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Contents

REGULAR PAPERS

- Fostering Learner Autonomy Through an AI-Integrated CALL Framework for Developing Undergraduate Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing Skills 1411
Jayasri Suma, V and Ramesh Pettela
- Trilingual Morphological Interactions: A Contrastive Analysis of Bound Morphemes in English, Portuguese, and Urdu 1423
Muhammad Waseem and Manar Almanea
- Comparing Quizizz-Based and Traditional Vocabulary Instruction: A Quasi-Experimental Study With Non-English Majors in Vietnam 1436
Tran Thanh Du, Nguyen Huu The, Dang Thi Bao Dung, Nguyen Thi Kieu Huong, and Nguyen Thanh Xuan
- An Analysis of Lexical and Syntactic Errors Found in English Narrative Paragraphs Written by Thai EFL English and Non-English Major Students 1446
Thareerat Suniphan
- Yeskendir as an Eternal Image: His "Campaign" in Kazakh Literary Art 1457
Baytanasova Karlygash Medetovna, Aimukhambet Zhanat Askerbekkyzy, Mirazova Marzhan Nysanbekkyzy, and Sabyrzhan Nursultan
- Rendering Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) in Translating Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* From English Into Arabic 1469
Doha Hisham Harmoush, Mohamed Abdou Moindjie, and Shaidatul Akma Adi Kasuma
- Politeness Strategies in Interrogation Speech Acts: A Translation Case Study of *A Murder Is Announced* 1482
Dede Irawan, M.R. Nababan, Riyadi Santosa, and Djatmika
- Constructing "Financial Piety": A Feminist CDA of Gendered Economic Obligations in *Rumiyah* Magazine 1492
Hissah Mohammed Alruwaili
- Construal Recreation in Song Lyrics Translation: Cognitive Operations and Motivations — A Case Study of Liu Yong's *Wanghaichao* 1504
Ruirui Chen
- From *Zāy* to *Zā'*: A Linguistic and Qualitative Contrastive Study in *Lisān al-ʿArab* 1515
Safaa Harb Ahmad Harb
- Making Endangered Languages Prestigious: The West Papuan Locals Hedging Against the Grip of Modernity 1526
Katubi, Paulus Rudolf Yuniarto, Dwiani Septiana, Selly Rizki Yanita, Ryen Maerina, Dendi Wijaya, and Chrisma Fernando Saragih
-

Agency Construction in AI English Language Learning Applications: A Transitivity Analysis of Promotional Discourse <i>Kholod Sendi and Najah Alsaedi</i>	1537
Stance, Framing, and Indexicality: A Multimodal Discourse Study of the #KaburAjaDulu <i>Rakhmat Wahyudin Sagala, Tri Indah Rezeki, and Amrullah</i>	1547
The Limit of <i>Karuṇā</i> : Fostering and the <i>Samsāric</i> Cycle in <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i> <i>Supapas Kumtancode</i>	1559
Traces of Foreign Language Absorption in the Lexicon of Packaged Cooking Spices in Indonesia: An Etymological Study <i>Mujahid Taha, Nikmala Nemin Kaharuddin, Sutejo, Restu Sukesti, Ridwan, Mukhammad Isnaeni, Yulino Indra, Fida Febriningsih, Herianah, and Abd. Rasyid</i>	1568
The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Translation Skills: EFL Instructors' Perspectives at King Khalid University <i>Ali Albashir Mohammed Alhaj</i>	1578
Socio-Political Criticism in Indonesian Stand-Up Comedy Discourse <i>Asri Wijayanti, Endang Nurhayati, Wening Sahayu, and Suhardi</i>	1589
The Metaphor of Traditional Chinese Medicine in TCM Classic <i>Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine</i> <i>Xinyu Chen, Hazlina Abdul Halim, and Zaid M. Mohd Zin</i>	1598
Enhancing Teachers' Content and Language-Integrated Learning and Young Learners' Instruction Through an Inquiry Complexity Reading Strategy Based on the Common European Framework of Reference <i>Erni Erni, Yuanita Putri, and Otang Kurniawan</i>	1609
Grammar Instruction in the Saudi EFL Context: Beliefs, Practices, and the Bridge to Professional Writing <i>Marwan A. Almuhaysh</i>	1622
Teachers' Needs for Collaborative Project-Based Learning Model Innovation in Strengthening Deep Learning for Senior High School Students in Central Java, Indonesia <i>Alfiah, Subyantoro, Hari Bakti Mardikantoro, and Tommi Yuniawan</i>	1633
Beyond the "China Doll": A Systematic Literature Review on the Discursive Construction of Chinese Women in International News <i>Shi Fu, Mohd Azidan Abdul Jabar, and Wan Ikhlas Wan Mohtar</i>	1643
Women's Cultural Practices in Madurese Novels: A Feminist Narratology Analysis <i>Anisa Fajriana Oktasari, Suyatno, and Anas Ahmadi</i>	1656
Analyzing Najdi Oral Narrative: A Case Study of Alsharhan's "The GMC Girls" Using Labovian and Rhetorical Frameworks <i>Hanady A. Alfalig</i>	1664
Synergistic Efficacy of an Integrated Gamified and Multiple Intelligences-Based Model on Young EFL Learners' Proficiency and Confidence <i>Margana. Margana, Pipit. Mulyah, Dyah Setyowati. Ciptaningrum, Nety. Nety, Dian Firdha. Utami, Anisah. Setyaningrum, Muhammad Fauzan. Aminudin, and Salman. Alade</i>	1674
On the Construction of Gender Discourse in Eileen Chang's Translation of <i>The Old Man and the Sea</i> <i>Xian Zhong, Mohamed A. Moindjie, and Shaidatul A. B. A. Kasuma</i>	1686
Exploring Cultural Narratives in Contemporary Indonesian Poetry <i>Mohammad Kanzunnudin, Irfai Fathurohman, and Ahdi Riyono</i>	1697

Bridging the Gap: A Hybrid Model of AI and Oral Reading for Developing EFL Communication Skills and Motivation <i>Amr M. Mohamed, Abdelhamid A. Khalil, Mostafa Hemida, Samia Mouas, Tahany S. Shaaban, Hatem Hossien Albasis, and Nida H. Al Shammmary</i>	1706
The Impact of Integrating Guided Reading Strategies Into Digital Reading Activities on Language Knowledge and Creativity <i>Nugroho Widhi Pratomo, Prima Gusti Yanti, and Sukardi</i>	1719
Revisiting the Airborne Toxic Event: Eco-Critical Perspectives on Environmental Catastrophe in Don DeLillo's <i>White Noise</i> <i>Karthikeyan. R, Prakash. A, U. Venkateswara, Jeyalakshmi Subramanian, and Kumar V</i>	1731
Negotiating Sociocultural Constraints Through Self-Efficacy: An Ethnographic Study of English as a Foreign Language Learners in Indonesian <i>Pesantren</i> <i>Devi N. Aini, Slamet Setiawan, Syafi'ul Anam, Sudirman, Wasilatul Ibad, and Burhanuddin Arafah</i>	1740
D. H. Lawrence and W. S. Merwin as Eco-poets: A Comparative/Contrastive Study <i>Nisreen T. Yousef and Nasaybah Walid Awajan</i>	1753
<i>Sawadi Indonesia</i> : Teaching Materials for Improving Everyday Indonesian Language Skills of Thai Bipa Learners <i>Rokayah Luebaesa, Ida Zulaeha, Hari Bakti Mardikantoro, and Yusro Edy Nugroho</i>	1763
Evaluating Large Language Models and Neural Machine Translation Systems in Translating <i>Liaozhaizhiyi</i> : A Cross-Cultural Literary Study <i>Jing Zhao, Mozhan Ghassemiazghandi, and Shaidatul Akma Adi Kasuma</i>	1775
The Use of Metaphors in Paremiological Units of English, Russian, and Kazakh Languages: A Study Based on the Thematic Group "Labor-Idleness" <i>Zhuldyz Rsaliyeva, Zhankara Dadebaev, Zhanar Abitzhanova, Aigul Y. Alpysbayeva, Irina A. Olkova, and Konstantin A. Myachin</i>	1785
On Intensifiers in Thai and Korean: Grammaticalization and Contrastive Perspectives <i>Suthathip Thirakunkovit and Seongha Rhee</i>	1796

Fostering Learner Autonomy Through an AI-Integrated CALL Framework for Developing Undergraduate Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing Skills

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Abstract—Artificial intelligence has developed rapidly and started to interfere with English language teaching in India across regional universities, where traditionally undergraduate learners remain less engaged in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) skills. Against this backdrop, the study has attempted to design, implement, and evaluate an AI-Integrated CALL framework to enhance LSRW skills and learner autonomy among undergraduates of a regional public university in Uttar Pradesh. A mixed methods sequential explanatory design has been adopted in this study, where, in a purposive sampling, 150 second-year undergraduate students (B.A., B.Com., B.Sc.) were divided equally into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. In terms of data compilation, the research involved pre-and post-tests of LSRW proficiencies using adapted CEFR descriptors, administration of a modified learner autonomy questionnaire, AI-usage logging, interviews and focus groups, and reflective journals. The quantitative analyses (t-test, ANOVA, regression, and Tukey HSD) established that the experimental group had a statistically significant improvement over all the domains of LSRW with autonomy and regular AI tool use being strong predictors of performance, whereas the qualitative findings showed enhancement in self-regulation, motivation, and perception of the role of learning, and discussed hazards such as digital access and digital literacy. AI-CALL has expedited the democratization of access to personalized language learning and functional communication and autonomy in resource challenged Indian higher education, subject to careful consideration of disciplinary and infrastructural contexts.

Index Terms—AI-Integrated CALL, learner autonomy, LSRW skills development, Mixed-Methods Research

I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education has revolutionized the conceptualization, delivery, and assessment of language learning, particularly in multilingual and resource-constrained contexts such as India (Cope et al., 2021; Jaiswal & Arun, 2021). Teacher-centred instruction has been the main characteristic of traditional English teaching in India for a long time, along with reliance on textbooks, and limited practice with listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, especially in large undergraduate classes where personalized feedback is not possible, as these skills get little attention (Patni & Dawar, 2025). Even though the use of communicative and task-based approaches has made some contribution to higher education in terms of interactivity, the educational system continues to use primarily rote learning and exam-oriented methods (Kadam & Pusawale, 2023). The introduction of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) opened new doors for technology-based practice (Hubbard, 2023), but previous CALL models were non-interactive and non-adaptive (Yao et al., 2025). The use of AI technologies together with their standards of natural language processing, automatic speech recognition, adaptive learning systems, and intelligent tutoring has turned CALL into a lively paradigm that promotes personalized, independent, and context-sensitive learning (Zhao, 2025). The AI-Integrated CALL framework goes beyond traditional CALL in providing real-time monitoring, adaptive task difficulty, and personalized feedback that help learners to take control of their learning processes (Kovalenko & Baranivska, 2024). In the case of India's diverse and large classrooms, AI-driven CALL has lessened the differences in exposure, practice, and feedback, especially in areas with limited resources. AI-enabled CALL systems are thus essential for the development of LSRW skills: online listening platforms assess comprehension in real-time (Abdellatif et al., 2024; Raza et al., 2024); recognition tools for speech in free settings improve speaking proficiency (Napitupulu & Dalimunte, 2025); adaptive reading platforms help understanding by altering text difficulty (Chatzichristofis et al., 2025); and automated writing evaluation tools provide feedback on correctness and coherence

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(Bahari, 2025). Although the world has made great strides in technology, the number of Indian studies focusing on AI-integrated CALL is very small and mostly limited to urban areas, thus neglecting the semi-urban and rural areas. More so, the earlier studies usually separated the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW), instead of integrating them together in a holistic way. To fill the voids of the existing literature, the proposed empirical study intends to examine the application of an AI-Integrated CALL framework at a public regional university in Uttar Pradesh, which is aimed at facilitating learner autonomy in the LSRW among undergraduates. Its goals are to create an AI-driven CALL model tailored to Indian undergraduate students, contrast its impact with that of traditional teaching approaches, and investigate its contribution to the development of learner autonomy through AI-supported feedback, monitoring, and self-regulation processes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent worldwide studies indicate a revolutionary effect of AI-based Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) on the learners' involvement, motivation, and independence through different contexts. Bahari et al. (2025) reported a remarkable improvement in students' enthusiasm, involvement, and language through personalized tutorials and active feedback. In the same manner, data from Zhang et al. (2025) pointed out that CALL-related activities in China were an important reason for increased learner autonomy and vocabulary intake through self-initiated efforts. Moreover, the qualitative analysis showed the development of more considerable cognitive flexibility and independent learning inclinations. The research of Namaziandost (2025) revealed that interactive learning through automation significantly developed both the writing skills and mental comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. In a different study by Zhou et al. (2025), it was observed that Chinese university students utilizing AI chatbots as a part of mobile-assisted blended learning (MABL) not only elevated their communication skills but also improved accuracy and satisfaction. Nopas (2025) pointed out the dual role of AI in teaching in Thailand, indicating that even though there was more engagement and feedback, there was also less space for creativity due to the control of algorithms and the digital divide that impacted countryside students. Hong and Guo (2025) mentioned that AI-based multi-screen instruction made the students more enthusiastic, more independent and in control of their own tasks, while Zong and Yang (2025) emphasized that social-emotional learning through AI had a major positive impact on students' psychological well-being and involvement.

Schlaoui (2024) engaged in an investigation of the role of AI in the creation of autonomous cognitive abilities in Algerian foreign language education and discovered a slight similarity in learners' attitudes between the French and English programs. Shanthi et al. (2024) unveiled a model backed by AI that was able to tune the feedback and questions according to the comprehension levels of the individual learners, thus positively contributing to the realm of interpersonal communication skills development. Aufa (2025) researched the Busuu online language platform and deemed it effective in the development of learners' autonomy and speaking fluency, notwithstanding technical and accessibility problems. Feng (2025) evaluated AI-assisted teaching, which included intelligent tutoring and speech recognition, indicating a better learning outcome and a lower cognitive load. Wang (2025) verified that the AI-powered teaching approach resulted in a decrease in student apprehension and a rise in motivation, joy, and English language proficiency. Moreover, Zhang et al. (2025) pointed out the mediating functions of technological optimism and anxiety reduction, declaring that AI literacy promotes communicative confidence in EFL learners.

Together, these studies—conducted in China, Iran, Thailand, Algeria, and other places—confirm that AI-based computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is beneficial for the learners' autonomy, engagement, and listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) skills (Bahari et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025; Namaziandost, 2025; Zhou et al., 2025; Nopas, 2025; Hong & Guo, 2025; Zong & Yang, 2025; Schlaoui, 2024; Shanthi et al., 2024; Aufa, 2025; Feng, 2025; Wang, 2025). Nevertheless, the bulk of the studies is focused on East Asia and the Middle East, ignoring the socio-cultural, infrastructural, and pedagogical challenges faced by Indian undergraduates, particularly in the case of regional public universities where the traditional method of teaching remains dominant. Moreover, previous studies often address isolated aspects such as motivation or a single skill, rather than integrating all four LSRW components with learner autonomy. To bridge these gaps, the present study proposes and evaluates a comprehensive AI-integrated CALL framework designed to holistically develop LSRW skills and learner autonomy among undergraduates at a regional public university in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

The current research on an AI-based CALL model to enhance learner agency in undergraduate listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) in India is established on two related theoretical approaches: Constructivist Learning Theory (Bada & Olusegun, 2015) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). The Constructivist Learning Theory is an active, self-directed, and socially situated process in which the learners construct knowledge through interaction, reflection, and scaffolds (Kharroubi & ElMediouni, 2024). In this view, the learner is not a passive recipient of information but rather an agent that creates meaning through interaction with learning resources, fellow learners, and tools (Bonk & Cunningham, 2012). The CALL framework, used in the present study and combined with AI technologies to form the LSRW development, is consistent with the principles of constructivism because it offers an environment of self-guided practice, feedback flexibility, and reflection. AI-driven listening apps like BBC Learning

English and Duolingo Stories dynamically adjust the difficulty level, enabling the learner to complete zone of proximal development (ZPD) activities that are challenging, but not too challenging. Likewise, speech-generating programs based on AI, such as ELSA Speak or Hello English, can enable one-to-one correction of pronunciation, just as peer and teacher scaffolding would in a large classroom setting where little individual attention is available. Constructivism, therefore, renders AI-CALL as a context in which learners gradually advance to self-regulation through guided practice towards gaining autonomy by owning their progress in LSRW skills (Du, 2025).

To supplement the constructivist approach to pedagogy, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) offers the theoretical basis to consider the way learners interact with AI-based CALL interventions and perceive them. TAM was originally theorized by Davis (1989) on the basis that perceived usefulness (the belief that a technology improves performance) and perceived ease of use (the belief that a technology does not require any effort) are two fundamental determinants of user acceptance, adoption, and long-term engagement. TAM is very applicable in the Indian higher education scenario, especially in a regional governmental university in Uttar Pradesh, where there is a range of exposure to digital in the community of learners. Because of this, access to digital tools by undergraduate students is frequently not equal, and their readiness to implement AI-CALL is determined by their feelings about whether or not these tools genuinely enhance their language competence and their ability to use them without a high level of technical skills. TAM thereby aids in the understanding of the difference in participation among learners using CALL and how AI tool attitudinal views affect skills development and learner autonomy.

Constructivist Learning Theory and TAM, in particular, are synergies that are particularly important to this study. TAM describes the psychological and behavioural adoption processes (Liao et al., 2018). When the learners believe the AI-CALL tools to be useful and easy to operate with, they can more easily engage with them, continue to practice, and become autonomous. Here, in this integrated framework, learner autonomy is both a result of constructivist interaction and a component of technology acceptance, and LSRW skills development is mediated by the pedagogical affordances of AI tools on the one hand and motivation conditioned by the attitudes of learners on the other. The overlap between these theories can be used to achieve a comprehensive view of how CALL interventions can be translated into quantifiable changes in the aspects of language competence and independence of learners. The hypotheses are formulated on the basis of this theoretical background. Based on the Constructivist Learning Theory, first, it is assumed that AI-based CALL framework students will show significantly better LSRW skills improvements than students who receive traditional instruction (H1). The adaptive feedback mechanisms inherent in AI technologies would yield better improvements in proficiency because constructivist pedagogy is based on scaffolding that is learner-centered. Since TAM is based on attitudes, it is assumed that the positive perceptions of AI-CALL will differ among student demographics (program of study), which will have a different impact on the development of LSRW (H2).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a rigorous mixed-method sequential explanatory design to investigate how an AI-based Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) framework has enhanced learner autonomy and improved listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) skills among undergraduate students in a regional public university in Uttar Pradesh, India. English, being a compulsory subject in these institutions, is often taught in teacher-centred, textbook-driven environments, leading to uneven proficiency levels. The research is focused on the second-year undergraduates from different fields of study, Arts, Commerce, and Science, thus guaranteeing a variety of disciplines without losing comparability. A purposive sample of 150 students is equally split into an experimental group (AI-based CALL instruction) and a control group (traditional classroom instruction), with the same number of students in both groups having similar background in English and technology. The AI-based CALL intervention gradually develops all four LSRW skills while creating learners' independence. For the listening skill, there are tools like BBC Learning English, Duolingo Stories, and ELSA Listening Lab that offer adaptive comprehension exercises with instant feedback. For speaking practice, there are ELSA Speak, Hello English, and Google Read Along applications that allow practicing of pronunciation and fluency with AI-based feedback. Through adaptive vocabulary and comprehension tools like Newsela and Quillbot Summarizer, which monitor progress and suggest appropriate texts, reading skills are enhanced. For writing, platforms such as Grammarly, Cambridge Write & Improve, and Quillbot Paraphraser provide automated feedback on grammar, coherence, and lexical variety. Reflective journaling, goal-setting activities, and AI-driven progress dashboards, moreover, build self-regulation and reflective learning, which are the main aspects of learner autonomy. Meanwhile, the control group undergoes an old-fashioned method of teaching consisting of lectures, textbook exercises, and teacher-marked assignments with little personalized feedback or technology integration.

Data collection includes three main stages: (1) a pre-test that aims to find out the level of proficiency and autonomy of the participants; (2) a 12-week intervention synchronized with an academic semester; and (3) a post-test for evaluating the outcomes. The quantitative data consist of standardized assessments of LSRW skills (adapted from CEFR) and a Learner Autonomy Questionnaire (modified and validated through pilot testing), both of which are analyzed by means of paired and independent t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis to establish the links among CALL exposure, autonomy, and skill development. The reliability is measured through Cronbach's alpha, and the construct validity is confirmed through factor analysis.

The qualitative aspect of the research involves semi-structured interviews with a total of 20 students from the experimental group, focus group discussions with students and faculty, and the analysis of reflective journals. The resulting data will be analyzed thematically using open coding to highlight the themes of motivation, perceived usefulness of AI tools, and barriers to autonomous learning among the participants.

The research location, which was an under-resourced state university in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, was chosen intentionally to display the digital and teaching divide between urban and rural institutions in India, where the use of computer-assisted language learning is still very limited. The study is conducted ethically through informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and institutional approval. This research uses a combination of statistical rigour and qualitative depth to be already comprehensive, sure of how and why AI-based CAL frameworks could be a great help in developing learner autonomy and LSRW proficiency in the sociocultural and infrastructural context of Indian regional universities.

