Sumarlam (2019) that repetition performs essential rhetorical and pragmatic functions. In Shaun's case, repetition serves three key roles: emotional regulation during moments of panic, fear, or anxiety; a cognitive processing mechanism; and a defining marker of narrative character identity. Consequently, removing repetition also removes stylistic verisimilitude a concept in stylistics referring to the linguistic authenticity of character portrayal.

In line with Molina and Albir (2002), the results demonstrate that preservation-oriented techniques such as established equivalent and variation achieve the highest AAR scores because they maintain Shaun's ASD-related traits. In contrast, reduction-oriented techniques such as deletion, reduction, and linguistic compression produce the lowest scores due to their weakening of emotional and psychological nuance, while discursive creation proves the most destructive by altering meaning and disrupting characterization. These findings collectively show that the choice of translation technique directly shapes the audience's perception of the character.

Furthermore, this study argues that existing TQA frameworks, such as that proposed by Nababan et al. (2012), require refinement when applied to the discourse of specialized characters, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Conventional TQA models tend to assume that repetition is unnatural in Indonesian; however, within ASD speech, repetition is a crucial stylistic and psychological marker. As a result, features that may generally be judged "unacceptable" become highly acceptable and even necessary for preserving character integrity in translation. The implications for audiovisual translation (AVT) highlight the need for a Stylistic Fidelity Index (SFI) within TQA to ensure the preservation of linguistic identity, prevent character erasure, and increase translators' awareness of neurodivergent communication patterns. Thus, this study offers an important theoretical contribution: repetition in ASD speech functions not only as a linguistic device but also as a narrative necessity, and its preservation is essential for maintaining translation quality.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the translation techniques applied to repetition-containing segments in the speech of Dr. Shaun Murphy systematically influence both subtitle quality and the fidelity of his characterization as an individual with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The analysis establishes a clear relationship between the choice of translation strategy and its impact on linguistic, stylistic, and characterological meaning. A direct inverse pattern emerges: the more frequently reductive techniques, particularly Deletion and Reduction are used, the lower the resulting translation quality and the weaker the preservation of Shaun's communicative identity. These findings demonstrate that repetition in ASD discourse is not merely lexical redundancy but a crucial stylistic and psychological marker.

Reductive strategies substantially lower translation quality across the Accuracy, Acceptability, and Readability dimensions by removing functional and emotional layers embedded in repetition. In contrast, preservation-oriented strategies maintain the cognitive, affective, and rhythmic functions of repetition, producing higher-quality subtitles with stronger coherence, emotional resonance, and representational integrity.

The study contributes theoretically to audiovisual translation (AVT) and translation quality assessment (TQA) by arguing that existing TQA frameworks, including Nababan's model, require refinement when used for neurodiverse or character-driven discourse. It proposes the development of a Stylistic Fidelity Index (SFI) to ensure that stylistically

meaningful features such as ASD-related repetition are evaluated systematically rather than treated as optional.

Practically, the study recommends that translators and subtitlers prioritize the functional preservation of stylistic traits, even when doing so requires minor, controlled adjustments to technical subtitling constraints. This approach promotes ethical and narrative fidelity, ensuring accurate representation of neurodivergent characters whose linguistic patterns are central to their identity.

The study recognizes its methodological limitations, including reliance on descriptive qualitative analysis and a small expert focus group for quality assessment. Future research may extend these findings through audience reception studies and by applying the proposed SFI to a wider range of genres to test its adaptability and strengthen AVT evaluation practices. Importantly, this research provides a foundation for improving subtitling standards within the Indonesian AVT context, emphasizing the need for culturally and stylistically informed translation practices in local media industries.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT: INSIGHTS FROM INDONESIAN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Parents play a vital role in supporting their children's academic achievement. This study aims to identify the types of parental involvement that support students' English learning at SMPN 3 Langsa and to examine how these forms of involvement relate to students' English achievement. This study addresses this gap by examining the forms and effects of parental involvement on English achievement among eighth-grade students in an Indonesian public middle school. Guided by Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement, this study categorizes parental practices into six types and investigates their relationship with students' formal English achievement scores. A qualitative-dominant design was employed, triangulating three data sources: (1) questionnaires measuring the frequency of involvement across Epstein's types, (2) semi-structured interviews exploring parental practices and motivations, and (3) official English score documents quantifying students' achievement. Findings show that parenting, learning at home, and volunteering were the most frequently practiced types of involvement, with rates of 89%, 84%, and 82%, respectively. Qualitative patterns indicated that learning-at-home involvement—including homework supervision and structured study routines—was strongly associated with higher English achievement scores, particularly among students consistently surpassing the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). The study contributes context-specific evidence for designing targeted parental engagement programs that address the unique demands of L2 learning in Indonesian middle schools.

Keywords: *English learning; parental involvement; students' achievement.*

1. Introduction

English has become an essential global language for academic mobility, digital participation, and economic advancement. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory foreign language beginning in secondary school, and mastery of English increasingly determines students' access to higher education and future opportunities. Despite its importance, national assessments and classroom-level evidence consistently show variation and persistent gaps in English proficiency among Indonesian middle school students. Many students struggle to meet the expected Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM), indicating that

additional support beyond classroom instruction may be necessary to enhance English learning outcomes at this level.

A growing body of research recognizes parental involvement (PI) as a critical contributor to students' academic achievement across subjects (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2013). Parental involvement refers to a multidimensional set of interactions through which parents support their children's learning, including home-based behaviours, school-based activities, and collaborative engagement with teachers (Epstein, 1992, 2002). Effective involvement encompasses more than attending school events; it includes supervision of learning routines, communication with teachers, provision of learning materials, and emotional encouragement. These forms of involvement help shape students' motivation, confidence, and learning strategies.

However, much of the existing literature focuses on PI and general academic achievement, particularly mathematics, science, and first-language subjects, while the specific demands of second-language (L2) learning, such as English in the Indonesian context, remain underexamined. Unlike L1 learning, L2 acquisition requires substantial exposure and practice outside the classroom, making home-based parental support uniquely important. Yet many Indonesian parents face constraints such as limited English proficiency, time pressures, and lack of access to L2 learning resources, which may hinder their ability to engage in effective L2-related involvement. These contextual challenges highlight the need for empirical research that identifies which types of parental involvement are most effective for supporting English achievement in Indonesia.

Middle school represents a critical developmental stage during which students begin to experience increased academic demands while still relying significantly on parental guidance. In Indonesia, Grade 8 students are at a transitional point where learning autonomy develops, but parental monitoring and encouragement remain influential. Understanding the specific ways parents can support English learning at this level is therefore essential for improving achievement outcomes.

Although parental involvement is known to enhance learning, there is limited evidence on which kinds of parental involvement are associated with improved English L2 achievement among Indonesian middle school students. This study addresses this gap by identifying the types of PI practiced by parents and examining how these types relate to students' measured English achievement. Therefore, this study aims to:

1. Identify and categorize the types of parental involvement practiced by parents of eighth-grade students, using Epstein's Framework of Parental Involvement.
2. Examine the relationship between these types of parental involvement and students' English achievement scores, as documented in official school records

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing Parental Involvement

Parental involvement (PI) is widely defined as the set of behaviors, interactions, and practices through which parents support children's academic, social, and emotional development. Nermeen, Bachman, and Elizabeth (2010) describe PI as *any interaction between parents, children, and schools that enhances learning and development*. Haack (2007) similarly views PI as operating along a continuum ranging from home-based involvement (e.g., supervising homework) to school-based involvement (e.g., attending conferences) and, ultimately, to collaborative home–school partnerships (e.g., involvement

in school governance). These conceptualizations emphasize that PI is multidimensional, encompassing both routines within the home and more formal structures within the school.

Within educational research, PI is consistently recognized as a factor associated with improved student outcomes, including motivation, homework completion, classroom engagement, and academic success (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Epstein, 2013). Additionally effective involvement strengthens communication between home and school, enables early detection of learning challenges, and fosters supportive learning climates. These foundational understandings form the basis of the theoretical framework employed in the present study.

2.2 Conceptual Framework: Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

This study adopts Epstein's (2002) framework of Parental Involvement, one of the influential models in family, school partnership research. Epstein proposes six distinct yet complementary types of involvement:

1. Parenting – Establishing home conditions that support learning, including health, safety, routines, and emotional stability. Parenting is predominantly *behavioral and home-based*, forming the foundation for students' daily learning.
2. Communicating – Ensuring meaningful two-way communication between school and home about programs, expectations, and student progress. This form is both behavioral and organizational.
3. Volunteering – Parents' participation in school activities and functions, contributing time and expertise. This type is largely *organizational and school-based*.
4. Learning at Home – Parental support for homework, study routines, and enrichment activities. This is the most direct *behavioral* involvement influencing academic learning.
5. Decision Making – Parents' participation in school committees, governance, and policy discussions. This type is *organizational* and reflects shared responsibility in educational planning.
6. Collaborating with the Community – Connecting families with community resources (health, culture, recreation) to support broader learning goals. This type bridges school and community partnerships.

Epstein's framework (2002) provides a structured typology for categorizing parental practices and examining their differential impact on student outcomes. In this study, it serves as the primary coding scheme for questionnaire responses and interview data, enabling systematic identification of the dominant involvement types among parents.

2.3 Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

English achievement in foreign language contexts is commonly measured through formal academic indicators, including: course grades, test results, proficiency assessments (reading, vocabulary, grammar), and teacher evaluation reports. These metrics reflect students' mastery of linguistic skills developed through classroom instruction and independent study. However, L2 learning is also influenced by affective variables, such as motivation, confidence, anxiety, and willingness to communicate. Gonida and Cortina (2014) note that parental encouragement, monitoring, and emotional support can shape students' motivational beliefs and achievement persistence.

In Indonesian secondary schools, English achievement is typically evaluated through a combination of daily tests, midterm assessments, final exams, and cumulative semester grades—such as the *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM), based on the 2013 Indonesian Curriculum (Permendikbud No. 104/2014). This study uses these official English score documents as the operational measure of achievement.

Research in Indonesia reveals unique contextual factors shaping PI in English learning. Many parents have limited English proficiency, making it difficult to assist directly with English homework. To compensate, parents often rely on private tutoring (bimbel), supplementary courses, or external learning materials. Cultural expectations also position teachers as primary authorities, sometimes limiting parental confidence or willingness to engage with schools (Komsi et al., 2018).

Moreover, studies show varied correlations between specific PI types and L2 learning outcomes. Fan and Chen (2001) demonstrated that consistent homework supervision is strongly associated with L2 reading proficiency. Fantuzzo et al. (2004) found that parental involvement predicted vocabulary development and communicative confidence. Conversely, excessive parental control or pressure may negatively affect L2 motivation, suggesting that not all involvement types yield equal benefits.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design (Cohen, Manion, & Morisson, 2018) to examine the relationship between parental involvement and students' English achievement in an Indonesian middle school. This approach was chosen to allow triangulation between numerical indicators of parental involvement (questionnaire results), documented English achievement scores, and rich qualitative insights from parental. Qualitative research generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words that reflect human behavior and observable actions, with the goal of understanding individuals and their experiences within their natural settings (Cohen, Manion, & Morisson, 2018). This approach centers the participants' perspectives and emphasizes detailed observation to produce rich and in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon under study (Morrison, 2002). This design aligns with Epstein's (2002) multidimensional conceptualization of parental involvement and enables a deeper understanding of how different forms of involvement manifest in students' learning contexts.

The participants in this study were eighth-grade students of SMPN 3 Langsa and their parents. Eighth-grade students were selected because this stage represents an important transition period, where students tend to explore new activities and develop varied learning experiences. Students in this grade at SMPN 3 Langsa also demonstrate diverse levels of academic achievement, making them suitable for examining variations in parental involvement. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants based on the objectives of the study.

Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The questionnaire captured general patterns of parental involvement, while interviews provided deeper insights into parents' and students' experiences. Students' English achievement scores were analyzed as supporting documents to understand how parental involvement might relate to academic outcomes.

The data analysis consisted of both quantitative and qualitative components. Questionnaire responses were tabulated to determine the frequency and percentage of

each parental involvement (PI) type, and descriptive statistics were used to identify the most dominant forms of involvement as well as patterns distinguishing high- and low-achieving students' families. For the qualitative analysis, interview transcripts were examined using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. Codes were developed inductively and subsequently aligned with Epstein's (2002) typology to identify consistencies between home-based practices and students' English performance, with particular attention to themes related to motivation, supervision, learning routines, and constraints.

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, the study employed methodological triangulation by integrating questionnaire data, interview narratives, and documented English scores; member checking, in which parents verified the accuracy of interview summaries; and peer debriefing, where a senior English teacher reviewed the interpretations to minimize researcher bias. This triangulated approach ensured that the findings were both contextually grounded and analytically robust. Ethical approval was obtained from the school administration, participation was voluntary with informed consent from parents, and all personal identifiers were removed from transcripts and score documents to maintain confidentiality.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Types of Parental Involvement on Students' Achievement in Learning English

This section presents the findings from the questionnaire, interview data, and documented English achievement scores. The integration of these three sources enables a comprehensive analysis of how specific types of parental involvement, based on Epstein's Six Types (2002), relate to students' English achievement. Quantitative questionnaire results are first reported, followed by qualitative insights illustrating differences between the parents of high-achieving and low-achieving students.

The parental involvement data were collected through a questionnaire completed by the parents. The researchers distributed this questionnaire, which measured the types of parental involvement, to 30 respondents. It consisted of 28 indicator items based on Epstein's (2002) six types of involvement: (i) parenting, (ii) communicating, (iii) volunteering, (iv) learning at home, (v) decision making, and (vi) collaborating with the community. Each statement provided four alternative response options. From the completed questionnaires, the researchers identified the types of involvement most frequently practiced by parents in supporting their children's English achievement as follow.

4.2 Results of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire measured the frequency of parental involvement across the six types of Epstein's model. Results showed that the most frequently practiced involvement type was Parenting (89%), followed by Educating Children at Home or Learning at Home (84%), Volunteering (82%), Decision Making (80%), Communicating (79%), and Collaborating with the Community (76%). These findings indicate that parents tend to be more engaged in home-based involvement rather than broader school–community collaboration.

4.3 Student English Achievement Levels

Documented English scores from the school report showed clear variation. Of the participating eighth-grade students, 19 met or exceeded the KKM, indicating high achievement. Besides, 11 students did not meet the KKM, indicating low achievement. This distinction allowed for meaningful comparison of parental involvement patterns between higher- and lower-performing students.

4.4 Qualitative Findings: Themes Emerging from Interviews

4.4.1 Theme 1: Parenting and Daily Supervision Strongly Support High Achievement

Parents of high-achieving students consistently emphasized their active role as caregivers and educators. These parents closely monitored daily routines, ensured adequate study time, and provided emotional support. For example, the parent of student AM (average score: 97) stated:

> "The reason I support children is because it is the duty of parents to always educate and guide children so that they have good achievement in learning English at school, not just being taught by the teacher."

This reflects the Parenting and Learning at Home types of involvement. Parents felt responsible for creating a structured home learning environment, which is known to enhance student motivation and task persistence. Similarly, the third interviewee, parent of student NP (average score: 94), explained:

> "In learning, I give my children a special schedule and time to study at home. A conscious and planned effort from me is sufficient to create an atmosphere of learning and the learning process so that children can actively develop their potential..."

This demonstrates deliberate parental planning and consistent support—behaviors strongly associated with higher L2 achievement.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Active Communication and School Engagement Reinforce Learning

High-achieving students' parents also described active communication with teachers and participation in school committees. The first interviewee, who served on the school committee, explained:

> "As the school committee, I am quite involved in contributing and being involved in activities carried out at school… Parents trust teachers… but parents do not let go and give up their children's learning from school."

They further noted:

> "There is a good interaction between me and the educator… so that students easily absorb the knowledge conveyed by educators and are able to apply it in daily life."

These statements illustrate Communicating, Volunteering, and Decision Making involvement. This aligns with prior research showing that positive home–school communication enhances student confidence and consistency in learning.

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4.4.3 Theme 3: Limited time and low interest in English constrain parental support (Low Achievers)

In contrast, parents of low-achieving students reported limited involvement due to work demands, reduced study supervision, or low confidence in assisting with English. The parent of student MA (average score: 66) shared:

> "I leave the decision and freedom of the child to choose his education, interests and talents. I feel that my child doesn't really like English."

This illustrates a hands-off parenting approach, which literature suggests may lead to reduced motivation and weaker homework discipline—especially in L2 learning that requires consistent exposure.

Similarly, the sixth interviewee, parent of student MF (average score: 60), stated: *"I can't always accompany children in studying, because I'm also busy on working."*

This reflects constraints on Learning at Home and Parenting involvement. Limited time and work pressures prevented consistent guidance, which can hinder the development of L2 learning routines.

The triangulation of questionnaire and interview data reveals a clear and consistent pattern across parental involvement types. Parents of high-achieving students demonstrated strong engagement in Parenting, Learning at Home, Communicating, and Volunteering, providing structure, monitoring daily routines, maintaining communication with teachers, and participating actively in school activities. In contrast, parents of low-achieving students showed more limited involvement, particularly in Learning at Home, often due to demanding work schedules, limited English proficiency, reduced supervision, or the belief that children should manage their own learning independently. Across both groups, collaboration with the community emerged as the weakest involvement type, indicating an area where schools could strengthen outreach efforts and develop programs to build parents' capacity to support their children's learning more effectively.

The findings support previous research indicating that home-based involvement, particularly establishing routines and supervising learning, is the most influential factor in L2 achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Topor et al., 2010).

5. Conclusion

This study has identified the dominant types of parental involvement practiced by Indonesian middle school parents and establishing an empirical relationship between these involvement types and students' English achievement. The findings show that Supporting Learning at Home—a behavioral form of involvement—stands out as the most influential predictor of higher English performance, surpassing organizational involvement such as volunteering or school decision-making. This confirms that, in non-immersion EFL contexts, home-based academic scaffolding is central to L2 success. The study contributes to ELT scholarship by contextualizing and validating Epstein's Framework (2002) within a Southeast Asian setting. The results demonstrate that when English exposure outside the classroom is limited, the home–school partnership must prioritize structured routines, study supervision, and motivational support, thereby reinforcing global evidence on effective parental mechanisms for L2 learning. Based on these findings, the study concludes that middle schools and ELT practitioners should shift from general parent outreach to targeted parent

education programs that train parents in practical Learning at Home strategies, including providing L2 media exposure, establishing homework routines, and maintaining supportive learning environments. These practices correspond directly with behaviors linked to improved English proficiency. The study's qualitative-dominant, single-site design limits the immediate generalizability of the findings. Future work should include large-scale quantitative studies across multiple regions to test the broader applicability of these results, as well as intervention-based research to measure the causal impact of parent training programs on L2 achievement. Overall, the study establishes that structured home-based involvement is essential for enhancing English learning outcomes in Indonesian middle schools and offers clear implications for ELT policy and practice.

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SOCIAL NETWORK DYNAMICS AND L2 PROFICIENCY: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF LEARNERS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

This study examined sociolinguistic dimensions of second language acquisition (SLA) within a multilingual community in South Africa, focusing on how social identity, community participation, and cultural context shaped learners' linguistic development. Employing a mixed-methods ethnographic approach, the research used sociolinguistic surveys and in-depth interviews with second-language learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds to investigate how factors such as social identity, social class, age, gender, and motivational dynamics influenced SLA outcomes. The study further explored how learners navigated sociocultural boundaries within complex multilingual networks and how language attitudes and ideologies informed their engagement with the target language community. Findings revealed that social network integration specifically the frequency and quality of interaction with target-language speakers emerged as the strongest predictor of linguistic proficiency, providing learners with sustained opportunities for meaningful language use. Positive attitudes toward the target language and its speakers were also associated with higher levels of linguistic integration and increased use of the language in everyday contexts. Overall, the research demonstrated that SLA was profoundly shaped by the interplay of social networks, identity positions, and local cultural dynamics. The study underscored the need for pedagogical and policy approaches that strategically promoted learners' participation in target-language social networks to improve L2 acquisition in diverse multilingual settings.

Keywords: *identity; language attitudes; second language acquisition; social networks; sociolinguistics*

1. Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) is increasingly conceptualised as a socially situated process that extends beyond the cognitive mastery of linguistic forms. Sociolinguistics provides a critical lens for understanding how learners acquire and use a second language (L2), as it foregrounds the social, cultural, and political conditions within which language learning is embedded. Foundational studies by Norton (1995, 2013) and more recent work

by Li and Zhang (2021) demonstrate that language learning is fundamentally tied to identity, power relations, and participation in social communities. These insights challenge decontextualised cognitive models and emphasise that access to meaningful interaction, valued linguistic practices, and linguistic capital is shaped by wider social forces. From this sociolinguistic standpoint, key factors such as identity, social networks, social class, and motivation have emerged as central in shaping learners' L2 trajectories.

Building on these foundations, sociolinguistic perspectives highlight that SLA is not merely an internal cognitive process but a social phenomenon involving the negotiation of meaning, social roles, and identity. Research shows that learners' motivations, access to authentic interaction, and positioning within social networks significantly influence the speed and success of L2 acquisition. Yet, scholars also note that learners' experiences are mediated by broader social variables, including age, gender, ethnicity, and social class and by the power relations embedded in multilingual societies (Gao & Li, 2022). Dominant languages often carry greater prestige, while minority linguistic identities may be marginalised, shaping learners' confidence, willingness to communicate, and opportunities for participation (Eslami, 2023). Understanding how learners navigate these intersecting dimensions of language, identity, and power is therefore critical for developing socially informed models of SLA.

The significance of these factors becomes especially evident in multilingual settings characterised by historical inequality and linguistic diversity, such as South Africa. With eleven official languages, a legacy of racially stratified language policies under apartheid, and the continued dominance of English as a gateway to socioeconomic mobility, South Africa presents a uniquely layered sociolinguistic ecology. In provinces such as Limpopo where several African languages coexist alongside English—linguistic identities intersect with social class, mobility pathways, and uneven access to educational resources. These conditions intensify the influence of social identity and social networks on L2 English acquisition and provide an ideal context for examining how sociolinguistic forces shape adult learners' language-learning experiences.

Despite the global rise of sociolinguistic approaches to SLA, research in the South African context remains limited. Few empirical studies have explored how identity, social networks, social class, and power dynamics jointly shape adult learners' English proficiency within the everyday realities of post-apartheid society. As the country continues to undergo rapid socioeconomic transformation, there is a notable gap in community-level research documenting how shifting social condition's structure learners' access to English, their opportunities for interaction, and their investment in the L2. Addressing this gap is essential for developing more inclusive and socially responsive frameworks for language education in multilingual and developing contexts.

The present study responds to this need by investigating the sociolinguistic dimensions of L2 English acquisition in an authentic South African community setting. Focusing on four interrelated sociolinguistic variable's social identity, social networks, social class, and motivation it examines how these factors interact to influence adult learners' English language proficiency. By analysing these interconnected dimensions, the study seeks to illuminate how social environments both facilitate and constrain L2 development. In doing so, it contributes to advancing sociolinguistic understandings of SLA in multilingual societies and offers empirically grounded insights for pedagogical approaches that draw on learners' social networks and community resources.

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2. Literature review

2.1 Social Identity in SLA: Norton's Framework

Social identity remains a foundational construct in sociolinguistic perspectives on SLA, and recent studies continue to expand Norton's framework by showing how identity, investment, and power shape learner participation. Recent evidence demonstrates that learners' imagined identities and access to symbolic capital strongly affect their willingness to invest in English learning (Ma, 2025). Similarly, contemporary scholarship has documented how learners' identities shift across contexts, revealing that identity construction is dynamic and closely linked to learners' access to linguistic resources (Ogul, 2024). Additional studies further confirm that identity mediates learners' opportunities for participation and determines how they are positioned by others in target-language communities, ultimately affecting English proficiency (Al-Mohtaseb, 2023). These findings reaffirm that identity, power, and legitimacy continue to shape L2 engagement and the quality of learners' interactional experiences.

3.2 Social Network Theory and L2 Acquisition

Recent scholarship shows that Social Network Theory (SNT) remains highly relevant to explaining variation in L2 acquisition. A 2025 longitudinal study of study-abroad learners demonstrated that diverse, expansive networks promote greater L2 proficiency gains by providing broader access to social and linguistic resources (Gallagher & Hasegawa, 2025). Complementing this, research on sociolinguistic development found that learners embedded in networks with a high number of L2 speakers acquired more authentic and socially valued linguistic forms (Zhang, 2023). Furthermore, new methodological work highlights that network-based modelling can effectively capture the complex relationships between interaction opportunities, individual differences, and L2 development (Konishi et al., 2022). These studies collectively confirm that the structure and diversity of learners' social networks directly influence the quantity, quality, and prestige level of English input they access.

3.3 Social Class and Motivation in SLA

Recent research underscores the continued relevance of social class as a determinant of learning opportunities, linguistic capital, and access to English-rich environments. A 2024 South African study shows that English-medium schooling reproduces class-based inequalities, as learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experience reduced access to high-quality English instruction despite strong motivation (Nkosi, 2024). Another study highlights how multilingual instruction can increase participation and motivation among working-class learners by validating home languages and reducing structural barriers (Simango & Moyo, 2024). In addition, scholars argue that motivational constructs must be re-evaluated in multilingual and socially stratified contexts, as traditional motivation models fail to account for the realities of learners whose access to L2 opportunities is shaped by class and linguistic hierarchies (De Wet, 2022). Together, these studies confirm that motivation does not operate independently but is shaped by socioeconomic constraints and unequal access to English-dominant domains.

3.4 Sociolinguistic Context of Multilingual South Africa

Recent research continues to document the complexity of South Africa's multilingual landscape, revealing persistent inequalities in access to English-medium domains. A 2022 analysis of multilingualism in childhood highlights a mismatch between learners' rich

multilingual repertoires and the English-dominant practices in schools, limiting equitable educational participation (De Klerk & Makalela, 2022). A 2024 study on rural learners' language attitudes shows both strong instrumental motivations to learn English and anxiety about its impact on indigenous identities, highlighting the ambivalent status of English in post-apartheid society (Matemba, 2024). Moreover, research on multilingual pedagogies demonstrates that school-based language policies continue to shape learners' identity positions, language choices, and access to English-speaking domains (Maseko & Nomlomo, 2025). These findings confirm that in South Africa, social identity, class, and social networks are not individual variables, but structural conditions embedded in a historically stratified linguistic ecology.

3.5 Synthesis and Research Gap

International scholarship has established the importance of identity in shaping learners' access to English (Norton & De Costa, 2018; Norton, 2019) and has shown how social networks influence exposure to and uptake of linguistic resources (Milroy, 1980). However, these constructs have rarely been examined together in African or postcolonial settings. Research on identity has largely focused on Western or Asian learners, while network-based studies tend to investigate immigrant groups or formal classroom contexts in the Global North. As a result, there is limited understanding of how identity, social networks, social class, and community-level dynamics jointly shape English proficiency in South African multilingual communities. Furthermore, little empirical work examines community dynamics, defined here as the patterned ways linguistic resources, interactional norms, and social hierarchies operate within everyday local contexts. This study addresses these gaps by integrating identity theory, Social Network Theory, and class-based motivational perspectives to investigate how adult learners' social environments condition their English proficiency in a South African community. The study therefore contributes a contextually grounded account of how sociolinguistic variables interact within a society where language, power, and mobility remain deeply interconnected.

4. Research Method

This study adopted a Mixed-Methods Ethnographic Research design, selected to generate an in-depth qualitative understanding of learners' social identities, community-based interactional opportunities, and access to English, while also incorporating quantitative survey data to measure motivation, social network strength, and self-rated proficiency. The design was appropriate because it allowed the study to capture both the sociocultural complexity of multilingual contexts and the measurable relationships between social variables and English proficiency.

4.1 Research Setting and Participants

4.1.1 Setting

The study was conducted in a peri-urban multilingual community in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, characterised by dense local social networks, limited English-dominant domains, and high linguistic diversity. Data were gathered at a public secondary school that served learners from mixed socioeconomic backgrounds and where English functioned as the target language (L2) of instruction.

4.1.2 Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who met the following criteria:
(a) they were L2 learners of English.
(b) they resided in the target community.
(c) they represented varying levels of proficiency, motivation, and access to English-speaking networks.

4.1.3 Participants

A total of N = 84 learners participated in the sociolinguistic survey. From this group, a subset of n = 18 focal participants were selected for in-depth qualitative work. Participants were aged 15–18, had diverse L1 backgrounds (Xitsonga, Sepedi, Tshivenda), and had studied English as a school subject for 9–12 years. Two English teachers also participated in interviews and classroom observations.

4.2 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

4.2.1 Sociolinguistic Surveys (Quantitative)

The survey collected quantitative data on:

- L2 motivation, using items reflecting instrumental and integrative orientations.
- self-rated English proficiency, measured across speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- basic social network structure, including size, frequency of contact, and contexts of English use.

Network-mapping questions included items such as: “Who do you speak to in English daily?”, “How often do you interact?”, and “In which situations do the interaction occur?” Network strength was operationalised through frequency, multiplexity, and linguistic function of ties.

4.2.2 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews (Qualitative)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with focal learners and teachers. These interviews elicited:

- narratives of linguistic identity,
- experiences of accessing English-speaking spaces,
- barriers and affordances within the community, and
- perceptions of English as a resource linked to social class and mobility.

Follow-up stimulated-recall sessions used short excerpts from classroom observations to prompt participants’ interpretations of interactional moments.

4.2.3. Classroom Observation and Ethnographic Fieldnotes

Ethnographic observations were conducted over 8–10 weeks, producing detailed fieldnotes on language practices, classroom participation, peer interaction, and teacher mediation. Selected lessons were audio-recorded to document naturally occurring L2 interaction.

4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

4.3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Survey data were entered into statistical software and analysed using:

- descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations),
- correlation analysis to examine relationships between network strength, motivation, and self-rated proficiency.

These analyses provided evidence of statistical associations between learners' social environments and English competence.

4.3.2 Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts and fieldnotes were analysed using Thematic Analysis. The process involved:

1. initial open coding of raw transcripts,
2. development of analytical codes,
3. grouping codes into themes such as Navigating Sociocultural Boundaries, Class-Based Access to English, and Patterns of Community Interaction.

This approach enabled a systematic interpretation of how learners perceived their identities and interactional opportunities.

4.3.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

A triangulation strategy was used to integrate data strands. Qualitative themes were used to interpret and explain quantitative relationships (e.g., how network diversity clarified reported proficiency levels). Convergent and divergent findings were compared to develop a holistic account of sociolinguistic influences on English learning.

4.4 Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee. Written informed consent was collected from teachers and parents, with assent from minors. All data were anonymised and securely stored.

Trustworthiness was ensured through:

- member checking, where participants reviewed and verified interview interpretations.
- inter-rater reliability checks, performed by an independent coder on a sample of interview transcripts.
- prolonged engagement, through repeated observations across several weeks.
- methodological triangulation across surveys, interviews, and observations.

These steps enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

5. Results and Discussion

This section presents the quantitative findings from the survey and social network analysis (SNA), followed by qualitative insights from participant interviews. The results are interpreted through the study's sociolinguistic framework, drawing on Milroy's Social Network Theory, Granovetter's weak/strong tie distinctions, Norton's Investment Framework, and scholarship on multilingualism and social inequality in South Africa.

5.1 Summary of Quantitative Findings

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients Between Key Variables

Variables Compared	Correlation (r)
Social Network Strength ↔ L2 Proficiency	0.61
Exposure at Home ↔ L2 Proficiency	0.48
Peer Interaction Frequency ↔ L2 Proficiency	0.52
Attitudes Toward L2 Community ↔ L2 Proficiency	0.44
Media Engagement ↔ L2 Proficiency	0.50

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5.2 The Role of Social Network Strength on L2 Proficiency

Consistent with the highest correlation coefficient (r = 0.61), social network strength emerged as the most powerful predictor of L2 proficiency. Participants with frequent, meaningful interaction with L2 speakers, whether peers, family, or community members—consistently achieved higher proficiency scores.

Survey data on exposure (Table 1) indicated that 30% reported high exposure at home, while 40% had moderate exposure. Peer interaction data similarly showed that 35% engaged with the L2 weekly, and 25% daily. These patterns reflect the importance of sustained interpersonal contact.

Interview accounts reinforced these findings. One participant noted:
"My closest friend speaks English at home, so we end up using it when we're together. That's when I feel I really improve because I'm not scared of making mistakes with her."
(P12, Female, 16)

Another learner described the benefits of weak-tie connections:
"At school I speak English with classmates from different areas. They correct me, but in a friendly way. I learn more from them than from people I know well in my neighbourhood."
(P27, Male, 17)

Interpretation

These findings correspond with Milroy's (1987) argument that dense, multiplex networks support language maintenance, while weaker, more expansive networks enhance language innovation and access to broader linguistic norms. In this study, learners with weak ties to diverse L2 speakers tended to acquire richer input and demonstrated higher proficiency—aligning with Granovetter's theory that weak ties provide access to new linguistic resources not available in immediate social circles.

Within the South African multilingual landscape, where English often functions as a lingua franca across social groups, these weak-tie interactions provide crucial routes for learners to participate in broader social and economic domains.

5.3 Social Identity and Investment in L2 Learning

Learners' attitudes toward the L2 community and their sense of identity significantly shaped their investment in language learning. Quantitatively, 50% expressed positive attitudes, while 30% were neutral and 20% negative.

Interview perspectives reveal that identity negotiation strongly influences willingness to communicate:
"Sometimes when I speak English, my cousins say I'm trying to act better than them. It makes me hold back, even though I want to improve."
(P05, Female, 15)

Conversely, learners who embraced multilingual identities showed higher investment:
"Speaking English makes me feel like I can fit in anywhere. It doesn't take away my home language; it just adds more options."
(P33, Male, 18)

Interpretation

Norton's (2013) Investment Framework explains that learner motivation is embedded in identity positions and access to symbolic and material resources. In the South African context where English carries historical associations with socioeconomic mobility positive

attitudes often reflect learners' aspirations for upward mobility. However, negative attitudes or pressure to remain aligned with L1-speaking groups can restrict L2 use and reduce investment.

This finding extends existing theory by demonstrating how identity tensions are heightened in post-apartheid multilingual communities, where English can simultaneously represent empowerment and cultural distance.

5.4 Social Class and Access to Target Language Speakers

Social class played a mediating role in shaping learners' opportunities to interact with L2 speakers. Although not directly measured as a numeric variable, qualitative data consistently emphasized disparities in access:

"Where I stay, we don't meet many English speakers, so I only practice it at school."
(P40, Male, 16)

"My parents have Wi-Fi at home, so I watch English shows every day. I think that's why my English is better."
(P14, Female, 17)

These insights align with the quantitative data: learners with higher digital/media access (35% daily use) tended to report stronger proficiency.

Interpretation

South Africa's persistent socioeconomic inequality continues to shape language acquisition opportunities. Learners from higher-income households have greater access to English media, diverse social networks, and schools where English is used regularly. This supports previous research showing that SES strongly conditions access to linguistic capital, extending Bourdieu's notion of language as a resource for social mobility.

5.5 Community Dynamics and Sociocultural Boundaries

The multilingual communities in which learners reside presented both opportunities and constraints. While occasional code-switching was reported by 45% of respondents, participants described nuanced sociocultural boundaries influencing when and how they used the L2:

"In my area people mix languages all the time. You start in isiZulu, then switch to English without noticing."
(P22, Female, 17)

In contrast, others identified restrictions:

"If you speak English too much, people think you're showing off. So I only use it at school."
(P09, Male, 15)

Interpretation

These patterns reflect the complex language hierarchy present in multilingual South African communities, where English holds high prestige but may carry social stigma within certain peer groups. Code-switching serves as a strategy for managing social boundaries and negotiating identity, consistent with sociolinguistic literature that positions bilingualism as a resource rather than a deficit.

The finding that occasional code-switchers performed well supports research suggesting that flexible linguistic repertoires foster pragmatic competence and adaptive communication strategies.

5.6 Synthesis and Theoretical Contribution

Overall, the study confirms, challenges, and extends several key sociolinguistic theories:

- Supports Milroy (1987): Strong social networks contribute to stable linguistic environments, but the South African context shows that weak ties particularly across racial and socioeconomic boundaries—are crucial for L2 development.
- Extends Norton's Investment Framework: Investment is shaped not only by identity negotiation but also by community attitudes toward English as a symbol of mobility or elitism.
- Aligns with multilingualism scholarship: Code-switching and hybrid language practices are integral to communicative competence in linguistically diverse communities.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that second language acquisition (SLA) is fundamentally shaped by the social worlds in which learners participate. Across the quantitative and qualitative data, Social Network Strength emerged as the most powerful determinant of L2 proficiency, surpassing the influence of home exposure, media use, or attitudes alone. Strong and weak ties not only determine how frequently learners encounter the target language but also mediate their access to diverse linguistic norms, interactional opportunities, and identity positions. In this way, social networks operate as the central bridge between a learner's Social Identity as theorised by Norton and their ability to engage meaningfully with the wider L2-speaking community. The findings further reveal that Social Class and historically embedded linguistic hierarchies shape the formation and reach of these networks. Learners from higher socioeconomic backgrounds accessed broader, more heterogeneous English-speaking networks, while those in lower-income settings experienced constrained opportunities for contact. These patterns affirm that SLA in South Africa is deeply mediated by structural inequalities and sociocultural boundaries, which influence not only where and with whom learners interact, but also how they perceive and invest in the L2.

The research offers a unique contribution to global sociolinguistic scholarship by extending Social Network Theory (SNT) through ethnographic and empirical evidence situated in the post-apartheid South African context. It demonstrates how social class and linguistic stratification directly shapes network formation and L2 interaction opportunities dimensions that have been noted theoretically but rarely documented with mixed-methods evidence in multilingual, socially stratified societies. By illustrating the combined effects of network strength, identity negotiation, and unequal access to linguistic capital, the study enriches our understanding of how structural and interpersonal factors intersect to shape acquisition.

These findings carry significant implications for language pedagogy and policy in multilingual contexts. They suggest that effective L2 education cannot rely solely on classroom instruction or decontextualised exposure. Instead, policies and pedagogical approaches must strategically cultivate and validate learners' social networks. Community-based programmes, peer-interaction initiatives, and opportunities to form meaningful weak

ties with fluent L2 speakers could substantially enhance learners' access to authentic input. Schools and policymakers should recognise the sociolinguistic realities of learners' environments and design interventions that leverage the social resources available within multilingual communities.

The study's scope was geographically limited to one community, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings across South Africa's diverse linguistic landscapes. Additionally, proficiency measurements relied partly on self-reported data and ethnographic observation, which, although valuable, may not capture all dimensions of linguistic competence. Future research should pursue longitudinal studies tracing how learners' social networks evolve over time and how these shifts correlate with L2 development. Comparative work examining the acquisition of English (a high-status language) versus a local African language (lower status) within the same community would further illuminate how language hierarchies influence network patterns and learning trajectories.

Based on sociolinguistic insights into second language acquisition (SLA), several key recommendations can guide educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in creating effective and socially responsive language learning environments. It is essential to integrate authentic social interactions into language learning. Learners acquire linguistic competence most effectively when they use the target language in real-life contexts, such as through conversation with native speakers, community engagement, or collaborative projects. Classroom activities should therefore move beyond rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar, emphasizing communicative tasks that reflect genuine social practices. Cultural awareness and pragmatic competence should be central to SLA programs. Understanding the sociocultural norms, idiomatic expressions, politeness strategies, and discourse conventions of the target language community enhances learners' ability to communicate appropriately and meaningfully. Teachers should incorporate materials and activities that expose students to diverse sociocultural contexts, including media, literature, and community interactions, to foster intercultural competence. Attention should be given to learner identity and motivation. Sociolinguistic research highlights that learners' attitudes toward the target language, their sense of belonging to the speech community, and their perceived social roles can significantly affect acquisition outcomes. Educators should create supportive, non-judgmental environments that validate learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds while encouraging engagement with the target language. Encouraging learners to explore how the new language aligns with their personal and social identities can strengthen motivation and investment. Exposure to linguistic diversity is crucial. Learners benefit from encountering various dialects, registers, and sociolects of the target language, which prepares them for real-world communication and reduces reliance on a single standardized form. Incorporating multimedia resources, guest speakers, and virtual exchanges can help learners navigate and appreciate this diversity. Policymakers and curriculum designers should promote socially inclusive language policies that recognize the role of community, peer interaction, and social networks in SLA. Programs that foster collaboration with local communities, language clubs, and online forums can provide learners with sustained, meaningful exposure to the target language outside the classroom. By implementing these recommendations, second language acquisition can be approached not just as a cognitive exercise, but as a socially embedded, culturally responsive, and identity-affirming process, aligning closely with the principles of sociolinguistics.