IV. RESULTS

A. Quantitative Findings

Findings of this research give a broad picture of how an AI-based CALL system can be used to promote learner autonomy and contribute significantly towards improving LSRW skills in undergraduates in a regional state university in Uttar Pradesh. Table 1 provides the demographic data of the participants (N = 150), which will provide the necessary background regarding the interpretation of the outcomes of the intervention. The sample is also fairly balanced in gender, and 48 percent of the surveyed are men and 52 percent are women, which means that no gender is overrepresented in the results. The values of age distribution indicate that the greater part of students (86.7) is between the ages of 18-21, which is the average undergraduate age in India. Students with BA, BCom, and BSc programs provide a disciplinary diversity, with the biggest share of students with BA programs (40%), the middle and the end share of BCom (33.3%), and BSc (26.7). This disciplinary combination is especially important since CALL application and learning patterns might be different based on subject exposure, e.g., BA students in many cases have a more language-centred curriculum than BSc students. The exposure to CALL technologies was quite uneven, as 46.7% of respondents had low exposure, 40% moderate, and 13.3% high exposure. This implies that the vast majority of the study participants came into the research with little knowledge about the AI-based CALL applications, which speaks to the novelty and the possible effectiveness of the intervention program. These demographics, combined with each other, represent a typical demographic of a regional university in North India, which justifies generalizing the results to other regional universities.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS (N = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	72	48.0
	Female	78	52.0
Age (years)	18–19	60	40.0
	20–21	70	46.7
	22–23	20	13.3
Program of Study	BA	60	40.0
	BCom	50	33.3
	BSc	40	26.7
Prior Exposure to CALL	Low	70	46.7
	Moderate	60	40.0
	High	20	13.3

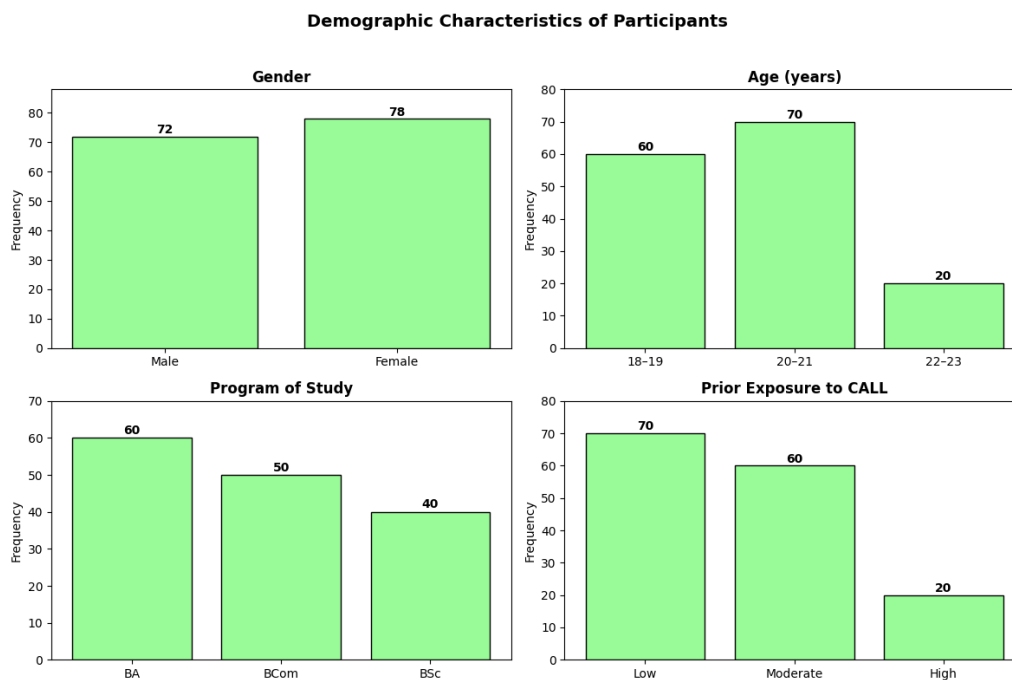


Figure 1. Demographic Characteristics

Table 2 displays the comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores of the control and the experimental group. The performance of the control ($M = 42.8$, $SD = 5.4$) and experimental groups ($M = 43.2$, $SD = 5.3$) at the baseline was statistically the same, which indicates that the groups were similar at the beginning of the intervention. However, the results of the post tests are bleak. The experimental group made a tremendous jump in its mean score to 58.4 ($SD = 4.8$), whereas the control group scored a small step up to 45.1 ($SD = 5.6$). The control group had a mean difference of 2.3, which was significant but small ($t = 3.21$, $p = 0.002$) and showed no major gains through traditional instruction. Opposed to that, the experimental condition gained an increase of 15.2 points ($t = 18.45$, $p < 0.001$), which is a distinct difference and a sign of the great power brought by AI-interventions through CALL. Thus, the result suggests that the AI framework did not just support the learning process but also made it much faster than the traditional way of teaching through lectures. The significant disparity in post-test results demonstrates the possibilities of adapting feedback, independent practice, and individual learning tracks with the help of AI.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES IN CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

Group	N	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Control	75	42.8 (5.4)	45.1 (5.6)	2.3	3.21	0.002*
Experimental	75	43.2 (5.3)	58.4 (4.8)	15.2	18.45	<0.001*

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

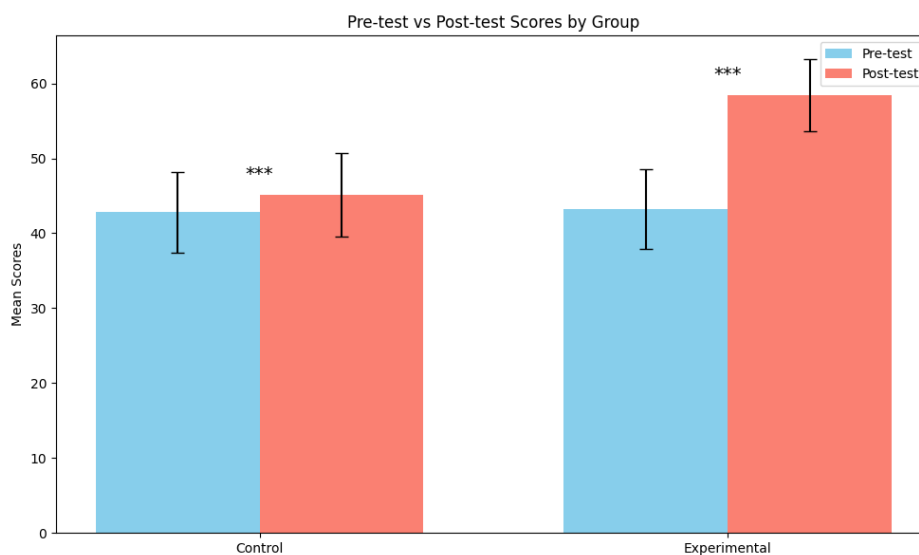


Figure 2. Overall Scores Comparison Between the Groups

Table 3 further breaks down the area of the skill by comparing the pre- and post-test scores in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing individually. The performance of the control group also has a minor improvement in all skills, with an average of around 1 point of improvement per skill. To illustrate this, Listening was changed to 12.0, then Speaking changed to 11.6, Reading changed to 12.2, and Writing changed to 11.3. These increments are even consistent with what one would expect out of exposure to classroom-based activities, but they are, at the same time, relatively modest. Conversely, the experimental group showed a considerable improvement at all LSRW domains. Listening increased 11.0 to 15.5, Speaking increased 10.8 to 15.0, Reading increased 11.2 to 15.8, and Writing increased 10.9 to 15.6. Such advantages of the AI-based CALL tools of about 4-5 points per skill point to the fact that they are acting as holistic communication tools. ELSA Speak and Hello English platforms probably led to improvements in speaking and listening with real-time feedback on pronunciation and adaptive listening activities, whereas Grammarly and Write and Improve platforms may have improved writing skills with constant and automatic feedback. Likewise, Newsela and Quillbot were used to aid reading comprehension by the use of scaffolded exercises and summarization tools. The coordinated growth of all of the LSRW skills supports the synergy of the CALL framework.

TABLE 3
PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES BY LSRW SUB-SKILLS (CONTROL VS EXPERIMENTAL)

Group	N	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Control	75	10.8 (1.5)	12.0 (1.6)	10.5 (1.7)	11.6 (1.8)	11.0 (1.6)	12.2 (1.7)	10.5 (1.6)	11.3 (1.7)
Experimental	75	11.0 (1.4)	15.5 (1.5)	10.8 (1.5)	15.0 (1.6)	11.2 (1.5)	15.8 (1.4)	10.9 (1.5)	15.6 (1.5)

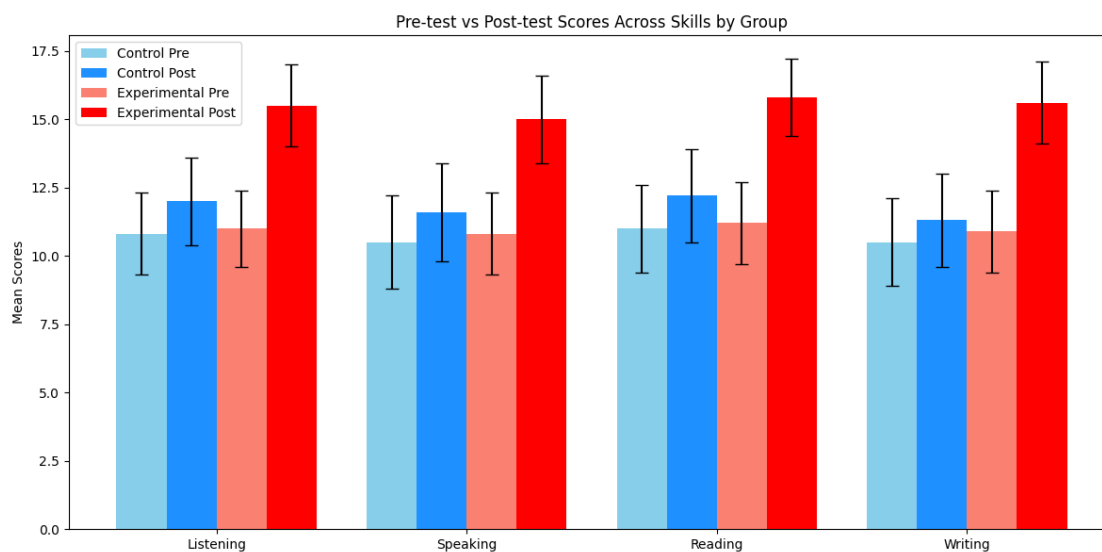


Figure 3. Scores Comparison Between the Groups Across Skills

Table 4 verifies the statistical significance of the difference between the control and experimental groups in post-test performance using an independent t-test. The experimental ($M = 58.4$, $SD = 4.8$) and control groups ($M = 45.1$, $SD = 5.6$) had a significant difference between them with a t-value of -15.67 ($p < 0.001$). The size of the difference is a response to the strength of the intervention. The gains of the control group, though statistically significant, are insignificant when compared to the gains of the experimental group, which once again proves that traditional methods, though functional, do not as effectively utilize learner autonomy and provide personalized feedback on the same level as AI-assisted CALL.

TABLE 4
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST BETWEEN CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS (POST-TEST)

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
LSRW Skills Post-test	Control	75	45.1	5.6	-15.67	<0.001*
	Experimental	75	58.4	4.8		

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 5 displays the results of the ANOVA to compare scores after testing for the experimental groups per their programs of study. Statistically important inter-group differences were recorded in all four skills: Listening ($F=3.85$, $p=0.025$), Speaking ($F=3.20$, $p=0.045$), Reading ($F=4.40$, $p=0.016$), and Writing ($F=4.95$, $p=0.010$). This has shown that not all the programs benefited from CALL equally. Such disparities might well be symptomatic of disciplinary leanings, with BA students possibly possessing a wider background of exposure to coursework that might lean toward the linguistic-intensive and, thus, might be more able to adjust to AI applications that emphasize linguistic factors, as

opposed to the BSc students who may show a steeper learning curve. However, the presence of statistically significant differences demonstrates that the difference in disciplinary background-mediated degree, to which CALL is effective, is also very important to scaling such interventions within various university settings.

TABLE 5
ONE-WAY ANOVA FOR LSRW POST-TEST SCORES BY PROGRAM OF STUDY (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

Skill	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Listening	Between Groups	12.8	2	6.40	3.85	0.025*
	Within Groups	116.2	72	1.61		
Speaking	Between Groups	10.5	2	5.25	3.20	0.045*
	Within Groups	118.0	72	1.64		
Reading	Between Groups	14.2	2	7.10	4.40	0.016*
	Within Groups	116.0	72	1.61		
Writing	Between Groups	15.0	2	7.50	4.95	0.010*
	Within Groups	109.2	72	1.52		

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows the regression analysis of predicting LSRW post-test scores. Three predictors were studied, including pre-test scores, learner autonomy and frequency of usage of CALL. Each of them was a major predictor, and pre-test scores ($b = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$) revealed that pre-test competence is a factor that influences the results. The theoretical basis of the study was confirmed: the autonomy of the learners ($b = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) turned out to be a strong predictor of the benefits that CALL could produce. Usage of CALL frequencies ($b = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$) was also a significant factor, which explains the fact that regular application to AI platforms is converted into greater improvements. The model has been significant as it explained 62 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.62$), with the three factors explaining the largest portion of the gains. Notably, the predictive power of learner autonomy implies that CALL is not a purely technological intervention but one that can prosper in case students are allowed to control their learning process.

TABLE 6
REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING LSRW POST-TEST SCORES

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p-value
Pre-test Score	0.52	0.08	0.48	6.50	<0.001*
Learner Autonomy	0.41	0.07	0.39	5.86	<0.001*
Frequency of CALL Usage	0.23	0.05	0.27	4.60	<0.001*

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.62$, $F(3,146) = 79.9$, $p < 0.001$

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 7 provides post hoc comparisons, through the Tukey HSD test, of the differences in LSRW skills by program of study. Findings indicate that BA students performed better than BCom and BSc students in most of the skills. In the case of Listening, BA students achieved much higher scores as compared to BCom ($p = 0.032$) and BSc ($p = 0.005$), with non-significant BCom-BSc difference. The same thing occurred with speaking, with BA doing better than either group, even though BCom and BSc were not significantly different. The students who were from the BA discipline were recorded to be better at reading, compared to those from BCom ($p=0.015$) and BSc ($p=0.003$). Writing had the highest level of observed difference, where BAs were way superior to BComs ($p=0.007$) and BScs ($p=0.002$). These results would suggest that BA students might have made better use of CALL tools because of their traditional emphasis on language. BSc students, on the other hand, because of their typical orientation more towards technical subjects, might have found it difficult to engage in work requiring heavy use of language in the beginning.

TABLE 7
TUKEY'S HSD POST-HOC TESTS FOR LSRW SKILLS BY PROGRAM OF STUDY (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

Skill	Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	p-value	Interpretation
Listening	BA vs BCom	0.4	0.15	0.032*	Significant
	BA vs BSc	0.7	0.17	0.005*	Significant
	BCom vs BSc	0.3	0.16	0.12	Not Significant
Speaking	BA vs BCom	0.3	0.14	0.045*	Significant
	BA vs BSc	0.5	0.16	0.012*	Significant
	BCom vs BSc	0.2	0.15	0.18	Not Significant
Reading	BA vs BCom	0.5	0.16	0.015*	Significant
	BA vs BSc	0.8	0.18	0.003*	Significant
	BCom vs BSc	0.3	0.17	0.09	Not Significant
Writing	BA vs BCom	0.6	0.17	0.007*	Significant
	BA vs BSc	0.9	0.19	0.002*	Significant
	BCom vs BSc	0.3	0.18	0.10	Not Significant

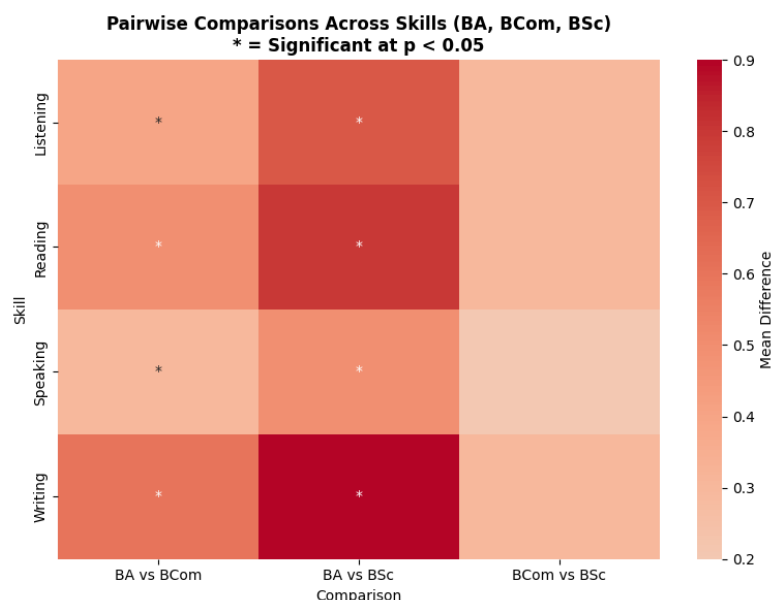


Figure 4. Pairwise Comparisons Across Skills

B. Analysis Results

A qualitative analysis of interview data involving undergraduate participants of a local state university in Uttar Pradesh has produced four major themes, each spotlighting the subtle influence of the AI-integrated CALL framework on learner autonomy and LSRW skills along with the course. These common themes (1) Enhanced Self-Regulation and Independent Learning, (2) Increased Motivation and Engagement through AI Feedback, (3) Problems of Access, Digital Literacy and Language Anxiety and (4) Shifts in Perception of Teacher and Peer Role all offer a multifaceted perspective of how the intervention influenced the experiences of students in contrast to the traditional mode of instruction followed by the control group.

Theme 1: Improved Self-Regulation and Self-study

The feeling of increased ownership and responsibility exhibited by the learners with respect to their language development was one of the prevailing themes of the interviews. The CALL system, based on AI and the use of apps like Grammarly, Write and Improve, and ELSA Speak, provided students with immediate feedback that they could observe at any stage. Unlike the control group, which was described by the high dependency on teacher observations, the experimental group described how they used these tools as the means to self-correct, set their individual goals, and reconsider learning materials at their own pace. One student remarked, “*I would wait till my teacher could point out where I had gone wrong in writing. But with the help of Grammarly and Write and Improve, I may get to see the mistakes I make and improve. I do not have to rely on anyone. I believe that I am now my own master of learning.*” Another one said: “*I practiced a lot with ELSA Speak to give me practice with pronunciation, and then I talked to the classroom. It gave me marks, and I could track my progress daily. It was my personal coach.*” These considerations reflect how learners increasingly became independent and less dependent on the teacher, which speaks to a broader aim of CALL interventions: to make learners agency-producing.

Theme 2: More Motivation and Engagement by AI Feedback

The second theme had an accent on the motivational forces of AI-based, personalized, and gamified feedback. Students continuously stated that adaptive features of applications like Hello English, Duolingo Stories, and Google Read Along hold their attention with rewards, feedback, and difficulty levels that are scaffolded. The AI tools provided a more interactive experience as opposed to the conventional exercises that used textbooks, which were described by many as monotonous. According to one of the participants, “*it was exciting to move ahead when Duolingo awarded me with points and badges upon completing tasks. It was not similar to homework; it was more of a game. I wanted to improve my level.*” Another one shared: “*Hello, English app gave me an explanation of meanings in Hindi, also, and I became less scared of new words. It motivated me to learn more.*” Another aspect that the students pointed to was the psychological benefits of obtaining non-judgmental feedback via AI systems. One of the participants said, “*Sometimes when teachers correct the situation in front of the crowd, I feel shy. However, the AI tools provide feedback anonymously, and I am not embarrassed. That makes me try more.*” This theme provides a good example of AI feedback that not only inspired students but also provided them with a psychologically safe environment to experiment with, which is essential to building confidence to speak and minimizing performance anxiety.

Theme 3: Problems of Access, Digital Literacy, and Language Anxiety

The responses from the interviewees were largely positive, but some issues were raised regarding the learners' access, infrastructure, and digital preparedness. Certain students have expressed difficulty with the use of different platforms

and cited problems related to poor Internet connection or inability to use AI applications on low-end smartphones. At some points, these impediments lessened their participation and minimised the smoothness that was to be enjoyed by the framework. One of the students said, *"Sometimes the app was not loaded due to a poor internet connection in my hostel. Then I missed practice time. We do not have such problems in class."* Another one wrote: *"I did not know how to use Quillbot or Write & Improve at the beginning. It took me time to learn. It did not have the assistance of peers."* Interestingly, some students said that they had language anxiety even after getting AI feedback. As an example, one participant said, *"Although ELSA Speak provided me with scores, sometimes I became nervous when I received low scores repeatedly. It got me thinking that maybe I can never get my accent any better."* This shows that although AI minimizes social anxiety, it can unintentionally cause other types of performance stress. These results highlight the need to offer sufficient orientation, technical support, and infrastructural support upon the implementation of AI-incorporated CALL, particularly in under-resourced institutions in North India.

Theme 4: Shifts in Perception of Teacher and Peer Roles

The last theme showed a reorganization of the roles of teachers and peers viewed by learners in the process of language learning. Although the traditional approach put the teacher as the main source of knowledge and feedback, learners in the experimental group had to start perceiving the teacher as a facilitator who assists in integrating AI tools in their learning. One participant said, *"I have previously believed that it is only teachers who can correct my English. However, now I realise that the apps are supporting me as well. A teacher is a kind of a guide to indicate which application is helpful."* Another one reflected: *"We practised using AI applications in terms of what to say before speaking in front of friends in group activities. This allowed the peer discussions to grow more active because everyone was ready with AI for the training, to start with."* Students responded that they enjoyed this hybrid model, with AI taking corrective feedback on chores, while teachers take care of the higher-order activities, such as critical discussions, cultural contexts, and training strategies. The shift did not merely foster a stronger sense of autonomy for the learners but also democratised participation within the classrooms, as even shy students were more willing to speak up.

C. Synthesis of Themes

Altogether, these four themes paint a huge yet comprehensive territory of the antediluvian landscape through the force of AI-adapted CALL exercises on learner autonomy, an area that primarily concerns LSRW skills. Student responses lauded autonomy in the higher education setting as they were feeling empowered, motivated, independent of the teacher, and given new chances to practice privately. However, the results also cautioned about potential infrastructural and emotional problems, particularly for low-resourced universities. Therefore, this transition to learner autonomy models should be monitored, in balance with AI support and human intervention, equitable access and emotional support for those whose help is lost in the new digital environment.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide compelling support and suggest a turning point for AI-assisted CALL technology, which can facilitate learner independence in a higher education institution in India, and at the same time, the development of LSRW skills among undergraduate students. This research, conducted in a public regional university of Uttar Pradesh, is a clear example of significant learning through AI interventions, while also highlighting certain mediating factors - learner autonomy, frequency of usage, and disciplinary background - that influence the learning orientation through CALL. The results of the research position the Indian situation right in the centre of a worldwide conversation about language learning and AI that is just starting to unfold. The most important discovery of all is the incredible and very different test scores of the experimental group compared with the scores of the pre- and post-tests in numbers. The control group gained just 2.3 points, while the experimental group literally and figuratively went up more than 15 points, which consequently contributed to the universal validation of AI effectiveness further. Therein, considering, Bahari et al. (2025) saw that the integration of CALL and AIALL into an interactive model would greatly motivate learners and offer customization and effective feedback. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2025) investigated Chinese undergraduates who, in contrast to traditional textbook-based instructions, enjoyed more autonomy in their instruction and, therefore, encouragement for self-direction-whether in the very interventions based on CALL. Hence, it may be concluded from these studies that AI-based frameworks for CALL offer advantages that transcend mere efficiency, including personalized feedback and a catalyst for self-paced learning: the same can be observed with the Indian sample studies. Speaking and listening experienced greater levels of richness in improvement, with enhancements in perception or pronunciation probably given by ELSA Speak and Hello English, respectively. The finding indeed revalidates those of Zhou et al. (2025), who observed a great improvement in the fluency and appropriateness of spoken English by Chinese students working with an AI chatbot within the framework of mobile-assisted blended learning (MABL), the learners themselves citing real-time AI feedback as important for their progress. Reading and writing were greatly enhanced in India as well through the use of Grammarly, Write & Improve, and Newsela, which echoes Namaziandost's (2025) results showing that AI-assisted flipped instructions improve writing development and metacognitive awareness among Iranian EFL students. The convergence of such findings across countries highlights the effectiveness of AI-assisted strategies in promoting holistic LSRW development. In the logistic regression-based study, the author further emphasizes the importance of learner autonomy as a key predictor of post-test success, second only to baseline

competence. This observation is in keeping with Zhang et al. (2025), who observed that the use of CALL served to increase learners' autonomy, motivation, and metacognitive awareness. In Thailand, it was found by Nopas (2025) that AI systems offer autonomy and limit it at the same time-giving real-time feedback yet narrowing the scope of intellectual exploration. From an Indian perspective, it was clearly discerned that AI supported greater autonomy and self-regulation, which was also evidenced in students' qualitative reports of managing their own progress and setting their own goals. One can take away from this that autonomy is not merely incidental to CALL but rather the main mechanism through which CALL works.