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SPELLING ERRORS AND MEANING-MAKING IN MASTER'S DISSERTATION AT A RURAL SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating the impact of spelling errors in meaning-making in the master's dissertation written by university students. The researcher identified common spelling errors in dissertation writing within the department of language education in the School of Education at a rural university in South Africa. Six dissertations were selected from a sample of forty master's students, using the random sampling technique. Data were collected using a qualitative method. A descriptive case study design was employed in this study, as a specific case was identified and analysed through qualitative, narrative explanation. Data were gathered from dissertation documents and classroom observations. It was found that the majority of the spelling problems result from pronunciation during dialogue. The findings suggest that the spelling errors were as a result of omission, addition, substitution of letters, incorrect word spacing, dialects, and punctuation. The study will greatly contribute to post-graduate studies by providing guidance on dissertations and ensuring that meaning is achieved.

Keywords: *dialect; master's dissertation; meaning-making; omission; punctuation; university students*

1. Introduction

As a supervisor of master's students' dissertations, the researcher realised that the spelling errors found in dissertation writing have an impact on meaning-making. The meaning of the statement becomes distorted due to errors in spelling. According to Ludlow's (2014) theory of the dynamic lexicon, word meanings are radically underdetermined (a semantic claim), and this is to allow discourse partners to renegotiate the precise semantic properties of words from conversational context to conversational context (a foundational claim). In many cases, errors occur at the semantic level and must adhere to grammatical rules to be understood. The incorrect application of lexical semantics leads to spelling errors. This suggests that spelling errors often arise from students' limited attention to grammatical rules. This paper seeks to analyse the types of problems that occur in students' dissertation and to suggest a way to minimize the issues. Armanda, Nugraheni, Wulansari, and Imron (2022) indicate that students mostly make many errors in several aspects of writing, such as spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing. These errors affect the meaning of a sentence and thereby also the entire

dissertation. The lack of meaning and cohesion will have negative consequences for the students in that they will not successfully complete their master's degree. This is supported by Omar and Barzani (2022) when they say that writing errors must be considered and should not be overlooked as they help learners develop their writing abilities. This writing ability is required to deem students fit to pass and obtain their master's degree.

The researcher noticed that it is difficult for most master's students to complete a paragraph without writing an incorrectly spelled word. It is imperative for students to take heed of spelling when writing as this will mean the difference between a comprehensible dissertation and an incomprehensible one. Students must therefore employ adequate sound-spelling skills. Khan, Shahbaz, Kumar, and Khan (2020), indicate that without sound-spelling skills, learners cannot enhance their reading abilities effectively. Without these reading abilities, both learners and students will not be able to spell correctly. The commission of spelling errors occurs across all grades, from Primary level up to university level. For an individual to be able to spell correctly, they should be able to read first, and this skill is taught as early as the kindergarten stage. Padilla-Lambonao (2023) supports this view by stating that this implies that kindergarten learners require targeted reading interventions. The more they read, the better they can identify words and their meaning, which will ensure their ability to spell word correctly. Teaching spelling should be prioritised in the foundation phase. A child should know the letters of the alphabet and the sound of each alphabet so that he/she can correctly construct a word. Word construction will lead to the correct formulation of a sentence, and subsequently a paragraph or a text. Similarly, master's students need to know the sound of letters and thus words so that they can spell the words correctly. The researcher found that many students lack these foundational skills, which contributes to difficulties in writing their dissertations. This is the reason the researcher decided to do an in-depth study of this problem. This study expects that the results will be beneficial to students and provide guidance on dissertations by identifying where the students encounter the most challenges.

As previously mentioned, the researcher realized that spelling errors in dissertation writing negatively affect meaning-making. A misspelled word can distort or obscure the intended meaning at sentence level. Loss of meaning may reduce reader engagement and comprehension. In the case of master's students, spelling errors may negatively affect the evaluation of the dissertation. Yang, Cheng, Liu, and Sun (2019) state that when a word spelling error occur, erroneous translations are more likely to occur. Such errors may lead readers to draw incorrect conclusions. This paper aims to investigate the impact of spelling errors in meaning-making in university master's students' dissertation.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify and analyse the spelling errors most frequently committed by Sepedi master's students in their extended writing.
2. To examine the factors that contribute to students' spelling errors.
3. To propose strategies that can be used to address and correct spelling errors among students.

2. Literature Review

This study adopts constructivist theory. The basic premise of constructivist theories is that people create their own meaning through learning, (Piaget 1964). Learning is an active process whereby learners construct their own understanding based on what they already know or their experiences. In other words, knowledge is not just handed to them

but built inside their mind as they ideas with what they already know. Students have already acquired knowledge of the language and therefore use their prior knowledge to construct meaningful sentences. Sentence should be constructed in a meaningful way, with correctly spelled words. Hein and College, (1991) support Piaget (1964) by stating that constructivism refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves, each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning as he or she learns. Instead of memorizing facts, learners build their own understanding based on their experiences and interactions.

According to Masruddin and Nasriandi (2022) the writing skill should take into account a person's spelling to avoid communication errors or breakdowns. Correct spelling is a crucial part of writing as it helps avoid misunderstanding. Spelling is usually described as the correct arrangement of letters to represent a word. It relates to the knowledge of the orthography (the system of symbols and rules used to represent spoken language in writing) of a particular language. Students who wish to write well should make a deliberate effort to understand and avoid spelling errors. In other words, correct spelling contributes to effective writing because it ensures accuracy and clarity. Alsolami (2019) states that spelling refers to producing the correct written representation of a word. It is, therefore, essential to identify effective strategies and apply them effectively when writing a text. Spelling is a linguistic skill that includes orthography, phonology, morphemes, and word meaning. The primary years are crucial for teaching spelling.

Tijms, Pavlidou, and Hoette, (2020) view spelling as a problem from a young age, therefore he states that it is difficult for a learner to grasp the language of teaching and learning because of lack of morphological knowledge, making it even harder for the learners to improve their language proficiency, particularly when spelling words. This indicates that students enter university with insufficient morphological knowledge. The students are then influenced by peers and proceed with the knowledge they pick up from their peers. Students who do not understand how words are formed often omit letters, misuse prefixes or suffixes, and misspell plural or past tense words. Additionally, Fitria (2020) states that "error refers to the use of a word, speech act, or grammatical items unit such as part of speech which seems imperfect and significant of incomplete learning. An error, therefore happens when a learner uses a word or phrase incorrectly, due to not having full knowledge or mastery of it yet. This lack of knowledge results in students breaking grammatical rules when writing. The rules of grammar are violated when students do not assemble the letters of a language in accordance with their correct sequence according to the official orthographical rules of that language otherwise; it is viewed as a spelling error (Altamimi & Rashid, 2019).

Furthermore, Huang, Li, Jiang, Zhang, Chen, Wang, and Xiao (2021) explain that error analysis is an important branch of research in second language acquisition. They recommended automated spelling error detection tools. In principle, spelling relies on the knowledge a person accumulates. The students' inability to analyse their errors leads to repeated spelling errors. Allocating adequate time to error analysis can prevent repeated mistakes. The use of spell-check tools eliminates human assumption and error. The challenge, however, is that the use of spell-check tools may be limited by unequal access to technology. Students can eliminate many spelling errors through consistent writing practice. Bell and Valley (2020) recommend writing practice and exercises that need to focus on a specific topic, context, or theme that allows students as much practice as possible with targeted, specific, and topic-centred vocabulary.

Cummings (2018) notes that many errors involve morpheme omission. Morpheme omission occurs when a part of a word that carries meaning is missing. An example of this omission is when a person omits the letter "s" when writing the word "books", this omission will change the meaning of the word and ultimately the sentence. A similar omission occurs when writing in the past tense where someone omits the suffix "ed" and writes "walk" instead of "walked", thereby affecting meaning. This has also been found to be the case with master's students at the university because students sometimes omit letters from words, which in turn affects meaning. Moro, (2019), states that morphology as part of grammar, is the part that describes changes within a word. It is a branch of linguistics that studies how words are formed. Omission is one of the factors that contribute to spelling errors, which in turn affect meaning. Many factors contribute to spelling errors that disrupt meaning.

Setaka (2018) states that the current African language lexicography is also heavily influenced by certain lexicographic traditions and global trends and changes – such as the user perspective and the emphasis on user-friendliness, a more functional approach, increased attention to dictionaries suitable for text production, corpus-based dictionaries superseding the traditional introspection-based dictionaries, etc. This means that African dictionaries today follow modern global methods. They are more focused on the user, easier to use, based on real language information, and designed to help people read, write and communicate more effectively. The dictionaries provide clear guidance on spelling, enable writers to check and confirm the correct spelling and show how words are actually used in a sentence. A good writer must pay attention to spelling to avoid communication breakdown. Students who wish to be good writers should therefore make effort to understand and avoid spelling mistakes/errors.

In conclusion, different factors contribute to spelling errors, such as morpheme omission. Students who are careful not to omit morphemes will reduce spelling errors and ensure that that sentence have meaning. The ability to analyse errors through use of automated spelling error detection tools will assist students in their writing. Similarly, by not writing frequently and practising excessively students will not be able to spell correctly. The problem of poor spelling appears to be generous. The challenge of spelling is prevalent in all grades through to university level, and can ultimately spill over into the workplace.

3. Research Methods

An observational case study research design was used as a number of student essays were selected for observation and analysis. Research design refers to the plan that guides the researcher in answering the research questions. Thomas (2022) explains research design as the plan for the researcher which will guide the researcher in answering the fundamental questions that will make the research profitable. According to Ghanad (2023) regarding research design, he argues that it serves as the "blueprint" for the research investigation. The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. This enables students to gain a deeper understanding of the cases by comparing similarities and differences.

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Creswell & Creswell (2017), explain that the qualitative approach relies on text and image data and follows specific steps of analysis. The study adopted this approach as it analysed text. In qualitative research, as described by Gundumogula and Gundumogula (2020), qualitative method helps researchers to understand the thoughts, feelings and expressions of the participants. Observation

occurred during the supervision process as the researcher examined students' written work. The students' work gave an understanding of their thoughts, feelings and expressions. According to Roller (2019) qualitative research involves the examination of nuanced connections, along with the social and contextual dimensions, that give meaning to qualitative data. The investigation aims to analyse students' experiences with Sepedi spelling.

The participants are the master's students from the University of Limpopo in the School of Education. The total population of master's students in the School of Education is estimated at one hundred and sixty, forty of those are registered in the Department of Language Education, where the research was conducted. Lawrence, (2014) defines population as the complete set of people or elements you are interested in studying, or about which you want to draw conclusions. A sample of six students from the forty in the Sepedi Unit was selected. Dissertations from three male and three female students were purposively selected.

According to Taherdoost (2021) data collection is a main stage in research that can overshadow the quality of achieving results by decreasing the possible errors which may occur during a research project. Data were collected through observation and document review. The results were obtained through observation, which served as one of the data collection instruments. Data will be collected from students work, that is, the dissertation written by the students, and an essay test written in the lecture rooms. The students were given an activity in the form of an essay writing exercise. After writing, feedback was given. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer. O'Leary (2020) states that lesson observation plays an important role in teacher development. The lecturer observed the students while they wrote essays, and assessed their work in the form of dissertations.

Braun & Clarke (2023) explain thematic analysis as thematic coding involves the use of grounding theory coding procedures to develop themes from data. Documents, particularly students' written work, were organized into themes for analysis. A report and findings were then compiled. The packed written essays were analysed through thematic analysis technique. A thematic analysis approach was applied by examining students' essays.

The study adhered to ethical protocols during data collection. Some of the primary ethical considerations include: The researcher will seek ethical permission from the Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee (TREC) to perform the study.

Informed consent ensures that participants understand their rights and that their involvement is voluntary (Grant, 2021). Participants received consent forms indicating their voluntary participation. After ensuring that all participants understood the consent forms, the researcher requested that they sign them before continuing with data collection. Participants were entitled to withdraw from the study at any time.

According to Attarian and Hashemi (2021), privacy, anonymity and confidentiality are applied and ensure that data were separated from identifying information and the storage of the code linking data to individuals securely. Fictitious names were used to protect participants' identities.

According to Resneck (2024), in any research or study, ensuring that participants are treated with respect and dignity, and that they receive standard care, is paramount to ethical practice. These principles are vital not only for the well-being of participants, but also for the credibility and integrity of the research itself. The researcher respected participants, maintained their dignity, and treated them with care. The researcher safeguarded the

privacy of the participants and upheld their dignity while respecting their various religious beliefs.

Benefits refer to the positive outcomes or advantages that the participants may gain from the research (Pramod, 2022). The researcher informed the participants about the benefits of the study such as gaining and sharing of knowledge. The study ensured that participants were not exposed to physical, emotional, or social harm. The study protected participants from social harm such as embarrassment or stigma.

4. Results and Discussions

The findings indicate that incorrectly spelled words change meaning. Alsolami (2019) states that spelling refers to producing the correct written representation of a word, therefore producing the incorrect representation will affect meaning. All the six sampled students had spelling errors in their dissertations. They had spelling errors that emanated from the following factors: Omission, addition, punctuations, word spacing, substitution, and dialects respectively. The errors identified and analysed from the Sepedi master's students' work are tabulated below:

Kind of error	Wrong Spelling/ Correct Spelling (In Sepedi)	Meaning (In English)
Omission	Ke nko mang? (omission)	What kind of nose is this?
	Ke nako mang?	What time is it?
Addition	O na le mona.	He is jealous.
	O na le monna. (addition)	She has husband.
Punctuations	Matome o ja nama.	It is reported that Matome is eating meat.
	Matome, o ja nama.	The statement is direct speech telling Matome that he is eating meat.
Word spacing	Go seka motho.	A person is in court.
	Go sekamotho.	Humanoid/He is half a person.
Substitution	Ba **swara** batho.	Present tense – they are arresting people.
	Ba **swere** batho.	Past tense – they arrested people.
Dialects	**Tšhipi** e a roba. (wrongly spelled)	The iron ore is heavy.
	Tshipi e a roba. (Correctly spelled)	The iron ore is heavy.

The researcher observed that there are various other factors that affect spelling in Sepedi for university students. The three most common are, the use of social media platforms, phonetic confusion/Sound click/articulation, and variations among Speakers of Sepedi and Northern Sotho Linguistic.

1. The Use of Social Media Platforms

The use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has negatively influenced spelling. These social media platforms are meant for short messages. This does not mean that the words should be abbreviated but rather for communication to be through concise sentences. Students have become used to this manner of writing which negatively affects academic writing. An example of this influence is when they write 'Ska lebala' instead of 'O seke wa lebala' (Do not forget). This method of shortening words results in vowels or letters being omitted and only being left with consonants. The meaning can be distorted, especially if the reader cannot decode the SMS

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language. This aligns with Cummings (2018) refers to this as morpheme omission, which occurs when a part of a word that carries meaning is missing

2. Phonetic confusion/Sound Click/Articulation

A single sound can be expressed by different combinations of letters, words can sound correct, but be spelled differently to how they sound. For example the word 'molemi' (farmer) sounds like 'molimi', 'mosepedi' (walker) sounds like 'mosipidi', 'phapošeng' (classroom) sounds like 'phapušing'. Such words cause confusion to language students who do not have adequate foundational knowledge of the language. Reading a lot of texts exposes students to different lexicon, which can help improve spelling. If students are able to recall words that they have previously came across, they can easily identify an incorrectly spelled word. This aligns with Piaget (1964)'s theory that Learning is an active process whereby learners construct their own understanding based on what they already know or their experiences.

3. Variations among Speakers of Sepedi and Northern Sotho Linguistic

Speakers of both languages reside in one province, namely Limpopo Province and speak different dialects which often influence one another. For example those speaking Northern Sotho refer to nature as 'hlago' instead of 'tlhago'. The students find it difficult to identify official written version between the two versions. The students ended up not knowing which language is official and which one is not. Further examples include, "Labotlhano" instead of "Labohlano" (Friday), "tlhogo" for "hlogo" (topic/heading)". According to Warda (2023), spelling is important because it can influence the meaning of words. Dialect influences spelling and thereby the meaning of words. Similar trends were reported by Tijms, Pavlidou, and Hoette, (2020), who state that spelling is a problem from a young age, therefore it is difficult for a learner to grasp the language of teaching and learning because of lack of morphological knowledge, making it even harder for the learners to improve their language proficiency, particularly when spelling words.

There were many spellings as well as grammatical mistakes found in the students' essays which indicate that students were not taught how to edit their written work before submitting their final draft. The inability to edit work can result in sentences having a different meaning than what was intended. For example, a student wrote 'ke **tša** mošomong' which means 'they (things) are for work', instead of 'ke **tšwa** mošomong' which means 'I am from work'.

Name or participant	Error	Frequency	Percentage	Error Pattern
Participant A	Omission	15	30.6%	Frequent omission of letters
Participant B	Addition	7	14.3%	Adding extra letters
Participant C	Punctuation	8	16.3%	Incorrect or missing punctuation marks
Participant D	Word Spacing	5	10.2%	Incorrect spacing between words
Participant E	Substitutions	5	10.2%	Replacing correct letters with incorrect ones
Participant F	Dialect	9	18.4%	Using dialectal forms instead of standard forms
TOTAL		49	100%	

Frequency/Distribution

The findings of this study will inform curriculum and teaching strategies because the patterns of spelling errors will provide evidence to adjust teaching approaches. The most frequent spelling error found was omission of letters, therefore teaching should focus on phoneme awareness and syllable segmentation by clapping sounds and breaking words into syllables. Language teachers should also focus use word-building and word-expansion activities to help students see how missing letters change meaning. These findings can also strengthen assessment practices setting better placement tests and diagnostic evaluations, having fairer student writing evaluation, and rubrics that differentiate between surface and meaning-changing errors.

4. Conclusion

The study found that many university students made numerous spelling mistakes influenced by several key factors. The use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter influenced spelling because of the short messages that inform sentences on these platforms. Students should differentiate between formal and informal writing. Another factor is errors caused by phonetic confusion or sound click where vowels are mistakenly interchanged, thereby affecting meaning. Furthermore, the variations among Sepedi and Northern Sotho language speakers results in incorrect spelling. Certain Words are pronounced and spelled differently in these languages. Word spacing, addition or omission of letters, punctuation, and substitution of letters have also been identified as major contributing factors to spelling errors. Correct spelling contributes is fundamental to sentences having meaning. This research contributes to the study of linguistics by enhancing understanding of language development in students, and also informs curriculum and teaching strategies. Future researchers can compare these results with other institutions, African language departments, or language backgrounds to identify whether the same error patterns occur elsewhere. Since social media usage is identified as a major factor, future studies can explore the relationship between digital writing habits and academic writing proficiency.

The study recommends a range of strategies to reduce spelling errors among students. Learners should approach their written work with greater care by reviewing and editing their assignments before submission. Spelling Bee competitions may be implemented across grade levels, as they motivate learners to master correct spelling through word memorization—an advantage that carries over into university studies. The excessive use of abbreviated forms in short messages should be discouraged to help students maintain the habit of writing words in full. Exposure to linguistic influences from other cultures should be managed carefully to ensure that students continue to use and apply their own language accurately. Peer influence should also be monitored to foster positive and accurate linguistic practices. In addition, the use of spell-check tools should be encouraged to minimize avoidable errors. Proofreading must be consistently performed before any submission. Weekly spelling tests conducted through dictation may further strengthen students' spelling skills. Finally, lecturers should cultivate strong, supportive relationships with their students both inside and outside the classroom, enabling them to serve as mentors and contribute positively to the university's academic environment.

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PRESERVATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AMONG THE VATSONGA THROUGH EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study explores the preservation of Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge Systems (VIKS) and cultural heritage as a foundation for sustaining community identity, intergenerational wisdom, and cultural diversity. It emphasizes the importance of culturally grounded education amid globalization and the Westernization of schooling, which erode Vatsonga traditions. Guided by Decolonial Education Theory and epistemological justice, the study conceptualizes integrating Indigenous epistemologies into formal education as both an intellectual necessity and a social imperative. Using a qualitative design, data were collected from 18 participants—Vatsonga elders, educators, policymakers, and secondary school learners—through interviews, focus groups, and curriculum content analysis. Findings reveal that embedding IKS enhances cultural pride, identity, belonging, and educational equity while promoting cultural sustainability. System-level recommendations include developing culturally responsive materials, formalizing collaboration with elders as knowledge holders, and strengthening policy frameworks supporting Indigenous knowledge integration. The study concludes that systemic incorporation of Vatsonga Indigenous knowledge into South African education is vital for cultural preservation, decolonization of learning spaces, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. It contributes to decolonial education scholarship by demonstrating how localized Indigenous epistemologies can be operationalized within curricula as a transformative strategy for advancing epistemic justice and cultural renewal. The research calls for national policy adoption of IKS integration to affirm the cultural rights and intellectual sovereignty of Vatsonga learners and communities.

Keywords: *cultural heritage; indigenous knowledge; preserving; vatsonga in education.*

1. Introduction

As a researcher concerned with the global crisis of epistemic injustice, I recognize that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) across the world continue to be undermined by enduring colonial legacies and the accelerating forces of globalization. These forces privilege Western epistemologies while systematically silencing or devaluing locally rooted ways of knowing. Mignolo (2018, pp. 41–44) supports this concern by arguing that Western epistemic dominance has produced deeply entrenched hierarchies of knowledge. Chilisa

(2020, pp. 12–15) extends this critique to educational contexts, demonstrating how Eurocentric curriculum structures normalize the erosion of Indigenous epistemologies. Smith (2012, pp. 1–5) further reinforces this observation, emphasizing that research and schooling remain key sites of colonial domination that invalidate Indigenous worldviews.

It is within this global landscape of epistemic marginalisation that this study is situated, positioning education as a central site for restoring epistemic justice. In response to this crisis, the study adopts Decolonial Education Theory as its guiding philosophical and analytical framework. This theory, articulated by Le Grange (2019, pp. 57–60), challenges Western knowledge hegemony and calls for the recovery, validation, and reintegration of Indigenous intellectual traditions within formal education systems. From this perspective, integrating Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge (VIK) into schooling is not merely an act of cultural preservation but a necessary intervention for curriculum reform, identity restoration, and epistemological redress.

Maldonado-Torres (2016, pp. 10–13) affirms that decoloniality requires dismantling the structural formations that maintain Western epistemic superiority. Dei (2016, pp. 23–27) similarly stresses that centering African worldviews in education is crucial for reclaiming Indigenous intellectual sovereignty. In alignment with these scholars, the study positions curriculum transformation as a vehicle for epistemic justice where Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are recognised as legitimate, sophisticated, and essential epistemological assets. This theoretical stance is further supported by sociocultural perspectives on learning, which hold that knowledge is socially constructed and transmitted through interaction, culture, and community.

Within this study, this orientation affirms that Vatsonga epistemologies expressed through oral traditions, communal practices, ritual knowledge, and collective memory are critical intellectual resources that can enrich teaching, learning, and assessment. Scholars such as Odora Hoppers (2002, pp. 6–9) emphasise that IKS embody holistic, relational, and experiential forms of knowledge that have long been devalued by institutional systems prioritising Western scientific modes of reasoning. These conceptual insights reinforce the foundational argument of this research: meaningful curriculum transformation must be rooted in Indigenous worldviews and community knowledge structures.

The South African, and specifically Vatsonga, context sharply illustrates the urgency of this agenda. Historically, apartheid education intentionally marginalised African histories, languages, and Indigenous knowledge systems, producing a curriculum that fragmented African identity and disconnected learners from their cultural heritage. Msila (2016, pp. 88–91) notes that apartheid schooling systematically alienated communities from their cultural roots, a legacy that continues to shape the experiences of Vatsonga learners. Today, Vatsonga oral traditions, healing practices, artistry, and symbolic cultural expressions, which are central to community identity, remain structurally sidelined within formal schooling. This concern is also highlighted by Jaxa (2024, pp. 55–58).

Although post-apartheid education policies promote the recognition of IKS, their practical implementation is uneven and often superficial. Ndlovu (2023, pp. 34–36) supports this observation, noting that policy commitments have not translated into classroom reality. As a result, many Vatsonga learners experience weakened cultural identity and diminished belonging, challenges also observed by Hlalele (2019, pp. 21–23) across African learning environments. While the policy landscape acknowledges the general importance of Indigenous Knowledge integration, the review of existing scholarship reveals a persistent research gap.

Existing studies tend to focus on policy intentions rather than lived experiences. What is critically missing, and what this study seeks to provide, is empirical qualitative evidence detailing the specific, actionable strategies required for meaningful Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Heritage (IKCH) integration. Scholars such as Seleke, Teis, Els, and Legodu (2025, pp. 18–20) offer valuable insights into IKS challenges more broadly, but their work does not examine Vatsonga epistemologies or the nuanced perspectives of Vatsonga elders, educators, and policymakers.

Keane (2017, pp. 14–17) and Ramose (1999, pp. 54–57) similarly argue that Indigenous epistemologies demand locally grounded, community-anchored approaches that honour the lived experiences of cultural knowledge holders. The absence of such context-specific evidence weakens ongoing decolonisation efforts and makes it difficult to move beyond symbolic inclusion toward systemic curriculum transformation.

To address this gap, the present study seeks to identify and critically analyse stakeholder-driven strategies capable of shifting Vatsonga IKCH integration from superficial representation to meaningful curriculum reform. The aim is to produce evidence-based insights into how Vatsonga knowledge can be embedded within teaching, learning, and assessment practices in ways that strengthen cultural identity, promote inclusion, and advance epistemic justice.

Finally this study contributes an ethnographic, community-validated framework for IKCH integration that supports national decolonisation efforts within South Africa's education system. By foregrounding Vatsonga epistemologies and drawing on decolonial, epistemic justice, and sociocultural theoretical commitments, this research advances the transformative potential of curriculum renewal that is culturally grounded, contextually aligned, and reflective of South Africa's diverse knowledge heritage. Jaxa (2024, pp. 60–63) and Ndlovu (2023, pp. 37–40) reinforce this direction, affirming that lasting educational transformation must be rooted in Indigenous worldviews and community participation.

2. Literature Review

This study is situated within the critical discourse of Decolonial Education Theory (DET), which forms the principal analytical lens for examining the integration of Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge (VIK) and Cultural Heritage (IKCH) into South African schooling. DET critiques the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge structures and emphasizes the recovery, validation, and integration of Indigenous epistemologies as both an intellectual obligation and a social imperative (Santos, 2018, pp. 22–25; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986, pp. 12–15). In applying DET to the Vatsonga context, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is conceptualised not merely as cultural preservation but as a transformative mechanism for curriculum reform, epistemic justice, and the restoration of historically marginalised knowledge systems. Blackie (2024, pp. 72–74) observes that such integration challenges the entrenched dominance of Western epistemologies and promotes a more equitable distribution of knowledge authority within formal education.

2.1 Decolonial Education as an Epistemological Imperative

DET frames curriculum decolonisation as an intentional challenge to the epistemic monopoly of Western knowledge. Integrating Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Heritage (VIKCH) into schooling represents a tangible application of this theoretical commitment. Scholars identify barriers such as teacher scepticism, inadequate culturally responsive materials, and weak policy enforcement as manifestations of enduring colonial

curriculum structures (Seleke, Teis, Els, & Legodu, 2025, pp. 19–22). Maldonado-Torres (2016, pp. 10–13) emphasises that decoloniality requires dismantling institutional arrangements that maintain Western epistemic superiority. Similarly, Dei (2016, pp. 23–27) underscores the necessity of centring African worldviews in education as an expression of intellectual sovereignty. Through this lens, integrating Vatsonga knowledge is not symbolic but represents the epistemological and pedagogical transformation envisaged by DET.

2.2 Defining Indigenous Knowledge and Its Educational Value

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are understood in this study as holistic, dynamic, community-based frameworks that are locally grounded, socially transmitted, and intergenerationally sustained (Odora Hoppers, 2002, pp. 6–9). Unlike isolated cultural artefacts, IKS are coherent bodies of knowledge that guide daily practices, ethical reasoning, and ecological adaptation (Hlalele, 2019, pp. 15–18). Integrating IKS into formal education offers several pedagogical and socio-cultural benefits, including:

- **Cultural identity formation:** Embedding oral literature, language, and traditional practices strengthens learners' sense of belonging and self-understanding (Jaxa, 2024, pp. 56–59; Hlalele, 2019, pp. 21–24).
- **Relevance and contextualisation of learning:** Locally grounded knowledge situates learning within learners lived experiences, thereby improving comprehension and engagement (Da Silva, 2024, pp. 28–31).
- **Epistemological pluralism:** Recognising Indigenous knowledge alongside Western forms disrupts hierarchical epistemic structures and fosters a more inclusive and socially just educational environment (Ndlovu, 2023, pp. 34–36).

These benefits highlight that IKS integration functions both as a pedagogical strategy and as a cultural restoration initiative, particularly for historically marginalised communities such as the Vatsonga.

2.3 The Policy Landscape and Cultural Erosion in South Africa

Although post-apartheid policies advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge, systemic implementation remains inconsistent. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) formally acknowledge the importance of incorporating IKS, yet empirical evidence demonstrates a persistent gap between policy intent and classroom practice (Khosa, 2021, pp. 42–45; Makhubele, 2020, pp. 15–18). Within the Vatsonga context, oral traditions, ritual practices, and linguistic heritage continue to be underrepresented, reflecting the enduring effects of historical exclusion and contemporary neglect (Jaxa, 2024, pp. 55–58). This underrepresentation contributes to cultural erosion and weakens learners' sense of identity (Hlalele, 2019, pp. 21–23; Ndlovu, 2023, pp. 34–36). Recent scholarship underscores the urgency of developing empirically grounded strategies for integrating IKS. Seleke et al. (2025, pp. 19–22) identify persistent challenges related to teacher preparation, resource availability, and policy interpretation. Makokotlela (2025, pp. 40–43) demonstrates the potential of decolonised curricula in higher education to integrate local knowledge meaningfully. Similarly, Buthelezi (2024, pp. 50–53) documents institutional strategies for IKS preservation through digital repositories, while Da Silva (2024, pp. 28–31) illustrates inclusive pedagogical models that successfully embed IKS in primary education. Collectively, these studies reveal both the transformative potential and the systemic obstacles associated with operationalising IKS in formal learning environments.

2.4 Synthesis and Identified Research Gap

Although Decolonial Education Theory (DET) provides strong theoretical support for Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Heritage (IKCH) integration, and although policy frameworks exist within South Africa, empirical evidence detailing stakeholder-validated strategies for systemic integration among the Vatsonga remains limited. Existing studies primarily offer broad theoretical or policy insights without providing in-depth qualitative accounts of the lived experiences, practical challenges, and context-specific approaches identified by elders, educators, and policymakers. This study addresses this gap by offering an ethnographic investigation into Vatsonga IKCH integration, generating evidence-based strategies capable of informing systemic curriculum transformation, advancing epistemic justice, and promoting culturally grounded education. By foregrounding stakeholder perspectives, the study contributes both theoretically and practically to the broader discourse on decolonial education and provides a model for embedding Indigenous knowledge within South African schooling.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic research design, grounded in Decolonial Education Theory (DET), which prioritizes the validation, integration, and amplification of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in formal education. DET asserts that Indigenous epistemologies constitute legitimate, sophisticated knowledge systems, and curriculum reform must actively challenge the dominance of Western knowledge (Santos, 2018, pp. 22–25; Le Grange, 2019, pp. 57–60). An ethnographic approach was essential to capture the lived experiences of Vatsonga knowledge holders, educators, and policymakers, enabling the co-creation of knowledge rather than imposing externally derived interpretations. This design aligns with the interpretivist/constructivist philosophical stance, recognizing that reality is socially constructed, contextual, and deeply informed by community epistemologies (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, pp. 10–13).

3.1 Research Setting

The study was conducted in selected schools and community centers within Vatsonga-dominated regions of Limpopo and Mpumalanga, South Africa. These sites were chosen for their active engagement with Vatsonga learners, proximity to cultural custodians, and documented presence of traditional knowledge practices embedded in community life. This contextual specificity enabled rich, culturally grounded data collection while ensuring relevance to the study's objectives.

3.2 Research Participants and Sampling

Participants were purposively selected to ensure inclusion of individuals with deep cultural knowledge and formal roles in education. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to identify participants capable of providing nuanced perspectives on IKCH integration. The final sample included:

- **Vatsonga Elders (N = 4):** Recognized custodians of oral traditions, storytelling, and ritual knowledge.
- **Educators/Teachers (N = 5):** Teaching in schools serving Vatsonga communities and responsible for curriculum delivery.
- **Policymakers/Curriculum Developers (N = 3):** Individuals involved in curriculum formulation and policy oversight.

- **Students (N = 6; arranged in 2 focus group discussions of 3 students each):** Learners from participating schools representing secondary education cohorts.

This allocation ensured representation across all key stakeholder groups while maintaining a manageable total of 18 participants. Selection criteria prioritized participants' active engagement with Vatsonga culture, knowledge of IKS, and willingness to reflect critically on educational integration practices.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

a. **In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with elders, educators, and policymakers to explore the content, preservation strategies, and implementation challenges of Vatsonga IKCH. Interview themes were tailored to each group: elders focused on the nature and transmission of cultural knowledge, educators discussed teaching strategies and resource constraints, and policymakers addressed structural and regulatory barriers.
b. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Two FGDs were conducted with student participants to elicit perspectives on the relevance of IKCH in schooling, its impact on cultural identity, and perceived gaps in learning experiences. FGDs facilitated interactive discussions, allowing students to reflect collectively on the curriculum's cultural inclusivity.
c. **Content Analysis:** Key curriculum documents were analyzed, including selected Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) documents for Grades 7–9, textbooks, and supplementary teaching materials. Coding criteria distinguished between superficial references to IKCH and deeper, integrative inclusion that aligns with community knowledge.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework and anchored in decolonial epistemology. The process involved:

- Transcription of all interviews and FGDs for verbatim accuracy.
- Initial coding to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and culturally significant practices.
- Development of themes reflecting barriers, strategies, and opportunities for IKCH integration.
- Linking themes to research questions and theoretical constructs from DET to ensure analytical coherence.

The analysis prioritized the voices of elders and community knowledge holders over institutional narratives, reflecting the decolonial commitment to elevating Indigenous perspectives. Triangulation across interviews, FGDs, and content analysis strengthened credibility and internal validity.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Rigor

Rigor was enhanced through several strategies:

- **Methodological Triangulation:** Cross-validation across multiple data sources (interviews, FGDs, content analysis).
- **Member Checking:** Participants were invited to review preliminary findings to ensure accuracy and resonance with lived experiences.

- **Peer Debriefing:** Research findings were discussed with academic peers to mitigate researcher bias and ensure analytical transparency.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant University Research Ethics Committee (REC). Participants provided informed consent, with parental consent secured for minors. Cultural sensitivity was maintained through adherence to local protocols, respecting elders' authority, and anonymizing participant identities to ensure confidentiality.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings are organised according to the four core analytical themes that emerged from the data. Each subsection integrates raw qualitative evidence, theoretical interpretation, and relevant scholarship. Participants are anonymised as *Teacher 1*, *Student FGD 2*, *Elder A*, *Policy Official 1*, etc.

4.1 Outcomes of Integration: Enhancing Cultural Identity and Epistemological Equity

Findings from FGDs with learners and interviews with educators show that integrating Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge (VIK) into the curriculum strengthens cultural identity and promotes epistemological justice.

Strengthened Identity and Cultural Pride

Learners consistently expressed that learning through Xitsonga cultural materials affirms their identity. As one learner explained:

> "When we learn our stories and songs, I feel like our culture is finally respected at school, not only at home." (Student FGD 2)

Teachers similarly emphasised the motivational value of culturally grounded learning:

> "When I teach through proverbs and folktales, the learners become more confident. They feel the lesson belongs to them." (Teacher 3)

These findings confirm the broader view in decolonial education that indigenous epistemologies restore dignity and disrupt colonial hierarchies (Dei, 2014; Hoppers, 2002).

Epistemological Justice and Decolonial Interpretation

Students and teachers described VIK integration as realigning the curriculum with learners lived realities, a reflection of **epistemological justice**—a key concept in Decolonial Theory. One educator noted:

> "We are moving away from teaching only European ways of knowing. Learners must see their knowledge as valid." (Teacher 1)

In decolonial terms, these outcomes challenge the colonial assumption that Western knowledge is the only legitimate form of academic authority (Mignolo, 2011). The Vatsonga case aligns with Makokotlela's findings that culturally grounded pedagogy restores agency, identity, and knowledge ownership among indigenous learners.

4.2 Implementation Barrier: The Legacy of Curriculum Monopolization

Despite positive outcomes, participants revealed persistent barriers reflecting the colonial epistemic monopoly embedded in curriculum design and resource production.

Marginalisation of IK in Curriculum Materials

Content analysis of Xitsonga Home Language CAPS-aligned textbooks revealed minimal inclusion of Vatsonga-specific cultural content. One teacher stated:

> "Most of the books we get from the department focus on Western stories and poems. There is almost nothing about our own traditions." (Teacher 4)

This aligns with Hoppers (2002), who argues that colonial curriculum structures continue to privilege Western epistemologies and silence IKS.

Teachers' Dependence on Western Sources

Many educators described relying on Western materials because they lacked validated indigenous sources:

> "It's not that we don't want to teach culture; we just don't have proper Vatsonga materials approved for classroom use." (Teacher 2)

This dependency is a direct manifestation of colonial epistemic monopolization, where Western knowledge remains the primary "legitimate" resource in schools.

Contrasting Stakeholder Perspectives

- Educators emphasised practical barriers: lack of textbooks, training, and validated IK resources.
- Policymakers emphasised structural constraints: limited policy directives and insufficient national guidelines.

  As one official explained:

  > "Policy recognises IKS, but we do not yet have standardised frameworks for including it in daily teaching." (Policy Official 1)

This divergence highlights the systemic nature of the implementation challenge.

4.3 Strategy 1: Formalising Collaboration and Intergenerational Wisdom

Findings show a strong consensus that successful integration of VIK requires structured involvement of elders (Vatsonga knowledge holders), rather than informal or symbolic consultation.

Elders' Exclusion and Desire for Formal Recognition

Elders expressed frustration with being sidelined in educational processes:

> "We are invited only for Heritage Day, but not to contribute to what children learn every week." (Elder A)
>
> Another added:
>
> "Our knowledge is deep, but schools treat us as entertainers, not as teachers." (Elder C)

This reflects what decolonial scholars' term epistemic disqualification—the stripping of indigenous experts of their knowledge authority (Santos, 2014).

Educators Support Elder–School Partnerships

Teachers supported structured collaboration:

> "We need elders to guide us, because they know the real stories and meanings. Workshops or regular sessions would help." (Teacher 5)

Decolonial Interpretation

Formal partnership with elders redistributes epistemic authority back to indigenous custodians—directly challenging the colonial model where only certified, Western-trained teachers define legitimate knowledge.

This finding extends Makokotlela's and Hoppers' arguments by showing how intergenerational authority can be institutionally restored through policy-driven collaboration.

4.4 Strategy 2: Policy Imperatives for Systemic Integration

Policymakers and educators identified systemic and policy-level interventions necessary for sustainable IKS integration.

Need for Clear National Guidelines

Policy officials repeatedly noted the absence of detailed operational frameworks:

> "CAPS speaks about IKS, but schools are left to interpret it on their own. We need clearer national guidelines." (Policy Official 2)

This lack of policy clarity contributes to inconsistent implementation—mirroring challenges reported in other African contexts (Hoppers, 2002).

Institutional Support for Materials Development

Educators argued that integration would remain symbolic without officially produced cultural materials:

> "If DBE can produce proper Vatsonga storybooks, songs, and oral literature guides, the implementation will be real." (Teacher 6)

Synthesis with Decolonial Framework

Policymaker perspectives highlight the role of the state in dismantling structural colonial legacies. Creating policy frameworks that embed VIK mandates is an act of **epistemic re-centering**, asserting indigenous knowledge as a formal knowledge system within the national curriculum.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the preservation and curricular integration of Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge (VIK) form a critical foundation for sustaining cultural identity, moral reasoning, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. The findings confirm that VIK—expressed through oral literature, proverbs, traditional songs, rituals, and artistic craftsmanship—embodies a holistic epistemology that nurtures communal responsibility, social harmony, and ethical conduct. However, the study also revealed that

these rich forms of indigenous wisdom remain marginalised within formal schooling due to the enduring dominance of Western-centred epistemologies, globalisation pressures, and English-dominant pedagogies that collectively weaken cultural continuity and the visibility of Indigenous ways of knowing.

Integrating VIK into the school curriculum, particularly through Xitsonga Home Language teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy, has proven to enhance learners' linguistic competence, cultural agency, and moral development. This integration validates learners' lived experiences, restores epistemic balance, and affirms that Indigenous knowledge constitutes a legitimate and sophisticated system of thought. The role of community knowledge holders—especially elders—emerged as central in mediating authentic cultural learning and bridging school-based education with lived experience. Their participation repositions education as a collaborative process that respects intergenerational wisdom and promotes epistemic justice.

Nonetheless, this study acknowledges several limitations. The research was confined to selected schools and regions, meaning that findings may not fully represent all Vatsonga-speaking communities. Some elders were unavailable due to geographical and logistical constraints, and classroom observations were time-limited, offering only a partial view of implementation dynamics. The reliance on self-reported data from teachers and students may also have introduced elements of subjective bias. These limitations highlight the need for continued research to broaden empirical understanding across diverse Vatsonga contexts.

Building on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. The Department of Basic Education should develop officially approved Vatsonga Indigenous Knowledge teaching materials, including storybooks, folktales, and oral literature guides. Formal frameworks should be established to recognise and remunerate elders as community-based educators, ensuring their sustained involvement in school learning. Moreover, national CAPS guidelines must clearly define IKS integration objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment strategies. Teacher professional development should prioritise culturally responsive pedagogy, equipping educators with the skills to embed Indigenous epistemologies meaningfully. Finally, local research units and community partnerships should be strengthened to document, digitise, and archive VIK as part of South Africa's living knowledge heritage.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies examining the long-term impacts of VIK integration on learners' identity, academic performance, and social cohesion. Comparative analyses across different Indigenous communities in South Africa would provide valuable insights for developing national frameworks of IKS integration. Further studies could also evaluate the effectiveness of Elder–School partnership models and explore digital archiving strategies that preserve Xitsonga oral traditions while adapting them for contemporary educational contexts.

Overall, this research contributes to the broader discourse on decolonising education by illustrating that embedding Indigenous epistemologies within the curriculum is both an intellectual necessity and a social imperative. Meaningful integration of VIK redefines education as a space for cultural renewal, empowerment, and epistemic justice. By recognising Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate component of national education, South Africa can cultivate an inclusive, contextually grounded, and culturally sustaining curriculum that ensures the preservation and future vitality of Vatsonga heritage.

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EXPLORING A PEER SUPPORTER'S EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (SWD)

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Abstract

This study explores the emotional geography of a peer supporter who assists students with disabilities at Brawijaya University. Data were obtained from a participant at the Disability Service Center (PSLD) with the informed consent of the individual involved. The data were collected over three months through in-depth interviews. The analysis draws upon Hargreaves' (2001) framework of five emotional geographies—moral, sociocultural, physical, professional, and political. The study aims to analyze the emotional relationships that emerge during the peer support program organized by PSLD UB in assisting students with disabilities (SWD) as they navigate university life. The findings reveal how a peer supporter contributes to the academic and moral well-being of SWD, not only by providing physical support but also through emotional engagement. Furthermore, the study uncovers how the peer supporter responds to various situations with empathy, resilience, initiative, and responsiveness. These findings highlight the importance of fostering both personal and professional growth among peer supporters to strengthen inclusive practices within higher education environments.

Keywords: *emotional geographies; higher education; peer support; inclusivity; students with disabilities.*

1. Introduction

The government's role in promoting equal access to education is undeniably crucial and plays a significant part in advancing educational development (Oktadiana & Wardana, 2019). This commitment is reflected in Indonesia's strong support for inclusive education, particularly in expanding access to higher education for students with disabilities (SWD). Indonesia's dedication to inclusive learning is evident in the establishment of disability service centers across the country, which serve as proactive initiatives to enhance access and provide comprehensive support for SWD in pursuing higher education.

Many universities in Indonesia have demonstrated their commitment to inclusive education by establishing institutional support systems for students with disabilities. One notable example is Brawijaya University (UB), which has established the Disability Service and Learning Center (Pusat Layanan Disabilitas, or PSLD). The creation of such inclusive learning centers clearly reflects the nation's strong commitment to ensuring that students with disabilities are not excluded from opportunities to pursue higher education. Furthermore, according to Wibowo & Muin (2018), the adoption of inclusive education in

Indonesian schools represents a key initiative to eliminate the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the educational system.

Despite the availability of institutional support, students with disabilities (SWD) continue to face numerous challenges in navigating academic life. These challenges often stem from changes in support services, legal rights, and the shift in responsibility from parents to the students themselves (Madaus, 2005). Furthermore, SWDs often struggle to develop their personal and social identities, as they continue to require assistance and adaptation during their transition to university life (Goode, 2007). Lee (2014) explained that students with disabilities are usually aware of their rights and expect the same support they received in primary and secondary education, but they may not be familiar with independence in college and have struggled to manage their college studies. Additionally, universities have to deal with the threat to SWD by making friends who are quite reluctant because of the feeling of exclusion and rejection.

To alleviate some of these challenges, Brawijaya University, has opened recruitment for students who are willing to enroll as peer supporters. Peer support refers to the social and emotional assistance offered by someone who identifies as having personal experience with mental health, social, psychological, or medical challenges (Fortuna et al., 2022; Moores, 2024). Disability Service and Learning Center or PSLD Brawijaya University's voluntary program is depicted as a humanity-based programme. These volunteers are not compensated financially; their motivation is rooted in compassion, social responsibility, and a belief in equal access to education. Research shows that people's motivation to participate in community work is largely unrelated to the type, intensity, or duration of the work they do (Thoits, 2021). Beyond the external reasons, peer supporters also cited reasons for their advantages, like meeting new people, becoming more engaged, giving back to the university, and building skills such as mentoring, communication, confidence, and leadership (Muldoon, 2008). As they are firsthand students handling the SWD, they can also promote inclusivity towards their surroundings.

Nevertheless, not only do SWD face obstacles, but also the peer supporters themselves. During their volunteer work as peer supporters, they experienced many struggles, including how far peer supporters could be beneficial to SWD (Duong et al., 2023). This might evoke an emotional burden on the peer supporter in carrying out their duties. Introducing a peer-led care planning process enhanced service users' perceptions that their care was more aligned with their individual needs and took into account broader, non-clinical issues, such as housing and employment (Davidson et al., 2012; Moores, 2024). Following this, a peer supporter is not only a friend but also a caregiver, which draws significant emotional geographies when carrying out their duties.

There is some previous research in the literature concerning studies of students with disabilities. The research conducted by Sari et al. (2017) explored how peer support impacts university students' English language achievement. Using a pretest-posttest experimental design with 800 students near Istanbul, 400 participated in a peer support program, while 400 followed traditional lessons. Next, Fang et al., also examined how organizations that support people with disabilities work with self-advocacy groups for people with disabilities from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (CALD) to ensure high-quality and sustainable support under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and provide self-help groups to assist. Another study by Moores (2024) used narrative inquiry along with thematic and structural analysis to examine the experiences of a peer supporter at universities.

While peer support programs in educational settings have gained attention recently, existing research has predominantly focused on descriptive accounts of peer supporters' experiences in handling students' disability. Over the past years, previous studies on SWD have been conducted. However, little attention was paid to the emotional geography experienced by a peer supporter. On this basis, this article aims to explore the emotional geography of peer supporter in managing disabled students during their voluntary work at the Disability Service and Learning Center or PSLD, Brawijaya University.

According to Hargreaves (2001), emotional geography is the pattern of closeness and distance in human interactions that determines the emotions we experience in our relationships with ourselves, with others, and with the world around us. There are five emotional geographies—moral, political, physical, professional, and sociocultural—that influence the emotional interactions and relationships within educational and social contexts. Moral geographies concern the values, care, and ethical responsibilities that shape emotional connections and relationships. Political geographies reflect the influence of power relations, authority, and autonomy on emotional dynamics. Physical geography refers to the impact of spatial and bodily proximity or distance in shaping feelings of connection or detachment. Professional geographies involve role definitions, institutional expectations, and boundaries that affect emotional expression and engagement. Lastly, sociocultural geographies encompass the influence of cultural norms, social identities, and community values on emotional understanding. These geographies help explain how emotions are not just personal experiences but are shaped by broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts.

The findings of this study might explore the emotional geography of peer supporters during the voluntary work at PSLD Brawijaya University. By examining the experience, affective relationships, emotional dynamics, and professional field in undertaking humanitarian action, the research aims to contribute to inclusive education and the sustainability of voluntary support systems in higher education.

2. Literature Review

Over the past years, previous studies on SWD have been conducted. Most of them examined how SWD navigates challenges, especially in the education environment. While peer support programs in educational settings recently have raised people's eyebrows, existing research has predominantly focused on descriptive accounts of peer supporters' experiences of handling disabilities students. Little attention was given to the emotional geography experienced by peer disability supporters, even though their role was crucial for SWD—not only as companions, but also as sources of academic support.

The research conducted by Sari et al., (2017) explored how peer support impacts university students' English language achievement. This study used a pretest-posttest experimental design with 800 students near Istanbul; 400 participated in a peer support program, while 400 followed traditional lessons to reveal the effect of peer support both as supporter and as assistance. As a result, there was a significant increase in the achievement (pretest-posttest) “assistant and not assistant students” and “supported and not supported students." In addition, meaningful differences were depicted in the posttest results of experimental and control groups who are considered to be whether successful students or unsuccessful students. However, a significant difference was observed only in the assessments of the “supported” students. The “successful” students who participated in the experiment were not neither positively nor negatively.

Another study from Fang et al., (2022) examined how organizations that support people with disabilities work with self-help groups for people with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) to ensure high-quality and sustainable support within the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme). Working with three organizations that support people with disabilities in Sydney, these organizations have established and support various self-advocacy groups for people with disabilities and their families from different cultural backgrounds. The four participant self-advocacy groups for people with disabilities with which these organizations collaborate. These four groups mainly support Australian Chinese people with disabilities and their families. As a result, self-help groups for people with disabilities are valuable resources that provide support for culturally sensitive management of disability and need external support from the whole community.

Another study by Moores (2024) employed narrative inquiry along with thematic and structural analysis to examine the experiences of peer supporters at universities. This research examined the role of the peer supporter beyond being only a companion. They also could share experience and how it contributed to the therapeutic relationship, combat despair and isolation, and provide them with insight into the systems that students must follow to achieve mental well-being and academic success. Another benefit was promoting mutual wellness and growth. The role of peer support influenced the approachment to the situation and reluctance to seek additional help, as well as bringing them emotional satisfaction from helping others.

3. Research Method

This research employs narrative inquiry, a long-established method that may seem novel for various reasons. It's widely recognized that people experience life and express those experiences through storytelling (Clandinin, 2006). It is seen in different ways: as a "story," a "way of understanding and making sense of experiences," and more recently, as a "research method." Often, it functions as all of these at once (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). This study involved one peer supporter currently serving as a peer supporter from Disability Service Center (PLD) Brawijaya University. This participant was selected through purposive sampling due to extensive direct experience in supporting students with disabilities, both inside and outside the classroom.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Valen (Pseudonym) is an EFL student majoring in English Language Education who is now sitting in the seventh semester. She provides assistance to those SWD who take English courses as English department students, English language education and SWD students taking English for Specific Purpose. Our investigation focused on Velen's emotional geography when serving as peer supporter for SWD, which displayed many truths, facts, and experiences. As a result, we looked for the subjectivity of meanings drawn from the participant's lived experiences in this inquiry. The participant was fully informed about the research objectives and the intended use of the data, and provided informed consent prior to participation. The participant's identity was anonymized, and all personal information was excluded to ensure confidentiality. Data collection was conducted through an online chat interview using a series of semi-structured questions. The interview focused on the participant's experiences as a peer support volunteer, particularly in relation to the five dimensions of emotional geography identified by Hargreaves (2001): moral, physical, sociocultural, political, and professional geographies.

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Data analysis followed a thematic narrative approach. The thematic approach focuses on topics within the story to give the narrative direction and purpose (Hargood, et al., 2008). First, interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded openly to identify repeated words, phrases, and meanings related to the five emotional geographies. Second, these codes were grouped into broader themes reflecting patterns of emotional experience within the context of peer support. Lastly, the themes were interpreted in light of Hargreaves' framework to better understand how peer helpers navigate the emotional geographies of supporting students with disabilities in university life.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The finding deals with the description of the emotional geography of a peer supporter who accompanies SWD open up novel knowledge about managing inclusive education and navigating the obstacles during the activity. This is implemented in five emotional geographies according to Hargreaves (2001).

4.1.1 Moral Geographies: 'I was interested in disability issues in my surroundings'

Having humanity naturally comes from within, without enforcement from any party. Not many people have a big heart and are involved in someone's academic life. A person with a strong sense of common humanity does not consider themselves alone in life, but rather realizes that similar challenges occur to other people (Kotera et al., 2024). It means that as a peer supporter, she understands that the struggles of SWDs do not only belong to her but also to other people who are likely in the same boat, which makes them connected. It is depicted in the statement:

Excerpt: I feel a great responsibility when I have to ensure that the students I accompany can follow the learning as well as possible. Having a role as a volunteer is crucial because I become a medium during learning activities.

Carrying a great responsibility to provide help for SWD sometimes puts a peer supporter under pressure. As a debut experience, a peer supporter wondered whether she would be able to perform to the best of her ability in this voluntary activity. In fact, during her duties, she really enjoys her work serving the SWD. The relationship between peer supporter and the SWD is mutual, which creates new nuance in the friendship. A peer supporter has expressed great confidence in her role, describing personal benefits, stating she is not hindered in completing her own work, and wanting to take on this role again in the future (Carter, 2017). Once, when the author asked about the feeling of enjoyment of accompanying the SWD, the peer supporter gave an unexpected statement.

Excerpt: Yes, because I can better understand what my friends with disabilities feel. At first, I was worried about whether I could help them properly, but as time went by, I felt happy and grateful because there were so many things to learn. I enjoy being with my disability friend. If I had another chance, I would like to be a peer supporter again.

The expression of gratitude, enjoyment, and satisfaction as a companion indicated the fulfillment of how this program succeeded in shaping a positive impact from the peer-supporter side. Her participation is valued by orientation, anticipated enjoyment, relationships, and personal growth (Carter, et al., 2019). Being a peer supporter is a priceless life experience because of the dedication to humanity.

4.1.2 Physical Geographies: "We often hang out together or do online chatting sometimes outside the class."

The statement above was uttered by the participant in her effort to build a relationship with SWD. Physical geography influences social interactions that are limited by factors such as emotional closeness that occurs in relationships (Ubaidillah et al., 2023) between peer supporter and SWD. Understanding the role of a peer supporter in disability services, whether it is casual conversations outside the class or spending time together, a peer supporter can better understand the needs of SWD, fostering a trusting and rapport relationship (Calhoun, 2018). Casual conversation contributes to strengthening the bond and breaking the barrier. However, there is still a gap in conversation, such as the distinction of the way it is; inevitably, the peer supporter has to deal with it. This emphasizes the importance of a peer supporter being adaptable in interaction. For blind students, verbal explanations replace visual cues, so peer supporter needs to develop more descriptive and imaginative ways of communicating. For deaf students, the inability to use sign language creates a significant communication gap. In such cases, reliance on written or typed communication becomes essential. This story is elaborated in the following excerpt:

Excerpt: The differences I encountered were more related to how communication was adapted to the type of disability. For example, when helping blind students, I needed to explain visual things in more detail verbally. When helping deaf students, the challenge was greater because communication could be disrupted, especially since I was not yet proficient in sign language. I usually used written or typed media so that we could still communicate effectively.

Peer supporter presence goes beyond academic assistance, but also creates a secure feeling for SWD. By participating in informal interactions, a peer supporter can provide an interpersonal learning environment that helps share feelings of connectedness between the peer supporter and SWD. It is vital to make sure the SWD understands throughout the learning process. Besides being an academic supporter, a peer supporter also acts as a bridge in the class, for instance, providing help, so that the knowledge is successfully transferred to SWD. Once there was a problem in using media learning, the peer supporter assisted it by explaining orally. This story was depicted in this excerpt:

Excerpt: I rarely interacted with the SWD's classmates, but sometimes I asked them about assignments and things like that. One of the experiences I remember most clearly was when a lecturer used Kahoot in class, and the blind student I was assisting had difficulty following along due to accessibility issues, and the rapidly appearing questions were too quick to be explained verbally.

In this case, the peer supporter assists the SWD with the difficulties in learning activities because they play an invaluable role in helping teachers integrate students with disabilities into the class community. The presence of a peer supporter helps SWD expand opportunities and enhance their confidence and self-esteem (Hillier et al., 2019). They assist in translating it into easier-to-understand materials so the SWD can keep up with academic progress. Therefore, it does not make them feel excluded in the class because of the academic challenges.

4.1.3 Sociocultural Geographies: Sometimes I feel "unseen," in the sense that people around me do not notice my role.

The role of a peer supporter carries a great responsibility, so feelings exist for this field were depicted in her strong desire and passion to participate in every activity (Ward &

Greene, 2018). Dedicating herself to helping SWD navigate their university life is something incredible because it is related to humanity and responsibility. Thus, she hit obstacles in the middle of her duties sometimes. One of them is accessibility issues, such as learning facilities, which could hinder SWD's full participation in university life. Moreover, the diversity of learning styles necessitates a flexible and personalized approach to support. By engaging in open dialogue with the SWD's they assist, a peer supporter can construct adaptive strategies that respond to unique needs as they can be effective in promoting employability and social skills in a work-based learning environment (Athamanah, 2017). These are elaborated in this story:

Excerpt: "There are several challenges, such as learning facilities that are not yet fully accessible and differences in learning styles. I usually overcome these challenges by discussing directly with the students I accompany, trying to understand their needs, and adjusting my assistance to their circumstances.

Besides the accessible facilities, Brawijaya University, as one of the inclusive universities, has committed to fully supporting SWD learning, including the teaching and learning staff. It is essential to provide them with a solid foundation of basic facts, not only because it is necessary to begin addressing inclusive issues in meaningful ways, but also because it empowers them to make greater efforts to improve the lives and outcomes of students with disabilities (Murray et al., 2008). Lecturers are already accustomed to peer supporter presence in the class to accompany the SWD. Thus, the learning activity will be held inclusively in recognition of that acknowledgement. These sociocultural aspects can be regarded in this excerpt:

Excerpt: Usually, lecturers already know that I am from PSLD because when they take attendance, they can see which students in the class have disabilities, and they already understand that there is usually a peer supporter present.

In the midst of peer supporter humanity duties, choosing half of university life as a peer supporter could be an emotional journey. The motives of a peer supporter who joins voluntarily vary; one of them is to gain knowledge about inclusivity. The benefits of voluntary work have a great impact on the SWD, but also provide opportunities for a peer supporter to flourish. She gains knowledge about how inclusivity must be executed, especially at a university. Direct engagement with SWD about how to navigate academic and social life amid physical limitations provides valuable insights and contributes to broadening their social horizons. Despite the advantages, time management sometimes becomes a problem, but the peer supporter believes that this role has a worthwhile outcome for future experience. It is stated in this excerpt:

Excerpt: The most valuable lesson is that I can meet and learn directly from the experiences of students with disabilities, and understand the importance of inclusivity. Indeed, it can be difficult at times, especially when it comes to time management. But that does not really matter because the experience gained is invaluable.

4.1.4 Professional Geographies: "I always maintain boundaries between my role as a friend and my responsibility as a companion."

A common way of expressing the idea of a peer supporter is professional in her approach while maintaining friendliness, rather than being friends who happen to act professionally (Scott, 2011). These two things are distinct, considering that a peer supporter is a friendly professional, not a professional friend; therefore, boundaries are established to manage sustainable voluntary activity. The boundary in friendship is important, as she can

protect individuals from the problems associated with seeking support from a friend and prioritizing self-preservation over her relationship (Johnson, 2022). In the class, a peer supporter carries out her duties as accountably as possible because assisting the SWD with academic difficulties has been the main goal of being a peer supporter. She is also responsible for delivering accurate and reliable academic assistance, such as taking notes or the main points of the class. Her role as a volunteer is structured to maintain sustainability, not only in the quality of academic support but also in emotional boundaries that prevent academic confusion for SWD. It is stated in this excerpt:

Excerpt: I usually take notes on the key points during class. Suppose the students I assist do not understand the material, and I do not understand. In that case, I will help them find additional references or ask other friends who understand better to provide a more accurate explanation.

Regarding the academic timetable, a peer supporter who accompanies SWD has to adapt quickly to unexpected changes in the academic activities. If a lecture makes sudden changes, such as altering the schedule, a peer supporter has to ensure that support for SWD is not interrupted. She would ask other volunteers to find a substitute. This effort not only demonstrates the responsibility and commitment of a peer supporter, but also highlights the flexibility and cooperation of the peer support role in political geography. Peer support services still prioritize her academic responsibility. She must be flexible and adaptable to ensure program success. As organizers, PSLD is committed to continually improving its services to provide a comfortable and safe space both for peer supporters and SWD. The schedule of peer support activities is adapted to accommodate academic schedules, ensuring that peer supporters' learning activities are not disrupted. It is illustrated in this excerpt:

Excerpt: Yes, especially when there were sudden changes to my lecturer's schedule. At that time, I had to find a replacement for my classmates myself by contacting other volunteers.

4.1.5 Political Geographies: "As far as I know, there is no official policy regarding academic relief."

At the first registration, PSLD, as the organizing party, did not announce any financial benefit in peer supporter activity. This approach ensures the loyalty of a peer supporter, who genuinely dedicates herself to the service center built upon humanity and empathy. However, at the end of her contract, she will receive an honorarium. Furthermore, there are also opportunities to serve as sign language interpreters at particular events. This story was an elaboration of this excerpt:

Excerpt: The benefits for the assistants from the institution are usually in the form of an honorarium. In addition, as far as I know, after becoming a companion in PLD, there are also opportunities to undertake off-campus tasks, such as becoming a JBI (sign language interpreter) at selected events.

PSLD is also responsible for providing quality peer support to assist SWD in the practical field. As an organization, PSLD is committed to continually improving its services to provide a comfortable and safe space for SWD. Therefore, PSLD gives a training class to equip new peer supporters. This training aims to prepare the peer supporters to be more patient, accepting, and empathetic, and also provides practical tips (Nicholson et al., 2022) to support her in the duties. Furthermore, training or preparation programs, in terms of the type, content, and quality, will provide a better understanding of how training can

contribute to sustaining peer support initiatives and encouraging her participation. It is depicted in this excerpt:

Excerpt: After registering, we got training from PSLD to get an understanding of disabilities, ethics, and practice of peer support

4.2 Discussion

As a peer supporter for disability, it is very possible to find obstacles as well as opportunities during duties. Adaptation skill is crucial in this performance because one has to adjust to different learning styles. In the class, a peer supporter is a bridge between the lecturer and the SWD to convey the material and ensure the SWD understands the lectures. Adjustment also occurs in the way a peer supporter communicates. A peer supporter does not handle only one disabled student, but different types of disabilities. For instance, when assisting a deaf student, a peer supporter kindly uses sign language or even uses WhatsApp to break the language barrier. Another issue is the time commitment, which requires being accustomed to changes in the lecturer's schedule and being quick to find a replacement. Despite the challenges during the duties, a peer supporter also learns great lessons as she is the first person engaging with SWD in the class. The primary advantage of peer support is its positive impact on the quality of life of vulnerable individuals, characterized by an improvement in emotional, social, and physical well-being, self-confidence, resilience, and the development and application of effective coping strategies (Mikolajczak et al., 2023). Amid the struggle for voluntary work, there remains significant potential for growth and development. PSLD has paved the way for the volunteer to become a sign language interpreter, so that she can explore the skills outside the campus. This reflects the positive effects of the techniques on her well-being and expresses interest in applying the skill both on a personal and professional level (Kane et al., 2024). Being a peer supporter also improves her social functioning and overall satisfaction with life through the shared experiences and mutual understanding inherent in peer relationships. It can also promote the development of cooperation, shared responsibility, and commitment among students, which are the most important aspects of the community (Meltzoff, 1994; Almulla, 2018).

According to Fortuna et al., 2022, the peer's program has resulted in an increase of self-esteem and self-efficacy, a sense of control, empowerment, hope, confidence in the possibility of changing one's own life, a sense of belonging, social support, participation in self-management, services, care, and community life, as well as improved social functioning, quality of life, and life satisfaction. Based on the findings, the peer's program has succeeded in pushing her to be more confident, as she is the key to this work. In this case, she gains personal development during her volunteer work at PSLD Brawijaya University. Accompanying and supporting the SWD in academic difficulties has shaped her point of view about inclusivity in higher education. It enhances the care and humanity of the "marginalized" people in a community and uplifts them to be seen. Involving students as a peer supporter in universities encourages the cooperation, shared responsibility, and commitment that are essential for a thriving university community. This program not only improves the well-being of those involved but also provides students with essential skills for their personal and professional future. At the end of the mentoring program, she reported feeling stronger, both from her own perspective and from the surrounding perspective. She feels more confident about her abilities and her capacity to achieve future goals (Krisi & Nagar, 2021).

5. Conclusion

Peer support programs have a well-documented positive impact on quality of life, particularly for SWD in universities. The five emotional geographies of Hargreaves, including moral, sociocultural, physical, professional, and political geographies, really shape the point of view of how a peer supporter manages a disabled student. It creates certain emotions and bonds the relationship between them during the voluntary program. The findings support the view that university support is beneficial to both recipient and provider, as it contributes to an inclusive academic environment and equips volunteers with transferable skills that are valuable for their future careers.

From a development perspective, the program has a lot of potential for improvement and expansion. The peer supporter program turns out to have shared mutual benefits, both for SWD and a peer supporter. A peer support gains knowledge and experience in handling disabilities as well as managing herself; meanwhile, SWD is assisted in terms of academic activities. In addition, this peer program indirectly contributes to personal growth as well as highlights the beneficial humanity-based program.

Future studies could examine the long-term effects of collegiate support on both SWD and peer supporters in social contexts, and examine the role of emotional geography in other forms of inclusive practices. It is also significant to explore more about SWD emotional geographies at university. Furthermore, future research will result in great data and broaden the participants. Lastly, as this research is focused on peer supporters' emotional geographies, the next research could undertake the SWD's teachers' emotional geographies, as teachers are key stakeholders of education.

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INTERPERSONAL METAFUNCTION IN INDONESIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY SLOGANS (2015–2025)

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Abstract

This study analyzes Indonesia's *Independence Day* slogans from 2015 to 2025 through Halliday's *Systemic Functional Linguistics*, focusing on *Interpersonal Metafunction*. As annual commemorative texts, these slogans function not only as symbolic expressions of independence but also as strategic discourses that negotiate power, construct solidarity, and reinforce national identity. Employing qualitative discourse analysis, the research investigates mood, modality, pronoun usage, evaluative lexis, and the interplay of explicit and implicit meanings. The findings indicate that declarative and imperative moods position citizens within relationships of inclusivity and responsibility, while modality expresses urgency and commitment. Evaluative vocabulary conveys optimism and resilience, with explicit meanings emphasizing productivity, recovery, and progress, and implicit meanings connecting contemporary challenges to historical struggles and the long-term vision of *Indonesia Emas 2045*. Overall, *Independence Day* slogans function as condensed ideological texts that bridge past sacrifices with future aspirations, illustrating the discursive power of language in shaping nationalism and providing practical insights for developing effective national slogans.

Keywords: *independence day slogans; interpersonal metafunction; national identity ; SFL.*

1. Introduction

Language is a fundamental resource for constructing collective identity and articulating values that unify a community. In the national sphere, linguistic forms such as slogans function not merely as textual ornaments but as strategic discourses that promote solidarity, cultivate patriotism, and align citizens with shared aspirations. In Indonesia, Independence Day slogans—produced annually by the government and disseminated through public spaces and mass media—serve as symbolic instruments that encapsulate both historical remembrance and forward-looking aspirations, reinforcing national consciousness. In a wider sense, language shapes meaning and influences audiences, especially in public texts such as slogans and brochures. Previous studies, such as Li (2025), have examined slogans from the perspective of translation strategies and advertising effectiveness, focusing primarily on commercial and cross-cultural contexts. However, research exploring the linguistic construction of national or ideological messages within

state-issued slogans remains limited. This contrast highlights a significant gap in understanding how language operates as a tool of persuasion and identity-building in governmental discourse, particularly in Indonesia's Independence Day slogans (Li, 2025). Analyzing language in this way uncovers the hidden strategies behind how information is presented and how audiences are persuaded (Syafitri, 2025).

Table 1

Indonesian Independence Day Slogans from the 70th to 80th Anniversary (2015–2025) with English Translations.

Year (Independence Day Anniversary)	*Indonesian* Slogan	English Translation
70th (2015)	Ayo Kerja	*Let's Work*
71st (2016)	Kerja Nyata	*Real Work*
72nd (2017)	Kerja Bersama	*Working Together*
73rd (2018)	Kerja Kita, Prestasi Bangsa	*Our Work, Achievement of the Nation*
74th (2019)	SDM Unggul, Indonesia Maju	*Superior Human Resources, an Advanced Indonesia*
75th (2020)	Indonesia Maju	*Indonesia Advances*
76th (2021)	Indonesia Tangguh, Indonesia Tumbuh	*Tough Indonesia, Growing Indonesia*
77th (2022)	Pulih Lebih Cepat, Bangkit Lebih Kuat	*Recover Faster, Rise Stronger*
78th (2023)	Terus Melaju untuk Indonesia Maju	*Keep Going Forward for an Advanced Indonesia*
79th (2024)	Nusantara Baru, Indonesia Maju	*New Nusantara, Advanced Indonesia*
80th (2025)	Bersatu Berdaulat, Rakyat Sejahtera, Indonesia Maju	*United and Sovereign, Prosperous People, Advanced Indonesia*

Between 2015 and 2025, Indonesia's Independence Day slogans reflect thematic variations aligned with the shifting socio-political landscape, encompassing resilience, development, unity, and the nation's long-term vision toward 2045. Although concise, these slogans are condensed ideological texts embedding implicit messages of authority, inclusivity, and collective ambition. Their rhetorical design illustrates how governments use language to negotiate legitimacy and strengthen solidarity with the people. Despite their significance, scholarly attention to Indonesian Independence Day slogans remains limited, particularly from a linguistic perspective. This limitation underscores the need for a systematic analysis of how such texts construct meaning and perform ideological functions.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze Indonesian Independence Day slogans from 2015 to 2025 through Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, with emphasis on interpersonal metafunction. The interpersonal metafunction offers analytical tools to explore how language enacts social relations, conveys evaluation, and negotiates roles between text producers and audiences. Through this framework, the study investigates how mood, modality, and appraisal resources are strategically used to persuade, unify, and mobilize citizens toward national values and developmental goals.

Moreover, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) provides further insight into the structure and meaning of language, thereby highlighting its sociological and functional dimensions. Analyzing the interplay between language, function, and context can therefore deepen theoretical and practical understanding of how texts work in society (Han & Yin, 2025). By situating the findings within the broader field of discourse analysis, the study contributes to scholarship on the intersection of language, ideology, and power, while also offering insights into how state-produced texts function to reinforce national identity and guide collective aspirations.

2. Literature Review

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides a comprehensive framework for exploring how language operates across different contexts of meaning. Central to this framework is the interpersonal metafunction, which explains how language manages relationships, negotiates roles, and expresses attitudes between speakers and audiences. By employing resources such as mood, modality, and evaluative expressions, texts can project authority, create solidarity, and shape social interaction. To connect theory with practice, the interpersonal metafunction serves as a bridge between abstract linguistic principles and real-world discourse analysis. This theoretical lens clarifies how linguistic choices reflect power relations and social positioning within communication. Consequently, SFL becomes particularly effective for examining slogans, which condense complex meanings into short, persuasive, and ideologically charged statements.

In this research, the SFL framework is applied to analyze linguistic elements such as mode, tenor, and the realization of interpersonal meaning through clause types and modality, revealing how relationships and attitudes are encoded in the slogans. Interpersonal choices play a crucial role in shaping relationships, influencing engagement, and enhancing the effectiveness of communication between text producers and audiences. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) not only offers a descriptive model of language but also provides analytical tools for examining text, discourse, and grammar, viewing language as a social semiotic system that both reflects and shapes culture (Harahap et al., 2024). Although numerous studies have employed SFL to explore language use across different contexts, much of this research has predominantly focused on ideational and textual meanings, leaving interpersonal aspects relatively underexplored. However, less attention has been given to how interpersonal meaning is realized, particularly through mood and modality, in texts designed to influence society. This study addresses that gap by showing how interpersonal features in slogans contribute to reinforcing national identity and guiding collective aspirations (Luthfiyati et al., 2024). Their findings highlight how interpersonal resources construct authority, engagement, and social balance in educational communication. However, such studies remain centered on classroom discourse and have not yet explored the persuasive and ideological potential of language in public contexts. This study addresses that gap by showing how interpersonal features in slogans contribute to reinforcing national identity and guiding collective aspirations.

The usefulness of the interpersonal metafunction has been highlighted in diverse studies of political communication, advertising discourse, and educational contexts. These investigations reveal that language does not merely transfer information but actively positions audiences in particular social relationships. In short, it establishes who speaks, who listens, and how each participant is expected to respond. Building on these insights, the

present study extends the discussion of interpersonal meaning to the analysis of national discourse. While previous works have emphasized interpersonal meaning in media or classroom interaction, its realization in state-sponsored slogans has received little attention. Understanding this connection provides a theoretical foundation for exploring how short, persuasive texts operate within broader ideological frameworks. Given that slogans must perform these roles within a restricted linguistic space, the study of their interpersonal elements becomes essential for understanding how they achieve both memorability and persuasive power. Slogans are effective linguistic tools. They are short, purposeful, and easy to remember, thereby shaping collective perception.

They are often formulated in concise clauses or sentences that are not only grammatically well-structured but also carry persuasive power (Sumari, 2024). They are often formulated in concise clauses or sentences that are not only grammatically well-structured but also carry persuasive power (Sumari, 2024). In commercial settings, slogans have been widely examined as components of branding strategies—for instance, in smartphone advertisements where each new product edition is launched with a distinct slogan to attract consumers. In a similar way, state-produced slogans related to national identity aim to unify, persuade, and mobilize citizens toward shared ideals. Through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), analyzing slogans at the lexicogrammatical level—particularly in terms of the interpersonal meaning realized through the mood system—can uncover how language choices shape audience responses and reinforce collective values.

In this regard, slogans function not only as linguistic artifacts but also as ideological instruments. Their rhetorical effectiveness arises from strategic linguistic choices such as the use of inclusive pronouns, declarative mood, and modal verbs that assert obligation or possibility. These features enable slogans to simultaneously reinforce authority and foster a sense of collective belonging. Beyond their ideological role, slogans also operate as powerful marketing tools that shape consumer perceptions, where the presence or absence of a slogan can affect how audiences evaluate a product's quality. Through stylistic devices such as repetition, rhythm, and persuasive lexical choices (e.g., "always," "forever," "everything"), slogans increase memorability and engagement, demonstrating how linguistic form directly contributes to consumer response (Denistia et al., 2024). Advertising slogans form an essential component of brand communication and often act as the first impression of a product. In the globalized economy, their effective translation becomes crucial for successful cross-cultural marketing, yet this task remains challenging due to linguistic and cultural differences. Beyond the commercial sphere, slogans also play a significant role in politics, functioning not merely as campaign phrases but as mechanisms of persuasion, identity construction, and ideological control. Across both business and political domains, slogans function as powerful linguistic tools that legitimize authority, mobilize collective support, and either reinforce or challenge dominant social structures. In doing so, they shape public perception and sustain shared identities across cultural contexts (Anjorin-Ojewole et al., 2025; Li, 2025). By appealing simultaneously to logic, emotion, and identity, slogans retain their persuasive strength while embedding ideological values within everyday discourse. Consequently, analyzing the interpersonal features of slogans offers valuable insights into how ideology is linguistically constructed, negotiated, and disseminated.

The significance of interpersonal strategies becomes evident when examining how public discourse persuades, unifies, and mobilizes audiences. Declarative statements often function as shared truths, imperatives serve as calls to action, and modality indicates varying

degrees of certainty or obligation. These linguistic choices shape audience interpretation and ensure that slogans resonate across diverse social groups. Through this lens, the analysis of *mood* and *modality* reveals how concise texts like slogans achieve rhetorical impact and social influence, making Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) a valuable framework for understanding how language constructs meaning in context. Closely related, discourse analysis provides both a theoretical orientation and a set of methods to examine how language in context contributes to the construction, maintenance, or contestation of social and political orders (Alejandro & Zhao, 2024). By integrating approaches such as corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, SFL enables systematic exploration of discourse practices, including how slogans and media texts shape identity, authority, and ideology. This is particularly visible in the way media discourse persuades audiences to adopt certain values or beliefs, often framing them as not only desirable but essential, thereby reinforcing the idea that alignment with these messages is a form of self-affirmation and collective belonging (Septiani, 2025).

Building on this understanding, Indonesian Independence Day slogans from 2015 to 2025 present an important case for study. Each year, these slogans encapsulate the government's priorities while projecting national aspirations such as unity, productivity, resilience, and progress. They not only commemorate historical struggles but also serve to orient citizens toward future goals, including the long-term vision of 2045. Despite their visibility and symbolic role in shaping national identity, these texts remain underexplored from a linguistic perspective. Applying the interpersonal metafunction to these slogans therefore offers a timely contribution, illuminating how language enacts authority, solidarity, and ideology within a national context while reinforcing collective identity over time. Theoretically, this study extends the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to the domain of national discourse, demonstrating how interpersonal meaning can be used to uncover ideological patterns and sociocultural values embedded in public texts.

3. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the interpersonal metafunction in Indonesian Independence Day slogans from 2015 to 2025. This approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to interpret the interpersonal meanings embedded in the slogans within their social and historical contexts, providing a rich and contextualized understanding of how language constructs national ideology and collective identity. This study adopted a qualitative approach, focusing on understanding meaning in context, including entire ways of life, belief systems, and holistic experiences rather than isolated elements (Aistyana & Prastiwi, 2025). Although sometimes considered less complex, descriptive qualitative research remains valuable for providing clear and contextualized descriptions of linguistic phenomena. It allows researchers to stay close to the data through systematic yet flexible analysis. In this study, this approach supports an in-depth interpretation of how interpersonal meanings are realized in Independence Day slogans while maintaining a direct connection to the textual and social context. This makes it suitable for studies aiming to describe events or experiences in straightforward terms(Lambert, 2012; Sandelowski, 2000). Although the findings are specific to the data examined, they still contribute meaningful insights into how language functions within particular social and cultural contexts, especially in understanding the evolving nature of

public discourse (Kurniawati et al., 2025). Although sometimes considered less complex, descriptive qualitative research remains valuable for providing clear and contextualized descriptions of linguistic phenomena. It allows researchers to stay close to the data through systematic yet flexible analysis. In this study, this approach supports an in-depth interpretation of how interpersonal meanings are realized in Independence Day slogans while maintaining a direct connection to the textual and social context (Halliday & M.I.M, 2014).

4. Results and Discussion

This study investigates *Indonesian* Independence Day slogans from 2015 to 2025 through the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics, with a focus on interpersonal metafunction. The findings indicate that these slogans function not only as symbolic commemorations but also as discursive strategies that establish authority, strengthen solidarity, and encourage collective engagement. An exploration of mood, modality, and evaluative expressions demonstrates that each slogan embodies the sociopolitical agenda of its respective period while consistently highlighting themes of unity, endurance, and national advancement. The subsequent discussion elaborates on the linguistic patterns present in the slogans and interprets their broader role in reinforcing ideology and shaping public consciousness.

Table 2

Analysis of Indonesian Independence Day Slogans (2015–2025) Using Halliday's Interpersonal Metafunction

Year (Anniv.)	Slogan (Ind–Eng)	Mood	Modality	Pronoun	Appraisal	Interpersonal Interpretation
70th (2015)	*Ayo Kerja – Let's Work*	Imperative	Medium obligation	Implicit "we"	Motivational, inclusive	Encourages collective responsibility; builds solidarity through direct call to action.
71st (2016)	*Kerja Nyata – Real Work*	Declarative (elliptical)	High certainty	None	Assertive, evaluative	Demands authenticity and accountability; distinguishes genuine contribution.
72nd (2017)	*Kerja Bersama – Working Together*	Declarative (elliptical)	Implicit high inclination	Implicit "we"	Inclusive, cooperative	Stresses unity and collaboration; minimizes hierarchy between leaders and citizens.
73rd (2018)	*Kerja Kita, Prestasi Bangsa – Our Work, Achievement of the Nation*	Declarative	High certainty	Explicit "kita" (our)	Positive appreciation	Links collective effort with national achievement; emphasizes shared ownership.
74th (2019)	*SDM Unggul, Indonesia Maju – Superior Human Resources, an*	Declarative	High certainty	None	Positive evaluation of citizens	Positions people as central to progress; promotes ideological

	Advanced Indonesia					alignment.
75th (2020)	*Indonesia Maju – Indonesia Advances*	Declarative	Absolute assertion	None (nation as subject)	Optimistic, forward-looking	Reinforces national pride and confidence; solidarity through identification with "Indonesia."
76th (2021)	*Indonesia Tangguh, Indonesia Tumbuh – Tough Indonesia, Growing Indonesia*	Declarative	High certainty	None	Resilience, optimism	Personifies the nation; conveys strength and optimism post-crisis.
77th (2022)	*Pulih Lebih Cepat, Bangkit Lebih Kuat – Recover Faster, Rise Stronger*	Declarative with imperative tone	Implicit high inclination	None	Motivational, comparative	Intensifies urgency and determination through graduation ("faster," "stronger").
78th (2023)	*Terus Melaju untuk Indonesia Maju – Keep Going Forward for an Advanced Indonesia*	Imperative	Inclination	Implicit "we"	Energizing, progressive	Emphasizes perseverance and continuity toward national progress.
79th (2024)	*Nusantara Baru, Indonesia Maju – New Nusantara, Advanced Indonesia*	Declarative	Assertive certainty	None	Positive, visionary	Links new capital (Nusantara) with national progress; builds acceptance of transformation.
80th (2025)	*Bersatu Berdaulat, Rakyat Sejahtera, Indonesia Maju – United and Sovereign, Prosperous People, Advanced Indonesia*	Declarative (listing)	High certainty	Explicit "rakyat" (people)	Highly positive, comprehensive	Integrates unity, sovereignty, prosperity, and progress; strengthens social bond between citizens and state.