According to the ANOVA and Tukey's HSD tests, disciplinary differences show that students in a BA degree perform better than their BCom and BSc counterparts in all skills being tested. One plausible explanation might be that the BA program stringently accords language emphasis, and thus, BA students may have benefited more by making use of the CALL features than those of the BCom and BSc programs. Similar interdisciplinary and learner-background-related differences have been reported elsewhere in the literature. For instance, Hong and Guo (2025) established variations in outcomes while testing AI-enhanced multi-display teaching systems with groups of EFL learners. These authors also posit that learners who are more used to technology-enhanced interaction tend to derive a disproportionate share of benefits. Zong and Yang (2025) further argue that affective and contextual factors, such as engagement and emotional well-being, stand in the way of successful AI integration. Consequently, for Indian non-language majors, category-specific interventions integrating disciplinary relevance (e.g., business English or scientific communication tasks) may be inescapable for balance.

The qualitative thematic approach applied in this study resonates with international findings on learners' experiences. Students appreciated self-regulation and feedback-based motivation alongside the agents of control offered via AI platforms. This is in line with the findings of the Busuu study of Aufa (2025), wherein the elements of structured exercises, immediate feedback, and accessibility caused positive perceptions of autonomy and independent learning. A parallel approach adopted by Wang (2025) highlights the view that AI tools reduce inhibitions toward foreign language learning and augment enjoyment- factors observed in our Indian sample as well, wherein students felt they gained over their language anxiety through non-judgmental AI feedback. On the contrary, issues of access, digital literacy, and instances of anxiety brought forth in our study lend credence to the equity considerations raised by Nopas (2025), who contended that digital divides and algorithmic constraints further the disadvantage faced by rural learners. In the Indian lens of variance in connectivity and digital preparedness, such findings signal for infrastructural support beyond just pedagogical advancement.

Another key theme in this article concerns shifting perceptions of teacher roles. Students no longer perceived teachers as sole evaluators but as facilitators complementing AI-driven feedback. This agrees with Shanthi et al. (2024), who propose an AI-supported communication model where automated feedback serves as a complement to teacher intervention and proves to be highly successful in skill development. It resonates with Feng's (2025) findings that, when using strategies assisted by AI, intelligent tutoring systems reduce cognitive load while requiring teachers to act as mediators of AI feedback. The Indian case, therefore, reflects a broader pedagogical shift: AI does not replace the teacher but redefines the teacher's role to mentorship, scaffolding, and dealing with affective needs.

There are two broader implications of this investigation. First, the study extends the existing CALL literature into a rather neglected setting in North India, where infrastructural issues often prevent individualized learning. Attesting to consistent improvements in all LSRW skills, it suggests that AI-powered CALL systems can accommodate these structural deficits while providing an equitable, if underprivileged, opportunity for individualized learning. This affirms Schlaoui's (2024) observation in Algeria that AI tools are becoming increasingly crucial in teaching foreign languages in developing contexts where resource constraints are similar to those faced in India. Second, the study identifies autonomy as a mediating variable, corresponding to the self-regulated learning theory and supporting findings by Zhang et al. (2025) and Hong and Guo (2025) that autonomy feeds continued achievement in AI-enabled environments. Aligning with the vision of India's NEP 2020, the findings stimulate policymakers to synergize technology with learner-centred pedagogy. The presence of free or low-charge AI platforms, such as Hello English, Google Read Along, or Grammarly, serves to make CALL economically feasible for regional universities. The designers are then suggested to design discipline-sensitive adaptations to guarantee equitable benefits across different undergraduate cohorts. From an educational perspective, teachers should assume a facilitator role in helping students use AI while attending to issues of access and anxiety.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to design, implement, and evaluate an AI-Integrated Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) framework to promote learner autonomy among undergraduate students for the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) skills within an understudied Indian higher education context. By running a quasi-experimental design with two groups (an experimental group and a control group), the study provided evidence that the AI tools (Bolo/Read Along, Duolingo English Test AI, Grammarly, ELSA Speak, ChatGPT, and Kahoot!) whenever introduced greatly helped in improving students' LSRW skills, motivation, and self-directed learning abilities more than the traditional textbook-based instructor-led classes. Quantitative analysis demonstrated greater gains in the post-tests by the experimental group in all four skills, supported by ANOVA, t-tests, and regression models, whereas

post-hoc tests suggested the most strikingly positive perceptions of CALL came from speaking and writing, as they had proven so efficacious through real-time feedback tools.

The key contribution of the study was to contextualize AI-integrated CALL within the Indian public university system, which has remained deficient in applied linguistics-educational technology research. The study proposes a versatile framework combining local pedagogical needs with global AI platforms, which can further be scaled up for the benefit of other resource-challenged institutions both within India and abroad. Some limitations, however, need to be mentioned. Carrying out the study within a local regional university, limited to a semester-long intervention, may have limited potential generalizability since both linguistic and institutional contexts could have been different. A few technical barriers juxtaposed with a gap in digital literacy, equal access to devices, and reliable Internet connectivity adversely affected the rollout of the program and pointed towards a bigger issue of digital equity for India. Thus, multi-institutional samples, longitudinal designs, and in-depth perspectives on learner experiences in AI-mediated CALL from a qualitative standpoint could stand as worthy future research directions.

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Trilingual Morphological Interactions: A Contrastive Analysis of Bound Morphemes in English, Portuguese, and Urdu

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Abstract—This study examines the morphological patterns of three languages—English, Portuguese, and Urdu—used by Urdu-speaking migrants in Portugal. Focusing on bound morphemes, both derivational and inflectional, the research adopts a comparative-descriptive design to explore possible cross-linguistic influences and typological distinctions. Drawing on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) as a historical framework, the study critically evaluates its applicability alongside contemporary perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) and morphological pedagogy. Data were sourced from grammars, morphology texts, and existing literature to identify shared derivational cognates and divergent inflectional systems across the three languages. Findings reveal that while derivational morphemes often exhibit semantic and formal similarities facilitating transfer, inflectional morphemes reflect significant typological divergence, corresponding to the analytic (English), fusional (Portuguese), and agglutinative (Urdu) spectrum. These patterns provide a rich ground for testing that morphological awareness effects in vocabulary acquisition, yet inflectional differences are expected to pose specific learning challenges. The study underscores the theoretical significance of typology-informed contrastive analysis and highlights practical implications for pedagogy and translation. It concludes by recommending classroom-based testing of derived and inflected forms to optimize learning strategies for multilingual migrants.

Index Terms—contrastive analysis, language typology, trilingual analysis, multilingualism, migration

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the migratory flows from South Asia to Europe have reshaped the sociolinguistic landscape of several European nations. Portugal has experienced significant migration flows over the past decades, with notable increases from countries such as Brazil, Ukraine, and various African nations. According to the International Organization for Migration (2025), Portugal's foreign-born population has been steadily increasing, particularly in the 21st century. However, the presence of Urdu-speaking migrants in Portugal is less documented. While specific statistics on Urdu-speaking migrants are limited, the broader context of migration to Portugal provides insight into the linguistic landscape. This influx has contributed to a multilingual environment in which languages such as English, Portuguese, and Urdu intersect, particularly in urban areas with diverse immigrant communities.

The migration of Urdu speakers to Portugal, though less prominent than that of other groups, is part of this broader trend. Immigration from Pakistan to Portugal has been increasing, indicative of a wider trend of South Asians pursuing new chances in this European country. Portugal's attractiveness stems from its favourable immigration regulations, robust family reunion framework, and the promise of a superior quality of life. The Portuguese labour market is accessible to individuals who are fluent in English, offering opportunities across all sectors. It presents significant opportunities for Pakistani citizens (Saad, 2024).

Migrants often maintain their linguistic heritage while adapting to the sociolinguistic realities of their new environment. Most try to learn the local language and master the appropriate accent to facilitate their adaptation and strengthen ties with the local population (Taborda, 2025). This demographic trend underscores the importance of linguistic preparedness, particularly in learning Portuguese, the host country's official language. The presence of Urdu in Portugal therefore adds a layer of complexity to the country's linguistic tapestry, influencing language contact phenomena and potentially shaping language acquisition and usage patterns among the migrant population. Most Pakistani immigrants to Portugal speak English, which is an official language in Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2013). English often serves as an intermediary language for immigrants, while Urdu remains their primary linguistic background. In such a situation, three languages are in interplay, namely English, Portuguese, and Urdu. While all are Indo-European languages (Figure 1), they exhibit vast typological differences (Garcia, 2011).

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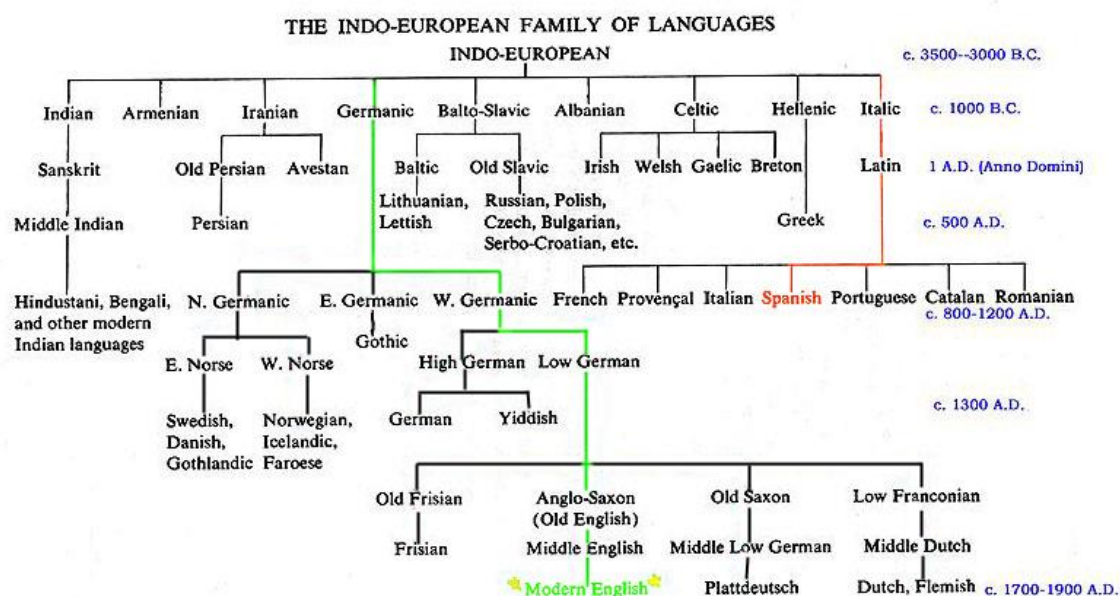


Figure 1. Indo-European Language Family Tree, Highlighting the Three Languages Analyzed in This Study

A. Theoretical Foundation

The three languages under investigation differ typologically and genealogically. English, a Germanic language, exhibits a relatively simple morphological structure compared to many other languages. It is predominantly analytic, relying heavily on word order and auxiliary verbs to convey grammatical relationships rather than inflectional morphology. English has a limited system of inflectional morphemes, primarily marking tense, aspect, number, and possession. For instance, the plural morpheme *-s* is added to nouns (e.g., cats), and the past tense morpheme *-ed* is added to regular verbs (e.g., walked). Derivational morphology in English is productive and diverse, enabling the creation of new words by adding prefixes and suffixes. Examples include *un-* (as in undo) and *-ness* (as in happiness). However, English lacks the rich system of inflectional morphology found in many other languages, relying instead on auxiliary constructions and word order to express grammatical nuances.

Portuguese, a Romance language, is spoken by around 260 million individuals, rendering it the fourth most widely spoken language globally. It is an official language in countries throughout four continents: Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia. It exhibits a more complex morphological structure than English, characterized by both inflectional and derivational morphemes. It is considered a fusional language, where a single morpheme can express multiple grammatical features simultaneously. For example, the verb form *falávamos* (we spoke) combines person, number, tense, and aspect in a single inflectional morpheme. Nouns and adjectives in Portuguese inflect for gender and number, with *-o* and *-a* marking masculine and feminine singular forms, respectively, and *-s* marking plural forms. Verbs conjugate across various tenses, aspects, moods, and persons, often through the addition of suffixes that fuse multiple grammatical features. Derivational morphology in Portuguese is also robust, with numerous prefixes and suffixes that alter the meaning or grammatical category of a base word. For instance, the prefix *re-* can indicate repetition (e.g., *refazer* – to redo), and the suffix *-ção* often forms nouns denoting action or effect (e.g., *educação* – education).

Urdu, an Indo-Aryan language, has a distinct morphological structure characterized by agglutinability. In Urdu, words are often formed by stringing together a sequence of morphemes, each representing a single grammatical feature. This agglutinative structure allows the expression of complex grammatical relationships by adding multiple affixes. Nouns in Urdu inflect for gender, number, and case. Inherent features of the noun mark gender, while number is indicated by suffixes such as *-e* for plural. Case is marked by postpositions that follow the noun. Verbs in Urdu conjugate for tense, aspect, mood, person, and number, with each feature typically represented by a separate morpheme. Derivational morphology in Urdu is highly productive, with a variety of prefixes and suffixes that can alter the meaning or grammatical category of a base word. For example, the suffix *-wala* can denote someone associated with a particular activity or thing (e.g., *dastawala* – one who carries a bag), and the prefix *be-* can indicate negation (e.g., *be-izzat* – dishonored). The degree of morphological complexities of English, Portuguese, and Urdu is depicted in the continuum presented in Figure 2.

Typologically, English (analytical) is the simplest, followed by Urdu (agglutinative) and finally by Portuguese (fusional).

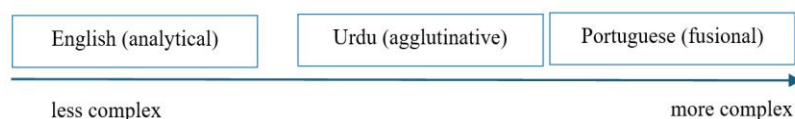


Figure 2. Complexity Spectrum According to the Language Typology of English, Portuguese, and Urdu

B. Significance of the Study

The present study is significant in that it offers a systematic morphological comparison of English, Portuguese, and Urdu within a unique trilingual migration-driven context. It thereby creates a foundation for testing several theoretical claims in linguistics and applied linguistics, while also highlighting practical pedagogical implications. This study is unique in that it compares and contrasts the morphological systems of three languages operating in a single context, unlike earlier contrastive analysis studies, which typically examine two languages.

(a). Theoretical Significance

1. Cross-Linguistic Influence (CLI)

The trilingual comparison provides an empirical basis for examining the extent to which structural similarities and differences across analytic, fusional, and agglutinative systems may facilitate or constrain transfer. Trilingual comparisons are very rare in the literature (Ali et al., 2025). Previous work has shown that CLI is bidirectional, occurring both from L1 to L2 and vice versa (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Odlin, 1989). Although the present study is descriptive, its findings highlight morphological domains where cross-linguistic influence is most likely to occur—for instance, derivational cognates across English and Portuguese, or divergent inflectional paradigms between Portuguese and Urdu. These contrasts create fertile ground for future classroom- and corpus-based research to test CLI predictions (Comesaña et al., 2018).

2. Morphological Awareness (MA)

Morphological awareness is a well-documented predictor of vocabulary development and reading comprehension in both first- and second-language learning (Kuo & Anderson, 2006; Ramírez, 2023). By identifying where derivational and inflectional morphemes align or diverge across English, Portuguese, and Urdu, this study suggests areas where enhancing learners' morphological awareness could have measurable pedagogical value. For instance, drawing attention to shared derivational suffixes (e.g., Portuguese *-ção* and English *-tion*) may facilitate vocabulary learning, while highlighting typological contrasts may prevent overgeneralization errors. The comparative findings thus establish a platform for empirical research into how morphological awareness contributes to SLA in multilingual settings.

3. Typology

The typological spectrum—analytic (English), fusional (Portuguese), and agglutinative (Urdu)—provides a natural testing ground for theories of morphological typology. Classic typological accounts (Bickel & Nichols, 2013; Comrie, 1989) emphasize that languages encode similar grammatical categories in structurally distinct ways, which can affect acquisition and processing. This study demonstrates these contrasts concretely, including the minimal inflectional marking in English, the complex verbal paradigms of Portuguese, and the agglutinative transparency of Urdu. Results from this study can provide a rich ground for testing hypotheses about processing load, acquisition difficulty, and computational modeling across these typological systems.

4. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Johansson, 2018; Lado, 1957) argued that structural differences between L1 and L2 predict learning difficulty, while similarities facilitate acquisition. Although later research demonstrated that CAH was overly deterministic (Khansir & Pakdel, 2019; Wardhaugh, 1970), contrastive studies remain valuable for descriptive purposes. By systematically documenting the structural contrasts in derivational and inflectional morphology across three typologically distinct languages, this study illustrates how CAH retains heuristic utility for identifying potential problem areas, even if it cannot predict learner outcomes on its own.

(b). Pedagogical Significance

In addition to its theoretical contributions, this study holds important pedagogical significance. For language teachers working with Urdu-speaking learners of English or Portuguese, the morphological contrasts highlighted here can inform the design of targeted instructional materials. Explicit instruction on derivational morphemes that overlap across languages may accelerate vocabulary acquisition (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). Conversely, attention to inflectional mismatches—such as verbal conjugations in Portuguese versus tense marking in English—may help learners avoid systematic errors.

Furthermore, the findings are expected to support the integration of morphological awareness activities into multilingual classrooms, enabling learners to compare and contrast morphological structures across their known languages. Such activities not only enhance vocabulary learning but also foster metalinguistic awareness, which has

been linked to long-term academic achievement (Nagy et al., 2006). By grounding pedagogy in actual morphological structures rather than abstract generalizations, teachers can scaffold learners' understanding in ways that anticipate challenges and leverage cross-linguistic resources.

C. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to conduct a systematic contrastive analysis of the derivational and inflectional morphemes of English, Portuguese, and Urdu within the migration context that has brought these languages into sustained contact in Portugal. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Document and compare the morphological systems of the three languages, focusing on both derivational and inflectional morphemes through descriptive and tabular analysis.
2. Situate the findings within relevant theoretical frameworks, including cross-linguistic influence, morphological awareness, and linguistic typology, while drawing on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis as a historical background.
3. Highlight potential points of convergence and divergence in the three systems—such as shared derivational cognates, divergent inflectional paradigms, and their placement along the analytic–fusional–agglutinative spectrum.
4. Lay the groundwork for future empirical studies that may test how these morphological contrasts and overlaps influence second language acquisition, vocabulary development, and cross-linguistic transfer in multilingual migrant contexts.
5. Suggest pedagogical and applied implications, particularly in the areas of language teaching, translation, and natural language processing, where morphological awareness can serve as a key facilitator.

By meeting these objectives, the study contributes both descriptively, by mapping out the morphology of three typologically distinct languages in contact, and theoretically, by offering a basis for testing claims made in contemporary SLA, morphology, and typology research.

D. Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions, grounded in the trilingual contrastive analysis of English, Portuguese, and Urdu morphology:

1. What similarities and differences exist in the derivational morphemes of English, Portuguese, and Urdu? Which morphemes are shared across languages, and how do their semantic and formal properties compare?
2. How do the inflectional systems of English, Portuguese, and Urdu differ in terms of marking grammatical categories such as tense, number, gender, and case?
3. How do the analytic (English), fusional (Portuguese), and agglutinative (Urdu) structures manifest in the morphological patterns observed across the three languages?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Johansson (2008), contrastive analysis is the systematic examination of two or more languages to reveal their similarities and differences. It is an organized investigation and comparison of languages, usually the target language of learners and their native language, aimed at identifying differences and similarities to anticipate challenges. Lado (1957) established the theoretical basis for the CAH, asserting that aspects similar to the learner's home language will be easy to understand, while dissimilar elements will pose challenges. Contrastive analysis posits that second-language learners often transfer characteristics of their mother language into the target language. Stockwell et al. (1965) introduced a hierarchy of difficulty based on the principles of transfer. They asserted that positive transfer occurs when the structures of two languages are similar, negative transfer occurs when their structures differ, and zero transfer occurs when there is no relationship between their structures.

Several studies conducted contrastive analysis mainly for pedagogical reasons. Al-Jurf (1995) developed a course intended to create a contrastive examination of English and Arabic for future English-Arabic and Arabic-English translators. Kazemian and Hashemi (2014) conducted a detailed analysis of the inflectional-bound morphemes in English, Azerbaijani, and Persian to locate their similarities and differences. Irshad et al. (2018) performed a contrastive analysis of Urdu and English lexicons to assist educators and learners in acquiring lexical items from both languages. Similarly, a recent study by Ejaz et al. (2024) conducted a contrastive analysis of English and Urdu pronouns, highlighting differences in gender marking and case systems. The findings suggest that Urdu's more complex gender system may pose challenges for English-speaking learners. Bertin et al. (Comesaña et al., 2018) discovered that two cohorts of bilinguals analyzed words in the same manner as the native control group. Furthermore, Waseem et al. (2020) conducted a lexico-grammatical analysis of incorporated English lexical elements in Urdu. Additionally, a comparative analysis by García and Borges (2013) examined the shared vocabulary between Portuguese and Urdu, with a focus on Arabic-origin terms. The study found that while both languages have borrowed extensively from Arabic, the integration and usage of these terms differ, reflecting their distinct morphological structures. Ali et al. (2025) explored morphological processing in trilingual speakers of English, Urdu, and Punjabi. The study found that language typology influenced morphological processing strategies: speakers of agglutinative languages, such as Urdu, employed different acquisition strategies than those of analytic languages, such as English. The findings suggest that typological similarity between languages facilitates positive transfer, while structural differences can lead to interference and errors. The

study supports existing theories of multilingual cognition, such as the Inhibitory Control Model, and highlights how language dominance and proficiency affect performance. It also emphasizes the importance of developing morphological awareness in language education to support learning and reduce negative transfer.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a comparative-descriptive methodology to investigate bound morphemes in English, Portuguese, and Urdu. The analysis focuses on two categories of bound morphemes: derivational and inflectional. This paper draws upon established grammatical descriptions and morphological analyses of the three languages as its primary data sources, as follows.

For English, reference is made to standard morphological descriptions such as Katamba (1993), Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (2016), and Lieber (2010). Portuguese data are based on Mateus and D'Andrade (2000), Perini (2002), and Villalva (2013). Urdu data are drawn from Rahman (1997), Schmidt (1999) and Butt and Ahmed (2011). These works provide detailed accounts of morphological structure, derivation, and inflection, ensuring a reliable basis for contrastive analysis.

The analysis procedure involved identifying the 10 most common distinctive derivational and 10 most common inflectional morphemes in the three languages, organizing them into structured tables, and analyzing their semantic scope, productivity, and typological functions. For derivational morphemes, the focus was on suffixes and prefixes that change word class or meaning. For inflectional morphemes, attention was directed to markers of tense, aspect, mood, person, number, case, gender, and possession. Each morpheme was then contextualized with examples to illustrate actual use in natural language.