As shown in Table 2, the *Indonesian* Independence Day slogans from the 70th to the 80th anniversary demonstrate a dynamic interplay of linguistic strategies that can be understood through the lens of interpersonal metafunction. Each slogan functions not only as a symbolic commemoration of independence but also as a linguistic tool to negotiate power, construct solidarity, and shape collective identity between the government and its citizens. At the same time, the semantic dimension—both explicit and implicit meanings—further strengthens the slogans' persuasive power, offering a richer perspective on how language functions ideologically. Language is shaped by its cultural environment, and shifts within society often bring changes in how it is used in public discourse (Muhtadi et al., 2025). This is evident in digital communication, where speakers may begin with casual, localized expressions but gradually modify their style to fit wider conventions. In a similar way, national slogans evolve alongside cultural transformations, maintaining their relevance while continuing to carry significant ideological meaning.

The historical trajectory of these slogans cannot be detached from Indonesia's broader sociopolitical context. Following the country's independence in 1945, the narrative of nation-building has always emphasized unity (*persatuan*), sovereignty (*kedaulatan*), and development (*pembangunan*). By the time of the 70th anniversary in 2015, Indonesia was entering a new era marked by democratization, decentralization, and global integration. Slogans such as *"Let's Work"* and *"Real Work"* reflected the government's historical concern with combating corruption, inefficiency, and stagnation—issues deeply rooted in Indonesia's post-reform experience. The explicit message of productivity and hard work implicitly echoed the unfinished project of national development since the New Order era, signaling continuity between the past struggle for independence and the present struggle for progress.

Similarly, slogans like *"Superior Human Resources, an Advanced Indonesia"* and *"Indonesia Advances"* resonate with Indonesia's long-term vision toward 2045, the centenary of independence. Explicitly, these slogans highlight human capital, technological progress, and resilience. Implicitly, they align the citizens' role with the state's mission to transform Indonesia into one of the world's top five economies by 2045, as articulated in the national vision of "Indonesia Emas." The choice of declarative forms in these slogans functions as a projection of certainty: advancement is not a possibility but a fact in the making. This aligns with historical narratives of independence, where proclamations themselves served as performative speech acts that did not merely describe but also enact sovereignty. At the same time, it is important to note that in many societies, certain utterances are deliberately avoided in public discourse because they may violate social norms or cause discomfort; yet, in specific contexts, speakers may intentionally employ such expressions to provoke or challenge, revealing the dual capacity of language to unify or to disrupt (Solihat et al., 2025).

Other slogans foreground collective resilience in the face of crises, such as *"Recover Faster, Rise Stronger."* Explicitly, this slogan addresses the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic aftermath. Implicitly, it draws upon a much longer history of *Indonesian* endurance, from colonial oppression and economic downturns to natural disasters. The interpersonal metafunction here is persuasive and empathetic, projecting solidarity between the state and citizens while reinforcing the idea that resilience is a core trait of the *Indonesian* nation. This duality of explicit recovery and implicit historical resilience demonstrates how language binds present challenges to past experiences, ensuring continuity in the nation's self-concept. This process also reflects the close and inseparable relationship between language and culture: while culture shapes collective ways of thinking, language serves as the vehicle that communicates and strengthens these cultural values (Sari et al., 2025). In the *Indonesian* context, such slogans not only convey governmental messages but also embody deeply rooted cultural notions of solidarity and endurance.

The latest slogans, such as *"New Nusantara, New Indonesia"* and *"United and Sovereign, Prosperous People, Advanced Indonesia"*, embody both historical identity and futuristic ambition. The reference to *Nusantara* explicitly situates Indonesia within its deep civilizational roots, while implicitly signaling the political project of relocating the national capital and redefining national identity for the 21st century. The first reference also conveys a specific and localized nature, anchoring the slogans in a tangible cultural and geographical symbol that resonates strongly with citizens. By invoking Nusantara, the slogans avoid abstract generalizations and instead draw on a concrete national heritage, making the

message more grounded and persuasive (Muhtadi et al., 2025). This reflects a historical continuity: just as the 1945 Proclamation redefined Indonesia as a sovereign state, the idea of a *New Nusantara* seeks to redefine Indonesia's geopolitical and developmental trajectory. The emphasis on unity, sovereignty, prosperity, and advancement directly mirrors the four pillars of Indonesia 2045—human development, economic growth, equity, and national resilience. In this sense, the interpersonal metafunction of these slogans operates not merely at the commemorative level but as an ongoing dialogue between the nation's historical legacy and its future aspirations.

The importance of slogans lies in their ability to condense complex national visions into simple, memorable, and emotionally charged linguistic forms. Slogans operate as a bridge between political discourse and public consciousness, ensuring that citizens can internalize and reproduce the values articulated by the state. From a systemic functional perspective, slogans are powerful not only because of their semantic clarity but also because of their interpersonal function: they call for collective action, foster national unity, and affirm the legitimacy of the government's agenda. Historically, *Indonesian* slogans have played a central role in mobilizing people—from revolutionary chants in 1945 to developmental mottos in the New Order and contemporary slogans that address globalization and modernization. In the context of the Independence Day, slogans acquire an even deeper meaning: they are annual reaffirmations of national identity, aspirations, and shared struggle. At the same time, this study identifies certain limitations, particularly in cultural adaptation, idiomatic expression, and domain-specific terminology. These challenges highlight the need for careful interpretation, since the persuasive and empathetic force of slogans—the very essence of their interpersonal metafunction—can be weakened if meanings are not fully aligned with cultural nuances. Thus, while slogans operate as powerful instruments of solidarity and national identity, their analysis requires human mediation to ensure that both explicit and implicit dimensions are faithfully understood (Brahmana et al., 2025).

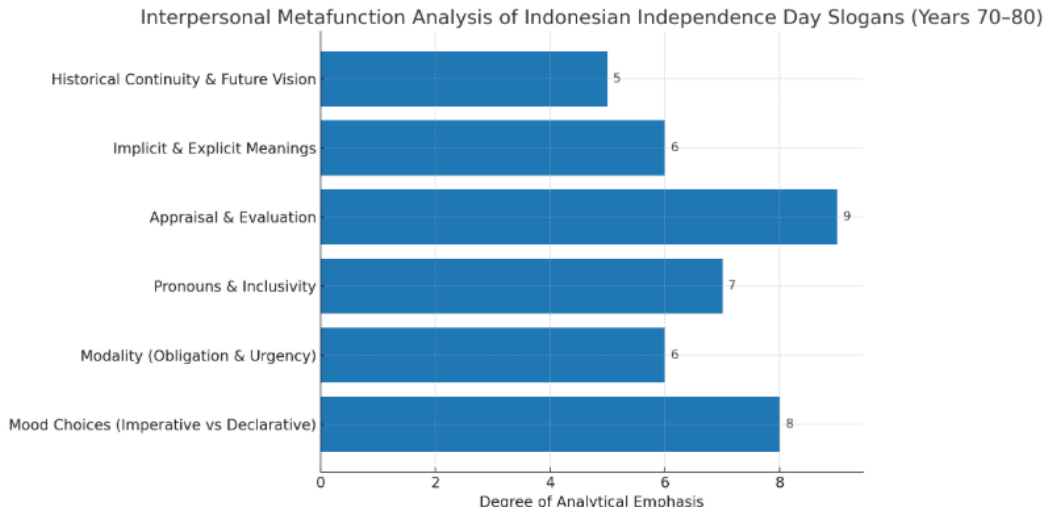
At the same time, the connection between past experiences and present challenges is evident in the way these slogans function discursively. The struggle for independence in 1945, which was marked by the determination to reclaim sovereignty from colonial powers, finds resonance in today's slogans that emphasize resilience, sovereignty, and advancement. For instance, the spirit of collective struggle (*gotong royong*) that characterized the independence movement reappears implicitly in contemporary slogans such as *"Recover Faster, Rise Stronger."* This demonstrates that the linguistic construction of solidarity in the past remains relevant in addressing global crises in the present. Likewise, the proclamation of independence in 1945, which asserted Indonesia's place among sovereign nations, finds continuity in slogans like *"United and Sovereign, Prosperous People, Advanced Indonesia,"* where the emphasis on sovereignty is not only political but also economic and technological in nature. Through this historical continuity, Independence Day slogans serve as annual reminders that Indonesia's current journey toward Vision 2045 is deeply rooted in its past struggles and achievements. Thus, the interpersonal metafunction of these slogans not only projects authority and solidarity but also reinforces the narrative of historical continuity between past sacrifices and present ambitions.

Therefore, the study of Independence Day slogans is not only academically significant as a linguistic analysis within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, but also

carries broad practical implications. This analysis provides a scientific foundation for governments, educational institutions, and society at large in designing slogans that go beyond ceremonial functions to truly embody nationalistic values capable of uniting generations. One of the most appropriate ways to conduct such an analysis is through the interpersonal metafunction, since it foregrounds how language constructs relationships, negotiates power, and fosters solidarity between the state and its people. By understanding both explicit and implicit meanings and their connections to historical experiences, future slogans can be crafted more strategically to internalize the values of unity, hard work, and national self-reliance. In other words, this study may serve as an essential reference to ensure that every slogan produced is not merely a string of words but a powerful ideological medium that nurtures patriotism and strengthens national identity in the face of evolving challenges.

Diagram 1

Degree of Analytical Emphasis on Interpersonal Features in Indonesian Independence Day Slogans (Years 70–80)



The diagram provides a comprehensive illustration of how Indonesia's Independence Day slogans operate as purposeful linguistic artifacts rather than mere ceremonial statements. Each analytical category—mood, modality, pronoun usage, evaluative lexis, explicit and implicit meaning, and historical connection—demonstrates how these texts strategically construct interpersonal relationships between the state and its citizens. Mood variation, for instance, highlights whether the slogans serve primarily as directives encouraging collective participation or as declarative affirmations of national progress. Modality encodes differing degrees of necessity, obligation, and urgency, thereby signaling the seriousness of the government's appeal. The presence of pronouns and inclusive references linguistically reinforce unity, while evaluative vocabulary injects positive affect and national optimism. Explicit elements make the message accessible to the wider public, whereas implicit layers carry deeper ideological orientations aligned with long-term goals such as Indonesia's Vision 2045. By bridging past struggles with present realities, the slogans symbolically map historical resilience onto contemporary aspirations, ensuring that the narrative of independence remains relevant across generations.

Beyond description, the diagram also allows for theoretical extrapolation. The recurring deployment of imperatives and inclusive markers suggests that state discourse is

persistently framed around collectivism rather than individualism, positioning shared responsibility as a central national value. The alternation between declarative and imperative moods can be interpreted as evidence of shifting sociopolitical contexts—declaratives being more dominant in times of stability to affirm achievements as established truths, whereas imperatives become prominent in transitional or challenging periods to mobilize public action. Likewise, the dynamic interplay of implicit and explicit meanings reveals an effort to address diverse audiences, simultaneously appealing to emotional identification and rational foresight. From a systemic functional linguistics perspective, this demonstrates the adaptability of interpersonal metafunction in shaping discourse that is both inclusive and persuasive. Such linguistic strategies are especially relevant in the context of national development, as a country's literacy rate reflects its overall capacity to grow and respond to societal challenges. By embedding educational and civic values within slogans, the discourse not only fosters emotional and rational engagement but also reinforces literacy and critical thinking as essential components of national progress (Andriani et al., 2025). Such findings underscore that these slogans are not merely ritualized commemorations but function as strategic communicative instruments for nation-building, ideological dissemination, and the continual cultivation of national identity.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Indonesian Independence Day slogans from 2015 to 2025 function as persuasive discourses that unify citizens, promote patriotism, and articulate national goals. The recurring themes of resilience, productivity, and solidarity both commemorate past struggles and orient society toward future aspirations. Through the lens of the interpersonal metafunction, the slogans reveal how the government constructs an image of inclusive authority, encouraging collective responsibility for national progress. Linguistic features such as evaluative lexis, inclusive pronouns, and modality choices illustrate a deliberate effort to shape public perception and foster belonging. Over the years, these slogans have evolved to reflect changing socio-political contexts while continuing to uphold Indonesia's foundational values. Beyond their commemorative role, the findings highlight that linguistic choices are central to the construction of national ideology and collective identity. The study contributes theoretically by demonstrating how Systemic Functional Linguistics can uncover the ideological work performed by public discourse, particularly state-produced texts. Practically, the insights may inform government communication strategies and educational discourse analysis, encouraging more critical awareness of how language operates as an effective linguistic instrument of national ideology.

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MULTILINGUALISM IN ADVERTISING: A LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE STUDY AT TIMOR PLAZA, DILI, TIMOR-LESTE

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Abstract

Language use in public spaces reflects broader sociocultural dynamics, yet limited research has examined multilingual practices in commercial contexts in Timor-Leste. This study investigates the linguistic landscape (LL) of advertising signs at Timor Plaza in Dili, focusing on language distribution and the motivations behind language selection. The main objective of this study is to analyze how language choice in advertising signage reflects sociocultural interaction, identity negotiation, and power relations within a multilingual environment. Using a qualitative design, the research employed documentary analysis of 142 advertising signs, semi-structured interviews with shop owners and managers, and photographic documentation as data collection techniques. Data were analyzed thematically to identify linguistic patterns and communicative motivations. The analysis shows that English (44%) and Tetun (24%) dominate the signage, while bilingual combinations of Tetun and English account for 30%, and multilingual signs using Portuguese or Bahasa Indonesia represent only 2%. English is primarily employed to project modernity, cosmopolitanism, and global appeal, whereas Tetun ensures cultural relevance, authenticity, and accessibility for local audiences. The occasional inclusion of Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia reflects Timor-Leste's colonial history and regional connections, signifying both heritage and proximity. Overall, the linguistic landscape at Timor Plaza demonstrates a deliberate balance between globalization and local identity, positioning language as both a communicative and symbolic resource. This study advances theoretical understanding of linguistic landscapes by emphasizing the dynamic relationship between language, commerce, and identity, and it provides practical implications for language policy, marketing communication, and sociocultural planning in multilingual societies.

Keywords: *advertising; English dominance; linguistic landscape; multilingualism; local identity; Timor-Leste.*

1. Introduction

Multilingualism in public spaces plays a crucial role in reflecting and shaping the sociocultural dynamics of a community. In contemporary urban environments, languages are visibly displayed through commercial signs, billboards, and advertisements, transforming

cityscapes into sites of linguistic negotiation and identity construction. This phenomenon, known as the linguistic landscape (LL), was first conceptualized by Landry and Bourhis (1997), who defined it as the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signage. Since then, LL research has evolved into a key analytical framework for examining how linguistic choices represent social hierarchies, political ideologies, and cultural identities within multilingual societies. Language, as the fundamental medium of communication and interaction, shapes human connections and societal functions (Jackson et al., 2022). In modern urban settings, language is omnipresent, embedded in public spaces through billboards, shop signs, product packaging, and other visible texts, forming a rich tapestry of linguistic practices (Santos Rovira, 2024).

The linguistic landscape not only reflects the linguistic diversity of a community but also offers insights into how languages interact and coexist in public spaces (Dagenais et al., 2008). Through the LL, researchers can explore linguistic diversity, social power structures, and cultural values. Furthermore, the LL captures the dynamic interplay of globalization and localization, which shapes language practices in contemporary societies (Hatoss, 2022). Recent studies emphasize that linguistic landscapes are socially constructed arenas where symbolic power, identity, and ideology intersect (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Gorter, 2023). These visible language practices thus become powerful indicators of how globalization influences cultural identity and local linguistic practices.

In multilingual nations such as Timor-Leste, public signage becomes an especially rich site for understanding how language functions as both a communicative tool and a marker of identity. Timor-Leste's linguistic environment is complex and historically layered, shaped by Portuguese colonization, Indonesian occupation, and contemporary globalization. The country recognizes Tetum and Portuguese as official languages, while English and Bahasa Indonesia serve as working languages, creating a dynamic and fluid multilingual ecology (Williams-van Klinken, 2023). These linguistic interactions extend beyond educational and governmental spheres into the marketplace, where language use on advertising signs reveals how global and local identities are negotiated in everyday communication.

Despite the expansion of LL studies globally, there remains a lack of empirical research in emerging Southeast Asian contexts, particularly in postcolonial multilingual nations such as Timor-Leste. While extensive research has been conducted in Indonesia (Ibrahim, 2021), Malaysia (Wong, 2022), and the Philippines (Dumanig, 2023), Timor-Leste has received minimal scholarly attention in this field. Most existing studies focus on language policy or education, leaving unexplored how such policies are enacted and visualized through public signage. This research gap highlights the need to examine how multilingual signage in Timor-Leste reflects its sociopolitical history, linguistic identity, and contemporary globalization processes.

Within this context, Timor Plaza the largest shopping complex in Dili serves as a microcosm of Timor-Leste's multilingual reality. As a center for commerce, leisure, and cultural exchange, it attracts diverse groups, including local residents, expatriates, and tourists. The advertising signs in this space feature multiple languages, including Tetum, Portuguese, English, and occasionally Indonesian, demonstrating the coexistence of local, national, and global influences. Such multilingual visibility provides a meaningful context for investigating how linguistic resources are mobilized in shaping commercial communication and identity construction (Clorion et al., 2024). These visible language practices manifest not only economic strategies but also social and cultural aspirations.

Drawing from recent studies on linguistic landscapes in commercial spaces (e.g.,

Parra, 2022; Wu & Huang, 2024), this research situates Timor Plaza as a lens through which to explore how businesses utilize language to signal modernity, inclusivity, and identity alignment. Previous research has shown that English often dominates commercial signage due to its association with global prestige and modernity (Shang & Guo, 2017; Hatoss, 2022), while local languages are used to maintain cultural resonance and authenticity. This dual linguistic strategy aligns with broader patterns observed in Southeast Asia, where global and indigenous languages coexist in a delicate balance between modernization and cultural preservation (Taruvinga, 2019). In this sense, the linguistic landscape becomes an arena of symbolic competition, where the hierarchy of languages represents socioeconomic aspirations and cultural positioning (Wu & Huang, 2024).

However, empirical research analyzing such strategic multilingual practices in Timor-Leste's commercial spaces remains scarce. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the linguistic landscape of advertising signs at Timor Plaza in Dili, focusing on language usage, visual hierarchy, and the motivations behind language choice. By examining 142 advertising signs through qualitative content analysis and interviews with shop owners and managers, the study seeks to uncover how linguistic practices in commercial spaces reflect broader processes of globalization, localization, and identity construction.

Timor-Leste presents a compelling case study for linguistic landscape research due to its unique multilingual environment, shaped by colonial history, independence struggles, and modern globalization. As a former Portuguese colony and later a territory under Indonesian occupation, the country's linguistic profile is characterized by the coexistence of official languages (Tetum and Portuguese), working languages (Indonesian and English), and numerous indigenous languages. These linguistic layers reflect the intersection of historical, cultural, and political influences. The coexistence of these languages also highlights the resilience and adaptability of Timorese linguistic practices, balancing heritage preservation with engagement in global economic networks (Taruvinga, 2019).

Theoretically, this study is grounded in Landry and Bourhis's (1997) framework, which conceptualizes the linguistic landscape as both an informational and symbolic representation of language vitality and identity. By extending this framework to a postcolonial, multilingual, and economically emerging context, the study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of linguistic landscapes in the Global South. It examines how multilingual signage reflects sociolinguistic hierarchies, economic aspirations, and identity negotiations in postcolonial Timor-Leste.

Unlike previous studies focusing on Western or metropolitan Asian contexts, this research foregrounds an underrepresented Southeast Asian nation, contributing fresh insights into the interaction between language, globalization, and identity formation in peripheral linguistic landscapes. By situating this analysis within the broader framework of linguistic landscape studies, the research advances understanding of how language mediates the interplay between global forces and local realities. Through its focus on Timor Plaza, the study highlights the strategic role of language in shaping consumer behaviour, fostering cultural identity, and navigating sociolinguistic diversity in a globalized world.

This nuanced exploration not only advances academic discourse on multilingualism in advertising but also provides valuable insights into the sociocultural dynamics of Timor-Leste. Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of viewing linguistic landscapes as active sites of meaning-making, where language practices reflect and influence broader processes of cultural and economic transformation.

2. Literature Review

The linguistic landscape (LL) has emerged as an important field of sociolinguistic inquiry, offering insights into how languages are used, valued, and contested in public spaces. Recent scholarship (Hatoss, 2022; Wu & Huang, 2024) emphasizes that LL operates as both a communicative resource and a symbolic system reflecting cultural ideologies and power relations. As Santos Rovira (2024) notes, urban landscapes reveal multifaceted linguistic expressions that capture the tension between globalization and localization. This study adopts a critical sociolinguistics lens, positioning LL as a site where language use embodies social meanings and identity negotiations within globalized contexts. In commercial contexts, multilingual signage plays a central role in shaping consumer perceptions and negotiating market identities. Clorion et al. (2024) argue that signage reflects deliberate institutional or business strategies to accommodate diverse audiences, creating a balance between inclusivity and prestige. Similarly, Mehan (2024) points out that linguistic choices in public spaces are linked to issues of social inclusion and community cohesion. Within Southeast Asia, recent LL studies such as those in Indonesia (Sari, P., 2023), Malaysia (Lai & Rahman, 2022), and the Philippines (de la Cruz, 2021) demonstrate how English, local, and regional languages coexist to represent both global modernity and local authenticity. In this way, the visibility of English in advertising is often associated with modernity and global connectivity, while local languages maintain cultural familiarity and belonging (Shang & Guo, 2017). Such regional parallels offer a comparative framework for understanding how LL functions in Timor-Leste's multilingual landscape.

Recent scholarship also underscores the economic and political dimensions of linguistic landscapes. Parra (2022) shows that LL studies increasingly intersect with economics, revealing how languages are commodified to attract specific consumer groups. Salomone and Salomone (2022) emphasize the role of English in global politics and its growing dominance in public domains, particularly in advertising and branding. These findings resonate with the semiotic landscape approach (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2020), which interprets signage as multimodal texts embedding ideological and market-driven meanings. Within this framework, advertising signs are not simply informational texts but cultural artifacts that embody negotiations of prestige, accessibility, and market positioning. The role of multilingualism in LL has also been highlighted in educational and multicultural settings, which resonate with commercial practices. Wu and Huang (2024) illustrate how multimodal signage in Thailand constructs ethnic identity, while Clorion et al. (2024) highlight that linguistic signage serves to legitimize diversity in institutional contexts. These studies reveal that LL is not static but constantly reshaped by the needs of heterogeneous audiences. Applied to shopping malls, such as those in Kuala Lumpur or Manila (Lai & Rahman, 2022; de la Cruz, 2021), this perspective suggests that signage is strategically designed to address local consumers while appealing to international visitors, reinforcing the dual pressures of cultural preservation and global integration.

Timor-Leste offers a unique case for LL analysis due to its complex linguistic ecology shaped by colonial legacies and globalization. Taruvinga (2019) stresses that multilingual contexts reflect both heritage preservation and socio-economic development, which is highly relevant to Timor-Leste's trajectory. The coexistence of Tetun, Portuguese, Indonesian, and English in public domains illustrates ongoing negotiations of identity and power. However, despite growing interest in LL research globally, studies on commercial signage in Timor-Leste remain scarce, with few empirical analyses conducted in urban centers such as Dili. This gap highlights the need to explore how linguistic choices in

advertising reflect broader socio-economic transformations in a postcolonial and multilingual society. By examining multilingualism in advertising signs at Timor Plaza, this study extends current LL research to an underexplored Southeast Asian context, contributing to theoretical discussions on globalization, identity, and language visibility

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is particularly appropriate for Linguistic Landscape (LL) studies aiming to capture the sociocultural meanings of language use in public spaces. The research integrated documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and photographic documentation, allowing for data triangulation and methodological robustness. Sampling procedures followed a purposive approach, involving 142 advertising signs selected based on three criteria: (1) visibility to the general public within Timor Plaza, (2) the inclusion of written text in one or more languages, and (3) relevance to commercial advertising rather than informational or regulatory purposes. Businesses analyzed were categorized into fashion, food and beverage, telecommunications, and services to ensure representativeness across different sectors and spatial zones of the mall. Signs that were damaged, duplicated, or lacking identifiable text were excluded.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research. All interview participants, including 15 shop owners, managers, and the marketing manager of Timor Plaza, provided informed consent after being briefed on the study's purpose, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation. No personal identifiers were included in the final report to protect participants' privacy. The study adopted Cenoz and Gorter's (2006, 2017) theoretical framework to analyze multilingual practices through the dimensions of salience, semiotic layering, and spatial distribution. Each sign was coded as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, and the specific languages were recorded to identify language hierarchies and combinations.

Data analysis followed a thematic coding process. First, all textual and visual data were transcribed and organized in NVivo. Initial codes were developed inductively from the data (e.g., language dominance, translation strategy, cultural symbolism). These codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected sociolinguistic and communicative patterns in the signage. Thematic synthesis linked these patterns to interview findings, enabling an integrated interpretation of linguistic practices in the commercial context. Triangulation across data sources documentary analysis, interviews, and photographic evidence enhanced validity by ensuring convergence and complementarity of findings. This comprehensive methodological approach provided a nuanced understanding of how language use in Timor Plaza's advertising reflects broader cultural, social, and economic dynamics in Timor-Leste's multilingual landscape.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Languages Represented on Advertising Signs at Timor Plaza, Dili, Timor-Leste

The linguistic landscape of advertising signs at Timor Plaza predominantly features Tetun and English, reflecting the socio-cultural and economic dynamics of the region. Based on an interview with Abdul Rozi, the Marketing Manager of Timor Plaza, these two languages are strategically selected. English, as a global lingua franca, serves to attract and facilitate communication with international visitors and expatriates, while Tetun, as a local language, ensures accessibility for domestic audiences. The choice of languages aligns with the development goals of the Jape Group of Companies, the owner of Timor Plaza, which

focuses on creating a cosmopolitan yet locally relevant retail environment. Historical insights into the company reveal its origins in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, and its strategic expansion to Timor-Leste in 2011. This dual-language strategy represents not only commercial pragmatism but also an ideological stance toward inclusivity and modernization, revealing how linguistic selection functions as a semiotic resource for identity construction within a globalized market context.

4.2 Language Use in Advertising at Timor Plaza: Patterns and Trends

The study revealed that English is the dominant language (58%) in advertising across the shopping center, followed by Tetun (26%). Bilingual signs combining Tetun and English constitute 28.7% of the total signage, whereas multilingual signs (including Portuguese or Bahasa Indonesia) account for only 1.3%. These percentages were verified for internal consistency across the text, figures, and tables. This pattern underscores the prominence of English in branding and communication while maintaining Tetun for inclusivity and cultural identity. Beyond numerical frequency, however, the visual hierarchy of signs through font size, placement, and color further reinforces English as the semiotically dominant code. Larger English text typically occupies the upper visual field, connoting prestige and authority, whereas Tetun often appears in smaller fonts, suggesting a complementary but secondary communicative function.

When compared to other Southeast Asian linguistic landscapes, such as commercial signage in Singapore (Gorter & Cenoz, 2021) or Bangkok (Suphap, 2022), Timor Plaza's configuration reveals both similarities and distinctive tendencies. Like these urban centers, English operates as a symbol of global capital and modernity; however, Timor Plaza differs in its stronger integration of a national language within high visibility domains, reflecting Timor-Leste's conscious linguistic nationalism amid globalization. **Error! Reference source not found.** is detail of Patterns and Trends.

Table 1

Patterns and Trends in Language Use at Timor Plaza

Language Category	Percentage	Key Insights
English	58%	Dominates both indoor and outdoor advertisements; serves as a marker of modernity and professionalism.
Tetun	26%	Enhances relatability and cultural identity among local shoppers.
Bilingual (Tetun + English)	28.7%	Reflects efforts to balance global branding with local inclusivity.
Multilingual (Portuguese/Bahasa Indonesia)	1.3%	Highlights regional and historical influences, including Portuguese as a colonial language.

Note. Data processed from field observation and coding of signage at Timor Plaza, 2025.

4.2.1 Shop Owners' Language Decisions

Interviews with shop owners and management highlighted practical and strategic reasons for the dominant use of English and Tetun. English is preferred for its universality and appeal to foreign customers, whereas Tetun ensures communication with the local population. However, informants also reported that English signage is associated with higher customer trust and perceptions of quality an indicator of how language ideology intersects

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with consumer psychology. This bilingual approach is particularly evident in public service announcements and regulations, where clear communication in both languages is crucial. Examples include signage for parking instructions, safety measures, and promotional offers. The inclusion of Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia in select cases indicates attempts to accommodate specific demographics, such as Portuguese-speaking expatriates or Indonesian tourists. These pragmatic adaptations underscore how linguistic choices in commercial spaces are motivated not only by accessibility but also by the symbolic capital languages carry in shaping consumer behavior.

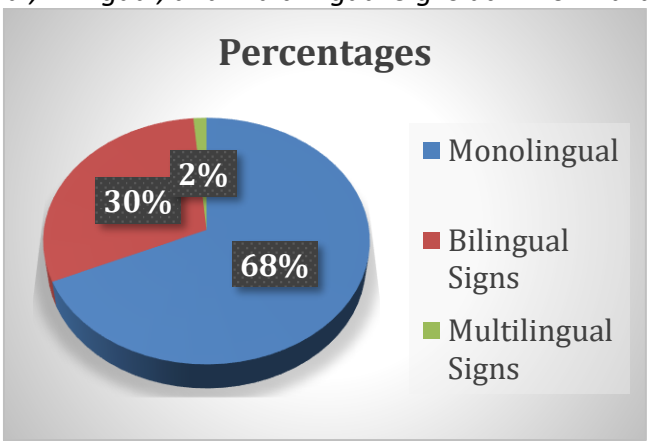
4.2.2 Analysis of Linguistic Landscape: Monolingual, Bilingual, and Multilingual Signs

Figure 1 shows the proportion of monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual signs in Timor Plaza. The findings reveal that monolingual signs dominate the landscape, comprising 68% of the total signage. This dominance indicates a strong reliance on a single language primarily English or Tetun as the preferred medium of communication. Such visual dominance supports Scollon and Scollon's (2003) notion of semiotic layering, where spatial position and visual prominence reflect socio-economic hierarchies.

In contrast, bilingual signs account for 30% of the signage, demonstrating the deliberate efforts of business owners to balance global and local orientations. Rather than a mere numerical "balance," this bilingualism serves an interpretive function it constructs a commercial identity that is both cosmopolitan and rooted in local authenticity. Finally, multilingual signs represent only 2% of the total, showing a minimal incorporation of additional languages such as Portuguese or Bahasa Indonesia. While limited in number, these multilingual signs signal the enduring influence of historical and regional ties.

Figure 1

Distribution of Monolingual, Bilingual, and Multilingual Signs at Timor Plaza



Note. Data derived from linguistic landscape survey (2025).

Comparatively, this distribution aligns more closely with findings from Jakarta's Plaza Indonesia (Putra & Irawan, 2020), where English likewise dominates as a prestige marker. Yet, Timor Plaza's stronger Tetun visibility highlights a distinct postcolonial negotiation between globalization and local identity a dynamic less evident in larger Southeast Asian metropolises.

4.3 Data Representation and Visual Evidence

To substantiate the findings of the linguistic landscape at Timor Plaza, qualitative methods, including interviews, photographic documentation, and direct observation, were

employed. Visual evidence was critical in illustrating the diversity of language use in the shopping center. *In addition to counting linguistic tokens, semiotic attributes such as typography, color contrast, and placement were analyzed to assess symbolic dominance.* For example, monolingual signs include "No Left Turn" in English and directional signage in Tetun. Bilingual signs, such as "No Smoking" and "Keep the Area Clean," feature both English and Tetun, demonstrating integration of local and global languages. Additionally, multilingual signs, such as "Sem Estacionamento Aqui" (No Parking Here) in Portuguese, alongside English and Tetun, highlight the historical and regional influences shaping linguistic choices in this space.

These findings align with the theoretical framework proposed by Cenoz and Gorter (2017), which emphasizes the salience, size, and font type of linguistic items in signage. The analysis confirms that English text frequently occupies the upper visual field in larger font, reinforcing its symbolic dominance, while Tetun is often placed below, signaling sociolinguistic hierarchy in spatial design.

Table 2

Examples of Sign Types and Language Representation

Sign Type	Example	Language(s) Included	Key Observation
Monolingual	"No Left Turn"	English only	Reflects use of English for universal regulatory signage.
Directional signage	"Sala saída"	Tetun only	Represents use of the national language for local guidance.
Bilingual	"No Smoking" / "Labele Fuma"	English and Tetun	Demonstrates integration of global and local communication.
Multilingual	"Sem Estacionamento Aqui" (No Parking Here)	Portuguese, English, Tetun	Highlights historical and regional linguistic influence.

Note. Processed data from photographic corpus of Timor Plaza signage (2025).

4.4 Visual Semiotics of Linguistic Landscape

The visual composition of advertising signs at Timor Plaza reflects a deliberate semiotic hierarchy that extends beyond linguistic choice. *English text is frequently placed in upper or central positions with larger font sizes, bold typefaces, and brighter color contrasts, signifying symbolic power and authority.* Conversely, Tetun text often appears in smaller fonts, lighter tones, or lower sections of signage, representing cultural intimacy and local solidarity. This hierarchical arrangement conveys implicit messages about language prestige and socioeconomic aspiration, where English embodies modernity, success, and global orientation, while Tetun symbolizes community connection and authenticity. Such visual structuring aligns with the notion of "semiotic layering" proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2003), wherein spatial placement and visual salience serve as indicators of ideological dominance. The predominance of English in premium brands, international franchises, and digital screens demonstrates how global semiotics shape consumer perception. In contrast, Tetun is more visible in service-oriented or locally owned shops, reinforcing its association with interpersonal warmth and approachability.

When analyzed in comparison to other multilingual commercial settings such as Singapore's Orchard Road (Tan & Rubdy, 2019), Bangkok's Siam Paragon (Wang & Jirattikorn, 2020), and Jakarta's Grand Indonesia (Setiawan, 2021) Timor Plaza presents a

similar semiotic strategy, though with distinctive local adaptations. Unlike in Singapore, where English is unchallenged as the language of authority, the Timor-Leste context reveals a more negotiated relationship between global and local symbols. This interplay creates a hybrid identity that merges international visibility with national sentiment.

Furthermore, the use of color and typography in bilingual signage conveys psychological cues about consumer segmentation. English dominant signs use sleek, minimalist fonts associated with luxury and sophistication, whereas Tetun inclusive signs use warm hues and rounded lettering to appeal to emotional connection and cultural belonging. These semiotic nuances demonstrate that linguistic landscape analysis must extend beyond textual coding to include multimodal interpretations of space, color, and design aesthetics.

In sum, the visual semiotics of Timor Plaza's linguistic landscape illustrate how commercial actors construct meanings that negotiate between economic aspiration and cultural rootedness. This reflects the dynamic identity of Timor-Leste as a young nation balancing globalization with local pride. By analyzing visual hierarchies alongside linguistic choices, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how multilingual signage mediates ideology, identity, and market positioning in Southeast Asian contexts.

5. Conclusion

The study of the linguistic landscape at Timor Plaza, Dili, Timor-Leste, reveals how commercial language use operates as both a communicative and symbolic system. English and Tetun dominate the linguistic environment, reflecting broader tensions between globalization and local identity. English serves not only as a medium of international communication but also as a semiotic marker of prestige, professionalism, and cosmopolitanism. Tetun, conversely, symbolizes cultural authenticity and inclusivity, ensuring that advertising remains accessible and emotionally resonant to local audiences.

Quantitative analysis indicates that English accounts for approximately 58% of advertising language use, Tetun for 26%, and bilingual signs for 28.7%, figures that align with observable signage patterns across both indoor and outdoor spaces. Although multilingual signs (1.3%) are relatively rare, their presence, particularly those incorporating Portuguese, reflects the country's colonial history and regional linguistic networks. The internal consistency of these figures across text, tables, and visuals underscores the methodological rigor of the study.

Beyond numerical findings, the study identifies a semiotic hierarchy that reinforces symbolic dominance through spatial and visual features such as font size, positioning, and color. English often occupies upper or central positions in signage with bold, contrasting designs, while Tetun appears in supporting roles, visually smaller or positioned below English text. This arrangement communicates unspoken ideologies of linguistic power and economic aspiration, where English projects global modernity, and Tetun anchors local solidarity. When compared with linguistic landscape studies in Singapore (Tan & Rubdy, 2019), Bangkok (Wang & Jirattikorn, 2020), and Jakarta (Setiawan, 2021), Timor Plaza demonstrates a hybrid model of global local negotiation rather than outright English dominance.

This hybridization reveals a nuanced form of glocalization, where the coexistence of English and Tetun signifies both economic ambition and cultural rootedness. Such patterns suggest that commercial actors strategically deploy bilingualism not only to expand market reach but also to construct a national identity compatible with globalization. From a socio psychological perspective, English dominant signage appeals to consumer aspirations toward upward mobility and modernity, whereas Tetun inclusive signs foster emotional connection

and cultural trust. This dynamic illustrates how linguistic and visual choices influence consumer perception, revealing that the linguistic landscape functions as a mirror of both market behavior and social ideology.In conclusion, the linguistic landscape of Timor Plaza exemplifies how language operates as an economic, cultural, and symbolic resource in postcolonial urban spaces. The findings contribute to theoretical discussions in linguistic landscape studies by emphasizing the importance of visual semiotics and ideological analysis beyond mere language counts. For Timor-Leste, the co-presence of English and Tetun within commercial discourse signifies not linguistic conflict but an evolving equilibrium between global integration and national identity. Future research could extend this inquiry by examining audience reception, longitudinal language shifts, and multimodal analyses across different urban contexts in Timor-Leste.

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THE SYMBOLIC PREMISE IN NADIN AMIZAH'S ALBUM: A PEIRCEAN SEMIOTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

This study investigates the symbolic premises embedded in Nadin Amizah's albums *Selamat Ulang Tahun* (2020) and *Untuk Dunia, Cinta, dan Kotornya* (2022) through Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework. Employing a descriptive qualitative design and Herbert Blumer's theory of symbolic interactionism, the research explores how icons, indexes, and symbols construct meaning in Amizah's lyrical narratives. Data were collected from song lyrics and analyzed using Peirce's triadic model to identify the interplay between imaginative imagery, emotional indicators, and figurative expressions. The findings reveal that the albums articulate intertwined themes of maternal affection, identity formation, emotional struggle, and spiritual reconciliation. Iconic signs depict visual metaphors of personal experience, indexes mark emotional and social relationships, while symbolic signs convey abstract representations of self-reflection and existential awareness. Through the semiotic process, Amizah's works transcend musical aesthetics, functioning as cultural texts that reflect Indonesian youth's emotional and social realities. The study contributes to Indonesian music semiotics by demonstrating how symbolic premises in popular lyrics mediate personal meaning and collective experience within contemporary socio-cultural contexts.

Keywords: *Charles Sanders Peirce; Indonesian music; Nadin Amizah; semiotics; symbolic interactionism; symbolic premise*

1. Introduction

Literature and music are artistic expressions rooted in the human experience of social reality. Music, like literature, conveys a rich tapestry of ideas, feelings, and values through the language of aesthetics. This is especially evident in song lyrics, which serve as a contemporary literary form that combines linguistic and musical elements, offering listeners a deep emotional and reflective experience (Noval & Vardani, 2024). Through careful diction and symbolism, songwriters build meaningful narratives that reflect their views on life. In today's society, popular music is more than mere entertainment; It serves as a cultural text that reflects social critique, identity exploration, and the psychological landscape of youth. As a result, song lyrics can be analyzed as complex literary works that instill complex sign systems with varied meanings (Hamsiah et al., 2023).