The contrastive framework was applied symmetrically: English and Portuguese data were first compared due to their shared Indo-European origins and historical contact through Latin. Urdu was then introduced as a third language with Indo-Aryan and agglutinative features, offering a typologically distinct counterpart. This triangular approach avoids the limitations of traditional binary contrastive analysis and instead situates the findings within the broader framework of cross-linguistic influence (Odlin, 1996) and morphological awareness theories (Kuo & Anderson, 2006; Nagy & Scott, 2000).

The methodology is qualitative and descriptive rather than predictive. Its goal is to provide a detailed comparative account of morphological structures. Whitman (1970) outlined the procedures for contrastive analysis in four distinct stages. First, L1 and L2 undergo thorough analysis, resulting in formal descriptions for each language. In the subsequent phase, selections are made from the descriptions for comparison. In the third step, a systematic comparison of the forms is carried out, encompassing any linguistic unit of any size. The concluding phase entails predicting difficulty via a contrastive analysis approach.

Ellis (1986) outlined six possible outcomes of emergence in a comparative study of two languages: (i) equivalence between L1 and L2 terms, (ii) dissimilarity between L1 and L2 terms, (iii) a convergent phenomenon, (iv) a divergent phenomenon, (v) terms existing in L1 but not in L2, and (vi) terms existing in L2 but not in L1. This study conducts a contrastive analysis of English and Portuguese bound morphemes, focusing on their similarities and differences.

IV. RESULTS

The first step in this analysis is to compare the derivational and inflectional morphemes of English and Portuguese. These are summed up in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1
DERIVATIONAL MORPHEMES IN ENGLISH AND PORTUGUESE

No.	Type of Morpheme	Semantic Scope	Example in English	Example in Portuguese	Notes
1	Suffix (-ness / -dade)	Nominalization (quality/state)	happiness	felicidade	Cognates, both from Latin -tatem
2	Suffix (-ity / -idade)	Nominalization	activity	atividade	Cognates, highly productive in Portuguese
3	Suffix (-er / -or/-eiro)	Agentive (profession/role)	worker	trabalhador	Cognates (-or), -eiro specific to Portuguese
4	Prefix (un- / in-)	Negation	unhappy	inútil	Cognates, Latin in-
5	Suffix (-able / -ável)	Adjectival, capability	readable	amável	Cognates from Latin -abilis
6	Suffix (-ist / -ista)	Agent noun (profession/ideology)	artist	artista	Direct cognates, productive in both
7	Suffix (-hood / -dade)	Abstract noun (state)	childhood	irmandade	Partial cognates, different derivational families
8	Prefix (re- / re-)	Repetition	redo	refazer	Cognates, high productivity
9	Prefix (pre- / pré-)	Temporal (before)	prewar	pré-histórico	Direct cognates, productive
10	Suffix (-ment / -mento)	Nominalization (action/result)	development	desenvolvimento	Direct cognates from Latin -mentum

TABLE 2
INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES IN ENGLISH AND PORTUGUESE

No.	Type of Morpheme	Semantic Scope	Example in English	Example in Portuguese	Notes
1	Suffix (-s / -s/-es)	Plural noun	cats	gatos	Cognates, both Latin origin
2	Suffix ('-s / de)	Possessive	John's book	o livro de Maria	Functional equivalents, not cognates
3	Suffix (-ed / -ou/-ei)	Past tense	walked	falou / falei	Different origins, same semantic scope
4	Suffix (-s / -a/-e)	3rd person singular present	he runs	ele fala	Not cognates, equivalent functions
5	Suffix (-er / mais)	Comparative	faster	mais rápido	English bound vs. Portuguese analytic
6	Suffix (-est / o mais)	Superlative	fastest	o mais rápido	English bound vs. Portuguese periphrastic
7	Suffix (-ing / -ndo)	Progressive/gerund	running	falando	Cognates, both from Latin -ndu(m)
8	Suffix (Ø / -mos)	1st person plural present	we run	nós falamos	English analytic vs. Portuguese fusional
9	Suffix (Ø / -am)	3rd person plural past	they spoke	eles falaram	English analytic vs. Portuguese fusional
10	Suffix (-en / -ido/-ado)	Past participle	written	falado / vendido	Cognates from Latin participial endings

The second step in this analysis is to compare the derivational and inflectional morphemes of English and Urdu. These are summed up in Tables 3 and 4.

TABLE 3
DERIVATIONAL MORPHEMES IN ENGLISH AND URDU

No.	Type of Morpheme	Semantic Scope	Example in English	Example in Urdu (transliteration)	Notes
1	Suffix (-ness / -pan)	Nominalization (quality/state)	happiness	khushi-pan	Not cognates; Urdu -pan is Indo-Aryan origin
2	Suffix (-er / -wala)	Agentive (profession/role)	worker	kitab-wala "bookseller"	Functional equivalents, not cognates
3	Prefix (un- / na-)	Negation	unhappy	na-kam "unsuccessful"	Different origins, similar scope
4	Suffix (-able / -ney-wala)	Adjectival, capability	readable	kar-ney-wala "doer"	Urdu construction is agglutinative
5	Suffix (-ist / -gar)	Agent noun	artist	kamgar "worker"	Different etymology, similar scope
6	Suffix (-hood / -pan)	Abstract noun (state)	childhood	bacha-pan	Not cognates, functional equivalents
7	Prefix (re- / dobara)	Repetition	redo	dobara karna "do again"	Urdu uses lexical item, not affix
8	Prefix (pre- / pehle se)	Temporal (before)	prewar	pehle se tayar "prepared beforehand"	Lexical phrase, not bound prefix
9	Suffix (-ment / -i/-gi)	Nominalization (action/result)	development	taraqqi	Urdu uses lexical derivation, not affix
10	Suffix (-ship / -iyat)	Abstract noun (status)	friendship	dosti-iyat	Urdu -iyat productive for abstract nouns

TABLE 4
INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES IN ENGLISH AND URDU

No.	Type of Morpheme	Semantic Scope	Example in English	Example in Urdu (transliteration)	Notes
1	Suffix (-s / -ē/-ō)	Plural noun	cats	ladkē “boys”	Not cognates, functional equivalents
2	Suffix (-’s / -ka/-ki/-ke)	Possessive	John’s book	Ali-ka kitab	Not cognates; suffix agreement in Urdu
3	Suffix (-ed / -a/-i)	Past tense	walked	likha “wrote”	Different morphology, equivalent scope
4	Suffix (-s / -ta/-ti)	3rd person singular present	he runs	wo karta / karti	Gender marked in Urdu
5	Suffix (-er / ziyada)	Comparative	faster	ziyada tez	Bound vs. analytic word
6	Suffix (-est / sabse)	Superlative	fastest	sabse tez	Bound vs. periphrastic
7	Suffix (-ing / -raha/-rahi)	Progressive aspect	running	wo kar-raha hai	Urdu uses auxiliary construction
8	Suffix (Ø / -te/-ti)	Present habitual	they play	wo khel-te hain	Gender-number agreement
9	Suffix (-en / -a gaya/-i gayi)	Past participle/passive	written	likha gaya “was written”	Equivalent function, different form
10	Suffix (Ø / -on/-in)	Case marking (oblique plural)	—	ladkon “of the boys”	Absent in English

The third step in this analysis is to compare the derivational and inflectional morphemes of Portuguese and Urdu. These are summed up in Tables 5 and 6.

TABLE 5
DERIVATIONAL MORPHEMES IN PORTUGUESE AND URDU

No.	Type of Morpheme	Semantic Scope	Example in Portuguese	Example in Urdu (transliteration)	Notes
1	Suffix (-dade / -pan)	Nominalization (quality/state)	felicidade “happiness”	khushi-pan	Not cognates; Portuguese -dade from Latin, Urdu -pan Indo-Aryan
2	Suffix (-eiro/-ista / -wala/-gar)	Agentive (profession/role)	padeiro “baker”, artista “artist”	kitab-wala “bookseller”, kamgar “worker”	Different origins, functional equivalents
3	Prefix (in- / na-)	Negation	infeliz “unhappy”	na-kam “unsuccessful”	Not cognates; same semantic scope
4	Suffix (-ável / -ney-wala)	Adjectival, capability	aceitável “acceptable”	kar-ney-wala “doer”	Portuguese suffix vs. Urdu agglutinative construction
5	Suffix (-ista / -gar)	Agent noun	motorista “driver”	kamgar “worker”	Different etymologies, parallel functions
6	Suffix (-dade / -pan)	Abstract noun (state)	irmandade “brotherhood”	bacha-pan	Functional equivalents, not cognates
7	Prefix (re- / dobara)	Repetition	refazer “redo”	dobara karna “do again”	Portuguese uses a prefix, Urdu uses a lexical adverb
8	Prefix (pré- / pehle se)	Temporal (before)	pré-história “prehistory”	pehle se tayar “prepared beforehand”	Portuguese bound prefix vs. Urdu lexical phrase
9	Suffix (-ção / -i/-gi)	Nominalization (action/result)	educação “education”	taraqqi	Portuguese Latinate suffix, Urdu lexical derivation
10	Suffix (-ismo / -iyat)	Abstract noun (system/status)	capitalismo “capitalism”	dosti-iyat	Parallel abstraction devices

TABLE 6
INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES IN PORTUGUESE AND URDU

No.	Type of Morpheme	Semantic Scope	Example in Portuguese	Example in Urdu (transliteration)	Notes
1	Suffix (-s / -ē/-ō)	Plural noun	gatos “cats”	ladkē “boys”	Functional equivalents, different roots
2	Suffix (-’s / -ka/-ki/-ke)	Possessive	o livro do João “João’s book”	Ali-ka kitab	Portuguese uses a preposition + article, Urdu suffix agreement
3	Suffix (-ou/-ei / -a/-i)	Past tense	ele falou “he spoke”	likha “wrote”	Both are fusional, but unrelated morphology
4	Suffix (-a/-e / -ta/-ti)	3rd person singular present	ele canta “he sings”	wo karta/karti	Agreement marked in both, gendered in Urdu
5	Suffix (-ior / ziyada)	Comparative	maior “bigger”	ziyada bara	Portuguese bound suffix vs. Urdu analytic word
6	Suffix (-íssimo / sabse)	Superlative	grandíssimo “very big”	sabse bara	Portuguese bound form vs. Urdu periphrastic
7	Suffix (-ndo / -raha/-rahi)	Progressive aspect	cantando “singing”	wo ga-raha hai	Equivalent aspect markers, different structure
8	Suffix (-a/-am / -te/-ti)	Present habitual	eles jogam “they play”	wo khel-te hain	Agreement systems in both languages
9	Suffix (-do/-da / -a gaya/-i gayi)	Past participle/passive	escrito “written”	likha gaya “was written”	Similar scope, distinct forms
10	Suffix (-os/-as / -on/-in)	Case marking (plural forms)	dos meninos “of the boys”	ladkon “of the boys”	Functional parallels in oblique marking

V. DISCUSSION

A. Derivational Morphemes

The comparison of derivational morphemes across English, Portuguese, and Urdu reveals both shared semantic functions and typological divergences. The study examined 10 morphemes per language, grouped functionally:

a) Nominalization / Abstract Nouns

- English: -ness, -hood, -ship, -ment
- Portuguese: -dade, -ismo, -idade, -mento
- Urdu: -pan, -iyat, -gi

All three languages use derivational processes to form nouns denoting qualities, states, or abstractions (Ali et al., 2025). English and Portuguese often share Latin-derived morphemes (-ment, -idade), whereas Urdu relies on agglutinative and native Indo-Aryan forms. This suggests that while the semantic function of nominalization is universal, the formal strategies reflect typological differences.

b) Agentive / Occupation Morphemes

- English: -er, -ist
- Portuguese: -ista
- Urdu: -wala, -gar

Despite different etymologies, all three languages mark agents or professions, illustrating functional equivalence. Urdu's system is flexible and context-dependent, consistent with its agglutinative nature (Ali et al., 2025).

c) Adjectival / Capability Morphemes

- English: -able
- Portuguese: -vel
- Urdu: -ney-wala ("doer of")

Urdu forms are periphrastic and agglutinative, contrasting with the single-suffix morphology of English and Portuguese. This highlights typological divergence in the expression of adjectival or potentiality meanings.

d) Temporal / Repetition / Prefixes

- English: re-, pre-
- Portuguese: re-, pré-
- Urdu: dobara, pehle se

Urdu employs lexical items for repetition and temporal modification, unlike English and Portuguese, which have bound prefixes. This reflects the contrast between analytic (English), fusional (Portuguese), and agglutinative (Urdu) structures.

e) Summary

Across derivational morphemes, functional categories are shared mainly, but form, origin, and productivity differ. These patterns provide insight into potential areas of cross-linguistic transfer and influence, as learners may more easily acquire cognate morphemes but struggle with structural divergences (Ali et al., 2025; Orcasitas-Vicandi, 2019). Cognates between English and Portuguese are more numerous than those between English and Urdu. This signifies the longer distance in the language family tree, as well as the geographical distance between the homelands of Urdu on the one hand, and English and Portuguese on the other.

B. Inflectional Morphemes

The study also compared 10 inflectional morphemes per language, revealing key differences in marking grammatical categories:

a) Number (Plurality)

- English: -s
- Portuguese: -s
- Urdu: -ẽ/-õ

All three languages mark plural nouns, but Urdu employs suffixes that also encode gender agreement, whereas English plural forms are unmarked for gender.

b) Possessive / Genitive

- English: -'s
- Portuguese: de + article
- Urdu: -ka/-ki/-ke

Urdu's case and agreement marking is more morphologically explicit than English or Portuguese, reflecting its agglutinative typology (Marks et al., 2022).

c) Tense / Aspect

- English: -ed, -ing; auxiliary constructions
- Portuguese: -ou, -ava; verb endings encode person and tense
- Urdu: -a/-i, with auxiliaries (gaya, gayi)

English relies on analytic constructions, Portuguese shows fusional endings, and Urdu combines agglutinative suffixes with auxiliaries, illustrating typological variation.

d) Person / Gender / Agreement

- English: limited gender distinction; 3rd person singular -s
- Portuguese: verb endings mark person and gender
- Urdu: verb suffixes and auxiliaries encode gender and number

These differences illustrate how typology affects morphological marking of agreement and syntactic dependencies.

e) Comparative / Superlative Forms

- English: -er/-est or periphrastic (more/most)
- Portuguese: -ior/-íssimo
- Urdu: periphrastic (ziyada/sabse)

Again, Urdu relies on lexical constructions rather than bound morphemes, reflecting its agglutinative structure.

f) Case / Oblique Forms

- English: mostly analytic (prepositions)
- Portuguese: fused in prepositional phrases (dos meninos)
- Urdu: suffixes (-on/-in) mark oblique plural

C. Synthesis of the Results

a) derivational morphemes

Function	English	Portuguese	Urdu	Functional Similarity	Notes
Nominalization	-ness	-dade	-pan	Yes	All form abstract nouns; Urdu form is agglutinative
Agentive	-er	-ista	-wala	Yes	Functional equivalence, different origins
Abstract noun	-hood	-ismo	-iyat	Yes	Semantic function shared
Adjectival/capability	-able	-vel	-ney-wala	Yes	Urdu uses periphrastic construction
Temporal/repetition	re-/pre-	re-/pré-	dobara/pehle se	Partially	Urdu uses lexical items, not prefixes
Comparative derivation	-er/-est	-ior/-íssimo	ziyada/sabse	Partially	Urdu uses periphrastic, not bound suffix
Repetition	re-	re-	dobara	No	Urdu lexical, others affix
Action/result nominalization	-ment	-mento	-gi/-i	Yes	Functionally similar
Status/abstract noun	-ship	-idade	-iyat	Yes	Shared function, form differs
Agent noun	-ist	-ista	-gar	Yes	Semantic equivalence

- Fully functionally similar: 6/10
- Partially similar: 2/10
- Functionally different: 2/10

b) Inflectional Morphemes

Function	English	Portuguese	Urdu	Similarity	Notes
Plural	-s	-s	-ē/-ō	Yes	Functional similarity
Possessive	-'s	de + article	-ka/-ki/-ke	Yes	Functional equivalence
Past tense	-ed	-ou/-ava	-a/-i	Yes	Form differs; function shared
3rd person singular	-s	verb endings	-ta/-ti	Yes	Functionally equivalent
Comparative	-er	-ior	ziyada	Partially	Urdu uses periphrastic form
Superlative	-est	-íssimo	sabse	Partially	Urdu lexical, not suffix
Progressive	-ing	-ndo	-raha/-rahi	Yes	Urdu uses auxiliary construction
Present habitual	Ø	Ø	-te/-ti	Partially	Urdu suffix marks gender-number
Past participle / passive	-en	-ado/-ido	-a gaya/-i gayi	Yes	Functionally equivalent
Case marking	Ø	fused	-on/-in	No	English lacks explicit suffix

- Fully functionally similar: 5/10
- Partially similar: 3/10
- Functionally different: 2/10

D. Interpretation of Results

1. High functional similarity in derivational morphology (6/10) suggests that semantic functions like nominalization and agentive marking are essentially universal. Learners can leverage these similarities for positive transfer.

2. Partial similarities (2–3 morphemes per set) reflect typological differences, especially with Urdu's agglutinative constructions versus English analytic or Portuguese fusional forms. These areas may predict negative transfer or learner errors.
3. Fully different morphemes (2 each for derivational and inflectional sets) indicate that some constructions (like case marking or lexical repetition in Urdu) are unique to specific languages and require explicit instruction.
4. Typological lens:
 - Analytic English favors auxiliary/lexical constructions, fusional Portuguese favors bound morphemes expressing multiple features, and agglutinative Urdu favors sequential morphemes marking single grammatical features.
 - Quantifying similarities/differences clarifies which typological features most strongly influence cross-linguistic influence.

E. Implications for Cross-Linguistic Influence, Morphological Awareness, and CAH

1) Cross-Linguistic Influence

The presence of cognate derivational morphemes (e.g., -ness vs. -dade) can facilitate positive transfer, whereas typological divergences (agglutinative vs. analytic/fusional) may lead to negative transfer and errors, consistent with Ali et al. (2025).

2) Morphological Awareness

A contrastive analysis of derivational and inflectional patterns can enhance morphological awareness, enabling learners to recognize word formation patterns and develop literacy strategies across languages (Marks et al., 2022). Awareness of functional equivalence and structural differences improves reading and vocabulary skills.

3) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)

Findings pave the ground for CAH predictions: areas of similarity predict fewer errors, while structural differences predict potential difficulties (Orcasitas-Vicandi, 2019). Understanding typological distinctions—analytic, fusional, and agglutinative—helps anticipate learner challenges in second-language acquisition. Figure 3 summarizes predicted difficulty levels of Portuguese morphemes when learned by Urdu learners.

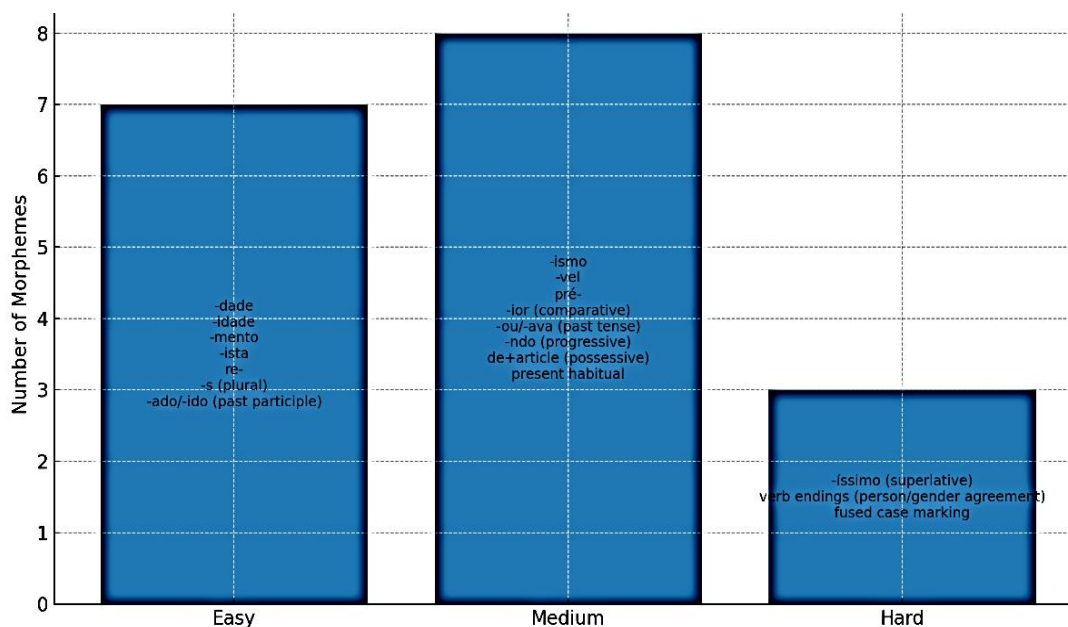


Figure 3. Difficulty Hierarchy of Portuguese Morphemes for Pakistani Immigrants (Urdu/English Speakers)

VI. CONCLUSION

This comparative study of English, Portuguese, and Urdu morphology has shown that while the three languages share certain broad semantic categories of derivational and inflectional morphemes, they differ strikingly in their formal realizations and morphological strategies. In derivation, English and Portuguese occasionally converge through cognate morphemes of Latin origin (e.g., -ment in English and -mento in Portuguese), while Urdu typically achieves similar functions with Indo-Aryan or Persian–Arabic derived affixes (e.g., -pan, -iyat). These parallels suggest functional equivalence, but the differences in form mean that learners cannot always rely on surface similarity.

In inflection, Portuguese distinguishes itself by a fusional system in which tense, person, number, and gender are expressed simultaneously in verb endings, a feature absent in both English and Urdu. English, with its relatively analytic system, uses fewer inflectional morphemes and often relies on auxiliary constructions. Urdu, by contrast,

employs a more agglutinative structure, stacking morphemes in systematic patterns with gender and number agreement. These contrasts illustrate how typological differences shape the expression of grammatical categories across languages.

Taken together, the study highlights that similarities across languages tend to occur in semantic scope—for example, pluralization, agentive roles, or abstract nominalization—while the formal expression of these categories often diverges. Such divergences are precisely where learners are expected to encounter the most significant challenges, especially when moving from the analytic and agglutinative systems of English and Urdu into the fusional morphology of Portuguese.

A. Recommendations for Future Research

This study generates predictions that can be empirically tested in future work. For example, it suggests that Pakistani immigrants learning Portuguese may find morphemes with clear functional parallels in English or Urdu (e.g., plural markers, agentive suffixes) relatively straightforward, while complex fusional verb endings may present greater challenges. Future research could test these predictions through psycholinguistic experiments, classroom interventions, or longitudinal learner corpora. Another direction is to extend the comparison to additional heritage languages spoken in Pakistan, such as Punjabi or Pashto, to determine whether the same patterns hold across diverse L1 backgrounds. Finally, it would be valuable to investigate how morphological awareness develops in trilingual learners who juggle analytic, fusional, and agglutinative systems simultaneously, building on earlier processing studies (Ali et al., 2025).

B. Theoretical Implications

The findings underscore the importance of integrating typological differences into theories of cross-linguistic influence. They show that the CAH remains useful when combined with more recent perspectives on morphological awareness and psycholinguistic processing. While CAH helps predict areas of difficulty by highlighting contrasts, it must be adapted to account for how learners transfer functions rather than mere forms across languages. Moreover, the study contributes to discussions on morphological complexity, showing that what appears “difficult” formally may still be learnable if semantic parallels exist. In this way, the results align with recent trilingual processing studies (Ali et al., 2025), which stress that learners’ success often depends on how well they can map old semantic categories onto new morphological realizations.

C. Pedagogical Implications

For language teaching, the study suggests a hierarchical approach to morphology. Teachers working with Urdu- or English-speaking learners of Portuguese should begin with morphemes that have clear functional equivalents in the learners’ L1s, such as plural markers, agentive derivations, and nominalizations. These serve as “bridges” to Portuguese morphology. More complex forms, particularly fusional verb endings that encode multiple categories simultaneously, should be introduced gradually with explicit scaffolding and repeated contextual exposure. Instruction should also emphasize morphological awareness, encouraging learners to see beyond form and identify cross-linguistic semantic parallels. This approach empowers learners to use their existing linguistic knowledge as a resource rather than solely as an obstacle.

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Comparing Quizizz-Based and Traditional Vocabulary Instruction: A Quasi-Experimental Study With Non-English Majors in Vietnam

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Abstract—Quizizz is a widely used game-based learning platform, particularly popular among university students in Vietnam. This quasi-experimental study investigates the impact of Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction compared to traditional teaching methods on vocabulary retention among non-English major students at a Vietnamese university. A total of 80 participants were divided equally into an experimental group, which used Quizizz for vocabulary learning, and a control group, which received traditional instruction. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with both students and lecturers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative responses were thematically analyzed. Results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in both immediate and delayed vocabulary retention tests, indicating that Quizizz-based instruction can effectively enhance vocabulary learning. Furthermore, students and lecturers expressed generally positive attitudes toward the use of Quizizz as a supplemental vocabulary learning tool, although some concerns about content quality and learning depth were noted. These findings provide practical implications for integrating game-based platforms like Quizizz into English vocabulary teaching and suggest directions for future research on technology-enhanced language learning.

Index Terms—Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction, traditional vocabulary teaching, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), non-English majors, mixed-methods research

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is considered one of the most important language competencies and is regarded as essential for successful foreign or second language learning and vocabulary learning is not merely about “learning form-meaning connections” but also requires repeated exposure and active use in order to achieve long-term retention (Schmitt, 2000). This highlights the indispensable role of vocabulary in communication and English learning. In this context, teachers need to adopt appropriate teaching methods to help learners retain vocabulary effectively. Wilkins (1972) stated that without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. This highlights that vocabulary serves as the foundation of all communicative activities. According to Mayer’s (2001) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, learning becomes more effective when both visual and auditory channels are combined rather than relying on a single channel. This theoretical perspective explains why technology-supported learning environments may enhance vocabulary retention.

However, despite the growing interest in gamified platforms, empirical evidence on their effects among Vietnamese non-English majors remains limited. Few studies have explored how game-based tools like Quizizz can enhance vocabulary retention in this specific learner group. Recent educational research (2022–2024), however, has demonstrated that technology-mediated approaches can significantly improve vocabulary retention. For instance, mobile-assisted vocabulary learning tools employing spaced repetition promote longer-term retention than traditional methods (Teymouri, 2024). Furthermore, digital reading environments have been shown to have a strong positive effect on L2 vocabulary acquisition, particularly when learners interact with multimedia-enhanced texts (Zhu et al., 2023). Additionally,

augmented reality systems that embed vocabulary in contextual visuals offer memory benefits across both immediate and delayed recall (Weerasinghe et al., 2022). While digital tools generally support vocabulary memory and learner engagement, their impact depends heavily on how they are integrated pedagogically (Babazade, 2024).

With the increasing popularity of digital technology, especially platforms like Quizizz in learners' daily lives, it is urgent and necessary to explore how to effectively exploit technological strategies to support sustainable vocabulary learning. Therefore, this study seeks to address this research need by exploring the impact of digital tools, including Quizizz, on L2 vocabulary development, thereby contributing to both theoretical understanding and pedagogical practice. This study employs Quizizz to teach vocabulary to non-English major students because the platform is highly suitable for vocabulary learning, easy to use, requires minimal technological skills, and its games and quizzes engage students during class while supporting long-term vocabulary retention. Compared to other platforms such as Kahoot, Quizlet, TikTok or Wordwall, Quizizz offers greater flexibility in activity design, allows both synchronous and asynchronous use, and provides detailed reports that help lecturers monitor students' learning progress easily and effectively.

Building on the increasing integration of digital technologies in language learning, this study aims to compare the impacts of Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction with traditional vocabulary teaching methods in enhancing vocabulary retention among non-English major students at a university in Vietnam. Additionally, it explores students' and lecturers' attitudes toward the use of Quizizz as a tool for vocabulary learning and the development of other English language skills.

Based on the aims of this study, the following research questions are addressed:

- 1) *How effective is Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction compared to traditional methods in improving English vocabulary retention?*
- 2) *What are students' and lecturers' attitudes toward using Quizizz for English vocabulary learning?*

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Vocabulary Learning in Second Language Acquisition

According to Schmitt (2000), vocabulary learning is not merely about memorizing isolated word-meaning pairs but involves a multifaceted process that includes the development of form, meaning, usage, collocations, and grammatical behavior. This process requires both receptive knowledge (recognizing words in reading and listening) and productive knowledge (using them in speaking and writing), and depends heavily on frequency of exposure and depth of processing. Modern approaches to vocabulary learning emphasize meaningful engagement with words in context. Techniques such as spaced repetition, contextual learning, and integrative use of vocabulary in communication tasks have been proven effective. Teymouri (2024) highlights how mobile-assisted vocabulary tools, especially those using digital flashcards and gamified repetition systems, improve long-term retention and learner motivation. Moreover, Zhu et al. (2023), through a comprehensive meta-analysis, demonstrated that multimedia-enhanced digital reading environments significantly support L2 vocabulary development. However, most of these studies focused on English majors or advanced learners in developed contexts, leaving little evidence about how such vocabulary learning processes function among non-English majors in EFL environments like Vietnam. Moreover, few studies have compared traditional instruction with technology-supported methods to determine which approach better facilitates long-term vocabulary retention. Their findings emphasize that learners benefit most when digital texts integrate visual, textual, and contextual cues, allowing for more effective incidental learning and better retention.

B. Technology-Enhanced Vocabulary Learning

The integration of multimedia and digital technologies into vocabulary instruction has transformed traditional language learning environments. Mayer's (2001) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, effective learning occurs when both visual and auditory channels are activated simultaneously. This dual-channel processing enhances memory retention by reducing cognitive overload and promoting meaningful encoding of information. Multimedia-enhanced vocabulary learning environments typically combine text, images, sound, video, and animation, enabling learners to establish richer form-meaning connections. For example, learners watching a short video that demonstrates the meaning of a word in context can process it more deeply than when encountering the word in text alone. Zhu et al. (2023) found that multimedia-supported digital reading significantly improves vocabulary acquisition, particularly when learners engage with texts containing interactive visuals and context clues. Similarly, Weerasinghe et al. (2022) investigated the role of augmented reality (AR) in vocabulary learning and found that embedding new words into real-world contexts using visual keywords led to improved recall in both immediate and delayed post-tests. Despite these benefits, the success of multimedia and technological tools depends largely on pedagogical integration. Babazade (2024) argues that technology alone does not guarantee learning outcomes; instead, instructional design, learner autonomy, and interaction with meaningful content are crucial for sustainable vocabulary development. These principles also underpin the pedagogical rationale for gamification, where visual, auditory, and interactive elements are combined to sustain learners' motivation and cognitive engagement in vocabulary learning.

C. Gamification in Language Learning

Gamification is defined as the integration of game elements into non-game contexts to enhance engagement and motivation (Deterding et al., 2011). In language learning contexts, gamified platforms such as Quizizz offer learners

choices in pacing and task completion (autonomy), provide immediate feedback and scores (competence), and enable collaborative or competitive interaction with peers (relatedness), thereby supporting sustained engagement (Sailer & Homner, 2020; Seaborn & Fels, 2021). These elements correspond with Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory.

Self-Determination Theory, which posits that learning motivation increases when activities satisfy learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Empirical studies have shown that gamified vocabulary learning environments increase learners' flow experiences, which in turn enhances vocabulary retention and overall engagement (Hamari et al., 2019). Studies have confirmed that when students perceive gamified vocabulary tools as useful and user-friendly, they are more likely to engage actively, resulting in improved learning outcomes (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018; Hew et al., 2023). Building on these principles, Quizizz operationalizes gamification through points, leaderboards, memes, and instant feedback, all of which promote enjoyment and repeated engagement in vocabulary tasks.

D. Quizizz in Vocabulary Instruction

Quizizz integrates key gamification elements, points, leaderboards, immediate feedback, and self-paced quizzes, to enhance student engagement and motivation (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018; Bury & O'Neill, 2021). Vietnamese university students using Quizizz for vocabulary lessons outperformed peers in traditional instruction on both immediate and delayed post-tests, while also expressing higher engagement and enjoyment (Do, 2023). Quizizz-based instruction facilitated not only recognition of word forms and meanings but also deeper processing through interactive games and quizzes, contributing to long-term retention (Pham & Nguyen, 2024). The gamified features of Quizizz, including instant feedback and competitive elements, have been found to increase learners' motivation and active participation, which are critical for effective vocabulary learning (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018; Zhao, 2022). However, overreliance on game-based features may lead some learners to focus more on competition and rewards than on linguistic content, potentially limiting deeper processing if not pedagogically guided.

E. Learners' and Teachers' Attitudes Toward Quizizz and Digital Tools

Attitudes toward technology play a crucial role in determining its successful adoption and integration in language learning (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Learners' perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and engagement significantly influence their willingness to participate in technology-mediated activities. Gamified platforms like Quizizz have been shown to elicit positive attitudes from students, who often report higher motivation, enjoyment, and active participation compared to traditional learning methods (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018; Do, 2023; Hew et al., 2023). Teachers' attitudes are equally important, as their acceptance and pedagogical beliefs determine how effectively such tools are integrated into classroom instruction (Chou & Feng, 2019; Pham & Nguyen, 2024). Educators generally view Quizizz as a valuable supplementary tool for vocabulary teaching because of its interactive nature and ability to provide immediate feedback (Bury & O'Neill, 2021). Yet, teachers' digital competence and pedagogical beliefs determine whether such tools are integrated as core teaching aids or remain peripheral supplements, as emphasized by Redecker et al. (2021) in the DigCompEdu framework. The alignment between teachers' instructional strategies and learners' expectations strongly affects the success of digital tools in language classrooms (Al-Marroof & Al-Emran, 2018).

F. Review of Previous Studies

Internationally, several studies have reported positive effects of Quizizz-based instruction on vocabulary acquisition. Bury and O'Neill (2021) indicated that EFL students in Ireland who used Quizizz for vocabulary practice showed significant improvement in both immediate and delayed post-tests compared to those using traditional methods. Tsai (2020) conducted a systematic review of digital game-based vocabulary learning and highlighted that platforms integrating gamification features such as points, leaderboards, and instant feedback enhanced learners' motivation, engagement, and retention. Sailer and Homner (2020) found that gamified learning environments satisfy learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, creating optimal conditions for language acquisition. According to Hew et al. (2023), learners are more likely to adopt gamified tools when they perceive them as useful and easy to use.

In Vietnam, Do (2023) confirmed that Vietnamese university students using Quizizz for vocabulary lessons outperformed their peers in traditional instruction on both immediate and delayed post-tests, while also reporting higher levels of engagement and enjoyment. Pham and Nguyen (2024) revealed that Quizizz-based instruction not only helped learners recognize word forms and meanings but also promoted deeper processing, which contributed to long-term retention. Le et al. (2021) highlighted that Vietnamese non-English majors often face challenges in vocabulary acquisition due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom; gamified platforms like Quizizz help address this gap by providing repeated practice and interactive learning opportunities. These studies consistently demonstrate the pedagogical value of Quizizz in enhancing vocabulary retention and engagement. Nevertheless, most of them employed short interventions or small samples, focusing mainly on English majors. The extent to which Quizizz supports vocabulary retention among non-English majors in sustained instructional settings remains underexplored.

G. Research Gap in Quizizz-Based Vocabulary Learning

Overall, both international and Vietnamese studies have indicated the positive effects of using Quizizz in vocabulary instruction. However, previous research has mainly focused on the isolated impact of Quizizz, with few studies addressing

students' and teachers' attitudes toward Quizizz and digital tools, as well as its integration with effective instructional strategies. Moreover, there is a lack of research focusing on non-English majors in Vietnam, a group that typically struggles more with vocabulary learning because of their limited opportunities to use English beyond the classroom. This study aims to fill this gap by examining both vocabulary retention and students' and teachers' attitudes toward Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction in the Vietnamese context.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design with a mixed-methods approach to investigate the effectiveness of Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction compared to traditional teaching methods in enhancing English vocabulary retention among non-English major university students in Vietnam. A total of 80 students were divided equally into two groups: an experimental group ($n = 40$), which received vocabulary instruction through Quizizz activities, and a control group ($n = 40$), which received conventional vocabulary teaching. The intervention lasted for 10 weeks. Data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively through a mixed-method study, using pre-tests, post-tests for both groups, and questionnaires for students and interviews with both students and lecturers.

B. Participants

The study was conducted with 80 non-English major students from a Vietnamese university during the 2024–2025 academic year. The participants ($N = 80$) were randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group ($n = 40$), which received vocabulary instruction through Quizizz-based activities, and a control group ($n = 40$), which received traditional vocabulary instruction. All participants had an equivalent level of English proficiency prior to participating in the study. Participation was voluntary and all students gave their informed consent after being clearly explained the objectives and procedures of the study.

C. Instruments

The researchers utilized both a pre-test and a post-test to measure changes in students' vocabulary knowledge before and after the intervention. The post-test was administered at the end of the 10-week period to evaluate the effectiveness of Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction compared to traditional methods. The assessment aimed to determine the impact of the intervention on students' vocabulary retention. To collect data on students' attitudes toward the use of Quizizz in improving vocabulary retention, a structured questionnaire was designed and administered. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The items examined various aspects of students' perceptions, including the perceived educational value of Quizizz, its effectiveness in supporting vocabulary learning, and students' engagement and motivation during the learning process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 10 students and 5 lecturers to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives regarding the use of Quizizz for vocabulary learning. The interviews aimed to explore the perceived benefits, challenges, and overall effectiveness of Quizizz-based instruction compared to traditional methods. Responses were audio-recorded and analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative data.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

To investigate the impact of the intervention, test scores from both the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics such as mean, mode, and standard deviation were calculated, and inferential statistics were employed to determine statistical significance. This analysis provided insights into the effect of Quizizz-based instruction on vocabulary retention among non-English majors. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. After data collection, the responses from the Google Forms survey were automatically compiled into a spreadsheet. The researcher then analyzed the data by calculating the percentage of each selected answer. The results were further examined to identify the most and least chosen answers, as well as to identify overall trends in participants' opinions. Finally, the researcher summarized the responses for each question and used the data to draw conclusions based on the survey results.

E. Ethical Considerations

When using questionnaires, tests, and interviews with teachers and students, all participants were clearly informed of the purpose of the study and voluntarily agreed to take part before data collection. Permission from the school administration was also secured. The research tools and tests strictly adhered to ethical principles, ensuring confidentiality and using the results solely to evaluate learners' progress.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

- *Results of Pre-test*

Before conducting the study to examine the impact of Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction compared to traditional teaching methods on vocabulary retention among non-English major students at a university in Vietnam, a pre-test was

administered to both the control group and the experimental group, with N = 40 in each group. The results are presented as follows:

TABLE 1
THE STATISTICS OF PRE-TEST TOTAL

N	Valid Missing	Control group	Experimental group
		40 0	40 0
	Mean	5.33	5.28
	Median	5.5	5.5
	Mode	5	5
	Std. Deviation	1.05	0.91
	Minimum	4	5
	Maximum	8	7

Table 1 shows that the initial vocabulary proficiency of both the control and experimental groups was relatively comparable before the intervention. Both groups had the same median score of 5.5 and the same mode of 5.0, indicating a similar central tendency. The mean scores were also close, with 5.33 for the control group and 5.28 for the experimental group, showing minimal difference. Additionally, the standard deviations (SD) were similar (1.05 for the control group and 0.91 for the experimental group), suggesting a comparable level of score variability within each group. The minimum and maximum scores were 4 and 8 for the control group, and 5 and 7 for the experimental group, respectively. These findings indicate that both groups started at a similar level in terms of vocabulary knowledge, providing a valid baseline for comparing the effects of the Quizizz-based teaching intervention in the post-test phase.

- *Results of Post-test*

After the experimental implementation of Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction, a post-test was conducted for both the control group and the experimental group in order to compare the results before and after the intervention using a paired t-test. The findings are summarized as follows:

TABLE 2
THE STATISTICS OF POST-TEST TOTAL

N	Valid Missing	Control group	Experimental group
		40 0	40 0
	Mean	5.48	6.31
	Median	5.5	6
	Mode	5	6
	Std. Deviation	0.93	0.77
	Minimum	4	5
	Maximum	8	8

Table 2 presents the post-test results for both the control and experimental groups following the implementation of Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction. The experimental group demonstrated a notable improvement, with the mean score increasing from 5.28 (pre-test) to 6.31 (post-test), and a reduction in standard deviation from 0.91 to 0.77, indicating more consistent performance and stable progress among participants. In contrast, the control group showed only a slight increase in the mean score, from 5.33 to 5.48, with the standard deviation decreasing marginally from 1.05 to 0.93. Interestingly, the median, mode, minimum, and maximum scores for the control group remained unchanged from the pre-test, suggesting minimal overall progress. Meanwhile, the experimental group exhibited positive shifts in all key statistical indicators: Mode increased from 5 to 6; Median rose from 5.5 to 6; Minimum score improved from 4 to 5; Maximum score increased from 7 to 8. These changes indicate not only an improvement in average performance but also in the overall distribution of scores within the experimental group. The decrease in standard deviation further suggests that students' performances became more consistent after the intervention. These results provide strong evidence that the Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction had a positive impact on learners' vocabulary retention compared to traditional teaching methods.

- *Questionnaire on Students' Attitudes Toward Quizizz-Based Vocabulary Learning*

After 10 weeks of implementing the Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction and administering the post-test, a 10-item questionnaire was distributed to the 40 students in the experimental group. The purpose of this questionnaire was to explore students' attitudes toward learning English vocabulary through Quizizz. The items covered various aspects, including educational value, engagement, enjoyment, motivation, and perceived effectiveness of Quizizz as a vocabulary learning tool. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the frequency and percentage of responses for each item. The results are summarized in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3
STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD QUIZIZZ-BASED VOCABULARY LEARNING (N=40)

<i>Statement</i>	Strongly Disagree (n/%)	Disagree (n/%)	Neutral (n/%)	Agree (n/%)	Strongly Agree(n/%)
1. I believe Quizizz has educational value when used for vocabulary learning.	2/ 5%	3/ 7.5%	7/ 17.5%	20/ 50%	8/ 20%
2. Quizizz-based activities help me remember new English vocabulary more effectively.	3/ 7.5%	3/ 7.5%	6/ 15%	19/ 47.5%	9/ 22.5%
3. I feel more engaged when learning vocabulary through Quizizz than through traditional methods	2/ 5%	3/ 7.5%	5/ 12.5%	18/ 45%	12/ 30%
4. I consider Quizizz a useful supplementary tool for improving my English vocabulary.	2/ 5%	3/ 7.5%	4/ 10%	17/ 42.5%	14/ 35%
5. I think vocabulary learning through Quizizz is more enjoyable than using textbooks.	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	3/ 7.5%	24/ 60%	13/ 32.5%
6. I can understand and remember vocabulary better when it is presented through Quizizz-based activities.	1/ 2.5%	3/ 7.5%	3/ 7.5%	18/ 45%	15/ 37.5%
7. The short and visual nature of Quizizz makes it easier for me to learn vocabulary.	2/ 5%	2/ 5%	6/ 15%	17/ 42.5%	13/ 32.5%
8. Quizizz motivates me to study English vocabulary regularly.	3/ 7.5%	2/ 5%	3/ 7.5%	22/ 55%	10/ 25%
9. Using Quizizz for vocabulary learning encourages me to use new words in real communication.	1/ 2.5%	2/ 5%	4/ 10%	17/ 42.5%	16/ 40%
10. I am more likely to learn vocabulary when it is related to my interests shown on Quizizz.	2/ 5%	2/ 5%	3/ 7.5%	18/ 45%	15/ 37.5%

According to Table 3, in general, most students showed a positive attitude toward using Quizizz to enhance their English vocabulary retention. Specifically, 78.75% of the students selected Agree (47.5%) and Strongly Agree (31.25%), indicating a high level of agreement on the effectiveness of Quizizz in vocabulary learning. Meanwhile, only 10.25% of students expressed disagreement, including 4.5% who strongly disagreed and 5.75% who disagreed. The proportion of students with a neutral opinion was 12%. These results suggest that Quizizz is perceived as a useful tool for English vocabulary learning and has a positive impact on students' learning attitudes.

Students in the experimental group demonstrated a positive perception of Quizizz's effectiveness in vocabulary learning, as reflected in items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 9. Specifically, 70% of students believed that Quizizz-based activities have educational value when used for vocabulary learning and that Quizizz helps them remember new English vocabulary more effectively (Items 1 and 2). 77.5% considered Quizizz a useful supplementary tool for improving their English vocabulary (Item 4). Notably, 82.5% of students stated that learning vocabulary through Quizizz helps them understand and retain new words better, and also encourages them to use new vocabulary in real-life communication (Items 6 and 9). In addition, a high percentage of students believe that Quizizz makes learning more interesting and engaging, while also encouraging them to participate actively in English learning activities in class, as reflected in items 3, 5, and 7. Specifically, in item 3, 75% of students highly appreciate learning vocabulary through Quizizz compared to traditional methods they have previously experienced. Similarly, in item 7, 75% of students believe that the short and visual nature of Quizizz helps them learn vocabulary more easily. Notably, item 5 received the highest agreement rate, with 92.5% of students agreeing that learning vocabulary through Quizizz is more enjoyable than using textbooks. Finally, Quizizz also contributes to motivating students to learn vocabulary, as reflected in items 8 and 10. Specifically, 80% of students reported that Quizizz encourages them to study English vocabulary more regularly (item 8), and 82.5% of students expressed that they feel more interested in learning vocabulary when it relates to their personal interests displayed on Quizizz (Item 10).

• Interview Questions for Lecturers

In the next stage, five English lecturers were interviewed using the above four questions to explore their attitudes towards the use of Quizizz in vocabulary teaching and to identify the challenges they perceived in integrating Quizizz into their instruction. The interviews were recorded, and the lecturers' responses were synthesized as follows:

1. What is your opinion about learning English vocabulary through Quizizz-based activities?

The lecturers stated that Quizizz is a useful tool for supporting English learning in general, and vocabulary learning in particular. With its short, engaging, and entertaining videos, Quizizz can stimulate learners' interest. In addition, the videos are often visual and context-based, which helps learners remember vocabulary more easily. However, the lecturers also pointed out some challenges in using Quizizz. The accuracy and reliability of the content are not always guaranteed or properly regulated; therefore, teachers need to carefully select appropriate materials. Moreover, assessing learning outcomes through Quizizz is difficult to conduct systematically compared to traditional teaching resources. Based on these perspectives, the lecturers recommended viewing Quizizz as a supplementary tool that should be integrated with traditional teaching methods. With proper guidance and careful selection of content, Quizizz has the potential to motivate learners and make vocabulary learning more engaging and effective.