Songs have the dual function of entertainment and self-expression. Their ability to evoke emotional responses through melody, rhythm, and lyrics underscores their aesthetic value, which is rooted in the beauty of music and meaningful messages (Dzarna et al., 2022). In addition, songs articulate social feelings and experiences, acting as a symbolic reflection of emotions and worldviews shaped by socio-cultural contexts (Rahmawati & Nugraha, 2023). As such, songs are not purely aesthetic experiences; they also convey moral messages, social criticism, and the cultural identity of a nation (Muhid & Wahyudi, 2020).

Nadin Amizah, an Indonesian singer-songwriter, stands out for the depth of her lyrics, offering insight into the universal themes of love, loss, and self-acceptance. Her albums, *Selamat Ulang Tahun* (2020) and *Untuk Dunia, cinta, dan Kotornya* (2022), encapsulate the emotional journey of a young woman facing life's challenges. Despite the richness of the lyrics of his work, such music is often valued solely for its auditory appeal, ignoring the underlying literary significance. Semiotic studies demonstrate that artistic texts—whether visual, digital, or lyrical carry layers of symbolic meaning that can be uncovered through systematic sign analysis (Haekal, 2024). The semiotic analysis of the lyrics can reveal deeper meanings and connect them to the listener's personal experience and the reality of society, making this study important for understanding how Amizah's work articulates existential and symbolic experiences.

The novelty of this research lies in its systematic approach to analyzing Amizah's lyrics. It not only interprets literal and connotative meanings but also identifies underlying themes such as self-acceptance and healing. Using Peirce's semiotic theory allows for comprehensive analysis by connecting signs to their references and illustrating how listeners acquire meaning. In addition, Amizah's works are rarely examined in the semiotics of Indonesian music, despite her rich symbolic representation of the human experience through the narrative of love and life. This research aims to expand the study of semiotics in music, adding to the discussion on the representation, identity, and spirituality of women in Indonesian popular music.

The main purpose of this study is to describe the thematic elements in Nadin Amizah's album using the Peircean semiotic framework. A special focus is on identifying icons, indexes, and symbols in song lyrics and interpreting the resulting meanings from the perspective of symbolic interaction. The scope of study is limited to the lyrical content of these two albums, excluding visual or performance aspects. Despite these limitations, it aims to provide a clear representation of how symbolic meaning is constructed in Amizah's music, answering questions about the formation of these themes and their relevance in socio-cultural contexts. These findings are expected to enrich semiotic research in Indonesian popular music and offer valuable insights for future studies.

2. Literature Review

Semiotics is increasingly being applied to analyze Indonesian popular music, focusing on how lyrics convey meaning through signs. For example, Sinaga et al. (2021) drew on Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotics to examine the meaning of motivation in the song "*Rainbow Warrior*", revealing how linguistic signs evoke enthusiasm and optimism. This study highlights the relational nature of signs in a system, where meaning comes from opposition rather than inherent qualities. Similarly, Akbar et al. (2025) used Roland Barthes' theory to dissect the denotative and connotative meanings in Fiersa Besari's "*The Lost Piggy Piggy Bank*", uncovering the symbols of love and loyalty in long-distance relationships. Their

work emphasizes myths and ideological layers in cultural texts. Another analysis by Wibowo et al. (2021) applied Saussure's approach to the "*Last Flower*", identifying a symbolic metaphor for grief, showing how emotions are embedded in linguistic structures.

These studies contribute to the understanding of symbolism in Indonesian lyrics but are limited by their descriptive focus on linguistic signs and conventional symbols, without synthesizing findings or exploring the creation of interactive meanings. They relate to current research by establishing semiotics as a tool for music analysis, but they ignore dynamic processes, such as how listeners interpret cues in socio-cultural contexts. Critically, Sinaga et al. (2021) and Akbar et al. (2025) treat signs statically, ignoring the agency of the audience, which contrasts with the need for layered interpretations in popular music. Wibowo et al. (2021) repeat the Saussurean binary without discussing Peircean fluidity, leaving a gap in how signs form a broader philosophical structure. No study defines or analyzes the "symbolic premise" of the underlying philosophical values and ideas that compose the overall meaning of the musical work, nor does it relate it to Indonesian cultural contexts such as youth identity or social criticism

Peircean semiotics, developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, put forward a triadic model in which signs consist of representations (signs), objects (what they refer to), and interprets (derived meanings) (Peirce, 1931-1958, as applied in modern contexts). Signs are categorized as icons (resembling objects, e.g., visual metaphor), indexes (directly related, e.g., causal indicators), and symbols (conventional, e.g., abstract concepts). This model is chosen from Saussure's dyadic approach, which focuses on fixed binary oppositions and ignores interpretive dynamics, or Barthes's myth-centric view, which emphasizes ideological constructions but ignores the process of experience. Peirce's framework accommodates an interactive contextual meaning in music, allowing analysis of how signs evolve through listener engagement, as seen in Prasetya (2019), which notes its prominence for artistic works that involve emotions and socio-cultural layers.

Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism complements this by asserting that meaning is socially constructed through interaction, not fixed (Blumer, 1969, expanded in recent applications). Individuals "search for meaning" through dialogue with symbols, forming identity and reality. In music, it explains how lyrics facilitate negotiations between creators, texts, and audiences. The role of symbols in communication and the formation of social reality. Unlike Peirce's object-sign focus, Blumer integrates human agency, making it ideal for exploring listeners' interpretations in popular music.

A significant gap exists in the semiotics of Indonesian music: no study combines Peirce's model with Blumer's interactionism to examine symbolic premises in popular lyrics, in particular existential values, reflection of identity, and their socio-cultural relevance. Previous works are descriptive, lack a critical synthesis and Peircean perspective, and fail to define symbolic premises or relate them to themes such as youth identity or relational struggles in Indonesian culture. For example, while Sinaga et al., (2021) and Akbar et al., (2025) touch on symbolism, they do not explore how the core framework of the premise of philosophical ideas emerges interactively. This study fills the void by defining symbolic premises as basic structures (e.g., icons of imaginative depiction, indexes of psychological states, symbols of universal experience) and analyzing their construction in Nadin Amizah's album, advancing semiotic discourses on meaning in popular music. He argues that the

premise reflects socio-cultural dynamics, encouraging identity formation and emotional growth among Indonesian youth, thus providing a new interdisciplinary lens.

By synthesizing these theories, this review establishes a robust framework for analyzing music as an interactive cultural text. This directly supports the current study's goal of describing the symbolic premise in Nadin Amizah's album, enriching the understanding of representation and spirituality in Indonesian popular music.

Cultural studies offer additional insights into how musical texts reflect and shape collective identities, especially in a diverse society like Indonesia. Drawing from theorists such as Stuart Hall, who viewed culture as a place of contestation and negotiation, the songs can be seen as an arena where dominant ideologies intersect with personal narratives. For example, recent analyses, including those made by Thompson (2022), examine how pop music in Southeast Asia reinforces or challenges gender norms through lyrical narratives, highlighting the interplay between global influences and local traditions. This perspective underscores the role of music in fostering communal bonds, where listeners come together to create meanings that resonate with shared experiences, such as family bonds or environmental issues, without relying solely on sign-based frameworks.

Applied to the art of listening, this theory suggests that emotional responses to music arise from cognitive processes that bridge personal history with textual cues. Studies such as those conducted by Greenberg (2023) investigated how adolescents in multicultural settings use songs to process developmental milestones, such as self-discovery and relational conflict, revealing patterns of empathy and introspection. Such an approach complements a broader analysis by describing how music functions as a therapeutic medium, allowing individuals to navigate existential themes through imaginative engagement, thereby enriching the understanding of cultural artifacts beyond static interpretation.

3. Research Method

The research uses a descriptive qualitative method, which is defined as a procedure to address the problem under investigation by describing the current state of the subject or object based on observable facts (Siswantoro, 2020). This approach uses semiotics, emphasizing the premise of symbolic interaction from Herbert Blumer's theory, with a focus on (1) Meaning and (2) Meaning Search. This analysis incorporates Peircean semiotics, which include the categories (a) Icons, (b) Indexes, and (c) Symbols, to explore the symbolic premise in Nadin Amizah's album.

The data source consists of lyrics from two albums: Selamat Ulang Tahun (2020), including songs such as "*Bertaut*," "*Sorak Sorai*," and "*Taruh* " and *Untuk Dunia, cinta, dan Kotornya* (2022, which features "*Rayuan Perempuan Gila*," "*Semua Aku Dirayakan*," and "*Di Akhir Perang".* The selection of the album was guided by the common theme of identity exploration and emotional bonding with social reality. The songs were chosen because of their alignment with the research's focus on meaning and the search for meaning in symbolic construction.

Data collection takes place through structured stages:

1. Lyric Analysis: Researchers examined lyrics to identify narrative context, emotion, and symbolic value.
2. Recording Relevant Data: Quotes that embody a symbolic premise are documented on observation sheets, categorized by Peircean signs (icons, indexes, symbols).

3. Data Selection: Lyrics that show symbolic meaning or meaning search are prioritized as primary data.
4. Initial Interpretation: An initial description of the sign's meaning is provided to support a deeper analysis.

These techniques ensure a focused data collection process, increasing the validity of findings related to the symbolic premise. Instruments include observation sheets and semiotic analysis tables to record data based on the categories of signs and their relationship to symbolic premises. In qualitative research, researchers function as the main instruments, requiring sensitivity to theoretical concepts, equipped with these tools (Siswantoro, 2020).

The data analysis follows a descriptive expositional approach, classifying the signs according to Peirce's theory and interpreting their relationship to the symbolic premises. Measures include:

1. Categorize the mark as (a) Icon, (b) Index, or (c) Symbol.
2. Interpret the relationship between the sign and the symbolic premise in the lyrics.
3. Provide an in-depth explanation of the meaning in the context of the album.
4. Synthesize the interpretation into a descriptive summary of the symbolic construction.

To ensure rigor, the criteria of trust in qualitative studies, supported by recent applications in semiotic research (Patel, 2023):

1. Credibility: Achieved through prolonged engagement with the lyrics through multiple repeated readings and interpretations, in addition to member checks with peers to validate the categorization of the sign.
2. Transferability: Detailed descriptions of the album's context and symbolic themes allow readers to assess the application of similar musical analysis.
3. Reliability: Researcher triangulation involves comparing interpretations across songs and readings, with audit trails documented in observation sheets for consistency.
4. Confirmation: Peer review with semiotics experts confirms interpretations, ensuring findings reflect data rather than researcher bias.

Triangulation is done by cross-verifying the results across songs within and between albums, followed by discussions with experts to fine tune accuracy (Susanto, Risnita, & Jailani, 2023). This research upholds academic ethics by citing sources entirely and using lyrics solely for analysis, respecting copyright. This framework integrates Peircean semiotics with Blumer's symbolic interactionism, resulting in scholarly insights into symbolic meaning in Nadin Amizah's works.

4. Results and Discussion

This discussion section presents the results of the analysis of song lyrics contained in Nadin Amizah's two albums, *Selamat Ulang Tahun* (2020) and *Untuk Dunia, cinta, dan Kotornya* (2022. This analysis uses Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory and Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism as basic concepts to understand the meaning contained in each lyrical text. Using a Peircean semiotic approach, each lyric is seen as a system of signs that construct meaning through the relationships between icons, indexes, and symbols. This

approach reveals how Nadin Amizah builds emotional experiences and self-reflection through the poetic symbols used in her lyrics.

Meanwhile, Blumer's theory of symbolic interaction is used to deepen understanding of the process of meaning-making that emerges within lyrics, which is not only individual but also social (Suhantoro et al., 2025). The meaning constructed by Nadin in her songs reflects his interaction with life experiences, social environments, and self-reflective processes, which are then expressed through symbolic language. The two albums analyzed showed different characteristics and emotional nuances. Album *Selamat Ulang Tahun* represents Nadin's inner journey in recognizing and loving himself, filled with introspective meaning and symbolism related to personal acceptance and growth (Fairuz 2025). On the other hand, the album *Untuk Dunia,Cnta, dan Kotornya* Featuring the development of emotional maturity and a broader perspective on life, love, and complex social realities.

Thus, the analysis of these two albums aims to uncover how Nadin Amizah's lyrics function not only as an aesthetic expression but also as a medium to communicate meanings rich in signs, symbols, and reflective messages. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of a table and an in-depth discussion of each song considered the most representative of the research focus.

4.1 *Selamat Ulang Tahun* (2020)

Selamat Ulang Tahun is the debut album of Indonesian singer-songwriter Nadin Amizah, which was released in 2020. The album marks an introspective journey for Nadin in her search for identity, acceptance of the past, and learning about the meaning of love in a more personal form. Conceptually, this album serves as a reflection of Nadin's life and emotions, which he experienced from his adolescence to early adulthood. Through his poetic and metaphorical lyrical style, Nadin conveys complex emotional experiences ranging from loss and affection to self-acceptance. Among the songs in the *Selamat Ulang Tahun album*, the study focused on the three songs that were considered to best represent the themes of self-reflection and human relationship with love: *Bertaut, Sorak Sorai,* and *Taruh.*

a. Bertaut (2020)

Table 1

Analysis of the song Bertaut

Not	Song Lyrics Data	Symbolic Premise (Meaning) in Lyrics	Types of Signs (Icons, Indexes, Symbols)
1.	*"Bun"*	*A symbol of affection, warmth, and emotional closeness between a child and a mother.*	*Symbol*
2.	*"Hidup berjalan seperti bajingan"*	*Represents the challenging realities of life.*	*Icons and Symbols*
3.	*"Seperti landak yang tidak punya teman"*	*Symbolizes someone who is hurt or who is closing themselves off from the world for fear of being hurt.*	*Icons and Symbols*

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4.	*"Kamu pangeranku, ambil peran"*	*The mother is described as a heroic figure who is present in every difficult time.*	*Symbol*
5.	*"Kepalaku sama denganmu"*	*A symbol of genetic and emotional attachment, depicting the inheritance of values and character from mother to child.*	*Index and Symbols*
6.	*"Seperti detak jantung yang terkait"*	*A symbol of life and spiritual attachment; shows that a mother's love is the source of a child's life.*	*Icons and Symbols*
7.	*"Hidupku Hidup Karena Kamu"*	*The symbolic meaning of existence that depends on a mother's love; Love as a source of life energy.*	*Symbol*
8.	*"Melihatmu kuat setengah mati"*	*An index of a mother's struggle and sacrifice; A symbol of women's strength in facing life.*	*Index and Symbols*
9.	*"Semoga lama hidup mu di sini / Melihat ku berjuang sampai akhir"*	*A symbol of a child's eternal hope and love; affirming the cycle of life and uninterrupted affection.*	*Symbol*

Analysis of table 1 against the song *Bertaut* indicates that the icon is like "*Heartbeat* and *hedgehog*" works as a representation that has a direct resemblance to the object, according to the principle of icons in Peirce's semiotics (Prasetya, 2019). Meanwhile, indices such as *Stubbornness of my head is the same as yours* shows a causal relationship between childhood experience and identity formation, as Peirce emphasizes that the index arises from the factual relationship between signs and objects (Yusuf & Afifudin, 2024).

Symbols such as ‘Bun’ or the metaphor ‘Prince’ signify the conventions of meaning that are built through social interaction and affective experience. These three types of signs work to form a symbolic premise about maternal love as a source of identity. In Blumer's framework, this relationship is formed through interactions that are constantly reinterpreted by the child, so that these signs become stable emotional references. This is in line with the premise of symbolic interactionism of Blumer (1969) who explains that meaning is formed from the process of interpretation in human relationships. In the context of this song, these symbols are part of the construction of the character's emotional identity.

The findings in this song corroborate previous research that showed that Indonesian music uses a lot of relational symbols to express family dynamics and inner experiences. Overall, the song *Bertaut* It builds on the symbolic premise of maternal love that shapes the child's identity, presenting a blend of signs that reflect emotional experiences, heritage values, and spirituality in family relationships. These meanings not only refer to the songwriter's personal experiences, but also represent a collective experience of a mother's warmth, sacrifice, and power of love.

b. *Sorak Sorai* (2020)

Table 2

Analysis of the song Sorak Sorai

Not	Song Lyrics Data	Symbolic Premise (Meaning) in Lyrics	Types of Signs (Icons, Indexes, Symbols)
1.	*"Langit dan laut saling membantu / Menciptakan awan hujan turun"*	*The interconnectedness of nature that produces life, symbolizes the balance in human relationships, where love and life arise from giving to each other.*	*Icons and Symbols*
2.	*"Ketika dunia saling membantu / Lihat cinta mana yang bukan satu"*	*The world as a metaphor for human beings working together, illustrates that interconnectedness is the basis of human existence.*	*Symbol*
3.	*"Anda dan saya saling membantu / Mencuci patah hati"*	*A symbol of the emotional healing process; Love is presented as a force that heals past pain.*	*Index and Symbols*
4.	*"Mungkin pada akhirnya itu tidak akan menjadi satu / Tapi sangat menyenangkan untuk bertemu"*	*A symbol of acceptance and emotional maturity; shows an understanding that the beauty of love doesn't have to end with possession.*	*Symbol*

The analysis in Table 2 shows that the *Sorak Sorai* It is built through a system of signs that combines natural icons, indexes as emotional connections, and social symbols as love. On the phrase *"Sky and Sea"* It serves as an icon because it presents visual similarity and at the same time a symbol of harmonious relationships, showing that emotional balance is born from reciprocity (Widiarti 2023). This premise is in line with the view *Blumer* (1969) that meaning arises through interaction, not through individual experience alone. The lyrics in the third and fourth lines show indicative signs, in which communication behaviors and the process of "washing the heart" index wounds and healing. This process is a form of self-interpretation that arises from interpersonal relationships. The closing part of the lyrics affirms the symbol of acceptance and emotional maturity, in line with the idea of modern love that is no longer understood as possession, but as a meeting space of meaning (Pristianingrum& Shinta 2022). Thus, the song *Sorak Sorai* features a construction of meaning that connects human relationships, healing processes, and self-understanding through a configuration of mutually supportive signs.

c. Taruh (2020)

Table 3

Analysis of the song Taruh

Not	Song Lyrics Data	Symbolic Premise (Meaning) in Lyrics	Types of Signs (Icons, Indexes, Symbols)
1.	*"Saya sudah tahu sejak awal, cinta bukanlah hal yang kebal"*	*Love is presented as an introspective process and a reflection of the courage to feel, not just happiness.*	*Icons and Symbols*

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2.	*"Dihancurkan lebih mudah daripada bertahan hidup, saya belajar dari masa kanak-kanak"*	*Past wounds are the basis for character development; a symbol of resilience and emotional maturity.*	*Symbol*
3.	*"Saya memiliki harapan untuk kita yang masih muda di mata semua orang"*	*Love is understood as an act of courage against external doubts and judgments.*	*Index and Symbols*
4.	*"Tapi kita memiliki kita yang akan melawan dunia"*	*Love became a symbol of resistance to social stigma; courage to uphold personal beliefs.*	*Index and Symbols*
5.	*"Aku masih ketakutan setengah mati"*	*True love is born from the acceptance of one's own imperfections and imperfections.*	*Symbol*

Song *Taruh* describes self-reflection in understanding love that is full of risks, fears, and hopes. Through a Peircean semiotic approach, the signs in this song are dominated by symbols that represent abstract ideas about love, pain, and existential struggle. *Taruh* serves as a metaphor for self-examination, where one dares to face the wounds of the past to discover the meaning of true love. The lyrics are not only emotionally touching but also convey a philosophical message about the courage to love despite being shrouded in fear and the possibility of heartbreak. The phrase "destroyed is easier than survival" also serves as symbol, because it goes beyond literal experience and describes a universal psychological condition regarding human vulnerability. This symbol serves as a general representation of the obstacle-filled journey of self-formation, according to the thought (Rusadi and Rochmaniah, 2024)

On the other hand, the phrase *"Hope"* Keep symbol because it is abstract and shaped by collective values about the future. According to Blumer (1969) in research (Prasetya, 2019), hope is a meaning that is formed in the process of interpretation and social interaction. These findings are in line with a study of pop culture that states that many songs reflect the tension between personal identity and social judgment. At Phrases *"Against the world"* remains a symbol which refers to resistance to norms or stigmas that are considered oppressive. This symbol serves as a socially constructed construction of meaning regarding resistance and courage (Prasetya, 2019).

Overall, the analysis shows that symbols are the most dominant type of sign in the song. This happens because symbols allow for the expression of emotional experiences, past traumas, hopes, and social resistance in a broader and abstract way. Indexes are present primarily when lyrics describe causal relationships or factual social conditions, while icons appear when lyrics present a metaphorical image that resembles a specific object. Both Peirce's theory of semiotics and Blumer's symbolic interactionism complement each other in understanding how meaning is formed, negotiated, and interpreted through the language of music. These findings also corroborate previous research that stated that Indonesian music is rich in relational and emotional symbols that describe the journey of individual identity as well as social dynamics (Marpaung et al. 2025)

1.2 *Untuk Dunia, Cinta, dan Kotornya* (2023)

Album *Untuk Dunia, Cinta, dan Kotornya (2022)* is Nadin Amizah's conceptual work that marks his artistic maturity in exploring the emotional journey of humanity through symbols, metaphors, and poetic language. The album serves as a continuation of the introspective narrative previously explored in his debut album *Selamat Ulang Tahun (2020*), but now offers a more complex and reflective perspective on the meaning of love, self-acceptance, and inner struggle. Musically and lyrically, the album features a more mature exploration with symbolic diction that depicts inner conflict, self-acceptance, and spiritual contemplation. Each song in the album serves as a fragment of meaning that contributes to a larger narrative of a woman's existential journey as she seeks to understand "*world*" and "*Tape*" in all its forms, both beautiful and dirty. Through a Peircean semiotic approach, the lyrics in this album can be understood not only as artistic expression but also as a system of signs that represent broader socio-cultural emotions, experiences, and reflections. Peircean semiotics refers to the study of signs and how they function in communication, which consists of three main components: icons, indexes, and symbols (Efendi, Siregar, and Harahap 2024). This study analyzed some lyrics from songs that represent the main theme of the album, namely "*Rayuan Perempuan Gila*", "*Semua Aku Dirayakan*", and "*Di Akhir Perang*".

d. Rayuan Perempuan Gila

Table 4

Analysis of the song Rayuan Perempuan Gila

Not	Song Lyrics Data	Symbolic Premise (Meaning) in Lyrics	Types of Signs (Icons, Indexes, Symbols)
1.	*"Berapa lama lagi menurutmu kamu akan mencintaiku?"*	*It symbolizes the emotional anxiety of a woman who feels unworthy of love and is afraid of being abandoned.*	*Symbol*
2.	*"Tidak ada yang menungguku untuk waktu yang lama"*	*Showing past traumas that form a lack of confidence in love.*	*Index*
3.	*"Panggil Aku Gadis Gila"*	*Criticism of social constructions that often stigmatizes women who are expressive and emotionally vulnerable.*	*Symbol*
4.	*"Hantu berkepala keji membunuh cintanya"*	*Describe the inner struggles and hurt self-image caused by social stigma.*	*Icon*
5.	*"Namun, saya berjanji untuk mereda sebagaimana mestinya"*	*The process of acceptance and self-healing, shows awareness and hope to reconcile with inner wounds.*	*Index and Symbols*

The analysis in Table 4 shows that the lyrics of *the Rayuan Perempuan Gila* form a series of semiosis processes that represent the conflict of women's identities through the triadic relationship between representation, object, and interpretation as stated by Peirce (in Prasetya, 2019). At the icon level, visual imagery such as "heinous ghosts with heads" serves as *imagery* that conjures up mental images of self-distortion due to social

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stereotypes. The index is present through phrases like "no one has been waiting for me for a long time," which marks traces of past emotional experiences and triggers interpretations of self-incompetence. Meanwhile, the dominant symbol appears in the declaration "call me a crazy girl," which represents the negotiation of meaning against the social labels attached to women who are perceived as too emotional.

Within Blumer's framework of symbolic interactionism, meaning is not inherent in lyrics, but is formed through the process of subjective interpretation of social symbols (Blumer, 1969). The use of the label "crazy" can be understood not as a clinical condition, but as a social category that is renegotiated by the subject through an interpretive process. Thus, the relationship between the structure of Peirce's sign and Blumer's social meaning shows how women's inner experiences are constructed, interpreted, and negotiated through symbolic language (Valentiyo et al. 2025).

The findings also show that the lyrics not only contain personal emotional expressions, but also reveal the social structures that stigmatize expressive and vulnerable women. Representations of inner wounds, feelings of abandonment, and efforts to subside indicate how women's experiences are shaped by interactions with internalized social norms. This is in line with music semiotics research that confirms that lyrics are often a space of resistance to gender constructions (Ulfah & Dewi 2025)

Thematically, this song emphasizes the consistent pattern of meaning on the album *Untuk Dunia, Cinta, dan Kotornya* (2022), namely the representation of women as subjects who negotiate identity, wounds, and self-acceptance. This pattern is in line with the findings on the album *Selamat Ulang Tahun* (2020), so that the two are interconnected in a thematic continuum about the formation of self-meaning through symbols of emotional experience. These patterns show the theoretical contribution of the research that Indonesian popular music is not only a medium of aesthetic expression, but also an arena of production and resistance to social meanings (Ramdani, 2021). This paragraph bridges the analysis and the conclusion by emphasizing that the process of semiosis in this song illustrates how symbols function in shaping both identity and social relations.

e. *Semua Aku Dirayakan*

Table 5

Analysis of the song *Semua Aku Dirayakan*

Not	Song Lyrics Data	Symbolic Premise (Meaning) in Lyrics	Types of Signs (Icons, Indexes, Symbols)
1.	*"Semua aku Dirayakan"*	*The holistic process of self-acceptance symbolizes the unconditional acceptance of all aspects of the self, both wounds and joys.*	*Symbol*
2.	*"Jangan menangis, aku akan menangis"*	*Inner peace after emotional turmoil, symbolizes the process of healing and self-recovery through love and acceptance.*	*Icon*
3.	*"di Ciumnya Api Marahku"*	*Emotional control and the transformation of anger into love, signify an inner change; Anger (fire) softened by love (kiss) describes the process of self-reconciliation.*	*Index*

4.	*"Jika malam tiba dan kamu takut menyerang"*	*The inner fear and anxiety of humanity, depicts a dark psychological situation as a symbol of the existential struggle within oneself.*	*Icon*
5.	*"Kamu mengerti apa yang aku ragukan"*	*Support and confidence from others, a relational sign that love can be an anchor for someone who is lost.*	*Index*
6.	*"Tidak ada yang mengatakan badai akan mereda"*	*The uncertainty in life symbolizes the existential awareness that life is not always certain, but it can still be lived with surrender and love.*	*Symbol*
7.	*"Hatiku seberat dunia"*	*An icon that represents sadness, inner burden, and the complexity of human emotions.*	*Icon*

The semiotic analysis in Table 5 shows that the lyrics *of Semua Aku Dirayakan* constitute a semiotic process that affirms the construction of meaning about self-acceptance, vulnerability, and emotional transformation. At the icon level, imagery such as "my heart is as heavy as the world" and "don't cry, I'm going to cry" serve as sensory images that conjure up visual representations of emotional burden and deep empathy. These icons work as representations that present objects in the form of human emotional states, so that their interpretation is in the form of universal psychic experiences (Peirce, 1931–1958) in Prasetya, (2019).

The index appears through the phrases "the kiss of my fury fire" and "you understand what I doubt." The phrase marks traces of interpersonal relationships that serve as triggers for emotional change. Fire (anger) that is softened by a kiss inexitly indicates an event that produces transformation in oneself. In the perspective of symbolic interactionism, these indices show how emotional meaning is formed through interactions with others (Blumer, 1969). The most dominant symbols are seen through the declarations of "all I am celebrated" and "no one says the storm will subside," which not only contain literal meaning, but also retain cultural values regarding total acceptance of self-identity. These symbols reveal an interpretation in the form of an existential awareness that life is not always certain, but that the subject can respond to it with surrender and acceptance. This pattern reinforces the view that symbols work as socially agreed cultural conventions, and in the context of music, serve to represent the structure of meaning about human beings who are fragile but want to survive (Rusadi and Rochmaniah 2024).

The semiotic process in this song shows that emotional identity is not present in a singular way, but is formed through negotiations between personal experience and social symbols. By combining the framework of Peirce and Blumer, this analysis confirms that the meaning of lyrics is not a fixed entity, but the result of an ever evolving symbolic interaction. a view also reflected in previous semiotic studies of song lyrics (Kaulika & Sakinah, 2025).These findings also show the continuity of the theme in the album, namely the shift from wound to acceptance, thus reinforcing the research contribution that Indonesian popular music can be read as a space for the production of complex social meaning.

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f. *Di Akhir Perang* (2023)

Table 6

Analysis of the song *Di Akhir Perang*

Not	Song Lyrics Data	Symbolic Premise (Meaning) in Lyrics	Types of Signs (Icons, Indexes, Symbols)
1.	*"Perlahan-lahan aku akan mengajarimu cara menanam panen dunia yang baik dan buruk"*	*The process of learning and understanding life, symbolizes human awareness of the balance between good and evil in life.*	*Symbol*
2.	*"Aku berbisik selama kamu tahu bagaimana rasanya benar-benar bahagia"*	*The experience of sharing happiness and peace, an index of the emotional relationship between two souls who have endured suffering and finally achieved calm.*	*Symbol*
3.	*"Perang telah usai"*	*The end of inner conflict and suffering, a symbol of settlement, reconciliation, and liberation from the wounds of the past.*	*Icon*
4.	*"Aku bisa pulang"*	*Spiritual return to inner peace, refers to one's existential journey back to themselves after the healing process.*	*Index and Symbols*
5.	*"Saya meletakkan anak panah dan meneriakkan kemenangan"*	*Surrender after a long struggle, signifies victory over oneself, a symbol of internal conflict resolution.*	*Icon*
6.	*"Saya sangat lega, saya di sini."*	*Mutual peace after suffering, signifies the harmony of the soul achieved through love, acceptance, and mutual understanding.*	*Symbol*

The analysis in table 6 shows that the song *Di Akhir Perang* builds a semiotic structure that represents the human existential journey from inner conflict to recovery. Lyrics such as "the war is over" and "I put down the arrow and shout victory" work as icons that present a visual picture of the resolution of internal conflicts. In Peirce's framework, icons present objects through resemblance, so that the images of war and weapons produce an interpretation in the form of an understanding of psychological struggles that eventually subside (Peirce, 1931–1958).

The index appears through the phrase "I can go home," which marks the trace of an inner journey to tranquility. This phrase shows a causal relationship between the healing process and the individual's ability to return to himself. According to the principle of symbolic interactionism, the meaning of "going home" is not geographical, but is the result of a subjective interpretation of the experience of recovery (Blumer, 1969). Other symbols such as "I whisper... how it feels to be truly happy" shows that emotional relationships are a medium for the formation of meaning. In the perspective of musical semiotics, this kind of relationship is a form of affective representation that builds a narrative of collective healing.

Thus, the lyrics of this song not only describe personal experiences, but also articulate cultural patterns regarding suffering, resilience, and reconciliation.

Overall, the song expands on the thematic pattern that has emerged in previous songs, namely the journey from wounds to recovery, from identity conflict to self-acceptance. Through the integration of Peirce and Blumer's approaches, this analysis confirms that the process of semiosis in songs works through the negotiation of meaning involving personal experiences, cultural symbols, and the interpretive structure of the listener. These findings contribute to the study of Indonesian music semiotics by showing that the lyrics of popular songs can be a space for articulating emotional experiences as well as reflections on social constructions (Fairuz 2025). This section is also the theoretical basis for the conclusion of the research.

Based on the overall analysis, it can be concluded that Nadin Amizah's musical works represent a symbolic space where linguistic signs and social experiences interact to form rich, reflective, and transcendental meanings.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that Nadin Amizah's two albums, *Selamat Ulang Tahun (2020) and Untuk Dunia,Cinta, dan Kotornya* (2023), represent a sign system that reflects the existential journey of humanity through symbols of love, pain, and self-acceptance. Through the Peircean semiotic approach, it is found that icons, indexes, and symbols in lyrics serve not only as forms of poetic expression but also as constructs of meaning that affirm the connection between personal emotional experiences and broader social contexts. Meanwhile, Blumer's theory of symbolic interaction reinforces the understanding of how meaning is negotiated through the singer's social experiences and self-reflection as an individual interacting with the reality of his or her life.

The main findings of the study highlight four dominant symbolic premises: maternal love as a source of identity, self-acceptance as a form of emotional healing, existential reflection on suffering, and spirituality as a means of inner reconciliation. The *Selamat Ulang Tahun* album emphasizes the introspective theme and emotional attachment between the individual and oneself, as well as the figure of a mother, while *For the World, Love, and Dirty* feature a progression toward emotional maturity, self-acceptance, and spiritual awareness. A comparison of the two albums illustrates the evolution of meaning: from the search for identity to a broader existential consciousness.

Theoretically, this study enriches the study of the semiotics of popular music in Indonesia by emphasizing that musical works can function as cultural texts that reflect the values, emotions, and social ideologies of the younger generation. Practically, these findings open up opportunities for further research that could explore symbolic representations in other musical genres or link semiotic approaches with socio-cultural and gender perspectives to better understand how symbolic meanings are constructed and negotiated in contemporary cultural spaces.

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THE USE OF GEN Z SLANG BY DIGITAL INFLUENCER "AWKARIN" ON HER SOCIAL MEDIA: A SOCIO-SEMANTIC STUDY

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Abstract

Generation Z increasingly relies on slang as a linguistic resource to express identity, negotiate belonging, and build intimacy in digital communication, making it an important site of sociolinguistic and semantic change. However, most existing studies focus on broad usage patterns rather than examining how individual influencers strategically use slang to construct their online personas. Addressing this gap, this study analyzes Awkarin's use of Gen Z slang on Instagram and YouTube through a qualitative sociolinguistic and semantic approach. The analysis identifies various slang forms—such as acronyms, neologisms, semantic shifts, and code-mixing—and their communicative functions in shaping influencer–audience interaction. Findings reveal that slang serves not only as informal vocabulary but as a strategic resource for identity performance, emotional expression, and audience engagement. This study contributes to sociolinguistic and semantic research by showing how influencers act as linguistic mediators who adapt and circulate Gen Z slang within Indonesian digital culture, highlighting slang as both a social practice and a site of meaning innovation.

Keywords: *digital communication; generation z; identity construction; semantic analysis; slang; sociolinguistics*.

1. Introduction

Language is constantly evolving, and one of its most dynamic manifestations is slang—informal, creative, and rapidly changing vocabulary that emerges within specific speech communities. In linguistic terms, slang represents a form of lexical innovation that reflects ongoing processes of language variation and change. It functions not only as a communicative shortcut but also as a sociolinguistic marker of identity, solidarity, and group membership. In the digital age, these processes become increasingly accelerated due to the speed of online interaction and the influence of algorithm-driven platforms. As a result, slang evolves, spreads, and undergoes semantic shifts at a much faster rate, particularly among Generation Z, who actively shape contemporary digital discourse.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, has accelerated linguistic innovation through its deep engagement with digital communication. As digital natives, Gen Z individuals develop distinctive linguistic styles influenced by their use of technology and online interactions (Hendrastomo & Januarti, 2023). Although Gen Z slang is widely used

across digital platforms in Indonesia, research specifically addressing how individual influencers shape, adapt, and circulate this slang remains limited. Most existing studies focus on general usage trends rather than the strategic linguistic practices of influential digital figures.

Previous research illustrates this gap. Jihan (2024) provided cross-influencer comparisons but did not examine micro-level linguistic techniques. Tufail et al. (2024) focused on peer communication, leaving influencer–audience dynamics underexplored. Studies mapping semantic change on TikTok offered limited sociolinguistic contextualization, while large-scale quantitative studies (Puspita & Ardianto, 2024; Marzuki & Mustapha, 2023) documented slang frequency but overlooked its contextual or strategic use. Zhang's (2025) work on algorithmic influence also did not consider influencers as linguistic mediators. Collectively, these studies highlight the absence of integrated sociolinguistic and semantic analysis focusing on a single prominent influencer and how they actively perform and innovate Gen Z slang in digital communication.

In Indonesia, Awkarin (Karin Novilda) stands out as a culturally influential figure whose communication style aligns closely with the sensibilities of Gen Z. As noted by Kandiawan (2022), influencers like Awkarin serve as both cultural trendsetters and linguistic innovators, playing a key role in spreading and localizing global digital expressions. Her frequent use of Gen Z slang across platforms makes her a significant case for examining the sociolinguistic functions and semantic processes underlying influencer discourse.

Given this context, a socio-semantic analysis of Awkarin's linguistic practices is crucial for understanding how Gen Z slang functions not only as informal vocabulary but also as a strategic tool for identity construction, audience engagement, and meaning-making in Indonesian digital culture.

2. Literature Review

Research on Gen Z slang in digital communication has expanded considerably, yet the scholarship remains conceptually disjointed. Quantitative investigations have predominantly emphasized macro-level patterns—such as demographic correlations, frequency distributions, and diffusion trajectories—thereby offering generalizable insights but leaving the micro-level linguistic agency of individual users analytically underdeveloped. Studies of interpersonal interaction, by contrast, illuminate the pragmatic and affective functions of slang within peer networks; yet, they tend to frame slang as a symmetrical, relational resource, thereby overlooking the performative, hierarchical, and identity-driven dimensions that are salient in influencer–audience contexts. Complementary work on semantic change and platform affordances demonstrates how digital environments facilitate lexical innovation and accelerate meaning shifts, but such accounts frequently isolate technological or lexical mechanisms from the socio-identitarian practices through which influential users construct public personas and mediate cultural flows.

Collectively, these bodies of research reveal a theoretical gap: while existing studies describe the circulation, functions, and semantic evolution of Gen Z slang, they have not sufficiently accounted for how influential digital actors strategically mobilize slang to negotiate identity, cultivate audience alignment, and localize global linguistic forms within specific cultural ecologies. This absence of an integrated socio-semantic perspective limits our understanding of slang as a practice that simultaneously indexes social positioning and generates new layers of meaning.

To address this gap, the present study examines Awkarin's linguistic practices through a socio-semantic lens, foregrounding individual agency in the production, adaptation, and contextualization of Gen Z slang. This approach enables a more comprehensive theorization of slang as both a sociolinguistic resource and a site of semantic innovation within Indonesia's dynamic digital landscape.

3. Research Method

3.1 Design and Framework

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to investigate the use of Generation Z slang in influencer discourse. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it emphasizes contextual interpretation and meaning-making rather than numerical measurement (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The analysis was guided by a combined sociolinguistic–semantic framework to capture both the social functions and the meaning-making processes of slang in digital interactions.

3.2 Data and Source

The dataset comprised linguistic expressions identified as Gen Z slang from publicly accessible content on Awkarin's Instagram and YouTube accounts. These platforms were selected purposively because of Awkarin's linguistic influence within Indonesian digital youth culture. All materials were sourced from publicly accessible online posts, ensuring adherence to ethical standards for research using publicly available online data.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through systematic non-participant digital observation of posts uploaded between January 2022 and December 2024. Slang items appearing in captions, video speech, and relevant user interactions were documented and catalogued by platform, post type, and interactional context. Only naturally occurring expressions produced by the influencer were included, consistent with naturalistic digital observation practices.

3.4 Data Analysis and Validation

Data were analyzed through a multi-stage process integrating sociolinguistic, semantic, and pragmatic perspectives. First, slang items were categorized based on their structural and contextual features. Second, semantic analysis examined mechanisms of meaning change, including narrowing, broadening, metaphorical extension, and neologism formation. Third, functional analysis explored the pragmatic roles of slang in influencer–audience communication. Analytical validity was strengthened through theoretical triangulation across sociolinguistic and semantic lenses (Abidin, 2021).

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of 25 Generation Z slang expressions used by Awkarin on Instagram and YouTube. The findings are organized according to the three research questions: (1) the types of slang forms, (2) their contextual meanings, and (3) their social functions. The results and discussion are combined to show both the linguistic patterns identified in the data and their significance within sociolinguistic and semantic frameworks.

Summary of Slang Distribution

The table below summarizes the slang dataset into five clusters of linguistic features, along with examples, core meanings, and functions.

No.	Type of Slang	Representative Expressions	Frequency	Primary Social Function	Platforms
1	Acronyms	FOMO, FYI, BT, GGWP	28%	Emotional expression & relatability	Instagram & YouTube
2	Neologisms	Gengs, Bestie, Mamiii LFG	24%	Community building & solidarity	Instagram
3	Semantic Shifts	Slay, Red flag, Green flag, Flexing, No Cap	20%	Identity performance & social commentary	Instagram & YouTube
4	Code-Mixing	Girls POV, Mamiii LFG, GG Gaming	16%	Cultural glocalization & trend alignment	Instagram
5	Emphatic Expressions	Periodt, Know your worth	12%	Empowerment & audience motivation	Instagram

The distribution demonstrates that Awkarin's slang use is hybrid and platform-sensitive, with Instagram supporting brief expressive forms and YouTube enabling more extended, narrative meaning-making.