2. Have you observed any changes in students' vocabulary acquisition or engagement when they use Quizizz as a supplementary tool?

According to the lecturers' observations, students appeared more interested in learning vocabulary when supported by Quizizz and often taking the initiative to share quizzes or new words they had learned in class. Thanks to the visual and

auditory elements, students found it easier to remember vocabulary. However, some students were only able to recall words within the quiz context and struggled to apply them flexibly in new situations. In addition, a small number of students did not use Quizizz for learning purposes and were easily distracted by entertaining content. The lecturers noted that Quizizz can enhance interaction and foster learning motivation. Nevertheless, to achieve effectiveness in teaching, Quizizz should be regarded as a supplementary tool that needs to be combined with traditional teaching methods.

3. *How do you compare Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction with traditional methods in terms of effectiveness and student engagement?*

Most lecturers stated that teaching vocabulary through Quizizz activities was more engaging than traditional methods. With its visual, interactive, and dynamic features, Quizizz attracted students' attention, encouraged active participation in class activities, created a lively classroom atmosphere, and supported more effective vocabulary retention. In contrast, when using traditional methods, students tended to participate less, and the classroom was often quiet and less engaging. However, the lecturers also acknowledged that the strength of traditional methods lies in helping students systematically consolidate and reinforce their knowledge. Therefore, they agreed that a flexible combination of Quizizz and traditional methods in vocabulary instruction would yield the most optimal results.

4. *Do you see any challenges in integrating Quizizz into vocabulary teaching?*

According to the lecturers, the content on Quizizz is very diverse and abundant; however, it is not always accurate or aligned with teaching objectives. Therefore, teachers need to carefully screen and select materials before using them in class. In addition, it is difficult to design a systematic lesson if relying solely on Quizizz. Another challenge is that students can sometimes focus more on the game-like elements of Quizizz, such as points and leaderboards, rather than on the learning objectives, and some still perceive it primarily as a fun activity rather than a serious learning tool. For these reasons, Quizizz should be considered a supplementary tool, integrated at a moderate level, and used with clear guidance from teachers in order to achieve effectiveness in vocabulary instruction.

- *Interview Questions for Students*

Ten students from the experimental group were randomly selected for interviews with three questions. The interviews aimed to explore their attitudes towards learning English vocabulary through Quizizz-based activities, to gather their opinions on learning vocabulary via Quizizz compared with traditional methods, and to examine whether they would like to continue using Quizizz for vocabulary learning. The students' responses were recorded and are presented below:

1. *How do you feel about learning English vocabulary through Quizizz?*

Most students reported that learning vocabulary through Quizizz is very interesting because the game-based format is lively, interactive, and easy to follow. The use of images and sound helps them remember vocabulary for a longer time, and it also makes the class more engaging and less boring. Quizizz is considered useful for introducing new words and creating motivation, but for deeper learning and long-term retention, students still need to rely on textbooks or traditional methods. On the other hand, some videos are too short and do not fully explain word usage, and sometimes students get distracted by entertaining content, which reduces their focus on learning.

2. *Do you think Quizizz is more effective than traditional vocabulary learning methods? Why or why not?*

Students think Quizizz is more effective because the game-based quizzes and instant feedback make it easier to remember and apply vocabulary in communication. The competitive elements and humorous answer choices help them memorize words much faster than studying from books. Although Quizizz is not as systematic as traditional methods, it helps me stay motivated to learn every day. Just spending a few minutes completing quizzes regularly allows them to pick up new words, which feels easier to maintain than rote memorization. Quizizz is effective in sparking interest and learning vocabulary in real-life contexts. However, to retain words longer and use them accurately, I still need to combine it with textbooks and exercises. Some students also think Quizizz is only partially effective, since sometimes the questions or answer options are oversimplified and do not fully explain word usage, which may cause confusion if they only rely on the platform.

3. *Would you like to continue using Quizizz for vocabulary learning in the future? Why?*

Most students would like to continue using Quizizz for vocabulary learning because it makes learning more engaging, enjoyable, and less stressful. The Quizizz-based activities, with images, sound effects, and immediate feedback, help them absorb and remember vocabulary more easily, and they can practice anytime and anywhere. Students believe Quizizz is suitable for learning new words and maintaining a daily learning habit. However, they emphasized that Quizizz should only be used as a supplementary tool. For deeper learning, long-term retention, and accurate usage, they still need to combine it with textbooks, exercises, or traditional methods. Some students also noted that Quizizz should be used in moderation, as the entertaining elements and competitive features can become distracting if not well controlled.

B. Discussion

The results obtained from the T-tests, questionnaires, and interviews provide comprehensive insights into the learners' vocabulary development, their learning experiences, and the underlying factors influencing their retention. This section discusses the findings in relation to the two research questions. Specifically, it highlights the similarities and differences between the experimental and control groups, interprets these outcomes in the light of previous studies, and considers their implications for English language teaching and learning.

Research Question 1: How effective is Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction compared to traditional methods in improving English vocabulary retention?

The research results indicate that Quizizz-based vocabulary learning is more effective than traditional instructional methods in improving vocabulary retention among non-English-major learners. The experimental group, which used Quizizz to learn vocabulary, showed a clear improvement, with the average test score rising from 5.28 (pre-test) to 6.31 (post-test). In addition, both the median (5.5 to 6) and mode (5 to 7) increased, indicating a general upward shift in learners' performance. The minimum score improved from 4 to 5, while the maximum score rose from 7 to 8, showing that even weaker students benefited from the intervention and that stronger learners achieved higher mastery. This group also achieved more consistent outcomes, as reflected in the reduced standard deviation. In contrast, the control group, which was taught through traditional methods, only showed a slight increase in average scores, from 5.33 (pre-test) to 5.48 (post-test). The median, mode, minimum, and maximum scores for the control group remained unchanged, showing no meaningful improvement.

This outcome aligns with Bury and O'Neill (2021) and Tsai (2020), who confirmed that game-based vocabulary learning environments integrating gamification features such as points, leaderboards, and instant feedback significantly improve learners' vocabulary retention compared to traditional methods. Do (2023) and Pham and Nguyen (2024) proved that students at Vietnamese university taught with Quizizz not only attained higher test scores but also engaged in deeper vocabulary processing, leading to long-term retention. The present results strengthen the existing literature while adding new insights into the effectiveness of Quizizz for non-English majors in Vietnam, a group often facing greater challenges in vocabulary acquisition because of limited revelation to English outside the classroom.

Research Question 2: What are students' and lecturers' attitudes toward using Quizizz for English vocabulary learning?

The results from the 10-item questionnaires and interviews indicate that both students and lecturers generally hold positive attitudes toward the use of Quizizz for vocabulary learning. Most students reported that Quizizz-based activities were enjoyable, engaging, motivating, and less stressful than traditional approaches. Specifically, 92.5% of students agreed that learning vocabulary through Quizizz was more enjoyable than using textbooks, while 82.5% expressed greater interest when vocabulary content was relevant to their personal interests. A majority of students (77.5%) perceived Quizizz as a useful supplementary tool for improving vocabulary, and 70–82.5% reported that it helped them understand, retain, and actively use new words in real-life communication. Students particularly valued the interactive, game-based quizzes with visuals and immediate feedback, which made vocabulary practice more convenient, stimulating, and effective.

Lecturers also expressed cautious optimism about integrating Quizizz into vocabulary instruction alongside traditional methods. While they acknowledged the platform's potential to capture students' attention and foster active engagement, they voiced concerns regarding possible distractions, inconsistent content quality, and the necessity of aligning materials with curriculum objectives. Overall, the findings suggest that both students and lecturers perceive Quizizz as a practical and effective tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and classroom participation.

The findings correspond with previous research highlighting that Quizizz-based activities support learners' autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Sailer & Homner, 2020; Seaborn & Fels, 2021). The platform also facilitates recognition of word forms and meanings, deeper cognitive processing, and long-term vocabulary retention (Pham & Nguyen, 2024; Do, 2023). Moreover, Quizizz provides interactive quizzes, visuals, and immediate feedback, which enhance both retention and active participation in learning activities (Al-Marooof & Al-Emran, 2018; Zhao, 2022). In addition, factors such as perceived usefulness, personal interest, and learner motivation play an important role in promoting engagement and sustained vocabulary learning (Do, 2023; Hew et al., 2023).

V. CONCLUSION

Findings

The findings of this study indicate that Quizizz-based vocabulary instruction was more effective than traditional teaching methods in enhancing vocabulary retention among non-English-major students. The experimental group demonstrated significant improvements across all key statistical measures, including mean, median, mode, minimum, and maximum scores, as well as reduced variability, suggesting both overall progress and more consistent performance. Both students and lecturers reported generally positive perceptions of Quizizz as a supplementary tool for vocabulary learning. Students particularly appreciated the platform's interactive, game-based quizzes with visuals and immediate feedback, which increased engagement, motivation, and enjoyment.

Implications

The study suggests that Quizizz can serve as an effective supplementary tool for vocabulary learning when appropriately integrated with traditional teaching methods. Its interactive, game-based quizzes with visuals and immediate feedback enhance students' engagement, motivation, and autonomous learning. Therefore, teachers should carefully select and design Quizizz activities that align with instructional goals to support vocabulary retention and expansion among non-English-major students.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted with 80 non-English-major students at a university over 10 weeks, which may limit the generalizability and long-term implications of the findings. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample and could explore the use of Quizizz's interactive, game-based activities in teaching listening and speaking skills.

In addition, investigating effective strategies for integrating Quizizz into instruction would help maximize the platform's potential in foreign language education.

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An Analysis of Lexical and Syntactic Errors Found in English Narrative Paragraphs Written by Thai EFL English and Non-English Major Students

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Abstract—This study aimed to analyze lexical and syntactic errors and to compare similarities and differences of types of lexical and syntactic errors found in English narrative paragraphs written by Thai EFL students. The participants in this study included 40 English and 40 non-English major students selected through purposive sampling. The research instrument was a writing test. According to the findings of the research, illustrating the first 5 ranks from the most to the least, the types of errors committed by English major students were found as follows: lexical errors: articles, spelling, prepositions, word choice, and pronouns; syntactic errors: verb tenses, punctuation, conjunctions, run-on sentences, and fragments. Moreover, regarding the errors committed by non-English major students, the results revealed types of lexical errors: spelling, prepositions, articles, word choice, and word form, and types of syntactic errors: verb tenses, punctuation, fragments, capitalization, and singular and plural. To compare the similarities and differences among error types, the findings revealed that there were 8 similar types and 2 different types of lexical errors; there were 26 similar types and 12 different types of syntactic errors. The findings of the study could significantly contribute to the development of pedagogical approaches to teaching English writing for Thai EFL students studying in both English and non-English majors.

Index Terms—error analysis, lexical errors, syntactic errors, Thai EFL students

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Rationale of the Study

Frequent errors found in writings serve as empirical evidence of the difficulties and complexities associated with English writing skills among EFL students at all levels, including lexical and syntactic levels (Chuenchaichon, 2022; Sermsook et al., 2017; Suraprajit, 2021). Numerous scholars assert that errors also serve as significant indicators of students' language acquisition processes and their perceptions in English language teaching and learning, thereby contributing substantially to language development (Corder, 1967; James, 1998; Sermsook et al., 2017). Consequently, error analysis (EA) is posited as a pivotal approach in second language acquisition (Brown, 2000; Chuenchaichon, 2022; Corder, 1967; Dulay et al., 1982; Hussain, 2019; James, 1998; Nuruzzaman et al., 2018; Reyes, 2025; Suraprajit, 2021). Outcomes of error analysis can elucidate language development progress, performance, and competence. These findings can help educators develop guidelines for remedial actions to address students' errors effectively and establish instructional strategies that enhance and encourage students' writing skills (Altabaa & Zulkifli, 2024; Corder, 1981; Nonkukhetkhong, 2013; Waelateh et al., 2019).

In Thailand, EFL students continue to face challenges in mastering writing skills, resulting in errors in their written assignments (Chuenchaichon, 2022; Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman, 2015; Sermsook et al., 2017). To my knowledge, there is no research specifically examining the error types committed by EFL English major and non-English major students, completing their written tasks under the same conditions. In this study, paragraph writing was emphasized because it is one of the fundamental units required for completing written tasks (Chuenchaichon, 2011). Additionally, a narrative paragraph was in an interesting area since it requires one to tell their own stories or events independently with a wide variety of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures, which can be informative in terms of error analysis (Joven et al., 2025; Kangangi et al., 2024; Ningsi et al., 2025). These considerations underscore the rationale for the ongoing study. Consequently, there remains a significant need for further study in this area, particularly studies that address the writing skills of both English and non-English major students.

B. Research Objectives

- (1) To explore the most frequent lexical and syntactic errors found in English narrative paragraphs written by Thai EFL English major students?

- (2) To explore the most frequent lexical and syntactic errors found in English narrative paragraphs written by Thai EFL non-English major students?
- (3) To compare the similarities and differences of the types of lexical and syntactic errors found in English narrative paragraphs between English major and non-English major students?

C. Research Questions

- (1) What are the most frequent lexical and syntactic errors found in English narrative paragraphs written by Thai EFL English major students?
- (2) What are the most frequent lexical and syntactic errors found in English narrative paragraphs written by Thai EFL non-English major students?
- (3) What are the similarities or differences in the types of lexical and syntactic errors found in English narrative paragraphs written by English major and non-English major students?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition of Errors in Writing in English

Errors have been defined in different definitions and explanations from several different perspectives of scholars. Firstly, errors are defined as language features or linguistic items produced by L2 learners that have different ways used differently by native speakers (Corder, 1973; Richards & Schmidt, 2002). According to Dulay et al. (1982), errors are defined as deviations of language performance in speech and writing, occurring in different ways from the language norm of L1. Additionally, errors as a systematic deviation of correct language use occur consistently when L2 learners have not learnt correct forms of a language, and they are clueless to correct the errors (Norrish, 1983). Also, Ellis (1997) and James (1998) defined Errors as unnoticeable points that eventually occur because L2 learners lack the language competence to identify any errors and to consider whether errors are correct or incorrect. Alanazi (2017) provided more information that errors have been defined as one of the inevitable features and the empirical indicators in second language acquisition.

B. Classification of Errors

Errors have been categorized into various categories by several scholars and researchers. Burt and Kiparsky (1972) stated that there are two categories of errors: local errors and global errors. Corder (1981) also categorized errors into two types: competence errors and performance errors. As for competence errors, interlingual and intralingual factors have been considered as two sources of EFL learners' errors. Additionally, performance errors occur because of L2 learners' stress, fatigue, or carelessness. According to the error classification proposed by Dulay et al. (1982), errors were classified into four categories: linguistic category taxonomy, surface strategy taxonomy, comparative taxonomy, and communicative effect taxonomy. In the study conducted by Bussmann (1996), errors were classified based on five classificatory principles: modality, linguistic levels, form, type, and cause. According to James (1998), errors were classified into five categories: grammatical errors, substantive errors, lexical errors, syntactic errors, and semantic errors.

C. Error Analysis (EA)

The theory of Error Analysis (EA) focuses on analyzing errors committed by ESL or EFL learners in second language acquisition. The purposes of this theory are to find out to what extent and how the learners perceive a second language, to discover difficulties in second language acquisition, and to provide assistance for both teachers and learners. The Error Analysis has been defined by several scholars and researchers as follows. Dulay et al. (1982) defined error analysis as an approach to investigate EFL and ESL learners' errors, to find out difficulties in L2 learning, and to explore learners' learning strategies. James (1998) stated that Error Analysis was defined as an investigation of the comparison of what learners have perceived with what they haven't. Brown (2000) defined Error Analysis as a process of L2 learners' errors investigation through observation, analysis, and classification so as to discover the L2 learners' learning system. According to Khansir (2012), EA is defined as "a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors students make" (p. 1029). Ulla (2014) proposed a definition of Error Analysis as "the process to observe, analyze, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second language and then to reveal the systems operated by learners" (p. 22). Hafiz et al. (2018) defined Error Analysis as "the process of studying the appearance, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language" (p. 113).

D. Previous Studies

(a). Analysis of Errors Committed by English Majors in Thailand

Nonkukhetkhong (2013) conducted his research to investigate five types of errors made by the 49 Thai first-year English major students. Also, Sermsook et al. (2017) analyzed errors in written tasks of 26 Thai second-year English major students. According to the study of Promsupa et al. (2017), it was to investigate grammatical error types found in English essays written by 34 Thai second-year English majors. Finally, Amnuai (2020) analyzed errors found in 40

research project abstracts written in English by Thai fourth-year students studying in English for International Communication.

(b). Analysis of Errors Committed by Non-English Majors in Thailand

Waelateh et al. (2019) examined the errors found in essays written by 15 Thai undergraduate students. In Suraprajit's (2021) study, its purpose was to investigate the errors found in sixty English essays written by Thai non-English major students. Additionally, Chuenchaichon (2022) analyzed the errors at the lexical, syntactic, and paragraph levels in expository paragraphs written by 95 Thai EFL non-English major students.

(c). Analysis of Errors Committed by English Majors in Other Countries

First, Khansir (2012) examined the types of errors committed by 200 students studying in the English major in Iran and India. Second, Zhan (2015) investigated the errors found in the writings of Chinese EFL students studying in the second year of the English major. Also, Sychandone (2016) analyzed and compared error types, frequency of error types, and similarities and differences of errors found in written tasks by 54 first, second, and third-year English major students in Champasack University, Laos. Finally, the study of Khatter (2019) was conducted to explore the most common errors in 120 essays written by 40 Saudi female students studying at the Department of English.

(d). Analysis of Errors Committed by Non-English Majors in Other Countries

Hamed (2018) investigated the types of linguistic errors and frequency of errors committed in the written tasks of 40 Libyan non-English major students. Also, Nuruzzaman et al. (2018) investigated the errors found in paragraphs written by 90 Saudi non-English major students of different English proficiency levels from three faculties. Additionally, Hussain (2019) examined the English written tasks written by 130 Saudi female students to find out the categories and the types of errors, and the frequency of errors.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Participants

To examine the errors presented in English narrative paragraphs composed by Thai EFL university students, a purposive sampling method was employed to select 80 participants from Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, Thailand, during the second semester of academic year 2022. Among these participants, 40 were English majors enrolled in the Paragraph Writing course, while the remaining 40 were non-English majors enrolled in the Control and Formulaic Writing course. Despite the differences in their courses, all participants received instruction on English writing and narrative paragraph organization.

B. Data Collection

In adherence to ethical research standards, the research protocol was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and received approval, as indicated by the IRB approval number, PSRU-EC 2023/006. This ensured that the research process was conducted in accordance with ethical principles and standards. In this study, the 80 participants, comprising both English and non-English majors, were tasked with writing a narrative paragraph on the topic 'My First Day at the University.' This topic was chosen because it was relatable to all participants, thereby reducing their concern about content generation and allowing them to focus on form, including mechanics, grammar, and sentence structure. The participants were required to write a paragraph of 150-170 words by hand, without the use of dictionaries, within a one-hour timeframe. Subsequently, the written paragraphs from both groups were collected separately.

C. Data Analysis

Following data collection, the analysis adhered to the initial three steps of Corder's (1974) error analysis process: (1) collection of errors, (2) identification of errors, and (3) description of errors. Each written paragraph was meticulously examined at both lexical and syntactic levels to identify, classify, and quantify errors. Errors were categorized, and their frequencies and percentages were calculated for statistical analysis (see Table 1 and Table 2). Subsequently, the occurrence of error types in both groups was compared to identify similarities and differences (see Table 3 and Table 4).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of this study are organized and demonstrated according to the three research questions (RQs) of this study, as follows:

A. Research Question 1

TABLE 1
TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF THE LEXICAL AND SYNTACTIC ERRORS COMMITTED BY ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

No.	Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank	Example
Lexical Errors (737 out of 1,802: 40.9%)					
1	Articles	153	8.49 (20.76)	3 (1)	On the first day in (a) classroom...
2	Spelling	149	8.27 (20.22)	4 (2)	We boldowed a bicycle to ride...
3	Prepositions	148	8.21 (20.08)	5 (3)	(On) My first day at the university...
4	Word choice	129	7.16 (17.50)	6 (4)	I woke up late because my alarm clock was died .
5	Pronouns	82	4.55 (11.13)	7 (5)	She name's Noom.
6	Word Form	59	3.27 (8.00)	11 (6)	I will suggestion to everyone who wants...
7	Nouns	9	0.50 (1.22)	20 (7)	...because of the COVID-19 (outbreak).
8	Adjectives	5	0.28 (0.68)	24 (8)	I was stronged better . (stronger)
9	Adverbs	2	0.11 (0.27)	27 (9)	I didn't remember because it began so bad (ly) .
10	Transitional words	1	0.06 (0.14)	28 (10)	...many things, (for) example, Seven Eleven shop...
Syntactic Errors (1,065 out of 1,802: 59.1%)					
11	Verb Tenses	309	17.15 (29.01)	1 (1)	On that day, I have new friends.
12	Punctuation	223	12.38 (20.94)	2 (2)	I liked this university, because I liked people here.
13	Conjunctions	79	4.38 (7.42)	8 (3)	Although my first day is not like others, but I am so happy.
14	Run-on sentences	77	4.27 (7.23)	9 (4)	I was so happy (because) I had friends.
15	Fragments	66	3.66 (6.20)	10 (5)	When I came to the university.
16	Singular / Plural	57	2.72 (5.35)	12 (6)	I don't have friend (s) here.
17	Capitalization	49	3.16 (4.60)	13 (7)	someone came from Mae Sot.
18	Comma splice	27	1.50 (2.54)	14 (8)	I ate noodles, I liked everything in the university.
19	L1 Syntactic interference	25	1.39 (2.35)	15 (9)	My alarm clock was died.
20	Omitting 'verb to be' before adjectives	21	1.17 (1.97)	16 (10)	I (was) excited because...
21	Subject-verb agreement	13	0.72 (1.22)	17 (11)	Friends is kind.
22	Noun clause	13	0.72 (1.22)	17 (11)	I knew that where the place was.
23	Misordering in a sentence	11	0.61 (1.03)	18 (12)	The university had food was good. (Food in the university was good.)
24	Using 'V1' after 'verb to be'	10	0.55 (0.94)	19 (13)	A girl who was sit next to me...
25	Using 'V1' after prepositions	10	0.55 (0.94)	19 (13)	I smiled to her for make friends.
26	Unnecessary verbs	8	0.44 (0.75)	21 (14)	I rode a motorbike to come to my dormitory.
27	Word order	7	0.39 (0.66)	22 (15)	I never saw my face friends . (friends' faces)
28	Relative	7	0.39 (0.66)	22 (15)	It was a feeling that it was different from a high school.
29	Using 'V2' after 'to'	7	0.39 (0.66)	22 (15)	I enjoyed to went to the university.
30	Omitting the preparatory 'to' after certain verbs	6	0.33 (0.56)	23 (16)	It has been two years to came (to) learn here.
31	Passive voice	6	0.33 (0.56)	23 (16)	My feeling would change (would be changed) .
32	Using 'V.ing' after 'to'	5	0.28 (0.47)	24 (17)	I stayed to learning for a certificate.
33	Using 'V2' after prepositions	5	0.28 (0.47)	24 (17)	I will use my power for did it.
34	Using 'V2' after 'verb to be'	4	0.22 (0.38)	25 (18)	We are went shopping...
35	Using 'V1' after 'verb to have'	3	0.17 (0.28)	26 (19)	I read books that I hadn't see before.
36	Omitting 'verb to do' before 'not'	3	0.17 (0.28)	26 (19)	Teachers (did) not gave homework.
37	Using 'to + V1' instead of 'V1'	3	0.17 (0.28)	26 (19)	Thing I must to do was to take a shower.
38	Using 'verb to do' before adjectives	3	0.17 (0.28)	26 (19)	I didn't sad.
39	Omitting necessary verbs	2	0.11 (0.19)	27 (20)	It was exciting (to come to) the university
40	Using 'V.ing' instead of 'V1'	1	0.06 (0.09)	28 (21)	She always helping me a lot.
41	Unnecessary 'verb to be'	1	0.06 (0.09)	28 (21)	She will be take care...
42	Using 'V2' after 'verb to do'	1	0.06 (0.09)	28 (21)	I don't ate food.
43	Using 'V2' after modals	1	0.06 (0.09)	28 (21)	I can't controlled my life.
44	Using a singular verb after modals	1	0.06 (0.09)	28 (21)	My feeling will changes .
45	Using 'V.ing' after modals	1	0.06 (0.09)	28 (21)	I guess we will getting by...
Total Errors of English major students		1,802	100		

Data from Table 1 present that the total number of errors made by Thai EFL English major students was 1,802: 737 lexical errors, accounting for 40.9% and 1,065 syntactic errors, accounting for 59.1%. After analyzing the errors, 45 types of errors were found: 10 types of lexical errors and 35 types of syntactic errors. Among all types of errors, the five most frequently found errors were verb tenses (309 out of 1,802 errors or 17.15%), punctuation (223 or 12.38%), articles (153 or 8.49%), spelling (149 or 8.27%), and prepositions (148 or 8.21%). The findings of the current study were in line with the study of Khatter (2019), which analyzed the errors found in essays written by Saudi English major students. That is, the five most frequently found error types in both studies were similar; however, the ranks of the error types were different. Additionally, regarding verb tenses as the most committed errors found in this study, this finding goes parallel with the finding of Nonkukhetkhong (2013) investigating errors made by Thai English major students. A similar finding that the most frequent errors were tenses and verb forms was found in Zhan (2015), analyzing the errors found in the writings of Chinese English major students.

At the lexical level, there were 737 errors out of the total errors (1,802), and the percentage and the rank of the errors in this level are shown in parentheses in the table. Articles (153 or 20.76%) were the most frequently found errors in this level, followed by spelling (149 or 20.22%), prepositions (148 or 20.08%), word choice (129 or 17.5%), and pronouns (82 or 11.13%). As seen above, the percentage among errors of articles, spelling, and prepositions is not significantly different, so these are the main types of lexical errors. These findings are in line with the study of Sermsook et al. (2017), which analyzed errors committed by Thai English major students and found that articles and spelling were the two most frequently found errors. Moreover, in the study of Promsupa et al. (2017) investigating error types committed by Thai English majors, the frequency of errors of articles and prepositions was found in rank 2 and rank 3, respectively.

In this current study, the use of articles posed the most common difficulty at the lexical level for Thai EFL English major students. The students often omitted the indefinite article 'a/an' more frequently, as in the following sentences, 'I never (a) negative attitude to everything at the university' or 'In (a) classroom, we did (an) activity together'. Also, they used the definite article 'the' instead of the indefinite article 'a/an' as in 'I always looked at the (a) map' or 'I became the (a) new student in this university'. The reason for this error type might be because there are no articles in the Thai language (L1); therefore, most of the Thai EFL students are not familiar with and have still been confused with the use of articles in English (Sermsook et al., 2017; Suniphan, 2015; Suraprajit, 2021).

At the syntactic level, there were 1,065 errors out of the total errors (1,802), and the percentage and the rank of the errors in this level are shown in parentheses in the table. It was revealed that verb tenses (309 or 29.01%) were the most common type of errors in this level. It was followed by punctuation (223 or 20.94%), conjunctions (79 or 7.42%), run-on sentences (77 or 7.23%), and fragments (66 or 6.20%). These findings are rather similar to the previous study (Sychandone, 2016) analyzing errors found in the writings of English major students in Laos. The results presented that verb tenses were the second most frequently committed errors; however, verb tenses were found as the most frequently committed errors in this current study. Additionally, the frequency of conjunction errors was found in the same rank in both studies, namely in rank 3. However, the findings are slightly different from those found in Sermsook et al. (2017) exploring errors found in tasks by Thai second-year English majors, and the results revealed that the frequency of punctuation errors was in rank 1 but found as rank 2 in this present study. Additionally, the frequency of verb tense errors was found as rank 5, but found as rank 1 in the present study.

In this present study, verb tenses were found as the most frequently made syntactic errors by Thai EFL English major students. It might be possible that all of them, as English majors considered to have a great understanding of the rules of verb tenses, completed their written tasks with carelessness and negligence rather than a lack of L2 proficiency (Nuruzzaman et al., 2018). Therefore, students' awareness might be fostered and promoted to help the students reduce the number of errors in this error type (Sermsook et al., 2017).

B. Research Question 2

TABLE 2
TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF THE LEXICAL AND SYNTACTIC ERRORS COMMITTED BY NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

No.	Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank	Example
Lexical Errors (439 out of 1,070: 41.03%)					
1	Spelling	142	13.27 (32.35)	2 (1)	I thought Japanese was <i>diffical</i> .
2	Prepositions	83	7.76 (18.91)	4 (2)	<i>In</i> my first day, I felt lonely.
3	Articles	75	7.01 (17.08)	5 (3)	I didn't know anyone in <i>(the)</i> class.
4	Word choice	73	6.82 (16.63)	6 (4)	I can't think <i>(recognize)</i> vocabulary.
5	Word Form	32	2.99 (7.29)	11 (5)	Good <i>think</i> . (thinking)
6	Pronouns	30	2.80 (6.83)	12 (6)	<i>It</i> my first class was about Japanese.
7	Nouns	3	0.28 (0.68)	19 (7)	<i>(The thing)</i> I liked the most about the university was a view.
8	Adjectives	1	0.09 (0.23)	21 (8)	We are responsible for ourselves <i>more</i> in each subject.
Syntactic Errors (631 out of 1,070: 58.97%)					
9	Verb Tenses	245	22.90 (38.83)	1 (1)	Because I <i>am</i> lazy, I <i>want</i> to sleep.
10	Punctuation	99	9.25 (15.69)	3 (2)	When I talked to her(,) I thought I was so stupid.
11	Fragments	70	6.54 (11.09)	7 (3)	My first day at the university.
12	Capitalization	57	5.33 (9.03)	8 (4)	She ate <i>Bacon</i> and <i>Juice</i> .
13	Singular / Plural	38	3.55 (6.02)	9 (5)	My friends played game(s).
14	Omitting 'verb to be' before adjectives	34	3.18 (5.39)	10 (6)	She <i>(was)</i> so kind.
15	Conjunctions	15	1.40 (2.38)	13 (7)	Before we had an online class, <i>and</i> I saw bad comments about me.
16	Word order	13	1.21 (2.06)	14 (8)	I met <i>first my friends</i> in the library.
17	Subject-verb agreement	8	0.75 (1.27)	15 (9)	They <i>likes</i> Japanese because they <i>likes</i> an animation.
18	Using 'V1' after 'verb to be'	7	0.65 (1.11)	16 (10)	Everyday, I'm <i>studies</i> ...
19	Run-on sentences	6	0.56 (0.95)	17 (11)	This place has a lotus (, <i>so</i>) it makes me feel comfortable,
20	Using 'V2' after 'to'	6	0.56 (0.95)	17 (11)	I was so happy to <i>met</i> them.
21	Using 'V1' after prepositions	4	0.37 (0.63)	18 (12)	Before <i>studies</i> , I went to eat a meal.
22	Omitting the preparatory 'to' after certain verbs	3	0.28 (0.48)	19 (13)	I tried <i>(to)</i> talk to friends.
23	Using 'V2' after 'verb to do'	3	0.28 (0.48)	19 (13)	My friends don't <i>ate</i> a meal.
24	Omitting necessary verb (It was exciting <i>(to come to)</i> the university)	3	0.28 (0.48)	19 (13)	I wanted to <i>(go to)</i> university.
25	Omitting 'verb to be' before 'V.ing'	3	0.28 (0.48)	19 (13)	We <i>(were)</i> going to the class.
26	Comma splice	2	0.19 (0.32)	20 (14)	There were a lot of cars in the city, this was so bad,
27	Unnecessary 'verb to be'	2	0.19 (0.32)	20 (14)	On my first day <i>is</i> -at 6.00, I go to the university.
28	L1 Syntactic interference	2	0.19 (0.32)	20 (14)	I can drive <i>go</i> to the university
29	Misordering in a sentence	2	0.19 (0.32)	20 (14)	I liked the most about the university was a view. <i>(I liked a view in the university the most)</i>
30	Using 'V2' after modals	2	0.19 (0.32)	20 (14)	They looked fun because they could <i>spoke</i> Japanese.
31	Using 'V.ing' after 'to'	1	0.09 (0.16)	21 (15)	I had experience to <i>learning</i> Japanese.
32	Using 'verb to do' before adjectives	1	0.09 (0.16)	21 (15)	I <i>don't</i> happy to study for 2 hours.
33	Omitting necessary 'verb to be'	1	0.09 (0.16)	21 (15)	My friends <i>(were)</i> so cute.
34	Using 'V3' after prepositions	1	0.09 (0.16)	21 (15)	After <i>drunk</i> milk, I saw my friends.
35	Using 'V2' after prepositions	1	0.09 (0.16)	21 (15)	I went to the university for <i>studied</i> .
36	Passive voice	1	0.09 (0.16)	21 (15)	My first day was great because experiences <i>gave (were given)</i> .
37	Noun clause	1	0.09 (0.16)	21 (15)	<i>(What)</i> I knew was Japanese language, but I didn't know English.
Total Errors of non-English major students		1,070	100		

According to Table 2, the results reveal that 1,070 were found as a total number of errors committed by Thai EFL non-English major students: 439 lexical errors, accounting for 41.03% and 631 syntactic errors, accounting for 58.97%. There were 37 types of errors found after analyzing the data: 8 types of lexical errors and 29 types of syntactic errors. Among all error types found, the five most common error types were verb tenses (245 out of 1,070 errors or 22.90%), followed by spelling (142 or 13.37%), punctuation (99 or 9.25%), prepositions (83 or 7.76%), and articles (75 or 7.01%).

According to these findings, the five most common types of frequently committed errors are rather similar to the error types found in other studies conducted with non-English major students (Hamed, 2018; Hussain, 2019; Nuruzzaman et al., 2018; Suraprajit, 2021). Also, it is interesting to compare the five most common error types found in the previous studies and those found in the current study. Firstly, Hamed (2018) investigated the types of linguistic errors of Libyan non-English major students and found spelling as the first rank, verb tenses as the third rank, punctuation as the fourth rank, and articles as the fifth rank. As for error types found in Hussain's (2019) study conducted to examine the English written tasks of Saudi non-English major students to find out the categories, types, and frequency of the errors, spelling and punctuation were found as the most and the second most, including prepositions and articles found as the fourth and fifth most, respectively. In the study of Nuruzzaman et al. (2018), who investigated the errors found in paragraphs written by Saudi non-English major students, the first two error types found in their study relatively align with the first two error types found in this current study. That is, verb tenses and spelling were in the first two ranks of most common error types found in both studies. However, Suraprajit (2021), investigating the errors found in English essays of Thai non-English major students, found that the frequency of article errors and preposition errors was in rank 1 and rank 2, but both of them were found in rank 5 and rank 4 in this present study.

It is also valuable to discuss further the overview of the study's findings demonstrated in this study and previous studies. The top five most frequently committed error types found in each study were focused on. Firstly, spelling was the most frequently committed error type in the studies of Hamed (2018), Hussain (2019), and Nuruzzaman et al. (2018); nevertheless, it was the second most in this present study. Secondly, capitalization was found as one of the first five most frequently used errors, according to the studies of Hamed (2018), Hussain (2019), and Nuruzzaman et al. (2018); nonetheless, it did not appear in the first five ranks but in rank 8 in this current study. Finally, however, according to the findings of the present study, it was found that the first five error types committed by both groups of students are highly similar. That is, verb tenses, spelling, punctuation, prepositions, and articles, respectively, were the top five error types made by non-English major students, and those of English major students were verb tenses, punctuation, articles, spelling, and prepositions, respectively.

Interestingly, among both groups of participants in this study, verb tenses were revealed as the most frequently committed errors. As observed in the data analysis, most of the participants in both groups used a simple present tense verb form instead of a past tense verb form, as in 'On that day, I have (had) new friends and know (knew) some places in the university'. The cause of this error type might be that L1 syntactic interference occurs in L2 writing processes (Suraprajit, 2021). In the Thai language (L1), there is no equivalent of past tense verb forms or conjugation. That is, to indicate when actions take place in the time of present, past, and future, the same forms of verbs are used. Moreover, it is possible that the writing topic, which required the students to write about events in the past, caused this error type, so this type of error was highly committed (Sychandone, 2016). Additionally, it might be possible that they could not revise and edit their tasks elaborately because of a high-pressure situation and time restriction. Therefore, a greater length of time is required to help them reduce errors in their written tasks. In conclusion, it might be stated that the use of verb tenses seems to be one of the L2 learning difficulties of both English and non-English major students.

At the lexical level, 439 were found as a total number of lexical errors, out of 1,070. The percentage and the rank of the error types in this level are displayed in parentheses in the table. Among 8 types of lexical errors, spelling (142 or 32.35%) was the most frequently found error type, followed by prepositions (83 or 18.91%), articles (75 or 17.08%), word choice (73 or 16.63%), and word form (32 or 7.29%). This finding correlates with the study of Chuenchaichon (2022), analyzing the errors at the lexical levels in paragraphs of Thai EFL non-English major students. The five most frequently found errors in his study: spelling, prepositions, articles, word choice, and word form, respectively, are similar to those found in the current study. Interestingly, spelling was found as the most frequently committed error in both studies, which were conducted with Thai EFL non-English major students. Regarding errors in spelling, it might be because of the students' limited knowledge of English vocabulary and their carelessness (Sermsook et al., 2017).

At the syntactic level, the findings showed that there were 631 errors out of 1,070. The number shown in parentheses in the table illustrates the percentage and the rank of the errors in this level. According to the findings, the five most frequently committed errors were verb tenses (245 or 38.83%), punctuation (99 or 15.69%), fragments (70 or 11.09%), capitalization (57 or 9.03%), and singular/plural (38 or 6.02%). This finding aligns with the study of Chuenchaichon (2022), analyzing the errors at syntactic levels in paragraphs of Thai EFL non-English major students and found that the top four most frequently committed error types found: capitalization, punctuation, singular/plural, and fragments, respectively, were rather similar to those found in the present study. However, the most frequently committed error type in both studies was different. That is, the frequency of verb tense errors was found as the first rank in this current study; capitalization was found as the first rank in the other study. As previously mentioned, this might result from L1 syntactic interference, writing topic, and time restriction.

C. Research Question 3

TABLE 3
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF TYPES OF LEXICAL ERRORS COMMITTED BY ENGLISH MAJOR AND NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

No.	Types of Lexical Errors	English Major Students		Non-English Major Students		Similarity	Difference
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
1	Articles	153	20.76	75	17.08	✓	
2	spelling	149	20.22	142	32.35	✓	
3	Prepositions	148	20.08	83	18.91	✓	
4	Word choice	129	17.50	73	16.63	✓	
5	Pronouns	82	11.13	30	6.83	✓	
6	Word Form	59	8.01	32	7.29	✓	
7	Nouns	9	1.22	3	0.68	✓	
8	Adjectives	5	0.68	1	0.23	✓	
9	Adverbs	2	0.27	0	0		✓
10	Transitional words	1	0.14	0	0		✓
Total lexical errors		737	100	439	100		

As illustrated in Table 3, there were both similarities and differences between the types of lexical errors committed by English major students and the lexical error types of non-English major students. Among total lexical errors, 10 types were found. There were 8 similar types of lexical errors: articles, spelling, prepositions, word choice, pronouns, word form, nouns, and adjectives. Both groups of students made these types of errors. On the contrary, there were only 2 different types of lexical errors: adverbs and transitional words, both of which were found as the error types made by English major students.

In terms of similarity, the percentages of both groups' lexical errors were not significantly different. That is, the percentages of non-English major students' lexical errors seem to be slightly lower than those of English major students. This might be because the total number of words written in the English major students' tasks is greatly higher than that of non-English major students. In other words, writing more will inevitably lead to more chances to make more errors. However, the percentage of spelling errors (32.35%) made by non-English major students was highly different from the percentage of English major students' spelling errors (20.22%). Despite a smaller number of the total words written in the tasks, a large number of spelling errors were found among non-English major students. Nevertheless, it could be possible to conclude that misspelling is a serious problem for both English and non-English major students.

As for differences, there were no errors of adverbs and transition words found in non-English major students' written tasks, but there were small numbers of error types of adverbs (0.27%) and transition words (0.14%) found in English major students' written tasks. According to the data analysis, both groups of students seem to scarcely use adverbs and transition words in their task, and this might lead to infrequent occurrences of these error types. The reason for the less frequent use of adverbs and transition words in written tasks written by Thai EFL students might be because they have a lack of knowledge and limited vocabulary, and some of them might be perplexed because of their function and placement. Also, L1 interference might be another influencing factor that contributes to why adverbs and transition words are scarcely used in students' writing.

TABLE 4
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF TYPES OF SYNTACTIC ERRORS COMMITTED BY ENGLISH MAJOR AND NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

No.	Types of Syntactic Errors	English Major Students		Non-English Major Students		Similarity	Difference
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
1	Verb Tenses	309	29.01	245	38.83	✓	
2	Punctuation	223	20.94	99	15.69	✓	
3	Conjunctions	79	7.42	15	2.38	✓	
4	Run-on sentences	77	7.23	6	0.95	✓	
5	Fragments	66	6.20	70	11.09	✓	
6	Singular / Plural	57	5.35	38	6.02	✓	
7	Capitalization	49	4.60	57	9.03	✓	
8	Comma splice	27	2.54	2	0.32	✓	
9	L1 Syntactic interference	25	2.35	2	0.32	✓	
10	Omitting 'verb to be' before adjectives	21	1.97	34	5.39	✓	
11	Subject-verb agreement	13	1.22	8	1.27	✓	
12	Noun clause	13	1.22	1	0.16	✓	
13	Misordering in a sentence	11	1.03	2	0.32	✓	
14	Using 'V1' after 'verb to be'	10	0.94	7	1.11	✓	
15	Using 'V1' after prepositions	10	0.94	4	0.63	✓	
16	Unnecessary verbs	8	0.75	0	0		✓
17	Word order	7	0.66	13	2.06	✓	
18	Relative	7	0.66	0	0		✓
19	Using 'V2' after 'to'	7	0.66	6	0.95	✓	
20	Omitting the preparatory 'to' after certain verbs	6	0.56	3	0.48	✓	
21	Passive voice	6	0.56	1	0.16	✓	
22	Using 'V.ing' after 'to'	5	0.47	1	0.16	✓	
23	Using 'V2' after prepositions	5	0.47	1	0.16	✓	
24	Using 'V2' after 'verb to be'	4	0.38	0	0		✓
25	Using 'V1' after 'verb to have'	3	0.28	0	0		✓
26	Omitting 'verb to do' before 'not'	3	0.28	0	0		✓
27	Using 'to + V1' instead of 'V1'	3	0.28	0	0		✓
28	Using 'verb to do' before adjectives	3	0.28	1	0.16	✓	
29	Omitting necessary verb	2	0.19	3	0.48	✓	
30	Using 'V.ing' instead of 'V1'	1	0.09	0	0		✓
31	Unnecessary 'verb to be'	1	0.09	2	0.32	✓	
32	Using 'V2' after 'verb to do'	1	0.09	3	0.48	✓	
33	Using 'V2' after modals	1	0.09	2	0.32	✓	
34	Using a singular verb after modals	1	0.09	0	0		✓
35	Using 'V.ing' after modals	1	0.09	0	0		✓
36	Omitting 'verb to be' before 'V.ing'	0	0	3	0.48		✓
37	Omitting necessary 'verb to be'	0	0	1	0.16		✓
38	Using 'V3' after prepositions	0	0	1	0.16		✓
Total syntactic errors		1,065	100	631	100		

The data illustrated in Table 4 present the similarities and differences in the types of syntactic errors made by English and non-English major students. Among the total syntactic errors, they were categorized into 38 error types.

As for similarities, there were 26 error types that both groups employed. According to these similar types of errors, most of them were related to the syntax or English grammar about tenses and parts of speech (Sychandone, 2016). Interestingly, among 26 similar error types, verb tense and punctuation, respectively, were found at very high frequencies as the first two syntactic errors of both English and non-English major students. It might be stated that both verb tenses and punctuation are very serious problems for both English and non-English major students.

In terms of differences, there were 12 error types. Only English major students made errors on 9 types. However, 3 types of errors were committed by only non-English major students. Regarding these different error types, the differences in percentage of the error types between English and non-English major students were very low; therefore, it might be concluded that both groups of students were not significantly different in terms of differences in error types.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has conducted an analysis of the lexical and syntactic errors found in the narrative paragraphs of 40 Thai EFL English and 40 Thai EFL non-English major students at a Thai university. The objectives of the study were to identify the types of errors, determine their frequency, and compare the similarities and differences in error types. Regarding the errors committed by English major students, the findings indicated that, at the lexical level, the five most prevalent error types were articles, spelling, prepositions, word choice, and pronouns. At the syntactic level, the most frequent errors were verb tenses, punctuation, conjunctions, run-on sentences, and fragments. Furthermore, for non-English major students, the results revealed that the five most common lexical errors were spelling, prepositions, articles, word choice, and word form. In terms of syntactic errors, the most frequent types were verb tenses, punctuation,

fragments, capitalization, and singular/plural forms. Additionally, the results demonstrated that, concerning lexical error types explored in both groups, there were 8 similar types and 2 different types of lexical errors. As for syntactic error types, there were 26 similar types and 12 different types.

These findings suggest that the error types at both lexical and syntactic levels committed by English major students are highly similar to those found in non-English major students' writing. Consequently, these results highlight the writing challenges faced by Thai EFL students, irrespective of their major. The sources of these errors appear to include L1 interference, limited English vocabulary knowledge, insufficient understanding of English grammar and writing, student carelessness, and high-pressure situations, including time constraints. These findings have significant implications for stakeholders such as teachers, policymakers, researchers, and students themselves, as they can inform efforts to enhance students' proficiency in English writing.

Last but not least, it is recommended that further research be conducted to investigate both main error types and subtypes, with a larger and more diverse participant pool. Additionally, it would be valuable to examine the reasons for or factors contributing to weaknesses in English writing. Since this study focused on narrative paragraphs, it is also recommended to analyze errors in various types of paragraph writing, such as descriptive, persuasive, and expository writing, to compare any similar or different results.