4.1 Types of Gen Z Slang Used by Awkarin

The significance of these categories lies not in their labels, but in how each form contributes to the strategic construction of persona. Acronyms (e.g., *FOMO, FYI, BT*) create immediacy and a sense of generational closeness, reinforcing digital identity signaling (Holmes, 2022). Neologisms (e.g., *Gengs, Bestie*) showcase linguistic creativity and invite followers into an in-group, consistent with sociolinguistic notions of group membership (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015).

Semantic shifts (e.g., *Slay, Red flag, No Cap*) illustrate the dynamic adaptation of English youth vocabulary within Indonesian digital culture, aligning with Cruse's (2011) framework of semantic innovation. Code-mixing (e.g., *Girls POV, Mamiii LFG*) reflects "glocalized" linguistic performance (Crystal, 2011), where global youth expressions are localized into Indonesian identity work. Emphatic expressions (e.g., *Know your worth, Periodt*) function as affective discourse markers that amplify stance and index authenticity in Gen Z communication. Overall, the typological distribution demonstrates that Awkarin's linguistic choices are deliberate and oriented toward self-branding and audience alignment, rather than casual or spontaneous use (Fauziah et al., 2024).

These patterns suggest that Awkarin's selection of slang types is not incidental, but rather part of a calculated linguistic strategy that reinforces her public persona while maintaining constant alignment with Gen Z's cultural expectations and platform-specific norms.

4.2 Contextual Meanings of Gen Z Slang

Awkarin's slang use reflects four interconnected semantic processes: metaphorical extension, semantic narrowing, semantic broadening, and neosemanticism. These processes operate collaboratively to support identity construction and performative relatability. Metaphorical extension (e.g., *Red flag, Green flag, Touch grass*) maps everyday non-social

domains onto social judgment, enabling concise cultural commentary (Coleman, 2012; Eckert, 2016). Semantic narrowing (e.g., *Stan, Vibe check*) restricts broad meanings into specialized uses within influencer–audience interactions, allowing precise evaluation with minimal linguistic effort (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Semantic broadening (e.g., *Iconic, Slay*) expands terms beyond their original fields to express general affirmation, aligning with Gen Z's expressive self-presentation. Neosemanticism (e.g., *It's giving + adjective/noun*) introduces new meaning templates that signal high cultural fluency within Gen Z discourse. Collectively, these processes illustrate active meaning-making, showing how Awkarin adapts and reshapes meanings to reinforce cultural belonging and personal branding across digital platforms (Sitohang & Ristia, 2025).

Taken together, these semantic processes reveal that Awkarin functions not only as a user of Gen Z slang but as an active meaning-maker who reshapes, filters, and recontextualizes global youth language to fit Indonesian digital culture, thereby influencing how her audience interprets and reproduces emerging slang forms.

4.3 Social Functions of Gen Z Slang in Awkarin's Digital Discourse

Six interconnected social functions emerged from the dataset:

Function	Contribution to Persona/Engagement
Identity construction	Aligns with Gen Z cultural norms & authenticity
Community building	Establishes friendship-like parasocial intimacy
Emotional expression	Communicates effectively and relatably
Cultural mediation	Connects global trends with local contexts
Humor/entertainment	Enhances appeal and platform retention
Social commentary	Enables casual critique without a moralizing tone

For example, "Slay," "Periodt," and "It's giving" simultaneously perform confidence, cultural literacy, and empowerment, creating a multilayered persona. Meanwhile, "Gengs," "Bestie," and "Girls POV" cultivate a sense of symbolic proximity, transforming follower relationships into imagined friendships. Expressions like "Sus" and playful exaggerations of "Iconic" deliver humor that increases replay value and shareability, while critique terms like "Red flag" enable commentary without disrupting a conversational tone (Paoletti et al., 2025). Collectively, these patterns show that Awkarin's slang use operates as a deliberate communicative strategy that shapes relational positioning, reinforces her influencer identity, and optimizes audience engagement within Indonesian digital culture.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that Awkarin's use of Gen Z slang functions not as casual vocabulary but as a purposeful socio-semantic resource for constructing her influencer identity and fostering engagement with young audiences. Slang emerges as a strategic form of meaning-making that integrates identity performance, audience alignment, and cultural positioning within Indonesian digital spaces.

The findings advance sociolinguistic and semantic scholarship by demonstrating that influencer discourse is a site where semantic innovation and social meaning operate simultaneously. Processes such as metaphorical extension, narrowing, broadening, and

neosemantic formation are shown to serve pragmatic and relational purposes, highlighting the interdependence of meaning and social function in contemporary digital language.
The study also contributes to understandings of Indonesian digital culture by illustrating how influencers act as cultural mediators who circulate, adapt, and normalize global Gen Z slang within local contexts. Through these practices, influencers help shape linguistic identities and reinforce values of authenticity, empowerment, and digital belonging among Indonesian youth.

Despite its insights, this study is limited by its focus on a single influencer and two platforms. Future research should incorporate comparative analyses, audience perspectives, and multi-platform datasets to capture broader patterns of slang evolution in Indonesian social media.

Overall, this research emphasizes the role of digital influencers as emerging linguistic agents whose practices actively shape the development, transformation, and dissemination of youth language in Indonesia.

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IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION IN GEN Z'S SLANG ON INSTAGRAM: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This research aims to examine textual features, investigate discursive practices, and analyze social practices that reveal the ideological constructions embedded in Gen Z's slang on Instagram, utilizing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Data were obtained from 31 purposively selected public Instagram posts that contained frequently used slang expressions, such as "delulu," "roasting," and "rizz." The analysis was conducted through three interrelated stages: textual analysis (examining linguistic patterns, metaphors, and emojis), discursive practice analysis (exploring production, circulation, and audience interpretation), and social practice analysis (interpreting the broader ideological context). Findings reveal that Gen Z's slang reflects ideologies of individualism, irony, authenticity, and digital resistance, functioning not only as a linguistic trend but also as a discursive tool for negotiating power and identity in online communication. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language and ideology intersect within contemporary digital discourse, highlighting the socio-cultural significance of youth language in shaping online interactions.

Keywords: *critical discourse analysis; digital communication; gen Z slang; ideology; instagram discourse*

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology in the twenty-first century has transformed the ways people interact and express themselves linguistically and culturally. Among the generations shaped by this transformation, Generation Z (Gen Z) stands out as the first cohort to grow up entirely in the digital environment, where technology is deeply intertwined with identity formation and social participation (Roth-Gordon, 2020). Social media platforms have become spaces where discourse, meaning, and ideology are produced and negotiated rather than merely transmitted. Among them, Instagram occupies a central role due to its multimodal nature—combining images, text, hashtags, and comments—which enables users to continually shape their self-representation and engage in shared meaning-making (Syaputra et al., 2024). Since Instagram remains a leading platform among young people, examining how they use language provides insights into broader patterns of digital communication and cultural change (Telaumbanua et al., 2024). Consequently, Instagram serves not only as a site of communication but also as an arena where linguistic expression becomes a vehicle for ideological construction and cultural resistance (Fairclough, 2013).

Within this digital landscape, Gen Z has developed a rich repertoire of slang expressions—such as "roasting", "sigma", "delulu", "red flag/green flag", "yapping", "TBH", "no cap", and "skibidi"—that extend beyond playful creativity. These expressions serve as semiotic tools through which users articulate humor, critique, and self-identity, while simultaneously reflecting broader social and ideological orientations (Eviani, 2021). For instance, roasting often functions as humorous criticism, whereas "delulu" turns self-irony into a mode of emotional expression. Such linguistic innovations illustrate how ideology is conveyed through everyday language in online discourse. As Fairclough (2013) asserts, discourse is inherently ideological because it constructs and reproduces social relations and power structures.

Although previous research has examined Gen Z slang on social media, most studies have focused on its linguistic or sociolinguistic features rather than its ideological implications. Wafa and Amalia (2022), for instance, categorized Instagram slang into types of abbreviations and interjections but did not analyze how such terms encode power relations or ideological meanings. Similarly, Syaputra et al. (2024) linked slang use to emotional expression and identity formation, yet their study remained descriptive in nature. Paoletti (2025) further explored the sociopolitical potential of youth slang but did not reveal the linguistic mechanisms through which ideology is constructed. These studies highlight a significant research gap: the need to investigate how Gen Z's digital slang linguistically constructs ideology within social media discourse.

To address this gap, the present study applies Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)—encompassing textual, discursive, and social practices—to examine ideological constructions embedded in Gen Z slang on Instagram. This approach enables an exploration of how linguistic forms, multimodal expressions, and social contexts interact to produce meaning. This study aims to identify textual analysis (linguistic patterns, metaphors, and emojis), to explore discursive practice (production, circulation, and audience interpretation), and to analyze social practice that reflects the ideological construction in Gen Z's slang on Instagram. Ultimately, this research contributes to understanding the intersection of language, ideology, and power in digital communication, offering insights into how online linguistic practices shape contemporary cultural and ideological realities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ideology and Language

The relationship between ideology and language becomes increasingly visible in digital spaces where linguistic expressions circulate rapidly and widely. As Van Dijk (2006) explains, ideology can be understood as a set of socially shared beliefs that shape group identity and power relations. Language serves as the main instrument for the reproduction of such ideologies, especially within mediated communication. In social media environments, users construct and negotiate ideological meanings through textual and visual discourse (Wodak, 2011). Instagram, as a multimodal platform, provides a fertile ground for the production of ideological messages. Through captions, hashtags, and comments, users construct identity while simultaneously engaging in ideological positioning. The use of informal, creative, and humorous language—such as slang—acts as a mechanism for expressing alignment or resistance to dominant cultural narratives (Eviani, 2021). For instance, the term "delulu" humorously represents an over-idealized self-perception but also critiques societal pressures to conform to rational standards of behavior. Likewise, "sigma"

promotes an alternative masculinity that challenges traditional power structures. These linguistic patterns highlight how digital language operates as a vehicle for both identity formation and ideological construction (Among, 2025).

2.2 Theoretical Framework (Fairclough's CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theoretical and methodological approach that examines how language functions as a medium of power and ideology. Fairclough (2013) conceptualizes discourse as both a linguistic and social practice, meaning that language not only reflects reality but also shapes it through ideological processes. In this sense, every linguistic choice—whether a word, phrase, or expression—has potential ideological implications because it contributes to how social relations and power structures are represented and maintained. Wodak (2011) reinforces this notion by emphasizing that CDA seeks to expose the implicit ideologies that perpetuate inequality and hegemony in communication. Fairclough's three-dimensional model—text, discourse practice, and social practice—provides a framework for analyzing how meaning is produced, distributed, and consumed within a specific social context. The textual dimension focuses on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, and cohesion; the discourse practice dimension concerns the processes of production and interpretation; and the social practice dimension relates to broader social structures and power relations (Gee & Handford, 2013). Through these interconnected levels, CDA enables the identification of how language use in digital spaces, including social media, contributes to the reproduction or contestation of ideologies. In the digital era, this approach is particularly relevant because online language is not merely communicative—it also functions as an ideological act (Roth-Gordon, 2020).

2.3 Previous Studies on Gen Z's Slang

Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, represents a cohort that has grown up with constant access to digital communication. Studies have shown that Gen Z's linguistic behavior reflects their need for self-expression, creativity, and community (Paula et al., 2024; Paoletti, 2025). Their frequent use of slang on platforms like Instagram demonstrates a collective attempt to construct a unique generational identity through linguistic innovation. According to Wafa and Amalia (2022), slang on social media serves as both an identity marker and a social bonding mechanism, differentiating Gen Z from older generations. Paula et al. (2024) found that Gen Z tends to use text-based and meme-driven slang, whereas Gen Alpha adopts more visually oriented expressions influenced by platforms such as TikTok. These linguistic patterns reveal how each generation constructs meaning through the technological environments it inhabits. However, as Paoletti (2025) argues, the ideological dimension of slang—particularly its role in shaping or challenging socio-political ideas—remains insufficiently explored. This gap highlights the importance of applying CDA to examine how Gen Z's linguistic creativity intersects with ideological representation in online discourse.

Slang has long been recognized as a form of linguistic innovation that reflects cultural values, resistance, and a sense of belonging. In digital spaces, however, slang extends beyond playful language use; it becomes a medium through which ideological positions are articulated and circulated (Roth-Gordon, 2020). On Instagram, for instance, terms such as "red flag," "roasting," or "no cap" convey implicit attitudes about morality, relationships, and authenticity. Through these expressions, Gen Z constructs a worldview that values individual freedom, irony, and social critique (Adhi & Masykuroh, 2025). Fairclough's CDA

offers an effective analytical lens for interpreting slang as a site of ideological struggle. The textual level allows researchers to examine the linguistic features that signal ideological stance, while the discursive and social levels reveal how these meanings are produced and normalized through online interactions (Wodak, 2011). By situating slang within Fairclough's model, researchers can examine how Gen Z's everyday linguistic choices contribute to broader ideological negotiations concerning identity, gender, and power in digital culture.

3. Research Method

This study is categorized as a descriptive qualitative research, utilizing Norman Fairclough's (1992, 2013) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework as the central analytical lens. The qualitative research enables an in-depth interpretation of linguistic phenomena and ideological meanings behind the slang expressions used by Generation Z on Instagram. Rather than quantifying occurrences, this approach focuses on describing how linguistic forms reflect social practices and ideological constructions embedded in digital discourse. The research design emphasizes understanding how language operates as a medium of ideology, identity, and resistance within Gen Z's online communication (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The research focused on uncovering ideological meanings embedded in the slang expressions used by Generation Z on Instagram. The data consisted of linguistic units such as words, phrases, and short textual segments that represented common slang expressions, including "delulu", "roasting", "yapping", "rizz", "sigma", and "no cap". These terms were selected because they frequently appear in online communication and symbolize social and ideological meanings in Gen Z discourse. The data were taken from 31 publicly accessible Instagram posts uploaded between January and October 2025, originating from influencers, celebrities, meme creators, and ordinary users. Each post was documented along with relevant contextual information such as the account name, posting date, caption, and screenshot evidence. The study only analyzed publicly available posts to maintain ethical integrity and adhere to research ethics in digital ethnography (Snee et al., 2016).

The data collection process employed a documentation method that was supported by manual note-taking and screenshot archiving. The researcher continuously observed Instagram accounts known for using Gen Z slang throughout the research period. To ensure the relevance of the data, Google Trends and online slang dictionaries were used to verify the popularity and meaning of selected expressions. Purposive sampling was employed to select 31 posts that met three main criteria: frequent use of slang, social or cultural significance, and clear ideological representation. All collected data were then organized into a classification table, which contained the slang term, linguistic type, contextual meaning, social function, and source. This corpus construction ensured that the dataset represented a wide range of social contexts—personal, humorous, promotional, and ideological—thus providing a comprehensive basis for discourse analysis (Silverman, 2020).

The analysis of the corpus followed Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which consists of the stages of description, interpretation, and explanation. In the first stage, description, the researcher examined the textual features of slang expressions, including their lexical, grammatical, and semantic structures, as well as multimodal components such as emojis, hashtags, and visual cues. The second stage, interpretation, analyzed how these linguistic forms were produced, circulated, and understood within Instagram's communicative environment. This stage emphasized how digital users interact with slang through captions, comments, and meme exchanges, illustrating the discursive practices that

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sustain the social meanings of language. The final stage, explanation, connected the linguistic and discursive patterns to broader ideological contexts, identifying how slang reflected or resisted dominant values such as modernity, individuality, authenticity, and digital inclusivity. Through these interconnected stages, the study demonstrated how Gen Z's linguistic creativity on Instagram serves as both a reflection of social experience and a mechanism for ideological negotiation in digital culture (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2011).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of Findings

The data analyzed in this study consisted of 31 Instagram posts containing slang expressions commonly used by Generation Z in 2025. The posts were collected through purposive sampling, focusing on slang that appeared frequently in captions, hashtags, memes, and comments. The selected terms—such as "roasting," "yapping," "oversharing," "delulu," "TBH," "red flag/green flag," "rizz," "sigma," "no cap," and "skibidi"—represent a variety of digital expressions through which Gen Z communicates identity, emotion, and ideology. Each post was examined through Fairclough's (1995, 2013) three-dimensional framework: textual, discursive, and social practice. This approach allowed for a holistic understanding of how linguistic creativity and social dynamics converge in the construction of digital ideology.

In terms of textual features, there are rewording ("oversharing," "delulu," "yapping"), metaphor ("roasting," "red flag/green flag"), hyperbole ("rizz 100," "no cap"), and the creative use of emojis (😂, 💯, ✌️) that enhance tone, humor, and interpersonal meaning in digital interaction. Here are the findings of the textual features.

1. Rewording: "Oversharing", "delulu", "yapping"
   These words are formed through lexical modification and semantic shift. "Oversharing" combines the prefix "over–" and the verb "share," signaling excessive self-disclosure, while "delulu" (clipped from delusional) redefines a psychological term into humorous self-awareness. "Yapping" transfers animal-like imagery ("barking") into social commentary on excessive talking.
2. Metaphor: "Roasting", "red flag/green flag", "rizz"
   "Roasting" metaphorically expresses critique disguised as humor; "red flag/green flag" employs color as a moral metaphor to signify warning and approval; "rizz" metaphorically refers to charisma or charm as a quantifiable resource, turning abstract social appeal into a measurable trait.
3. Hyperbole: "Rizz 100", "nobody can roast me better than my mom", "no cap"
   "Rizz 100" exaggerates the idea of having maximum charisma; "nobody can roast me better than my mom," amplifying a humorous claim of familial teasing to express emotional closeness; "no cap" intensifies truth claims, functioning as emphatic hyperbole for sincerity. Through these overstatements, Gen Z emphasizes emotional expressiveness and irony, using exaggeration as a means of humor and identity performance.
4. Acronym: "TBH" ("to be honest"), "W/L" ("win/lose"), "No Cap"
   These acronyms index authenticity and evaluation. "TBH" expresses honesty or sincerity, "W/L" frames judgment in binary terms, and "no cap" signals truthfulness, reinforcing Gen Z's ideology of performed authenticity.

5. Emoji: "😂", "😭", "💅", "💯", "✌️", "🤩"
   Emojis operate as paralinguistic cues that soften sarcasm, signal irony, and add emotional texture. For instance, "😂" or "😭" amplify humor or exaggeration; "✌️" adds friendliness to irony; "💅" and "💯" index confidence and approval, aligning with Gen Z's expressive and playful communication style.

4.2 Textual Analysis

4.2.1 Rewording

Rewording in Gen Z's slang represents lexical creativity where existing words are modified or recontextualized to express new social meanings. Examples include "oversharing", "delulu", and "yapping". The word oversharing combines the prefix "over–" and the verb "share," forming a new lexical item that humorously critiques excessive self-disclosure on social media. This modification reflects Gen Z's awareness of digital boundaries and the ideology of self-control in online spaces. Similarly, "delulu"—a clipped form of delusional—transforms a term with clinical connotations into a humorous expression of self-irony and emotional optimism. It reflects how Gen Z normalizes imperfection and embraces imagination as a coping mechanism in a high-pressure digital environment.

The term "yapping", originally used to describe the sound of small dogs barking, has been reappropriated to describe people who talk excessively or unnecessarily. This rewording illustrates how Gen Z employs linguistic humor to critique social behavior in a lighthearted, non-aggressive manner. Overall, these examples show that rewording allows users to challenge conventional meanings and create new vocabularies that align with their cultural values of openness, humor, and creativity.

4.2.2 Metaphor

Metaphor serves as one of the most powerful textual devices in Gen Z's slang, enabling abstract concepts and social attitudes to be expressed in vivid and relatable terms. Expressions such as "roasting", "red flag/green flag", and "rizz" reveal how metaphorical language operates as a discursive tool for encoding ideology. The term roasting metaphorically refers to the act of "burning" someone with words, transforming criticism into playful humor. This metaphor enables users to engage in social critique without confrontation, reflecting an ideology of indirectness and irony prevalent in Gen Z communication.

The color-based metaphors "red flag/green flag" symbolize moral evaluation—warning and approval, respectively. These metaphors simplify complex interpersonal judgments into accessible visual codes that circulate widely in memes and hashtags. Their popularity demonstrates how metaphor facilitates shared cultural understanding and collective participation in moral discourse online. Meanwhile, "rizz", a slang term for charisma, metaphorically conceptualizes charm as a measurable quantity—something one can "gain," "lose," or "have 100% of." This metaphor reflects a neoliberal ideology of self-performance and social competitiveness, where personal appeal is treated as a quantifiable asset. Through such metaphors, Gen Z conveys its identity, social stance, and emotional tone in concise and symbolic ways. They use metaphor not only to entertain but also to position themselves ideologically within a digital culture that values humor, relatability, and self-awareness.

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4.2.3 Hyperbole

Hyperbole, or deliberate exaggeration, is another salient feature of Gen Z's slang on Instagram. It serves to dramatize meaning, intensify emotion, and add humor or irony to digital communication. Common examples include "Rizz 100," "Nobody can roast me better than my mom," and "No cap." These expressions rely on overstatement to amplify affective force and convey playful self-expression. The phrase "rizz 100" exaggerates the level of one's charisma, implying maximum charm or confidence. It mirrors a gamified worldview where social traits are quantified, reinforcing Gen Z's engagement with performance-based identity in online spaces. Similarly, "nobody can roast me better than my mom" employs hyperbole to humorously elevate familial teasing into an exaggerated yet affectionate competition, softening criticism through humor. The expression "no cap" originated as an assertion of truth and now functions as emphatic hyperbole to reinforce sincerity and reliability. Through hyperbolic language, Gen Z constructs a discursive style that celebrates emotional expressiveness and irony. The exaggeration embedded in these phrases underscores an ideological stance that values humor and authenticity over formality and restraint. In digital interaction, hyperbole becomes a linguistic strategy for dramatizing identity, signaling confidence, and maintaining social connections.

4.2.4 Acronym

Acronyms are a pervasive textual feature in Gen Z communication, representing linguistic economy and shared cultural codes. Expressions such as "TBH" ("to be honest"), "W/L" ("win/lose"), and "no cap" exemplify abbreviation as a means of establishing in-group identity and signaling communicative efficiency. The acronym "TBH" is used to preface statements of sincerity, functioning as both a politeness marker and a performative cue of honesty. "W/L" reduces evaluative judgment into binary categories of success and failure, reflecting the digital generation's tendency toward instant categorization and moral shorthand. Meanwhile, "no cap"—though originally slang rather than a strict acronym—operates semantically as a compressed expression of authenticity, emphasizing the speaker's truthfulness. These linguistic shortcuts embody Gen Z's ideology of speed, simplicity, and emotional transparency in communication. By condensing meaning into recognizable codes, acronyms enhance group belonging and efficiency in online discourse. They also reflect a broader cultural tendency toward multimodal brevity, where words, symbols, and emojis collectively construct meaning in digital spaces.

4.2.5 Emoji

Emojis function as crucial multimodal elements that complement linguistic meaning and construct emotional tone. Far from being mere decoration, emojis such as "😂", "😭", "💅", "💯", "✌️", and "🤩" serve pragmatic functions that clarify intent, reinforce humor, and express stance in online discourse. For instance, "😂" and "😭" are frequently paired with sarcastic captions to indicate laughter or mock despair, transforming potentially harsh statements into lighthearted humor. "✌️" adds friendliness or ironic detachment, while "💅" and "💯" signal confidence, empowerment, and approval. These visual symbols function as paralinguistic markers, conveying nuances of tone—softening sarcasm, signaling playfulness, or amplifying emphasis. In the context of Fairclough's (2013) textual analysis, emojis act as semiotic resources that bridge linguistic and visual communication. They function ideologically by embodying Gen Z's preference for emotional transparency and

expressive individuality. The integration of emojis into everyday writing illustrates a shift toward multimodal literacy, where visual symbols enhance relational meaning and reinforce digital intimacy.

The analysis of thirty-one Instagram posts containing Gen Z slang expressions revealed that language use among digital youth extends beyond casual communication and serves as a discursive site of ideological construction. Based on Fairclough's (1992, 2013) three-dimensional CDA framework, the data were analyzed through three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. The descriptive stage identified linguistic patterns such as metaphor, acronymization, and rewording; the interpretative stage examined how users produced and circulated slang across social interactions; and the explanatory stage connected these discursive forms to broader ideological meanings within digital culture. The findings indicate that Gen Z's linguistic creativity reflects multiple ideological orientations, particularly those related to modernity, inclusivity, and identity, as well as resistance and self-expression. These ideologies appear not as abstract concepts but as lived discursive practices that shape how young users perceive power, authenticity, and belonging in online spaces.

The data demonstrate that certain slang expressions—such as "delulu", "rizz", "sigma", "roasting", "TBH", and "red flag/green" flag—function as symbolic representations of generational values. While the frequency of usage varied, terms like "delulu" and "roasting" appeared most often in captions and memes, highlighting humor and self-irony as the dominant communicative strategies. In contrast, words such as "rizz" and "sigma" occurred in motivational or lifestyle contexts, indicating aspirational discourse linked to identity and self-image. These linguistic variations illustrate how ideology is encoded through language choice and multimodal expression, aligning with Fairclough's notion that discourse both reflects and reconstructs social reality.

4.3 Discursive Practice

Discursive practice refers to the processes through which language is produced, circulated, and interpreted within a specific social context. In the case of Gen Z's slang on Instagram, discursive practice highlights how linguistic creativity is not an isolated act of expression but a socially embedded process shaped by digital participation, community norms, and technological affordances. Following Fairclough's (1992, 2013) framework, the analysis of production, consumption, and distribution reveals how Gen Z collectively constructs meaning, reproduces ideology, and negotiates identity through everyday online discourse.

4.3.1 Production

The production of Gen Z's slang on Instagram is characterized by participatory authorship, where users—ranging from influencers and content creators to ordinary followers—actively coin, modify, and remix linguistic expressions. The creation of terms such as "delulu", "rizz", or "yapping" often originates from online micro-communities (e.g., fandoms, meme pages, and subcultures) and is later recontextualized into mainstream digital discourse.

This linguistic production process is closely tied to creativity and the performance of identity. Influencers and meme creators, for instance, use slang strategically to craft relatable personas and engage followers through humor and authenticity. Posts containing phrases like "stay delulu babes ✌️" or "rizz 100" are not merely linguistic play, but

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intentional acts of self-branding that align with Gen Z's ideology of performative confidence. The production stage also reflects intertextuality, as users draw inspiration from popular culture, music lyrics, and internet trends. Through this intertextual recycling, slang becomes a living discourse—constantly evolving to accommodate new social meanings and ideological undertones. Thus, the production of slang on Instagram represents not only linguistic innovation but also ideological authorship, where users collectively shape the values of openness, humor, and individuality that define Gen Z communication.

4.3.2 Consumption

The consumption of Gen Z's slang involves the interpretation, engagement, and internalization of linguistic meaning by digital audiences. Users who encounter expressions such as "no cap", "red flag", or oversharing often understand their meanings through contextual cues—such as memes, emojis, and comment interactions—that guide their interpretation. Meaning, therefore, is not fixed by the producer but co-constructed through participatory responses such as likes, shares, comments, and duets.

This process of active interpretation illustrates Fairclough's (1992) notion of discourse as social practice: language meaning is shaped by both production and reception. Audiences engage with slang not only to decode information, but also to perform identity and establish a sense of belonging. For example, when followers reply to a post saying the same "delulu energy ✨", they signal mutual understanding and alignment with the humor and ideology behind the term. Such interactions create a feedback loop in which meaning is continuously negotiated and reinforced through collective participation.

Furthermore, the consumption of slang reflects ideological alignment. When users adopt terms like "sigma" or "roasting," they implicitly endorse the underlying values of independence, irony, and critique. In this way, consumption becomes an ideological act—a means of affiliating with shared generational values while participating in a broader digital discourse of self-expression.

4.3.3 Distribution

The distribution of Gen Z slang illustrates how language forms can spread rapidly through repost features and algorithmic visibility. Based on research data, terms such as "delulu" are not only popular due to their linguistic creativity but also because the communication environment on Instagram enables them to spread quickly and widely, especially within the K-pop fan community.

At the user level, slang spreads through interactive features such as captions, comments, memes, reels, and reposts on Insta Story. When influencers use terms such as "Sunday roasting 🌷" in their post captions, their followers tend to reuse them in their comments or personal posts. This repeated participation forms a distribution chain that makes slang a shared linguistic resource, which is continuously recontextualized in various communication situations. In addition, the use of hashtags such as "#sigma," "#redlag," and "#greenflag" also expands the reach of dissemination by connecting slang to a broader discursive network.

At the platform level, Instagram's algorithm also plays a significant role in the dissemination of slang. Posts involving slang, especially on reels and memes, often gain high engagement, which is then promoted through the explore and recommendation features, allowing them to be redistributed by the audience. The mechanism of this algorithm enables terms that were originally used only in a small circle to spread and become widely accepted.

For example, content such as "rizz 100" and "nobody can roast me better than my mom" is often reposted by Instagram's algorithm due to its high entertainment value, thereby reinforcing the normalization of these terms.

4.4 Social Practice

4.4.1 Ideology of Modernity

At the descriptive level, several slang terms embody modernity through linguistic innovation and digital adaptability. Expressions such as "rizz," "TBH," and "no cap" represent the modernization of interpersonal communication by emphasizing confidence, honesty, and authenticity in online interactions. The abbreviations "TBH" ("to be honest") and "no cap" ("no lie") serve as discursive markers of sincerity, reflecting a generational shift toward transparency and self-expression in digital communication.

Interpreted within discursive practice, these words circulate widely across memes and comments, normalizing an ideology of modern authenticity that values openness yet remains performative. Users employ "TBH" to appear genuine, while simultaneously crafting a self-image that aligns with the aesthetic and emotional codes of social media culture. This duality reflects what Marwick and Boyd (2014) describe as "performed authenticity," where honesty itself becomes a mediated performance.

At the explanatory level, these linguistic trends reveal that Gen Z constructs modernity not solely through technological progress but through the redefinition of moral and emotional values in digital spaces. The use of concise, coded slang demonstrates the modern ideal of efficiency and immediacy, while simultaneously reinforcing the neoliberal value of self-branding. Similar to findings by Wafa and Amalia (2022), the prevalence of "TBH" and "no cap" underscores that Gen Z's communication style is shaped by an ideology of modernization that privileges individual authenticity over collective conformity.

4.4.2 Ideology of Inclusivity and Identity

The second major ideological pattern relates to inclusivity and identity construction. At the descriptive level, words such as "delulu", "red flag/green flag", and "yapping" exhibit linguistic creativity that blends humor with social awareness. The clipped form "delulu" (from "delusional") is a notable example of how psychological terminology is recontextualized into self-referential humor. Similarly, the metaphorical pairing of "red flag/green flag" simplifies complex interpersonal behaviors into accessible moral categories.

Interpretatively, these slangs are used as community markers that foster belonging and shared understanding within online groups. The frequent appearance of "delulu" in fandom posts, for example, builds collective solidarity through self-irony. When users say "stay delulu babes ✌️" They affirm both individuality and group membership, embodying what Paula et al. (2024) term as "linguistic bonding in digital tribes." Likewise, "red flag" memes invite participatory evaluation, creating a sense of moral community where users collectively define what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

At the explanatory level, these practices reveal an ideology of inclusivity rooted in the desire for connection and emotional visibility. Gen Z utilizes language to democratize identity expression, transforming private emotions into public discourse and thereby challenging hierarchical norms of communication. This aligns with Van Dijk's (2006) argument that ideology operates as a shared cognitive structure shaping group identity. By reappropriating stigmatized or clinical terms like "delulu", Gen Z transforms marginal

linguistic forms into expressions of empowerment and acceptance, reinforcing inclusivity as a defining feature of their digital identity.

4.4.3 Ideology of Resistance and Self-Expression

The third ideological pattern emerging from the corpus involves resistance and self-expression, most evident in slang such as “roasting”, “sigma”, and “skibidi”. At the descriptive level, “roasting” uses metaphor and irony to mask criticism within humor, while “sigma” and “skibidi” reflect linguistic play that challenges social conventions. The term "sigma," originally denoting an independent archetype, has evolved into a symbolic expression of self-determination and defiance against mainstream notions of masculinity. Meanwhile, “skibidi”, a nonsensical word from meme culture, embodies post-ironic creativity that rejects rational or traditional forms of communication.

At the interpretative level, these slangs circulate through comment threads, reels, and meme communities as acts of discursive play. Their viral repetition transforms them into tools of collective resistance against seriousness and authority. Users adopt “roasting” as a socially acceptable form of critique and “skibidi” as a humorous rejection of coherence itself, illustrating what Shifman (2021) terms “networked play,” where absurdity becomes a shared cultural code. This usage positions humor not as trivial entertainment but as a subtle act of ideological opposition.

At the explanatory level, these discursive patterns demonstrate how Gen Z employs language to resist normative expectations while constructing alternative value systems. The ideology of resistance is visible in how irony and humor are used to destabilize social hierarchies, critique societal norms, and celebrate self-expression. In line with Fairclough’s (2013) concept of discourse as a site of struggle, slang such as "roasting" and "sigma" reveal how everyday digital communication becomes a means of negotiating autonomy and power. This supports the findings of Among (2025), who emphasizes that youth discourse online functions as both a form of cultural resistance and a mechanism for ideological renewal.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of Gen Z slang on Instagram reveals that language in digital spaces serves not only as a means of communication but also as an ideological practice that shapes identity, values, and social interactions. Using Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework, this study found that textual features such as rewording, metaphor, hyperbole, acronyms, and emojis encode ideologies of humor, authenticity, and emotional openness; discursive practices involving influencers, memes, and fandoms transform these expressions into shared cultural norms; and social practices reflect broader ideologies of modernity, inclusivity, and resistance. The novelty of this study lies in its critical discourse approach that links linguistic creativity to ideological construction, revealing how Gen Z uses slang to challenge norms and redefine identity in digital culture. Although limited to English-based Instagram data, the findings provide valuable insights for future research to explore multilingual or cross-platform variations. Theoretically, this study strengthens the role of Critical Discourse Analysis in understanding how online discourse reproduces and negotiates ideology. Practically, it underscores the significance of youth language as a reflection of cultural values and social transformation in the digital age.

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MEDIATING ORAL COMPETENCE THROUGH GEN-AI IN GENRE-BASED SPEAKING INSTRUCTION FOR FRACTURED NARRATIVES

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Abstract

Developing oral narrative skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts is challenging. It is often made more difficult by limited opportunities for personalized feedback and the cognitive burden of real-time production. This study investigated the integration of GenAI tools, specifically Gemini and ChatGPT, within a Genre-Based Approach (GBA) to scaffold the speaking skills of 32 tenth-grade students in West Java, Indonesia. This study focuses on the creative genre of "fractured stories," which is a demanding task that requires progressive scaffolding. This study used a qualitative case study design to explore how GenAI tools functioned across the GBA cycle. Data were collected through classroom observations, student-AI chat logs, students' speaking recordings, and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that GenAI tools could improve students' organizational structure and pronunciation by effectively enacting Vygotskian scaffolding, functioning as a dynamic "More Knowledgeable Other," that progressed from a lexical support during the knowledge-construction stage to a personalized phonological coach in the phase of independent practice. Analysis of speaking recordings showed marked improvement in narrative structure across all proficiency levels, while lower-proficiency students demonstrated significant gains in pronunciation accuracy via multimodal rehearsal loops. The study concluded that when embedded in a rigorous genre-based framework, GenAI transforms from a mere text generator into a robust, affective-aware partner that democratizes access to high-quality oral feedback. Future research should examine long-term retention of skills beyond the intervention period and investigate GenAI integration across diverse oral genres.

Keywords: *fractured narratives; GenAI; Genre-Based Approach; speaking*

1. Introduction

The development of speaking proficiency represents a core challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, often constrained by logistical limitations such as high student-to-teacher ratios and insufficient opportunities for substantive, personalized practice (Emilia et al., 2021). Traditional classroom instruction frequently struggles to provide the necessary immediate and tailored feedback crucial for refining oral skills, particularly complex components like pronunciation and fluency. Concurrently, the Genre-

Based Approach (GBA) has proven effective in structuring language instruction by focusing learning around the social purpose, schematic structure, and linguistic features of specific text types (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Emilia et al., 2021; Joyce & Feez, 2012; Martin, 2014).

The advent of highly advanced generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT and Gemini, presents a significant technological integration opportunity for language education stakeholders (Warschauer, 2020). These tools, which utilize sophisticated Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) technology, are capable of offering personalized, versatile, and dynamic learning environments, effectively augmenting traditional instruction. This study investigates the pedagogical synergy created by integrating GenAI within the established cyclical framework of GBA, focusing specifically on a demanding oral production task: telling fractured stories.

The theoretical lens underpinning this investigation is rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, where GenAI acts as a dynamic mediator within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Unlike fixed forms of scaffolding, GenAI provides a responsive, adaptive support structure that guides students through the iterative stages of genre mastery. The effectiveness of GenAI stems from its capacity to offer instantaneous, data-driven feedback and adapt learning materials based on individual performance, fostering enhanced self-regulation and promoting learner autonomy. This technological scaffolding facilitates the move from collaborative learning to independent mastery of both genre requirements and necessary linguistic sub-skills (Christie & Derewianka, 2008).

Despite this potential, a critical gap remains in the empirical literature: How can AI-assisted GBA scaffold students' speaking development in telling fractured stories? While systematic reviews acknowledge the profound transformation brought about by GenAI in English Language Teaching, specific models integrating these advanced tools into the explicit four-stage GBA cycle (i.e., Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF), Modeling, Joint Construction, and Independent Construction) remain empirically underexplored, particularly in relation to fractured story genre. This genre is especially ideal for examining AI scaffolding, as it entails multidimensional support and demands a high level of cognitive integration involving content generation, structural knowledge, and delivery competence. Addressing this gap requires a nuanced examination of how AI functions dynamically across the pedagogical sequence to support the development of speaking skills.

This study makes three contributions:

a. It provides a concrete pedagogical model for integrating GenAI across the full GBA cycle for oral production.
b. It demonstrates how TTS and ASR technologies create targeted pronunciation practice loops; and
c. It offers empirical evidence of how AI scaffolding evolves from receptive support to productive coaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Genre-Based Approach and Oral Competence

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA), grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics, views language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts and treats genres as recurrent, goal-oriented configurations of stages shaped by culture (Halliday, 1993; Martin & Rose, 2008). Pedagogically, GBA seeks to make the often "hidden" organization of texts visible through an explicit teaching–learning cycle, moving learners from supported participation to independent control (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Feez, 1998; Emilia, 2016). Key principles

include explicit instruction in generic stages and linguistic features, systematic scaffolding of tasks, and a commitment to equity by providing all students access to powerful literacies (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Gibbons, 2015; Singh, 2022).

In oral genres, GBA typically unfolds through four recursive stages (Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF), Modeling, Joint Construction, and Independent Construction), each targeting different aspects of oral competence (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Triastuti et al., 2022). For narratives, instruction focuses on deconstructing schematic structure (Orientation–Complication–Resolution) and language resources such as appraisal and causal connectors, then reconstructing them in learner production (Hyland, 2007; Rose & Martin, 2012). Empirical studies show that genre-based speaking instruction can improve discourse organization, accuracy, and confidence: Khatibi (2014) and Zhang (2018) found that GBA-based speaking lessons led learners to produce more coherent, stage-appropriate oral texts, while Nahid et al (2018) and Hakim et al (2025) reported gains in clarity and length of learners' spoken descriptions and expositions. However, these studies also highlight persistent challenges in providing individualized feedback and sufficient rehearsal time for all students, especially in large EFL classes (Burns, 2022; Wardani et al., 2021).

2.2 Generative AI as a Learning Tool for Speaking

To address limitations in feedback and practice opportunities, recent work has turned to Generative AI (GenAI) and related speech technologies as mediational tools in language classrooms (Hwang et al., 2020; Kessler, 2023). Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) and Text-to-Speech (TTS) systems can provide immediate, individualized feedback on learners' output and create accessible pronunciation models, thus expanding practice beyond classroom time (Eskenazi, 2009; Dizon, 2020). In this role, AI tools offer high-frequency, low-stakes opportunities for listening–speaking cycles that are difficult to achieve through teacher feedback alone, especially in resource-constrained contexts (Xu et al., 2021; Ambarita & Nurrahmatullah, 2024).

A growing body of empirical research documents AI's specific functional contributions to EFL speaking. Studies using ASR-based platforms show significant improvements in segmental accuracy and overall intelligibility, particularly for lower-proficiency learners who receive continuous feedback on mispronounced segments (Bashori et al., 2022; Sun, 2023; Abimanto & Sumarsono, 2024). Voice-based chatbots and AI speaking assistants have been found to enhance fluency, interactional confidence, and self-regulation by enabling repeated practice in a non-judgmental environment (Han, 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Wang & Young, 2023; Farooqi, 2025). In the Indonesian context, Ahyarudin and Jamilah (2024) demonstrate that AI-based instructional tasks embedded within a GBA framework improved students' speaking scores and engagement, suggesting that GenAI can effectively complement structured pedagogies. At the same time, concerns remain about technical bias and recognition gaps for non-native accents, which may lead to frustration or unequal support if AI outputs are not critically monitored (Koenecke et al., 2020; Qiao & Zhao, 2023).

2.3 Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory and Digital Scaffolding

Vygotskian sociocultural theory provides a useful lens for understanding how GenAI can mediate learning within a GBA cycle. Learning is seen as a socially mediated process in

which higher mental functions develop first on the interpsychological plane through interaction with others or tools, and then become internalized (Vygotsky, 1978). Central constructs include the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (i.e., the space between what learners can do alone and what they can achieve with support) and the notion of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), who offers graduated assistance that is gradually withdrawn (Wood et al., 1976; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

In digital environments, AI systems can function as mediational tools that approximate an MKO by offering contingent, on-demand assistance aligned with learners' current needs (Holmes et al., 2019; Noroozi et al., 2024b). For speaking, features such as instant error detection, TTS models, and dialogic prompting can be interpreted as forms of scaffolding that reduce cognitive load and support movement through the ZPD: ASR feedback highlights the gap between learner output and target forms; TTS provides accessible models for imitation; and conversational agents offer guided questioning that helps learners plan and elaborate their texts (Dizon, 2020; Johnson & Lester, 2021; Liu & Ma, 2025). When embedded in a genre-based cycle, GenAI can thus act as a dynamic mediator (sometimes a resource bank, sometimes an analyst of structure, sometimes a collaborative co-author, and finally a pronunciation coach), mirroring the progression of scaffolding described in GBA and SFL-based instruction (Emilia & Hamied, 2015; Herazo, 2021; Sarmadi Kia et al., 2024).

At the same time, researchers caution that mediation and scaffolding must remain human-directed: AI can provide powerful assistance, but teachers need to orchestrate when and how learners rely on AI so that the technology amplifies, rather than replaces, dialogic teaching and peer interaction (Wardani et al., 2021; Hwang & Chen, 2023; Weng & Fu, 2025). This implies a design stance where AI is positioned explicitly as a scaffold within teacher-guided tasks, rather than as an autonomous instructor.

2.4 Research Gap

Existing GBA studies demonstrated that genre-based pedagogy improves learners' oral organization and speaking performance, but they rarely integrated advanced AI as a systematic mediator across the full teaching–learning cycle, particularly for creative genres like fractured narratives (Khatibi, 2014; Zhang, 2018; Puspitasari et al., 2024). Conversely, most GenAI-in-speaking research targets discrete skills (e.g., pronunciation or general chatbot practice) without embedding AI within a structured GBA framework that sequences BKOF, Modeling, Joint Construction, and Independent Construction (Bashori et al., 2022; Han, 2020; Wang & Young, 2023; Ahyarudin & Jamilah, 2024). Although sociocultural work increasingly conceptualizes AI as a mediational tool, there is still little empirical evidence showing how one GenAI system can act as a progressively evolving scaffold (from resource to analyst, collaborator, and coach) across a GBA cycle and how this shapes learners' speaking development in fractured narrative tasks; this study addresses that gap by examining GenAI as a dynamic scaffold within GBA for EFL students' oral production of fractured stories.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design (Cohen et al., 2018; Hancock, 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2011; Yin, 2011). A qualitative case study was chosen to gain

a deep, holistic understanding of the process of AI scaffolding and the mechanism of mediation within a real-world, bound context (the GBA class) (Berg, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.2 Research Participants

The study was conducted at a public senior high school in Subang Regency, West Java, Indonesia, a site that represents typical Indonesian EFL classroom conditions while providing sufficient digital infrastructure for AI-mediated activities. The broader participant cohort consisted of 32 tenth-grade students (12 male, 20 female, aged 15–17) from predominantly middle to low socioeconomic backgrounds. They owned personal mobile devices and were familiar with basic digital/AI applications, ensuring access to the technological components of the intervention. For the intensive qualitative analysis, purposive stratified sampling was used to select nine focal students (three high, three mid, and three low achievers) based on previous semester English scores and teacher evaluations of speaking performance and classroom engagement, so that they represented a maximum-variation profile of proficiency and likely interaction with the AI tools and thus provided information-rich cases for examining how AI-assisted GBA scaffolding operates across different ability levels within a case study design (Stake, 1995); all participants and guardians provided informed consent, and pseudonyms (S1–S9) were used to protect anonymity.

3.3 Data collection

Data were gained from three main sources: (1) classroom observations, (2) student artifacts (AI chat logs and pre-/post-speaking recordings), and (3) semi-structured interviews. The observations spanned eight ninety-minute sessions focused on teaching the fractured story genre and concluded with a final speaking evaluation. The teaching was structured around the four cyclical stages of GBA: BKOF, Modeling, Joint Construction, and Independent Construction, as suggested by Callaghan and Rothery (1988), Joyce & Feez (2012), Martin (2014), and Emilia et al (2021).

3.4 Data analysis

The data were analyzed using a multi-layered approach. Classroom observation data were analyzed descriptively by mapping instructional activities onto the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) cycle (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Joyce & Feez, 2012; Martin, 2014; Emilia et al, 2021). For each stage, the analysis identified the specific instructional activities and the distinct roles performed by the GenAI tools. Student artifacts and interviews were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure. AI chat logs were open-coded to identify recurring functions (e.g., lexical clarification, genre explanation, guided idea generation, form-focused feedback, pronunciation rehearsal), then clustered into higher-order themes such as Lexical Support, Genre Mediation, and Performance Coaching, which were interpreted through Vygotskian notions of mediation, MKO, and ZPD to show how AI support shifted with learner needs (Vygotsky, 1978; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Interview data were coded similarly, generating themes like Reduced Anxiety, Increased Agency, and Critical Engagement with AI linked to sociocultural perspectives on affect and learner agency. Speaking performance was rated with Emilia's (2016) GBA-aligned

rubric across three dimensions (narrative structure, pronunciation, and fluency) to track development over the intervention.

3.5 Gen AI Tools and Prompting

This study used two GenAI tools: ChatGPT (free mobile version, GPT-4o) and Google Gemini (free mobile app). Regarding the prompting, the teacher modelled using the prompt to ask AI as a learning tutor in the joint construction stage by asking the AI to guide them using questions to create a fractured story. In Independent Construction, students used ChatGPT/ Gemini speech features for practice (e.g., "Listen to my story and give feedback on my pronunciation, pausing, and intonation."), combining TTS/ASR feedback with their own oral rehearsal.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was supported through triangulation and member checking. Classroom observations, student artifacts (AI chat logs, written texts, ASR/TTS records), and interviews were systematically cross-checked so that, for example, reported gains in pronunciation or confidence were examined against log evidence and rated speaking performance, helping separate robust patterns from isolated claims. Member checking was conducted by sharing interview transcripts and brief thematic summaries with focal participants for confirmation or correction, enhancing the credibility and authenticity of the interpretations.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Improvement in oral performance

Analysis of the pre- and post-observation speaking scores showed that all nine focal students improved in at least one of the three assessed dimensions (narrative structure, pronunciation, fluency), with the most consistent gains observed in narrative organization and pronunciation. Narrative structure scores indicated that all students reached the "Advanced" level by the end of the intervention, suggesting that the combination of explicit genre instruction and AI-supported drafting successfully supported their control of orientation–complication–resolution sequencing.

This pattern reinforces evidence that explicit genre teaching can move learners from fragmented speech to more coherent, purposeful narratives by making schematic structure visible and repeatedly practiced in scaffolded cycles (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Tran, 2021; Zhang, 2018). The following table shows students' improvement in organizational structure.

Table 1

Students' development in organizational structure

Student	Structure Level in Pre-observation	Structure Level in Post-observation
S1	Basic	Advanced
S2	Advanced	Advanced
S3	Intermediate	Advanced
S4	Intermediate	Advanced
S5	Intermediate	Advanced
S6	Intermediate	Advanced
S7	Basic	Advanced

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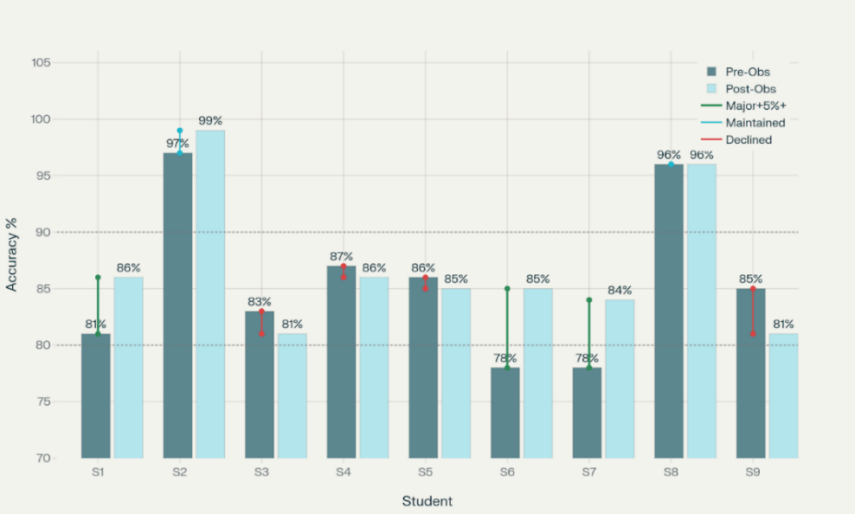
S8	Advanced	Advanced
S9	Intermediate	Advanced

All students' narratives contained the required story elements (orientation, complication, climax, resolution). Differentiation among levels was determined by the quality and sophistication of narrative coherence. Basic proficiency indicated complete but simple narratives lacking substantial elaboration or sophisticated linguistic development. Intermediate proficiency demonstrated straightforward, competent narratives with standard coherence across all stages. Advanced proficiency reflected narratives that seamlessly integrated all elements with sophisticated language choices and thorough elaboration, demonstrating superior genre mastery.

Lower-proficiency students showed marked pronunciation gains, with several moving from poor intelligibility to scores above 84%. Student S3 reflected: "I listened to the AI voice many times and practiced words it flagged as wrong. It helped because I was shy to ask the teacher to repeat." This illustrates how pronunciation improvement depends on repeated, private engagement. This is something the non-judgmental AI context facilitates. These gains align with research showing ASR-mediated pronunciation practice accelerates segmental accuracy for lower-proficiency learners (Abimanto & Sumarsono, 2024; Bashori et al., 2022; Gottardi et al., 2022).

Figure 1

Students' pronunciation improvement (pre- to post-observation)



Fluency scores showed smaller but meaningful improvements, especially in reduced pausing and fillers as students became more familiar with their fractured stories through repeated AI-mediated rehearsal. Such incremental fluency gains are consistent with research indicating that repeated, low-stakes rehearsal with AI tools helps learners reduce dysfluencies over time by stabilizing lexical retrieval and phrasing, even when formal fluency training is not the primary focus (Barrot, 2021; Farooqi, 2025).

Taken together, these results suggest that when AI is embedded in a genre-based cycle, it can function as a mediating tool that supports movement through the Zone of Proximal Development by combining explicit structural guidance with frequent, individualized feedback on form and delivery (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978).

4.2 Theme 1: AI as a Lexical and Structural MKO

Across the Building Knowledge of the Field, Modeling, and Joint Construction stages, AI functioned as a "More Knowledgeable Other" that mediated learners' access to lexico-grammatical resources and genre structure. In the BKOF stage, students used ChatGPT or Gemini as a digital glossary and information-retrieval tool to clarify unfamiliar vocabulary and cultural references encountered in the fractured stories, thereby reducing lexical cognitive load and enabling deeper engagement with the narrative content. This immediate access to lexical support ensured that students entered the subsequent stages with sufficient content knowledge and vocabulary to manipulate the genre meaningfully, echoing research that identifies AI's preparatory role in early learning phases. This preparatory function resonates with sociocultural views of mediation, where tools and artifacts help manage cognitive load so that learners can allocate more attention to meaning-making rather than basic decoding (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

During the Modeling stage, AI's role shifted from simple look-up support to that of an analytical assistant and exemplar provider. Students requested models of fractured stories based on familiar folktales and then prompted AI to analyze their schematic structure and language features, gaining metalinguistic awareness of how orientation, complication, and resolution are realized linguistically. Chat logs from this phase show learners asking AI to identify specific stages in sample narratives and to highlight key linguistic resources, while interview data (e.g., S5) confirmed that this process clarified expectations about how a story "should start with the orientation and move to the complication and finally the resolution." In this sense, GenAI partially assumes the traditional teacher role in GBA by making "hidden" genre rules explicit and negotiable, thereby extending earlier work on modeling and deconstruction in oral narrative pedagogy (Emilia et al., 2021; Joyce & Feez, 2012; Martin, 2014).

AI's capacity to deconstruct text models bridges educational divides by providing individualized linguistic analysis (Weng & Fu, 2025). Student S5 stated: "AI helped me understand the story structure (orientation, complication, resolution)." By enabling on-demand structural analysis, AI functions as a dynamic MKO accessible anytime, not just during teacher-led episodes (Lee, 2025; Wang, 2025). Chat logs from the Modeling stage (S8-Chat Log) further demonstrate this: when asked to identify schematic structure, S8 requested, "Can you show me where the orientation ends and the complication starts?" This reveals how AI's availability prompted metalinguistic inquiry beyond traditional whole-class interaction.

In the Joint Construction stage, AI operated as a collaborative writing guide and form-focused feedback provider that linked structural analysis to productive language use. Teacher-led demonstrations of prompts showed students how to co-construct fractured stories with AI, after which pairs or small groups used similar prompts on their own devices to draft narratives. As students composed, AI-generated guiding questions, suggested lexical choices, and provided immediate feedback on grammar and clarity, helping them refine lexico-grammatical accuracy before moving to independent oral production. This iterative, form-focused feedback reflects findings that learners often perceive automated corrective feedback as objective and consistent, which can make them more willing to make and revise ambitious language choices (Barrot, 2021, 2023; Algaraady & Mahyoob, 2023; Lee, 2025).

Overall, evidence from chat logs, classroom observations, and interviews suggests that in these early and mid-cycle stages, AI effectively assumed a lexical and structural MKO

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role, taking on much of the analytical and corrective work that would otherwise fall solely on the teacher. This progressive mediation illustrates a classic scaffolding trajectory, where support is initially heavy and explicit but gradually shifts toward learner control as performance becomes more independent, aligning with Vygotskian accounts of MKO-guided development in the ZPD and with GBA's emphasis on moving from joint to independent construction (Gibbons, 2015; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Martin, 2014).

4.3 Theme 2: AI as a Phonological and Delivery Coach

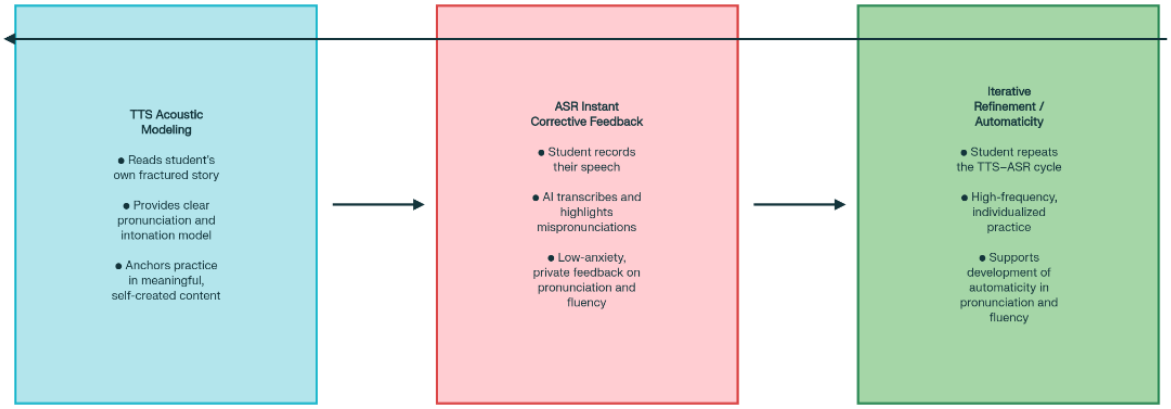
In the Independent Construction stage, AI's role evolved into that of a phonological and delivery coach, supporting students' transition from written drafts to oral performance. After using AI to help generate and refine their fractured stories, students converted their texts into audio using text-to-speech tools, which provided consistent acoustic models for pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. They then engaged in a multimodal practice loop in which they listened repeatedly to the AI-generated audio, imitated the pronunciation, and used automated speech-recognition (ASR) features in ChatGPT or Gemini to receive feedback on their oral production. The TTS–ASR loop implemented here mirrors designs in which synthetic models and automatic evaluation jointly create a closed feedback cycle, a configuration that has been shown to promote phonological awareness and more precise self-monitoring in L2 learners (Belda-Medina & Calvo-Ferrer, 2022; Dizon, 2020; Aryadoust, Zakaria, & Jia, 2024).

The TTS–ASR loop proved particularly effective for lower-proficiency learners, enabling significant pronunciation improvement through private, consequence-free rehearsal. Students engaged in iterative listening and targeted practice on words identified by the system as requiring attention. Interview data (S7) reveal that AI use evolved from vocabulary and grammar checking to pronunciation practice, fostering confidence through autonomous, non-evaluative repetition. This exemplifies the progression from lexical to structural to phonological scaffolding.

Similar to findings by Al-Ghezi et al. (2023) and Abimanto and Sumarsono (2024), the present data suggest that frequent, privately accessible practice can be particularly empowering for students who might otherwise avoid oral participation in face-to-face settings. The following figure illustrates the pronunciation loop when students practiced with GenAI.

Figure 2

AI pronunciation practice loop



Fluency gains, while more modest, appeared linked to this repeated rehearsal, as students became more comfortable with the pacing and wording of their stories and thus reduced hesitations during the final assessment.

At the same time, the data revealed clear limitations in AI-based phonological support, particularly the reduced accuracy of automatic speech recognition (ASR) for lower-proficiency accents. Some students (e.g., S5) reported that AI failed to respond appropriately during speaking practice, initially interpreting this as a personal pronunciation deficit, which poses a risk to learner self-efficacy. However, S5's subsequent decision to discontinue AI use in these situations reflected emerging critical AI literacy, as the learner attributed the breakdown to technological constraints rather than individual inadequacy.

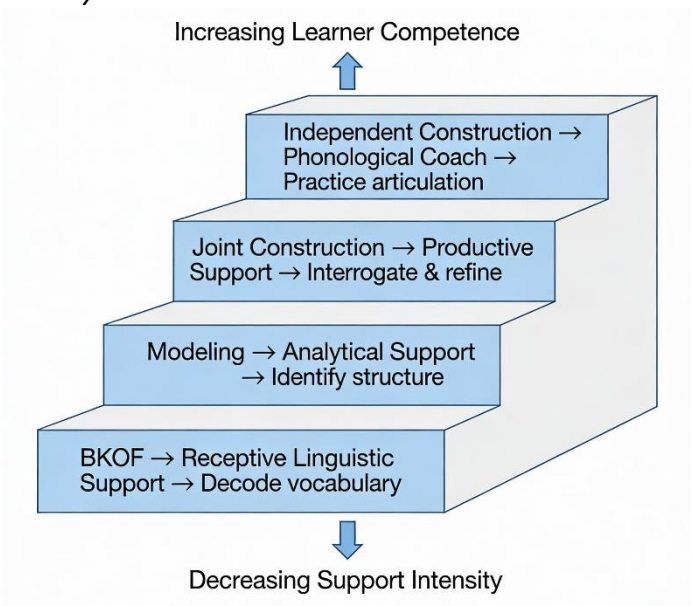
Evidence confirms AI functioned as a lexical and structural MKO (Emilia et al., 2021). Unlike class-bound teachers, GenAI enabled "on-demand deconstruction" of genre features, which is instantaneous rather than scheduled. This is a capability not previously documented in GBA. This progression through look-up, analysis, and refinement mirrors Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD scaffolding, where support decreases with competence, except here the mediator is digital and self-paced.

4.4 The Progressive Evolution of AI Scaffolding Across the GBA Cycle

The data reveal a systematic evolution in AI's mediational role that exemplifies progressive scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development. In BKOF, the AI operates at the level of receptive linguistic support: students consult it to decode unfamiliar vocabulary and cultural content, a function that requires minimal cognitive engagement beyond recognition. In Modeling and Joint Construction, AI's role escalates to analytical and productive support: students now interrogate the tool to understand generic structure, suggest alternatives, and refine grammar. These tasks require metalinguistic awareness and deliberate choice-making. Finally, in Independent Construction, AI becomes a phonological coach, where learners must practice articulation, receive automatic feedback, and iteratively adjust their motor execution. The following figure illustrates the systematic evolution in AI-assisted GBA.

Figure 3

AI scaffolding in the GBA cycle



This four-stage progression (from receptive linguistic support to phonological coaching) represents a classical scaffolding trajectory where each stage presupposes competence from the previous one (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Rather than a single mediator withdrawing support, AI's role transforms in response to evolving learner needs, maintaining appropriate cognitive load while progressively shifting responsibility. This finding extends Vygotsky's (1978) original conception by showing that technological mediators can be dynamically repurposed within a single pedagogical cycle, something a static human interlocutor cannot easily do.

4.5 Limitations and Future Research

This study contributes to understanding AI-assisted GBA for oral development, yet several constraints limit generalizability. The sample (nine students from a single school in West Java) restricts applicability across contexts. The intervention focused exclusively on fractured narratives; applicability to other oral genres (e.g., speeches, debates) remains untested. The eight-session duration precludes assessment of long-term retention or deepening of critical AI literacy. Additionally, ASR and TTS limitations with non-native accents suggest the need to compare different platforms (e.g., ELSA, Speechling, Duolingo). Finally, a more detailed discourse analysis of AI–student interactions could illuminate mediation mechanisms.

Future research should: (1) test the model across multiple contexts and proficiency levels; (2) examine other oral genres and task types; (3) employ longitudinal designs to measure retention and transfer; (4) compare AI platforms to optimize configurations for different learner profiles; and (5) investigate how teachers mediate between AI and human feedback while fostering critical evaluation of algorithmic error detection.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Generative AI functions as a dynamic, progressive mediator for oral competence, bridging instructional theory and technological application. The findings validate AI as an adaptable, More Knowledgeable Other capable of fulfilling Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development by transforming its role across the pedagogical cycle (from lexical support in the BKOF to phonological coaching in Independent Construction). This extends classical Vygotskian scaffolding into the digital age.

All nine focal students improved in narrative structure, with lower-proficiency learners showing the most substantial gains. The TTS–ASR pronunciation practice loop proved particularly effective by providing low-anxiety, high-frequency rehearsal, while students' increased confidence highlights AI's democratizing potential and affective benefits.

For practitioners, the implications are actionable: educators must design high-utility prompts that strategically shift AI's role across the GBA cycle (from resource provider to performance coach). Rather than an add-on, AI should be embedded in teacher-guided frameworks where technology amplifies, not replaces, pedagogical decision-making.

While robust, the findings are constrained by a single-context design and focus on one genre. Longitudinal research, comparative studies with control groups, investigation across oral tasks, and examination of optimal prompt-engineering for different proficiency levels would strengthen claims about generalizability and long-term efficacy.

This study illustrates a human-AI partnership grounded in pedagogy rather than technological enthusiasm. When designed within established theoretical frameworks, AI expands access to personalized feedback, particularly for under-resourced learners. The challenge lies not in whether to integrate AI, but in doing so while honoring learner autonomy and sustaining human relationships in language education.

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DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS IN VOCATIONAL SPEAKING CLASSES: TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS AND LESSON PLAN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Digital portfolios have become increasingly relevant in language education as tools for documenting learning processes, enabling multimodal task performance, and supporting formative assessment. However, limited research has examined how they are embedded in instructional planning or how teachers perceive their assessment role, especially in vocational English classrooms. This qualitative case study investigates (1) how digital portfolios are integrated into a speaking lesson plan, and (2) how a vocational English teacher perceives their use as an assessment tool. Data were collected through document analysis and an open-ended teacher questionnaire completed by an English teacher in an Indonesian vocational high school. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that digital portfolios were positioned as central to the design of speaking tasks, functioning as a structured mechanism for organizing workflow, documenting progress, and compiling multimodal evidence of learning. The teacher perceived the portfolio as a valuable tool for monitoring engagement, identifying learners who need support, and enhancing transparency in the learning process. However, constraints related to the absence of explicit assessment rubrics, increased workload, and varying student digital literacy limited the portfolio's potential for systematic assessment of speaking skills. The study concludes that digital portfolios have strong potential as process-based assessment tools in vocational English instruction; however, their effectiveness depends on the availability of clear assessment criteria, technological readiness, and sustained institutional support.

Keywords: *digital portfolios; formative assessment; speaking instruction; Vocational High School*.

1. Introduction

Assessment is a central component of language teaching and learning, shaping how students are evaluated and how teachers make instructional decisions. In recent years, the shift from product-oriented to process-oriented assessment has heightened interest in digital portfolios as tools that document learning trajectories, capture multimodal artifacts, and support reflective learning (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2021; Lin & Wen, 2023). Digital portfolios differ from traditional assessments by emphasizing longitudinal evidence rather than single-

event performance, making them especially relevant for speaking instruction where development occurs progressively across repeated attempts, revisions, and performance cycles.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially in vocational schools, students are expected not only to develop linguistic competence but also to engage with digital media, multimedia production, and technology-based communication. Vocational learners frequently participate in tasks such as video production, audiovisual editing, and online content creation. Within this context, digital portfolios offer opportunities to integrate language learning with industry-relevant digital skills, thereby supporting authentic and multimodal communication practices (Fang, 2022). *Multimodal learning* refers to learning that involves multiple semiotic modes such as audio, video, text, and visuals to construct and communicate meaning, a practice that is particularly relevant to speaking instruction in digital environments (Cakrawati & Yosintha. 2025).

Despite its pedagogical potential, implementing digital portfolios as an assessment tool presents significant challenges. Traditional language assessment relies on structured rubrics, standard criteria, and analytical assessment frameworks. However, portfolio-based assessment requires teachers to be involved in an ongoing assessment process, such as monitoring progress, reviewing iterative drafts, and interpreting diverse multimodal artifacts. These practices demand a high level of assessment literacy, understood as a teacher's ability to effectively design, interpret, and use assessment information to support learning. When assessment literacy or institutional support is limited, portfolio assessment can be subjective, time-consuming, or inconsistent (Wang & Lee, 2020). Previous studies have reported that teachers often feel uncertain about how to evaluate portfolio content, especially when assessment criteria are unclear or when submissions vary widely in format and modality (Abdullah & Tan, 2024; Said & Hashim, 2022).

Moreover, the role of digital portfolios in speaking assessment remains underexplored in the Indonesian vocational context. While several studies have examined digital portfolios for writing, reading, or general language learning purposes (Setyowati & Husna, 2021), few studies have focused specifically on their function in speaking instruction. Speaking is traditionally assessed through face-to-face performance, oral presentations, or test-based activities. which often capture only a snapshot of learners' abilities. Digital portfolios, by contrast, enable students to record and upload multiple speaking attempts, enabling teachers to observe progression over time. This potential for more comprehensive, multimodal documentation highlights the need to investigate how portfolios are integrated into lesson planning and how teachers interpret their assessment functions.

Assessment practices in speaking instruction traditionally rely on live performance, oral presentations, or test-based evaluation, which may capture only a snapshot of learners' abilities. Digital portfolios, by contrast, allow students to record, revise, and resubmit speaking performances, enabling teachers to observe developmental progress over time. However, implementing portfolio-based assessment requires teachers to exercise assessment literacy defined as the ability to design, interpret, and use assessment information effectively and to evaluate multimodal learning evidence, which includes audio, visual, and textual elements. Without clear criteria and institutional support, portfolio assessment may become time-consuming or inconsistent (Wang & Lee, 2020; Abdullah & Tan, 2024).

Although studies such as Rahimi and Shute (2021) and Chen and Huang (2022) have emphasized the usefulness of digital portfolios for formative assessment, many questions remain regarding how teachers operationalize portfolios in real instructional settings. Specifically, little is known about how portfolios appear in lesson plan whether they are positioned as core components of speaking tasks, peripheral tools for submission, or integrated systems for monitoring student performance. Similarly, teacher perceptions of portfolio-based assessment in vocational EFL classrooms remain limited in the literature. In response to these gaps, the current study examines instructional design and teacher perceptions related to the use of digital portfolios in vocational speaking instruction by answering the following research questions:

1. How are digital portfolios integrated into the lesson plan for speaking instruction in a vocational English classroom?
2. How does the teacher perceive the use of digital portfolios as an assessment tool?

These questions capture both the structural and perceptual dimensions of portfolio implementation, enabling a nuanced understanding of how portfolios function in practice. This study does *not* attempt to measure improvement in speaking fluency or evaluate student performance. While some studies make claims about the effectiveness of digital portfolios in enhancing speaking proficiency, such claims must be grounded in student performance data, which this study does not collect. Therefore, the purpose here is not to assess outcomes but rather to understand assessment *processes*.

By examining how digital portfolios are embedded in lesson planning and how teachers interpret their assessment role, this study contributes to the theoretical discussion of formative assessment and multimodal learning in EFL contexts. Practically, it offers insights for teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers on how portfolio-based assessment can be implemented meaningfully in vocational education. In the Indonesian context, the study provides empirical support for assessment practices aligned with process-based learning and digital competence development, which are central to current educational reforms.

This section reviews the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to digital portfolios, formative assessment, multimodal learning evidence, and teacher perceptions in speaking instruction. The review establishes the conceptual foundation of the study and situates the research focus within contemporary scholarly discussions.

2. Literature Review

This literature review synthesizes theoretical and empirical studies relevant to the present research. It is organized into four thematic subsections: (1) digital portfolios in language education, (2) portfolios as tools for formative assessment, (3) multimodal evidence of speaking development, and (4) teacher perceptions of digital portfolio assessment. This structure reflects the conceptual foundations of the study and clarifies how previous research informs the research focus.

2.1 Digital Portfolios in Language Education

Digital portfolios, broadly defined as curated collections of learners' digital artifacts demonstrating progress, achievement, and reflection, have gained traction in language

education due to their alignment with process-oriented assessment practices (Yancey, 2016). Unlike traditional portfolios, digital portfolios offer greater flexibility, enabling learners to upload recordings, multimedia products, drafts, and reflections in accessible formats. While early conceptual work by Barrett (2010) established digital portfolios as tools for reflection and assessment, more recent empirical studies have extended this foundation by examining portfolio implementation in contemporary digital learning environments. For example, Nguyen and Ikeda (2021) and Lin and Wen (2023) demonstrated that digital portfolios support formative assessment by enabling iterative feedback and learner self-monitoring. Similarly, Abdullah and Tan (2024) reported that portfolio-based assessment enhances transparency and learner engagement when supported by clear analytic criteria. These recent findings indicate a shift from viewing digital portfolios merely as repositories of work toward understanding them as integrated systems for process-oriented assessment and multimodal learning.

Digital portfolios also facilitate individualized evidence collection, which aligns with contemporary views of differentiated instruction and personalized learning. According to Chen and Huang (2022), portfolios allow learners to represent their performance through diverse formats, accommodating different learning preferences and technological competencies. As such, digital portfolios increasingly serve as holistic repositories of learning rather than mere replacements for traditional testing.

2.2 Portfolios as Tools for Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to ongoing evaluation processes aimed at monitoring learner progress, informing instructional decisions, and supporting learning improvements. Digital portfolios are widely recognized as effective formative assessment tools because they document learning over time and reveal patterns not visible in single-event assessments (Rahimi & Shute, 2021). Unlike summative assessments, which often capture only a snapshot of performance, formative assessments emphasize feedback, revision, and learner growth.

In speaking instruction, formative assessment is particularly important due to the dynamic and developmental nature of oral proficiency. Speaking performance can differ significantly across contexts, tasks, and recording attempts. Digital portfolios allow teachers to observe these variations and provide meaningful feedback, thus aligning assessment practices with actual learning processes (Lin & Wen, 2023). Moreover, portfolios support the formative assessment cycle by enabling students to review their prior performances and adjust their strategies accordingly.

Scholars have emphasized the need for clear assessment criteria in portfolio-based formative assessment. Abdullah and Tan (2024) argue that rubrics and analytic descriptors contribute to transparency, reliability, and fairness in evaluation. Similarly, Said and Hashim (2022) found that teachers who used rubrics during portfolio assessment demonstrated greater consistency in evaluating multimodal speaking tasks. However, the absence of explicit criteria can lead to subjective judgments and uneven assessment practices, limiting the effectiveness of portfolios. Despite these challenges, portfolios remain valuable in formative assessment frameworks due to their capacity to illuminate learning trajectories. Portfolios enable teachers to identify learners' needs early, allowing timely intervention Setyowati and Husna (2021). This formative dimension aligns strongly with the teacher perceptions identified in the present study.

2.3 Digital Portfolios and Multimodal Evidence of Speaking Development

Multimodality has become an important concept in digital language learning, referring to the use of various modes such as audio, video, text, and images to communicate meaning. Digital portfolios provide an ideal platform for multimodal evidence collection, especially in speaking instruction where voice, gesture, visual aids, and audio-visual editing skills play a substantial role (Fang, 2022). According to Lin and Wen (2023), multimodal portfolios expand the definition of speaking performance by incorporating visual and design components that support oral expression. These multimodal elements can reveal aspects of learning not captured through traditional speaking tests, such as creativity, content organization, and the use of technology to enhance communication (Xu, Chen, Wang, & Suhadolc, 2021). Moreover, multimodal evidence provides teachers with a richer dataset for understanding learner progress and competence.

Rahimi and Shute (2021) note that multimodal portfolio artifacts support more nuanced assessment because they allow learners to produce, review, and iterate on their speaking performances. This aligns with the principles of multimodal learning analytics, which highlight the interpretive depth afforded by diverse data sources. In vocational education, multimodality is even more relevant because students are trained to handle digital media production. (Kusnadi et al. 2023) emphasize that portfolios support authentic task engagement in vocational English classrooms by bridging language learning with professional digital skills. Consequently, multimodal portfolios not only represent linguistic achievement but also cultivate employability competencies.

2.4 Teacher Perceptions of Digital Portfolio Assessment

Teacher perceptions significantly influence the successful adoption of digital portfolio assessment. Positive perceptions often lead teachers to invest more time in reviewing submissions, giving feedback, and integrating portfolios meaningfully into instruction. Conversely, negative perceptions such as concerns about workload or technical difficulties can limit the effective use of portfolios. Wang and Lee (2020) found that teachers appreciated the developmental evidence available in digital portfolios but struggled with the time required to evaluate multiple versions of artifacts. Similarly, Chen & Kabilan (2022) reported that teachers viewed portfolios as beneficial for documenting learning but also expressed concerns related to digital literacy and assessment reliability.

Teacher perceptions are often shaped by institutional support, including training, access to digital platforms, and the availability of assessment tools (Said & Hashim, 2022). Without adequate support, even motivated teachers may find it challenging to implement portfolio assessment systematically. In the Indonesian vocational context, digital literacy disparities and infrastructure limitations further complicate portfolio adoption (Setyowati & Husna, 2021). The present study aligns with the broader literature showing that teacher perceptions reflect both recognition of pedagogical advantages and awareness of practical constraints. The teacher's understanding of the digital portfolio as useful for monitoring progress, providing feedback, and supporting multimodal learning resonates with the findings of Nguyen and Ikeda (2021) and Kusnadi et al. (2023). Meanwhile, the challenges identified mirror those reported globally in portfolio-based assessment research.

Drawing on formative assessment theory and multimodal learning perspectives, this study proposes a conceptual framework to illustrate the relationships among digital

portfolios, formative assessment practices, multimodal learning evidence, and teacher perceptions in vocational EFL speaking instruction. From a formative assessment perspective, the framework reflects cyclical processes of task performance, feedback, revision, and reflection (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Rahimi & Shute, 2021). From a multimodal learning perspective, it acknowledges that speaking development in digital environments is evidenced not only through oral language but also through visual, auditory, and design elements embedded in portfolio artifacts (Fang, 2022; Lin & Wen, 2023).

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of digital portfolios in formative speaking assessment

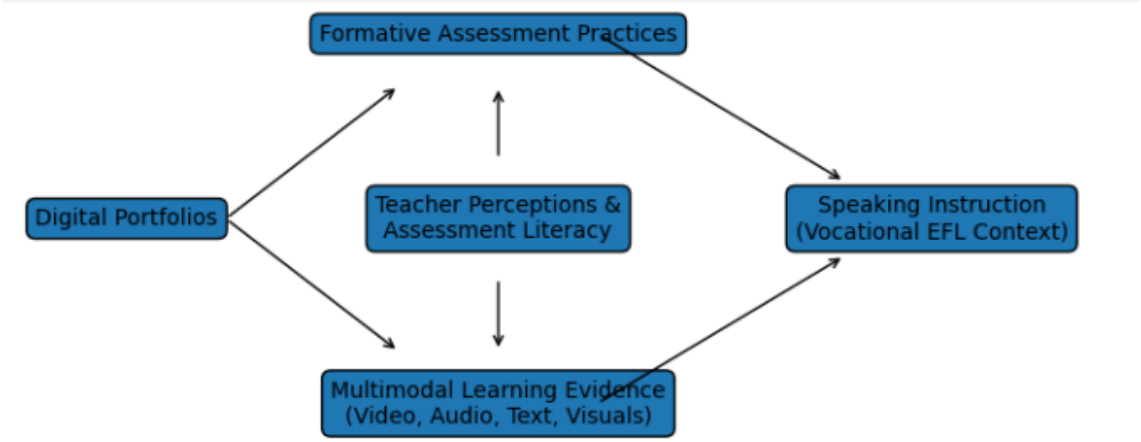

Figure 1. illustrates the conceptual framework that guides this research. This framework informs both the data collection and analytical procedures in the study, guiding the examination of instructional documents and the interpretation of teacher perceptions. Digital portfolios serve as a core instructional and assessment tool that facilitates formative assessment practices and the collection of multimodal learning evidence. These processes support speaking instruction in a vocational EFL context and are mediated by teacher perceptions and assessment literacy.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate how digital portfolios were integrated into speaking instruction and how the teacher perceived their role as an assessment tool. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of contextualized instructional practices and teacher experiences, which cannot be fully captured through quantitative measures (Creswell, 2014). The case study design was particularly appropriate because the goal was to understand a bounded system namely, the implementation of digital portfolios within one vocational English classroom.

Rather than attempting to generalize findings to broader populations, the case study aimed to provide rich, descriptive insights into how portfolios function in a real instructional environment. This design is aligned with contemporary recommendations for investigating assessment practices in authentic educational contexts (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2021; Chen & Huang, 2022). By focusing on a single teacher and lesson plan, the study was able to capture nuances in instructional decisions and assessment perceptions that broader survey-based studies may overlook.

3.1 Participant

The study was conducted at a public vocational high school in Surakarta, Indonesia. Vocational schools in Indonesia emphasize industry-oriented competencies, including multimedia production, digital communication, and technical skills. These characteristics make vocational classrooms particularly relevant for examining digital portfolio implementation, especially given their strong emphasis on multimodal learning (Kusnadi et al., 2023).

One English teacher who taught 11th-grade multimedia students participated in the study. The teacher had more than five years of teaching experience in the multimedia program and had implemented digital portfolios in speaking instruction for at least one semester prior to the study. Purposeful sampling was employed to select the participant due to their direct experience with the instructional approach under investigation (Creswell, 2014). The teacher's familiarity with digital technology and multimedia-based tasks further enhanced the relevance of the instructional materials analyzed.

3.2 Data Sources

Two primary data sources were used: teacher documents and teacher questionnaire responses.

1. Teacher Documents

The documents consisted of:

The speaking lesson plan [1]; activity sequences [2]; digital portfolio submission guidelines, and student task instructions included in the teacher's planning folder [3].

Document analysis was appropriate because the study aimed to understand how digital portfolios were structurally embedded within instructional planning. Documents capture instructional intent, sequencing, assessment design, and teacher expectations (Setyowati & Husna, 2021). The documents provided insight into the planned use of the portfolio, independent of the teacher's reflective perceptions.

2. Teacher Questionnaire

The teachers' opinions about the use of digital portfolios as assessment tools were gathered using a semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire. Open-ended responses allowed the teacher to articulate perceptions in depth and to describe personal experiences, challenges, and beliefs. This approach is consistent with qualitative assessment research, where teacher perception plays a central role in the success of innovative assessment practices (Wang & Lee, 2020).

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period during one instructional unit of speaking instruction in the second semester of the academic year.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure, which includes familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, and interpretation.

1. Document Analysis Steps

Document analysis focused on identifying:

The sequence of speaking tasks; the placement and frequency of portfolio activities; the assessment procedures involving the portfolio; the multimodal requirements embedded in tasks.

Codes such as *workflow structure, assessment checkpoints, multimodal evidence,* and *revision cycles* were generated. These codes were later grouped into broader themes representing how portfolios were embedded in the instructional design.

2. Teacher Perception Analysis

Teacher responses were coded inductively. Initial codes included *progress monitoring, feedback opportunities, authenticity, workload challenges,* and *lack of rubrics.* These codes were then clustered into thematic categories reflecting the perceived function and limitations of the portfolio as an assessment tool (Creswell, 2014).

3.4 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, this study adopted several strategies aligned with established qualitative research standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation by comparing instructional documents with teacher questionnaire responses, allowing converging evidence across data sources. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a clear audit trail documenting data collection procedures, coding decisions, and theme development. Confirmability was supported through systematic coding and reflexive analysis to minimize researcher bias. Finally, transferability was facilitated by providing a detailed description of the instructional context, participant characteristics, and assessment practices, enabling readers to judge the applicability of the findings to similar vocational EFL settings.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings derived from instructional document analysis and the teacher's open-ended questionnaire responses. Two overarching themes emerged: (1) the integration of digital portfolios within the lesson plan for speaking instruction, and (2) the teacher's perception of digital portfolios as formative assessment tools. These themes reflect both the structural and perceptual dimensions of portfolio implementation. The discussion links each theme to relevant literature to strengthen theoretical coherence.

4.1 Results

This section presents the empirical findings obtained from the analysis of teacher questionnaire responses and documents. The findings are organized thematically to address the research questions and provide a clear picture of how digital portfolios are implemented and perceived in speaking instruction. Interpretation and connection to broader theories are reserved for the Discussion section.

4.1.1 Digital Portfolios Integrated into the Lesson Plan for Speaking Instruction in a Vocational English Classroom.

This subsection reports the findings from the analysis of instructional documents, focusing on how digital portfolios are embedded in speaking lesson plans. Analysis of the instructional documents revealed that digital portfolios were deliberately embedded into the structure of the speaking lesson plan rather than positioned as an optional submission

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tool. The lesson plan organized the procedure-text speaking project into a sequence of interconnected stages: drafting a script, recording an initial video, receiving feedback, revising and re-recording, and submitting a final multimodal speaking performance. Each stage was assigned learning objectives, time allocation, submission deadlines, and required evidence to be uploaded to the digital portfolio platform. This design positioned the portfolio as the core mechanism for managing learning workflow and documenting progress throughout the speaking task.

The integration also aligned speaking instruction with vocational relevance. Students were asked to demonstrate not only oral communication skills but also multimedia production skills such as framing the camera, ensuring clear audio, adding captions or images, and editing clips which reflected professional practices in multimedia industries. By requiring multiple drafts and retaining every uploaded version, the portfolio allowed the teacher to observe development over time, identify students who fell behind earlier in the process, and ensure accountability for each learning step. Overall, the lesson plan indicated that the digital portfolio served dual functions: (a) scaffolding a structured learning process and (b) capturing multimodal evidence of growth in speaking performance.

Table 1
Results of Lesson Plan Analysis on Digital Portfolio Integration

Lesson Plan Component	Evidence of Digital Portfolio Integration	Function in Speaking Instruction
Learning objectives	Objectives included not only spoken delivery but also multimodal presentation skills (e.g., visuals, clarity of audio, editing).	Aligns speaking performance with vocational digital communication competency.
Instructional sequence	Five portfolio checkpoints were mandated: script → first recording → feedback → revision/re-recording → final recording.	Structures learning as a step-by-step process rather than a single performance.
Learning activities	Each activity required uploading artifacts (script, draft video, revised video, final video).	Documents progress and traces individual learning development.
Assessment procedures	Portfolio used for monitoring progress; no rubric included for scoring speaking performance.	Supports formative feedback more than summative scoring.
Time allocation	Deadlines and milestones were set for each upload stage.	Enhances accountability and prevents last-minute submissions.
Use of technology	Instructions required camera framing, clear audio, image insertion, and layout design.	Teaches vocational multimedia skills alongside spoken communication.

Note. Data were derived from lesson plan documents and instructional guidelines.

Based on table 1, the lesson plan positioned the digital portfolio as the core mechanism for managing and documenting learning throughout the speaking project. Learning objectives and activities required students to produce multimodal products rather

than single-take oral presentations, reflecting the vocational focus of the program. The step-by-step upload sequence (script, draft recording, revision, final recording) ensured that each stage of learning was visible and assessable. Time allocation and portfolio checkpoints helped reinforce accountability, while the technological requirements linked speaking instruction to authentic multimedia production practices. Overall, the lesson plan was designed to use the portfolio not merely as a place to store the final product, but as a structured learning and assessment workflow that supports formative monitoring of speaking development.

4.1.2 Teacher Perceptions of Digital Portfolios as Assessment Tools

The teacher perceives the use of digital portfolios as an assessment tool; six themes emerged from the thematic analysis of teacher responses. Each theme is introduced and concluded to clarify its contribution to understanding portfolio-based assessment.
The interview findings revealed six major themes related to the implementation of digital portfolios as formative assessment tools in speaking instruction.

Theme 1 — Planning and Preparation

This theme reflects the teacher's views on the importance of preparation prior to portfolio implementation. The teacher described preparing learning objectives, example portfolios, sample videos, and scoring rubrics before teaching.
The teacher emphasized that successful implementation depended on careful planning, including aligning learning objectives, preparing sample portfolios, and clarifying expectations. Planning was viewed as essential for minimizing student confusion and ensuring smooth implementation.

Table 2

Theme 1 planning and preparation

Code	Interview Statement
Planning learning objectives	"I start by preparing learning objectives that connect the structure of a procedure text with how students will demonstrate it in their video portfolio."
Preparing instructional media	"Before teaching, I prepared sample videos, portfolio examples, and the rubric so that students could clearly see what was expected of them."
Connecting English with multimedia skills	"Because this is a multimedia class, I tried to connect English speaking with what they do every day like editing and designing."

The first theme identified in the analysis was planning and preparation. This preparation appeared to serve two functions: ensuring that students clearly understood expectations, and reducing the risk of confusion during the project. The consistency of codes related to planning suggests that the teacher viewed preparation not only as a technical requirement but also as a pedagogical strategy.

Theme 2 — Implementation Process

This theme captures how the portfolio was enacted during instruction. The teacher described applying the digital portfolio through a structured sequence that included introduction, modelling, guided practice, individual recording, revision based on feedback, and final presentation.

Table 3
Theme 2 implementation process

Code	Interview Statement
Introducing digital portfolios	"At first, I explained what a digital portfolio is, showed examples, and discussed why this method is useful for speaking assessment."
Modelling	"I modelled how to create the script, record, and upload the video, so they did not get confused."
Guided practice	"During the first recordings, I guided them step by step until they became more confident."
Feedback cycles	"Students practiced several times. After each recording, I gave comments on pronunciation and fluency. They revised and improved their videos before the final presentation."
Instructional sequence	"The process was clear: script, recording, feedback, revision, and final presentation."

The second theme related to the implementation process. The results showed that modelling plays a central role in facilitating understanding, as students first observe the entire process before engaging independently. The analysis also shows that its implementation is iterative rather than linear; students often revisit previous recordings after receiving feedback, allowing them to make gradual improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and organization.

Theme 3 — Student Engagement and Motivation

This theme addresses learner responses to portfolio-based speaking tasks. The teacher reported increased engagement and motivation, particularly as students observed improvement across successive recordings. Authenticity of tasks contributed to learner confidence.

Table 4
Theme 3 student engagement and motivation

Code	Interview Statement
Increased enthusiasm	"Students were more active and creative; they liked combining English and multimedia tools."
Valuing authenticity	"They became excited because the project looked real and relevant to multimedia—not just a usual speaking task."
Confidence building	"Some students who used to be shy became more confident after seeing their improvement from the first video to the last one."

The result showed that engagement did not surge immediately but developed gradually as students gained confidence and began to notice their progress from one recording to the next. This gradual increase in engagement suggests that familiarity with tools and visible improvement contributed positively to motivation.

Theme 4 — Assessment and Feedback

This theme focuses on how assessment was conducted through the portfolio. Assessment was described as primarily formative. Continuous feedback guided revisions and enabled monitoring of progress across speaking attempts.

Table 5

Theme 4 assessment and feedback

Code	Interview Statement
Use of the rubric	"I used the same rubric throughout the project so students could track their improvement."
Formative assessment	"Feedback made them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Many students said this helped them improve step by step."
Evidence of learning	"With the digital portfolio, I could see their progress clearly from video to video. It was easier to evaluate improvement."

The results showed that the teacher perceived feedback as a critical component of the digital portfolio cycle. The use of the same analytic rubric across recordings enabled students to track their progress, while ongoing feedback both written and oral guided revisions and promoted reflective learning. The NVIVO evidence indicates that assessment was not positioned as a final evaluation but functioned as a continuous learning mechanism throughout the project.

Theme 5 — Challenges Faced

This theme captures constraints encountered during implementation. Challenges included technical difficulties, unstable internet access, and variation in students' digital skills. These challenges did not hinder the continuation of the project but required teacher adaptation.

Table 6

Theme 5 challenges faced

Code	Interview Statement
Technical obstacles	"Some students had problems uploading videos or managing the editing apps."
Internet limitations	"The internet connection was sometimes unstable, so I had to be flexible with deadlines."
Varying digital proficiency	"Not all students were fast with editing, but their peers usually helped them."

The result showed that strategies such as extending deadlines, receiving portfolio files offline, and encouraging peer assistance were used to maintain the pace of learning despite technical barriers.

Theme 6 — Reflection and Future Implementation

This theme reflects the teacher's evaluative stance toward continued use of digital portfolios. The teacher viewed digital portfolios as effective tools for monitoring progress and supporting reflective teaching, while noting that sustainability depended on infrastructure and institutional support.

Table 7
Theme reflection and future implementation

Code	Interview Statement
Effectiveness of method	"Overall, the digital portfolio is very effective for speaking class. I can see real progress."
Teacher learning	"This method also helped me reflect on my teaching because I could analyze student progress more deeply."
Recommendation	"If the facilities are ready, I would continue using digital portfolios in the next school year."

The teacher described the digital portfolio as beneficial for improving speaking performance and increasing student motivation, while acknowledging that its success depends on the availability of adequate facilities. The teacher also reported that analyzing students' portfolio progress helped them reflect on their own instructional effectiveness. This perspective indicates that the digital portfolio served not only as a student assessment tool but also as a form of reflective professional practice for the teacher.

4.2 Discussion

This finding confirms that digital portfolios function as formative assessment tools, supporting prior studies in EFL contexts. The results indicate that digital portfolios functioned as an integrated framework for process-based speaking assessment, multimodal learning, and formative feedback in vocational EFL instruction. Planning and scaffolding reflected principles of constructive alignment, while iterative feedback cycles supported gradual improvement in oral performance. The challenges identified align with existing literature on workload and technological constraints, underscoring the importance of institutional support. The findings with the English teacher revealed that the implementation of the digital portfolio in teaching procedure-text speaking monologues followed a structured and pedagogically informed process. The teacher explained that the planning stage began with identifying learning objectives aligned with the curriculum and the needs of multimedia students. According to the teacher, these objectives focused on improving students' fluency, pronunciation, and delivery while integrating digital tools that reflect the competencies required in the multimedia field. This deliberate planning reflects the principle of instructional alignment described by (Biggs, 1996), which emphasises that planning, teaching, and assessment must support each other to produce effective learning. Similar to studies conducted in European and East Asian EFL contexts (Rahimi & Shute, 2021; Chen & Huang, 2022), the present findings indicate that digital portfolios enhance formative feedback by enabling iterative performance review and longitudinal monitoring.

During the introduction phase, the teacher provided explicit explanations of what a digital portfolio is, how it would be used as part of speaking assessment, and what learning outcomes students were expected to achieve. The teacher also showcased sample digital-

portfolio products, including video demonstrations and slide-based procedure presentations. This modelling phase is consistent with the Genre-Based Approach (Hyland, 2004), in which teachers must present clear examples before students construct their own texts. The teacher noted that providing models helped students better understand the structure of a procedure text, including the use of imperative verbs, sequencing markers, and clarity of steps.

The teacher described the implementation as a step-by-step cycle that guided students from guided practice to independent production. After modelling, students worked collaboratively to draft their scripts and experiment with digital tools such as Canva, PowerPoint, Flipbook, and CapCut. Throughout the process, the teacher implemented ongoing formative assessment. Students received verbal and written feedback on their pronunciation, organisation, vocabulary use, and delivery. The teacher emphasised that allowing students to revise their recordings before final submission encouraged reflective learning. This reflects Barrett's theory of portfolio learning (2007), which positions portfolios as iterative cycles of performance, reflection, and revision. According to the teacher, this approach allowed students to monitor their progress and gradually refine their monologues, resulting in more polished final products.

The teacher also explained several challenges during implementation, including students' inconsistent internet access, variations in digital-editing skills, and time constraints for completing recordings. However, these challenges were mitigated through practical solutions such as flexible submission options, peer tutoring, and additional practice time. This adaptability demonstrates the teacher's role not only as an evaluator but also as a facilitator who adjusts instruction to meet student needs.

Overall, the interview data show that the implementation of the digital portfolio was a systematic, scaffolded, and student-centred process. The teacher's instructional decisions supported procedural understanding, multimodal expression, and reflective practice, all of which contributed to improved speaking performance among multimedia students. The findings indicate that the teacher played a critical role in bridging pedagogical theory with practical classroom application, ensuring that the digital portfolio was not merely a technological tool, but a meaningful framework for language learning and assessment.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the integration of digital portfolios into vocational English-speaking instruction and explored a teacher's perceptions of their role as formative assessment tools. Evidence from lesson plan analysis and teacher questionnaire responses indicates that digital portfolios functioned primarily as a structured, process-oriented assessment system rather than a summative scoring mechanism. The deliberate integration of portfolios across multiple stages of the speaking task drafting, recording, revising, and final submission reflects intentional instructional design aimed at documenting learners' developmental progress over time. The use of multimodal video artifacts further aligned speaking assessment with vocational learning demands by integrating language performance, media production, and digital communication skills.

Teacher perceptions revealed that digital portfolios provided rich evidence of learning trajectories, enabled targeted formative feedback, and enhanced transparency in assessment practices. Compared with single-event in-class speaking performances, replayable multimodal recordings offered more comprehensive and reliable evidence of

student development. Nevertheless, the implementation of digital portfolios was constrained by increased teacher workload, variations in student digital literacy, and the absence of standardized analytic rubrics, which limited consistency and efficiency in assessment. Despite these constraints, the teacher reported strong positive effects on student accountability, engagement, and motivation, noting that portfolios helped students visualize their own improvement and develop a sense of ownership over their work. The findings suggest that digital portfolios hold considerable potential as formative assessment tools in vocational EFL speaking instruction. However, its effectiveness depends on clear evaluation criteria, adequate technological infrastructure, and sustained institutional support. In the Indonesian context, these findings resonate with the principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which emphasizes authentic assessment, learner autonomy, and the integration of digital competencies into classroom practice. Digital portfolios align well with these policy directions by supporting process-based assessment and multimodal learning relevant to vocational education.

Overall, this study suggests that digital portfolios hold considerable promise as formative assessment tools in vocational EFL speaking instruction. Their effectiveness depends on clear evaluative criteria, adequate technological infrastructure, and sustained institutional support. This study was limited by its focus on a single participant and instructional context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research should therefore incorporate multiple participants, include student perspectives, and examine scalable models of portfolio-based assessment that maintain pedagogical quality while minimizing teacher workload.

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PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR STRUCTURES: THE CASE OF EFAL TEACHERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

English grammar instruction is fundamental to learners' success, especially in contexts where English is not a first language. However, despite its importance, the teaching and learning of English grammar continue to face persistent challenges. This paper investigates the teaching of English First Additional Language (EFAL) grammatical structures in selected public secondary schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa, and identifies obstacles to effective grammar instruction. The study was prompted by learners' inadequate grammatical proficiency, as reflected in National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results. Employing a qualitative exploratory design, data were collected through classroom observations of Grade 11 EFAL teachers across five schools representing five education districts. The study is grounded in both the Grammar Translation and Communicative Language Teaching approaches. Its significance lies in exploring the practical realities of grammar instruction, thereby shedding light on possible causes of learners' grammatical weaknesses. Findings reveal that while some teachers demonstrated a sound understanding of grammar rules and structures, others showed misconceptions regarding grammar teaching. Evidence of learner interlanguage, permeability, and fossilization was also observed. Moreover, teachers employed varying degrees of adaptation of the three approaches and utilized diverse teaching and learning materials. The study concludes that effective grammar instruction requires enhanced teacher training in the integration of multiple pedagogical approaches to strengthen learners' understanding of English grammatical structures.

Keywords: *English first additional language; fossilization, grammar structures; learner-teacher material; permeability; teaching approaches and methods.*

1. Introduction

According to Ahmed (2024: 41), for second language teachers, grammar is a crucial section of language teaching which can potentially enhance English Second Language (ESL) learners' overall understanding of the language. Santana, 2019 and Marzulina et al. (2019) observed that many ESL learners worldwide display inadequate proficiency levels in English language, projected largely through poor reading and speaking as well as the employment of

ungrammatical English, especially in writing tasks such as tests and examinations. South Africa is not immune to this problem. Hence, researchers, authorities and the entire SA society appear disturbed by poor English language proficiency of South African ESL learners. The EF English Proficiency Index for Schools (EF EPI-s) (2019), which examines the acquisition of English skills by full-time students aged 13 to 22, asserts that the millions of children that learn English at schools, including in South Africa, and who sit for a standardised university entrance examination at the end of secondary education, do not have an understanding of grammar which helps learners with effective language use in both written and spoken forms.

South Africa is one of the many countries whose school-going population is consisted largely of ESL learners as well as teachers. ESL, namely English First Additional Language (EFAL) in the South African context, is the level at which English language is delivered across a majority of schools. These learners thus spend a large portion of their academic year in the classroom taught by predominantly EFAL teachers who, even when well qualified, do not possess the necessary expertise to deliver lessons in English, resulting in failure by the ESL learners to acquire the proficiency that is of acceptable standards (Nel & Swanepoel, 2010: 47).

The inadequate expertise of EFAL teachers is worsened by their insufficient knowledge, and application of unsuitable grammar teaching methods. The issue of teaching methods of English language and their effect on learner acquisition of ESL is brought to the fore by a study by Makiwane-Mazinyo, (2017:10457), who asserts that teachers' inability to apply correct ESL methods will likely affect the teaching of English language, which will consequently act as a barrier to teaching grammatical structures.

Additionally, according to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (2011:11), English grammar should regularly be incorporated in the teaching of the language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, while also, at times, it needs to be explicitly and independently taught. This implies that grammar should at times be taught as an entity and not always in the context of the four skills. Doing so requires that teachers discern which methods to employ in English language teaching and for which language skills are those methods best suited.

The employment of unsuitable methods of grammar teaching brings to light the poor quality of teaching and learning that takes place in English language classrooms, and in particular, the effectiveness of teaching grammar in EFAL environments. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 28) highlight the pivotal role that grammar teachers play in teaching of grammar. For the majority of ESL learners, the teacher is the sole provider of knowledge and direction. This implies that teachers, with the employment of correct ESL methods, are often considered by their learners as the only accessible models, stimuli, counselors and mentors of ESL, which learners should emulate. In addition, in a study by Uys, Van der Walt, van der Berg and Botha (2007:77), cited in Nel and Swanepoel (2010:48), it was found that the teachers demonstrated a lack of knowledge and skills required to teach the four language skills as well as a disregard of the importance of methodological skills. This seems to have a bearing on the general poor English language proficiency of South African ESL learners, which is perceived to be escalating by various researchers, authorities and the entire SA society. While various studies have investigated the phenomenon of inadequate grammar proficiency within and beyond South Africa(Mkhatshwa, 2017, Van der Walt, van der Berg and Botha, 2007; Makiwane-Mazinyo, (2017; Nel & Swanepoel, 2010: 47) there is a research gap on how EFAL teachers' grammar pedagogy impacts on this phenomenon especially in Limpopo Province, which necessitated this study which aimed to examine how English First

Additional (EFAL) teachers taught English grammatical structures in the selected public schools in Limpopo Province. In an attempt to achieve this aim, the study formulated the following research objectives:

1. To explore and describe the experiences of the phenomenon of the handling of grammar structures by EFAL FET grammar teachers.
2. To suggest ways in which the teaching of English grammar to ESL pupils by EFAL teachers can be improved.

The researchers strongly believe that information collected from the results of this study will help enhance the teaching of English grammar particularly in ESL contexts where teachers are predominately EFAL. Therefore, to achieve the above-mentioned aims, the researchers formulated the below mentioned research question: *How do EFAL teachers in Limpopo Province implement and adapt grammar teaching approaches in classroom practice?*

2. Literature Review

In relation to the purpose of the study, the below section reviews the literature pertinent to this study in three subtopics namely: general pedagogical frameworks, the significance of grammar structures, grammar in South African context, the role of the teacher in grammar teaching as well as the main approaches and methods employed for grammar teaching. The researchers felt that the above selected areas of literature would help to position the study well.

2.1 Pedagogical Frameworks

The philosophical frameworks underpinning this study include an Objective-based Approach, Competency Approach and Problem-solving Approach. An objective-based approach posits that objectives are presented as students' behavior. Thus, the formulations of these objectives refer to activities from the point of view of the student, not from the teacher. This approach resonates with the behaviorist theory that is concerned with the study of observable behaviors of students and is relevant to this study because teachers' perspectives (which are sometimes expressed through certain behaviors) are paramount in this study.

The competency approach, on the other hand, hinges on the commitment to making learners work on global activities that are related to their everyday life. To implement a competency -based approach, certain principles must be respected. This approach, since its focus is on competency, is relevant to the teaching of English grammar structures since the focus is usually on competency.

Lastly, Problem-solving Approach is increasingly used in areas where it is impossible for learners to master all the knowledge in the field within a limited time frame. It is argued that problem-based learning is effective in developing skills and improving learners' attitudes toward learning. Indeed, learners who actively participate in the construction of various problems in the classroom will be involved in solving them. It is understood that the role of the teacher in this approach is to only facilitate and guide the learning process. This approach also aligns well with the teaching of English grammar structures since it touches on the development of specific skills and the attitudes of learners.

Table 1.1 below summarises the above-mentioned pedagogical approaches by Chekour (2018).

Educational Approaches			
In French		In English	
In the article	In the title of the article	In the article	In the title of the article
"approche par objectifs"		"Objective - based approach "	
421	10	659	12
"approche par compétences"		"Skills-based approach"	
4340	11	4470	90
" Approche par projet"		"project-based approach"	
485	15	9280	315
"approche par résolution de problèmes"		"Problem solving-based approach"	
123	0	148	3
"Approche d'investigation historique"		"Historical-investigative approaches"	
0	0	75	1

2.2 Methods of Grammar Teaching

Grammar teaching encompasses the use of suitable approaches and methods. Hasanova et al. (2021:375) define an approach as a principle and informed viewpoint which makes teaching possible, and which provides the framework on which the teaching process is based. Further, an approach provides direction and expectations that are obtainable from the teaching process. Conversely, a method denotes a planned, organized, orderly and systematic procedure employed by the teacher to impart knowledge and skills to the learner. According to the British Council (2015), a language teaching approach is a manner of analyzing teaching and learning and providing an underlying view of what constitutes a language, and of how it can be learned. An approach can therefore be defined as theories about the nature of language and language learning, which serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching. Therefore, teaching methods, procedures and techniques of teaching and assessment follow logically from the approaches. For example, the Communicative language teaching method emanates from the Communicative approach.

Furthermore, Richards and Rodgers (1986: 16) postulate that there are generally two major categories of teaching approaches inter alia: Major approaches and the Alternative/Current approaches. Among the vast varieties of approaches developed, the most commonly known include Audio-lingual, Communicative, Text-based, Process, Grammar-translation, Direct, Reading, Comprehension-based, Content-based, Task-based and Participatory approaches.

In the same vein, methods of teaching involve the breakdown of language learning approaches into tangible behaviors. They include mainly traditional methods such as the Audio-lingual, Grammar-translation and Communicative Language Teaching as well as the more recent 'designer methods' such as the Silent Way, Community Language Teaching and Suggestology or Suggestopedia (Celce-Murcia, 2013: 2). Out of the myriads of teaching methods, the Communicative Language Teaching, Process, Comprehension-Based and Text-Based methods are a few commonly known and employed methods in South African schools (Mashiane, 2019: 33, Mkatshwa, 2017: 9070).

2.3 Pedagogical Significance of Grammar Structures

Grammar, as a concept, means different things to different people. Rooney, K., & Soukhanov, A. (Eds.) (1999: 812) perceives it as a particular set of language rules. Ameen (2023) opines that grammar is a system and structure that plays a significant role in language learning, and which allows effective communication to take place in the target language.

Greenbaum and Nelson (1999:5) view it as a range of language activities such as word-formation and sentence as well as a book in which the organizing principles are presented. Thus, someone who follows the rules of a language may result in being referred to as someone who 'knows' his or her grammar. Wang (2010:78) corroborates what the previous authors stated by saying that grammar is a set of rules one follows when choosing words and putting words together to make sense. Rules, as a result, play a significant role in language teaching'. Debata (2013: 483) describes grammar as a force that guides how people should put words together into sentences, whereas Ellis (2006: 84) views it as a presentation of distinct grammatical structures. According to Hudson (1992: 20), both language structures and vocabulary are embedded in grammar. Larsen-Freeman (2013: 258) defines grammar as 'a system of vocabulary and grammatical patterns that are used to create appropriate meaning'. That means that grammar deals with the structure or form of the language while also functioning as an instrument through which meaning is formed. Bastone (1994) views grammar as a formal multi-faceted form of language that indicates meaning in that language and a flexible commodity which functions as a point of reference for users and learners of a language. Abdulmajeed and Hameed (2017: 40) assert that grammar is the word that represents the rules that people follow when they use a language. Therefore, grammar focuses primarily on the rules or structures of a language, which may facilitate communication. Without these rules, effective communication with others would be unrealizable. Since it is difficult for students to speak English well without learning English grammar, in formal education, it is inevitable for teachers who teach foreign languages to teach grammar (Wang, 2010:78). Grammar is very important in pedagogy because the standard of mastering a language embodies the importance of grammar teaching. Grammar is also very important for communication (e.g. expression), that is, to be clear without any nuances.

2.4 Grammar in South African context

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (2011: 46), grammar entails predominantly the presentation of language structures and conventions. For the Further Education and Training phase, which includes Grades 10 to 12, English First Additional language grammar comprises the comprehensive list of forms and rules with which English language is learnt as well as English vocabulary, which involves the use of synonyms, antonyms and other word relations. Furthermore, it is a study of figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, etymology and neologisms, parts of speech, spelling, punctuation as well grammar structures. Grammar structures refer, in EFAL settings in Further Education and Training (FET), to items such as nouns, determiners, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, verbs, tenses, concord, modals, conditional sentences, voice, and speech (EFAL Paper 1: 2019).

2.5 The role of the teacher in grammar teaching

Ameen (2023) concludes that while grammar is a necessity in language teaching, it is not an inspiring section to study for many learners. The dull and uninspiring connotations linked to grammar brings to the fore the pivotal role that grammar teachers need to assume to help this situation. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 28) assert that the role of teachers in grammar teaching depends on the methods that they employ to teach it. These roles include the teacher being viewed as the primary source of language, as in the Audiolingual method, to that of a psychological counsellor in methods such as Counselling Learning. Ameen (2023)

postulate that since grammar has negative connotations for many learners, which may impact the process of learning it, it is the teachers' prerogative update their manner of teaching English grammar, which would exert a positive mind-set among learners toward learning it.

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (2011: 12) stipulates a clear need for direct teaching of the basics of grammar. Notwithstanding the fact that it is encouraged that teachers mainly play a supportive role in language learning, CAPS stresses the need for explicit teaching of structures, particularly if the learners keep on committing errors in their language learning activities. It is therefore essential for EFAL FET teachers to constantly seek for suitable, adequate and effective methods to teach grammar in order to facilitate interpretation and assimilation. This is because it has been shown that inadequate knowledge and practice of language structures will hinder the practice required by the main four English language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Consequently, inaccuracies in speaking reading, listening and writing activities will likely impact learners' comprehension during listening and speaking activities as well as create confusion for the reader or misrepresent the intended message (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, 2011:15).

2.6 Conceptual framework

According to Wang (2010:80), the history of language teaching and the role of grammar have been addressed by a number of linguistic theories and pedagogies, and the way grammar is considered has a decisive influence on pedagogical practices, learning processes and many other areas involved in language teaching. The study in this article focused on how EFAL teachers taught grammar. Thus, this study was underpinned by principles of Grammar Translation Method (c.f. Chomsky, 1965) and Communicative Language Teaching approach. Wang (ibid) argue that Communicative approach makes linguistic knowledge run through linguistic performance as a teaching purpose. Grammar teaching services linguistic performance, therefore, we can assert that as an indispensable part of language teaching. The two frameworks were selected over others because they permeate through the whole process of grammar learning and teaching. They also had most potential to shape the observation criteria in this study as the teachers observed would likely employ either the Communicative approach which emphasises the need for language production which is uninhibited by language correction or Grammar-Translation approach whose focus is rather on the learners producing correct grammar structures. This implies that it was almost imperative that teachers' practice would lean mainly on one of the two.

2.7 The Study

The choice of the site of a study resulted from a combination of criteria including availability, accessibility and theoretical interest (Schwedt, 1997:140). This study was conducted at five secondary schools, each sampled from five education districts namely, Capricorn, Mopani, Waterberg, Vhembe and Sekhukhune districts in Limpopo province, South Africa. The selected schools were in terms of SA Department of Education classified ranging from quintile 1 to 3. The motivation for selecting these schools emanate from each representing each of the five education districts. The researchers in this study are lecturers at the University of Limpopo, which is located in Capricorn District. In SA, pupils write an examination in Grade 12 to obtain a National Senior Certificate (NSC). The NSC in SA is a statutory requirement for entry into higher education and the results of the NSC are often

difficult to interpret for the purposes of higher education (Prince, 2017:134). A majority of teachers who teach in public (government) schools are black and L2 speakers of English. Teachers who do not do Bachelor of Education (BED) do Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education PGCE. The training of a PGCE in SA is one year. Thus, one of the arguments in this study is that teachers who do PGCE suffer from not being inadequately trained in terms of teaching methodology.

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design and Method

This study employed an exploratory research design which, according to Leedy and Ormond (2013: 32), is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social phenomenon. Thus, teachers' handling of EFAL FET grammar structures was explored. According to Swaraj (2019), exploratory research design formulates problems, accumulates insights and explanations as well as clarifies concepts, thus preventing impracticalities in an organized and precise manner. The researchers employed a qualitative approach in this study. To meet the aims of this study, a single-method strategy comprising a self-designed observation scheme was developed and used to observe grammar teachers in classes and the type of pedagogy/ies utilized. This strategy was designed and modelled on well-known and tested observation schemes by other scholars because it fitted well with what the researchers wanted to investigate. The trustworthiness of observations was ensured by using member-checking. Varpio et al. (2017) postulate that member checking is a commonly used method of ensuring trustworthiness which often entails presentation of data transcripts to participants to obtain feedback from them. In this regard, the observed practices by the teachers were shared with the teachers after each observation to get rid of any misconceptions and discrepancies in interpretation.

3.2 Population, Sample, Sampling Method and Procedure

Furthermore, the study employed purposive sampling derived from a selected number of EFAL FET grammar teachers. Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) assert that purposive is commonly used in qualitative research because of its ability fulfil a specific purpose that a researcher has and ascertain the production of unbiased, reliable and trustworthy findings. The specific purpose of the researchers was to explore the manner in which grammatical structures were handled. It was thus hoped that the answer to the above research question would contribute to answering the question: How do EFAL teachers handle the teaching of grammatical structures, particularly in public schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa?

A total of five (1 female and 4 males) grade eleven (11) teachers participated in the in the study after giving their informed consent. All these research respondents indicated that they spoke English as a Second Language. The assumption was that native speakers might have a different view towards teaching of grammar. The researchers observed these lessons at different times of the day. The procedure was that each research participant taught his or her lesson observed by the researchers. As mentioned, the sample was made up of five (5) grade eleven (11) teachers from five (5) schools, (3 males and 2 females) each school belonging to each of the five (5) Limpopo Province districts. The rationale for selecting each of the five schools was as follows: one school was selected because it was one of the top performing schools in the district, one was from a largely rural area, while another one was one of the oldest schools in Limpopo, established in 1937. The other two schools comprised of a Maths, Science and Commerce stream only school while the fifth was selected as it was

located in the semi-urban township. Sampling was done in this manner to ensure that Limpopo Province is covered satisfactorily. The profile of the research subjects (teachers) is indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Teachers' Profiles

Teacher No	Gender	Language	Number of years teaching English	Qualification of the teacher
T1	Female	Sepedi	11	BA degree + PGCE
T2	Male	Sepedi	13	STD (Teachers Diploma)
T3	Female	Sepedi	14	STD (Teachers Diploma)
T4	Male	Sepedi	17	STD (Teachers Diploma)
T5	Male	Xitsonga	24	STD (Teachers Diploma)

Data was collected through observations. The researchers only played a role of just observers, implying that they did not, at any point, in any way, intrude in the lesson. Observations refer to the act of closely and systematically watching or monitoring phenomena to gather data and information (Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). An observation scheme was developed and used to observe grammar teachers in classes (see Appendix A). Ethical considerations included informed consent, respect for dignity of participants, anonymity and confidentiality.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments and Analyses

This study employed classroom observations as data collection instrument. This instrument was used to collect data meant to explore and describe how grammar structures were taught by EFAL FET grammar teachers in various selected schools. Observations from EFAL FET grammar classes were analysed through Thematic Content Analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-step thematic analysis. The steps include familiarisation with the data collected, generation of codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes as well as producing the report. This implies that the data collected from the observations were presented narratively in line with the thematic content analysis. Some of the themes that emerged from the analysis were outcomes, learner grammar, methods, types of teaching materials used, learner-teacher support materials and assessment. Furthermore, researchers such as Read (2007:107) posits that this kind of investigation typically require a relatively large sample. In this study, the sample was significant enough to make generalisable results.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Observations data are presented in terms of biodata, outcomes, learner grammar, methods, types of teaching materials used, learner-teacher support materials and assessment (see Appendix A). The topics taught during the observations were word classes taught in the context of autobiography, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, reading comprehension techniques (which was not a grammar topic) and cartoon interpretation.

The results indicate that 4 of 5 teachers held Senior Teachers' Diplomas (STDs) whereas only 1 had a university teaching degree. The lesson outcomes were stated excellently by 4 teachers, while 1 teacher did not state the outcomes. Two teachers taught grammar structures and rules excellently. This was good for the other 2 teachers, while 1 teacher did not teach a grammar topic. Two teachers employed a single method of teaching

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excellently, 2 did so marginally, while for 1 teacher, the employment of a single method was good. The adaptation of the chosen method(s) was considerable in 1 lesson and good in another. There was, however, no adaptation in the other 3 lessons. In terms of methods used, 1 teacher used the Grammar translation method excellently, 1 used the Task-Based Language Teaching method excellently, while 1 teacher's application of this method was good. Communicative Language Teaching was applied considerably and well in 2 lessons, respectively. No teacher used the Audio-lingual method in any of the lessons. No textbooks were used in all 5 lessons, but there was excellent use of the chalkboard in all lessons. Pamphlets were used excellently in 2 lessons, considerably in 1 and well in another. A study guide was used by only 1 teacher, whereas no teacher made use of the dictionary, projector, chart or poster. The learner-teacher support materials' suitability was marginal in 1 lesson, considerable in another and excellent in the other 3 lessons. The learner-teacher materials authenticity was evident in only 2 lessons; in the other 3 there was no authenticity. Lastly, there was no learner self-assessment in any of the 5 lessons, but 2 teachers allowed peer assessment considerably. Peer assessment was excellently allowed by 1 teacher.

Table 3
Depicts the summary of the data in a Table form

Teacher	Qualification	Gender	No years in the profession	Topic	Preferred pedagogical approach
T1	BA degree + PGCE	F	11	Cartoon	Competency approach
T2	STD (Secondary Teachers Diploma)	M	13	Subject-verb agreement	Problem–Solving Approach
T3	STD (Secondary Teachers Diploma)	F	14	Reading comprehension techniques	Objective-Based Approach
T4	STD (Secondary Teachers Diploma)	M	17	Word Classes in a autobiography	Problem Solving Approach
T5	STD (Secondary Teachers Diploma)	M	24	Punctuation	Problem Solving Approach

4.2 Discussion

This study set out to examine and analyze how EFAL teachers handle the teaching of grammatical structures, particularly in public schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The study achieved its main aim by investigating how these EFAL teachers taught English grammar and how they basically handled that process. The results indicated that teachers generally possessed only the basic teachers' qualifications, that is, the Secondary Teachers Diplomas, as only 1 teacher had a BA and PGCE. Most teachers' outcomes were realistic and aligned to CAPS. Grammar structures and rules were taught, which aligns to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 28) who emphasize the role of teachers in grammar teaching grammar.

However, there were indications of interlanguage and permeability of learner language, as well as variability in the grammar methods. This is congruent to the assertion by Ameen (2023) that as grammar is generally viewed by learners as dull and tedious to learn, it depends on the teacher to use variability in grammar teaching methods to ensure that the content permeates the learners' interlanguage fossilization. Fossilisation is as asserted by Ellis (1997: 34), a phenomenon that develops if language learning reaches a

stagnant period in which further learning of rules and structures slows down considerably or is no longer possible. The teachers used a variety of methods and some of them adapted their chosen teaching methods. However, in spite of the use of various strategies, there were still instances of fossilization still apparent in 3 of the lessons observed. The methods used were grammar—translation, task-based and communicative language teaching. Although there was no use of textbooks in all the lessons observed, there was some excellent use of the chalkboard. Pamphlets and study guides were also used, while the dictionary, projectors, charts or posters were not. Support materials were suitable in various degrees; some were authentic while others were non-authentic. The materials were, on the whole, adequate. None of the 5 teachers allowed self-assessment. However, there was peer-assessment, group assessment, some classwork, and homework and feedback given.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that many teachers do not try to upgrade their qualifications, which could possibly have an impact on how they deliver lessons on grammar. Secondly, it appears that teachers generally teach grammar structures and that they align their teaching to the chosen curriculum policy. This was taught mainly through three main methods, Grammar-translation, Task-based and Communicative language teaching, and all traditional methods. There was no evidence of innovative methods used. While the use of these methods is key in grammar, teachers need to regularly update their knowledge of different methods of grammar as well as include some of the more recent or innovative ones. Even though textbooks were available and adequate in the observed schools, there was no use of the textbooks in any of the observed lessons. The use of textbooks needs to be encouraged as most of the other teaching-learning materials may not adequately cover all the grammar content it should. The most commonly used learner-support materials were the chalkboard, teacher-generated pamphlets and study guides. Learner support materials such as the dictionary, projectors, charts or posters did not seem to be used at all. The teachers could be provided with support to encourage the use of a variety of materials. While support materials were suitable and adequate, some were authentic while others were not. Peer and group assessment appeared to be used and preferred almost equally to classwork and homework; however, self-assessment was never used. This could be addressed through workshops on different ways of conducting assessments.

The findings of the current study are in line with the results of the studies, which emphasize the beneficial role of teaching grammar in a language-learning situation, particularly in a foreign language-learning situation. The findings of this study advocate for proper handling of English grammar teaching. They also reveal that explicit meta-cognitive strategy training has a significant positive effect on the vocabulary learning grammar teaching on the part of EFAL pupils, and that meta-cognitive knowledge about L2/FL learning is a prerequisite for self-regulation and the effective management of language learning. Furthermore, the findings of the present study might have notable implications for those involved in language education in ELT (c.f. Kekana & Mogoboya, 2021). From a theoretical point of view, the findings of the present study will add value to the existing literature on how to teach English grammar to L2 English pupils like the ones in Limpopo Province, South Africa. From a practical point of view, ELT methodologists, textbook designers and material developers should pay serious attention to the incorporation of grammar inculcating strategies into the language textbooks and materials.

The following recommendations are accordingly suggested:

1. A survey of EFAL FET grammar teachers' qualifications in the Limpopo Province (LP) could be conducted and teachers be encouraged to upgrade their qualifications.
2. Teachers could be workshopped on the use of different grammar teaching methods and approaches in order to encourage variation and assist in making grammar learning a worthwhile activity for the learners.
3. A survey on grammar learner and teacher support materials in the schools within the Limpopo Province could be carried out. This will help address any shortages or irregularity in provision of these materials to the schools.

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