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Yeskendir as an Eternal Image: His “Campaign” in Kazakh Literary Art

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Abstract—The paper examines the “literary campaign” of Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn (Alexander the Great) as an eternal image in folklore and literature. This historical figure, renowned for his conquests, has been preserved in collective memory through legends, narratives, and poetic works. His image is distinguished by polyvalence, high spiritual value, cultural significance, and wide dissemination, which are key features of an “eternal image.” The study compares depictions of Yeskendir in Eastern and Western literary traditions, focusing on the works of great oriental poets such as Firdousi, Nizami Ganjavi, Jami, and Alisher Navoi, as well as on the poem “Yeskendir” by Abay Kunanbayuly. Particular attention is given to the Quranic story about Zulkarnaiyn, which influenced artistic portrayals of the character. Scholars’ debates on whether Alexander and Yeskendir are the same or different figures are also addressed. In literary tradition, they are often merged into one archetypal warrior and ruler. The article emphasizes how Abay reinterpreted the legendary plot, revealing new dimensions of the hero’s nature. The famous Kazakh legend of “Two-horned Yeskendir” also plays a significant role, inspiring multiple literary adaptations. Through comparative and systematic analysis, the study reveals how Yeskendir’s historical campaign transformed into a symbolic literary journey, securing his place as an enduring cultural and poetic figure.

Index Terms—historical personality, eternal image, legend, romantic hero, spring water

I. INTRODUCTION

All three poems of the great Kazakh poet Abay Kunanbaiuly (1845-1904) are based on legendary oriental stories. Among them is the poem “Yeskendir”, which is consonant with the plots of world literature and folklore. The main character of this poem is Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn.

Yeskendir is a mythical character. His essence as a glorious winner, his historical personality was determined by mythical and legendary “coloring”. Thus, he became one of the eternal images in world history and art. The term “eternal image” is used in literary studies, art criticism, and cultural studies. In encyclopedias and in many scholarly studies, it is defined as a permanent artistic image in literature. Yeskendir’s creative and heroic image brings his personality closer to myth. Therefore, it is natural to frame this image with mythical motifs, exalting it as much as possible in the manner of absolute glorification characteristic of folklore.

Yeskendir is, first of all, a historical figure. How can we explain the “mythologization” of this historical figure? Can historical truth become a myth? To answer this question, let’s look at one of the conclusions for myth and history.

According to Giambattista Vico, an eighteenth-century Italian philosopher, founder of the philosophy of history and ethnopsychology and author of the famous work *New Science of the Common Nature of the Nations*, myth is a historical value that preserves real events experienced by our ancestors in a special form. That is, we can find the history of ancient times in myths. The myth depicts the spirit of the people, the perception and feeling of nature. That is why, the thinker says it is necessary to begin the knowledge of history with myth, which is the source of spirituality. Then, based on this opinion, we find truth in the myth, that is, the history experienced by the people is preserved in the myth (Vico, 2018).

Thus, the legends about Yeskendir, rooted in reality, turned his personality into an “eternal image”.

The eternal image is the term characteristic of Literary studies, Art and Cultural studies. Based on definitions in the dictionaries and research reports, we know that it consists of artistic images in different works.

“Eternal images are literary images, like Prometheus, Phaedra, Don Juan, Hamlet, Don Quixote, Faust, etc., repeatedly depicted in the literature of different countries, in the literary art of different eras, and became special “symbol” of culture.

Traditionally, it includes the heroes of mythology and legends, historical figures (Napoleon, Jeanne d'Arc)", reads one of the encyclopedic dictionaries ("Eternal Images", 2001, p. 121).

In the monograph "Hamlet as an eternal image of Russian and world culture", eternal images and their features are described as follows: "Eternal image is a term of Literary studies, Art and Cultural history, and an artistic image, passing from one work to another, constituting an invariant arsenal of literary discourse. The properties of eternal images (usually found together) can be grouped as follows:

- content capacity, inexhaustibility of meanings;
- high artistic and spiritual value;
- the ability to overcome the boundaries of eras and peoples, common understanding, enduring relevance;
- polyvalence – an increased ability to connect with other systems of images, to participate in various plots, to fit into a changing environment without losing its identity;
- translatability into the languages of other arts, as well as the languages of philosophy and science, etc.
- widespread nature" (Lukov et al., 2010, p. 5).

Proposing such systematization, the authors of the monograph note that eternal images also appear in the form of signs, symbols, mythologems, and that symbol-things and symbol-images are also in this series (Lukov et al., 2010).

A number of eternal images are complemented by characters from national literature and art. It is possible to create a system of eternal images in Kazakh literature, taking into account the conditions characteristic of them, given above as substantiation. Our goal is to consider the eternal images in Abay's verses, included in the classic Kazakh poetry.

One of the "eternal images" in world literature is Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn (Alexander the Great). The roots of these images, revived in Abay's poetry, are connected with Oriental subjects. These stories are based on the heritage of folklore.

In recent years, a number of studies have revisited the literary and cultural afterlives of Alexander the Great / Iskandar Zulkarnain, further underlining the polyvalent, "eternal" character of his image. Gaillard (2023) offers a new reading of the Persian prose romance *Dārāb-nāma*, where Alexander appears as a conqueror and quasi-prophetic figure at the intersection of pre-Islamic Iranian and Islamic traditions. In the Islamic and Malay context, Kurniawan (2025) shows that *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* functions as a didactic and political narrative that idealizes Iskandar as a just, Islamized ruler, while another study by the same author traces the broader historical and literary legacy of Iskandar Zulkarnain across Persian, Islamic and Western traditions, emphasizing his role as both conqueror and unifier (Kurniawan, 2024). Within European literature, Benítez (2022) demonstrates how eighteenth-century Spanish theatre continually recodes Alexander as a flexible dramatic symbol through which questions of power and exemplarity are negotiated. Complementing these perspectives, Anson (2022) analyzes ancient historiographical and religious sources to reveal the close interplay between the political and sacral dimensions of Alexander's image, providing a crucial background for later identifications of the "two-horned" ruler with the Qur'anic Dhu'l-Qarnayn. Taken together, these works confirm that Alexander/Yeskendir remains a living cross-cultural image whose semantic core continues to be adapted to new textual and ideological contexts.

Building on the authors' previous research, this article further develops the analysis of how historical figures and legendary motifs structure literary representations of statehood and collective values. In her earlier co-authored paper "The role of historical figures and legend motifs in the modern prose structure in expressing the idea of statehood" (Turyzbek et al., 2021), Zhanat A. Aimukhambet examined the way mythicized rulers and heroes function as carriers of national ideology in modern Kazakh prose. The present study continues this line of inquiry by focusing on Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn as an "eternal image" whose literary "campaign" reveals the interplay between historical memory, mythopoetic imagination, and ethical reflection. Thus, the article links the authors' prior work on statehood discourse with a broader comparative exploration of Alexander/Yeskendir's cross-cultural literary reception.

Kostyukhin (1972) writes: "There are two traditions of narrating about Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn in antiquity: historical and literary. The pinnacle of the historical tradition is the work of the Roman historian Flavius Arrian *The Campaigns of Alexander*, and a literary tradition also developed along with the historical tradition associated with Alexander. Aristotle's relative Callisthenes stands at the sources of this tradition" (p. 6).

No matter how glorious Yeskendir's historical campaign was, his "campaign in the literary art" was even more glorious and continued from era to era. The paths of the commander who ruled the entire world were not only preserved as historical data but were also illustrated and revered, becoming a constant subject of literary art. He continued his life as an "eternal literary hero".

In literary works information about Yeskendir was mainly taken from historical works. However, it is known that history is used only as a background in the presentation of the main character and the depiction of events in a literary art, and philosophical and ethical issues are of paramount importance. As a great reformer and a glorious commander, Yeskendir became a constant hero of folklore and literary works. The truth is that his "eternal life" was facilitated not only by historical records, but also by works of literary art in the artistic space.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study analyzes the transformation of Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn (Alexander the Great) into an "eternal image" across Eastern and Kazakh literary traditions, with a focal reading of Abay Kunanbayuly's poem "Yeskendir." The primary corpus comprises: Abay's "Yeskendir"; Persian and Turkic epics (Firdousi's *Shahnameh*, Nizami's *Iskandarnāme*,

Jami's *Khiraḍnāmeḥ-ye Iskandari*, Navoi's *Saddi Iskandari*); the *Alexander Romance* (Pseudo-Callisthenes) and its Western reworkings; historical sources (Plutarch's *Lives*, Arrian's *Anabasis*); Qur'anic passages (Sūrat al-Kahf 83–97); and Kazakh folklore texts and poems (e.g., Dulat Babataiuly, Magzhan Zhumabaev, Akyt Ulimzhiuly) related to the “two-horned” motif. Secondary materials include encyclopedic and theoretical works on “eternal images” (literary studies, art and cultural history).

Methodologically, the research applies a comparative-historical and typological approach, combining close reading with intertextuality and motif analysis. A mythopoetic lens elucidates the mythmaking of a historical figure, while narratology and discourse analysis trace how ethical-philosophical meanings shift across languages, genres, and eras. Source criticism is used to distinguish historiography from legend; hermeneutic interpretation clarifies Abay's philosophical stance; and a limited content/thematic coding maps recurrent topoi (e.g., “living water,” “closed gate,” “two horns,” “wise counselor”).

The analytical framework operationalizes the notion of “eternal image” via criteria adapted from cultural-literary theory: semantic inexhaustibility, axiological weight, transhistorical diffusion, polyvalence, and translatability into other arts/discourses. Each text is evaluated against these criteria, then triangulated across Eastern/Western lines to identify convergences and divergences in Yeskendir's characterization (sage-king vs. conqueror). Validity is supported by cross-checking motifs among primary sources; limitations include the heterogeneity of versions and translation variance, which are mitigated by consulting multiple editions and scholarly commentaries.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Plutarch's “Comparative Biographies” can be called the most outstanding work about Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn. In the preface to this work, the ancient Greek writer said: “We do not write history, but biographies, and virtue or depravity is not always visible in the most glorious deeds, but often some insignificant deed, word or joke reveals a person's character better than battles, in which tens of thousands of people, the leadership of huge armies and the siege of cities” (Plutarch, 1994, p. 116). Relying on data from his characters' life in his works, Plutarch tries to reveal their character from any jokes, simple actions and words. First of all, the reliability of such data is weighed. Noting that “Comparative Biographies” contain two sides (historical data and anecdotes about the hero's personal life), scholars say that both are moral judgment.

Plutarch cites myth and legend as evidence of the hero's life. According to him, a myth is a story that a biographer needs to reconstruct. Mythologists repeatedly say that the deep connection of myth with reality, based on subtle hints and allusions, leads to truth. We see that historical events are preserved in the “memory” of the myth from the stories about the flood, the destruction of cities, great campaigns and the heroic deeds. It is also natural that the “fictional” hero in a literary work has a real prototype. We can say the same about any of the characters of mythical stories.

Myths keep historical memory alive. Many real figures later became legendary—Tomiris, Korkyt ata, Hercules, Achilles. Plutarch even links Yeskendir to Hercules and Achilles, while Kazakh tradition connects Edige to a mythical ancestor. Mythic additions ensure that historical heroes continue to live as eternal images.

We have mentioned a literary work, associated with the name of the Greek historian Callisthenes (IV century BC). The work about Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn is known as the “Alexander Romance”. Ethnographic fantasy and legendary-historical biography determined the most popular novel of antiquity – the novel about Alexander. The source of the novel is various folklore, literary and historical stories about the famous commander.

This work contains many references to ancient authors about the kingdom of Macedonia. At one time, the novel was a great success and was translated into many languages. Several versions of the novel have survived to the present day. According to researchers, there are three main plots in the novel: 1) the birth of Alexander; 2) exploits and Indian campaign; 3) death in Babylon. Over time, these stories were completed with new episodes. We can say that the introduction of new plots was caused by the special interest of readers and the goal of exaggerating the personality of the famous commander as much as possible.

The only work that introduced Yeskendir as a knight and romantic hero in the West is the French version of the book about Alexander the Great.

Italian historian Daniele Forconi writes that “the French version of the ‘The Novels of Alexander the Great’ is a work in which Alexander's exploits inspired the courtly tradition, turned the Macedonian commander into a great hero in the Western world, and gave his image a particularly positive character” (Forconi, 2008, p. 120).

The name Zulkarnaiyn is found in verses 83–97 of the sura “Kehf” of the Holy Qur'an. Verse 84 says: “Verily, we have made Zulkarnaiyn mighty on the earth. We gave him convenience in everything”.

In folklore and literature, the history of Yeskendir is greatly exaggerated, and his campaign is depicted not only as a raid but also as a search for “eternal water” (abelkhayat, or living water). According to many researchers, Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn and Alexander the Great are not the same person, but two different people. The Prophet Kyzыр-Ilyas (peace and blessings be upon him) was with Yeskendir, who was looking for eternal water. We also see Aristotle next to Yeskendir on a military campaign. The opinions of scientists about Yeskendir are still divided. Two different groups of historians and scientists believe that one of them (Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn and Alexander the Great) is a legendary person, who lived in antiquity, and the other is Macedonian commander who intended to conquer the world. However, in all works of literary art Yeskendir became the same person.

Yeskendir's first "campaign" in Eastern literature began with Firdousi's "Shakh-name" (written in 977-1010) and Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi's epic "Yeskendirname" (written in 1211), and continued in the epic "Oinaii Iskandriy" ("Yeskendir's Mirror") by the Indian poet Khusrau Dehlavi in 1299-1300.

The great Persian poet Abdirahman Jami, who took Alexander the Great as the prototype of Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn. His epic "Khiradname Iskandary" was written in 1484. Both of these works are in Persian.

The epic "Yeskendir's Fortress" was written in the ancient Turkic language by the great poet Alisher Navoi in 1485.

Kazakh poet Abay revived the theme of Yeskendir, poetized by the great oriental poets, at a new level in the Kazakh land. It is not known exactly in what year this epic was written. The Kazakh writer M. Auezov reports that the poem was included in a manuscript collection in 1898. Abay's first collection "The Story of Yeskendir" was published in 1909.

Among the stories associated with Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn, Abay took the plot about Yeskendir's journey in search of living water, as the basis of his epic. This storyline is modified to tell of Yeskendir's next campaign, when he stumbles upon spring water with a different taste, flowing from a closed gate. Thus, the constant motif of "closed gates" for Yeskendir, mentioned in Abay's poem, is transformed.

The search for eternal life is a constant motif in the mythology of the peoples of the world. The motif about the journey of Gilgamesh, Korkyt was also created for this purpose. The mortal man's striving for immortal life has given rise to several remarkable motifs about the immortality of the soul.

Yeskendir's trip to the land of darkness, that is, towards sunset, is connected with the search for living water. His guide on this journey was Kyzыр (peace and blessings be upon him). Kyzыр first saw the water of abelkhayat, drank it, washed himself, and watered his white horse. When he was about to tell Yeskendir about it, the water disappeared ("Abay Encyclopedia", 1995, p. 229). The story about how Yeskendir built a fortress and imprisoned Yajuj in the mountains in Nizami's poem and in the Quran is also poetized in the epic.

In Nizami's epic the story is depicted in connection with the mystical world. The world of darkness, where Yeskendir wandered, the water of abelkhayat, which Kyzыр (peace and blessings be upon him) drank and gained eternal life are presented in a mythical and legendary description. Nizami presents the historical Alexander the Great and the legendary Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn as one and the same person, creating the image of a wise commander and ruler. Alisher Navoi does not believe that Yeskendir and Alexander are two people. In his poem "Fortress of Yeskendir" he writes:

Not correct fact that Yeskendir is two of them
If this is true, Jami should know this:

He said: "everyone knows that he is one,
The secret is known only to one person".

Source given by Nizami,

This is what Jami says to everyone today. (Navoi, 2019, p. 197)

As an eternal image Yeskendir is a collection of personalities from these historical and religious legends.

Yeskendir in the works of Navoi:

Everything cannot be put into words,
If you don't know who Yeskendir is.

Wonderful his every hour, every day,
hard to stop the story...

There are many miracles in Yeskendir's life,
Let's write only after realizing the meaning.

If I said wrong before, I'll correct it,
I will proclaim the truth to all.

Who dares to attack the home when he is here?
He was able to become a support for everyone.

Having freed the vast land from the shackles,
Protected his people from the evil enemy. (Navoi, 2019, p. 197)

Further, Navoi talks about the countries and states conquered by Yeskendir. Thus, he presents him as a victorious commander and a great ruler.

Academician Kaskabasov (2014) classifies the stories about Yeskendir in Kazakh folklore and literature into three types: (1) publicizing Yeskendir's two horns; (2) Yeskendir's departure to Zulmat with his companions Kyzыр and Ilyas in search of living water; and (3) Yeskendir's unexpected encounter with the gates of paradise and the receipt of a bone as a gift in Abay's poem (p. 256). Although the third plot parallels Nizami's version, it is presented differently. Kaskabasov (2014) notes that this motif is characteristic of the ancient Talmud and writes: "this plot entered the Talmud

in early times, when the peoples of the Near and Middle East told about it in the parables” (p. 256). As examples of its use by ancient and medieval authors, he cites the ancient *Alexander Romance*, *Alexander* by the German poet Lamprecht (12th century), and *The Legend of Alexander* by Albert von Chamisso, a leading representative of German Romanticism (18th–19th centuries) (p. 256). This poem by Chamisso was freely translated by the Russian Romantic poet V. A. Zhukovsky, and that version subsequently served as one of the bases for Abay’s poem. However, Zhukovsky’s text does not mention dipping dried fish into spring water, as in the Talmud; Abay may have encountered this motif directly in the Talmud. In other words, Abay’s “Yeskendir” adapts and renews the traditional plot within modern literature. Alternatively, the motif could derive from a legend widely circulated among the Kazakhs.

We can see that famous historical figures are full of contradictions from the images of Attila, Genghis Khan, Amir-Temir, Edige, and Yeskendir tops this list. Yeskendir, first of all, repelling evil, a victorious commander, a virtuous and wise ruler; secondly, the conqueror of the world, a cruel ruler, an insatiable, power-hungry king. These two contradictory characteristics define Yeskendir’s personality as an eternal image. Abay sought to show the character of the ruler and bloodthirsty commander in a critical realistic direction.

The history of the Abay’s poem, whose main character is Yeskendir, unfolds in a realistic manner. The poet mentions the character and gives him a description from the first stanza of the poem:

Does the world remember Yeskendir and his deeds?

The city of Macedonia is his home.

He is the son of the king Philip,

His life is a dream of glory. (Abai, 2020, p. 11)

Abay reveals Yeskendir’s insatiable behavior, talking about a twenty-one-year-old ruler, who threatened his neighbors, gathered an army, killed the rulers of other countries, capturing their cities, and shed rivers of human blood:

Yeskendir made all the khans obedient,

Each time he conquered, he was not insatiable.

His greed got bigger and bigger

He thought about conquering the whole world...

Nobody could argue with him.

He took everything, threatened everyone.

No one could get around or stop,

The one who wants to rule the earth alone. (Abai, 2020, p. 12)

These lines show Abay’s position as a poet. An insatiable desire to rule the whole world is characteristic of all victorious commanders and rulers in history.

Around this characteristic, the list of thesauri that reveal the personality of the protagonist of the poem “Yeskendir” includes the descriptions as “vain”, “jealous”, “insatiable king, threatening neighbors”, “ambitious ruler, eager to rule the world”, “envious”.

The history of Yeskendir’s search for abelkhayat water in religious legends moved into a different direction in Abay’s poem. Abay’s hero falls into the desert during the campaign of conquest:

They walked long and ended up in a devastated desert,

Drank all the water that carried with them.

Suffered from heat and thirst, without a drop of water,

God entrusted him with a difficult task. (Abai, 2020, p. 12)

When the ruler “wandered and could not find water in the wide steppe” with his army, he saw “something emitting a radiant light”. It was a clear spring:

There flows a stream, with a murmuring sound,

Like a ribbon coming out of a ditch.

Yeskendir got off, clung to the spring and rushed to drink,

That special, sweet water. (Abai, 2020, p. 12)

The story about “Yeskendir’s order to wash smoked fish in the spring water”, confirms Abai Kunanbayuly’s reading the Talmud:

He ordered to put in the stream,

And wash smoked fish in the water.

The fish has become different, it tastes great.

Surprisingly, the water refreshed it. (Abai, 2020, p. 12)

Thesauri as “special water”, “too sweet”, “different taste of smoked fish when washed” clarify the miraculous effect of spring water.

Struck by the wonderful spring water, Yeskendir intends to find out where the water comes from and to take possession of this place. However, the arrogant commander-in-chief, who believed that “there is no one equal to him”, failed. The stream goes into the gorge, the top of the rock, and the mouth of it is protected by a golden fortress. His army was unable to open the gate. The voice behind the gate says:

- The gate was not ordered to be opened.

This is the gate to the Almighty. (Abai, 2020, p. 13)

In Nizami's epic Yeskendir could not taste the water of abelkhayat, and in Abay's poem he drank spring water, but could not find the way to the source. That is, the gates on this path are closed for him. "Gate to the Almighty" does not let Yeskendir, who conquered the whole world.

In Navoi (2019)'s epic, during his journey by sea Yeskendir plunges into the abyss of sea waters and travels to the underwater world with a mystical vision.

He said to everyone: "I have not seen many miracles,
Now I say goodbye to you.

That was my first goal,
Dive into the deep abyss.

If God helps me by giving me patience,
I'll take a look under the water".

Water is a mystical world that connects two worlds in ancient knowledge. The way to the watery abyss is opened to Yeskendir. His army cannot stop him on this path:

Who can say to Shah: "How come?"
Yeskendir entered a large glass ball.

The chest ball is waterproof and closed.
They tied a long rope.

If the ruler is up to something, his people have no peace.
Outside they will hold one end.

So Shakh was so determined,
The people lowered the ball into the water. (Navoi, 2019, p. 517)

Under water there is another world, that is, the second world. In Greek myths, Odysseus went to the kingdom of Hades to find out about his fate and his future, Yeskendir saw two worlds at the same time and achieved his goal:

Tirelessly under the water for months,
Carefully watching the spectacle of the abyss.

When he signaled,
The people pulled him back.

Who lives forever in the world,
He achieved his goal and was pleased.

... Enjoyed the joy of this world,
And that was the end of his journey.

All his life full of glory,
A bright light of wisdom lit up in his eyes.

There was no one ahead of him,
He experienced all the wonders of the world.

Saving many unfortunate people from trouble,
He held all the magic of the mysterious world.

Revealed all sorts of wonderful secrets,
Even the waters opened up to him. (Navoi, 2019, p. 517)

Thus, Yeskendir's fame is associated with mysticism. Navoi (2019) extols the glory of the great commander not only for militancy, but also for wisdom and wonderful knowledge of the secrets of the two worlds. The underwater world is the key to "the end of Yeskendir's journey", "the glory of his whole life", "the absence of a person equal to him in the world". Yeskendir's underwater journey is his departure to the other world. In artistic representation, this concept is expressed by allusions and gestures. Navoi (2019) alludes to the "eternal life" of his character. "Fascinated with the mortal world", "knowledge of the underwater mystery" reveals the character of Yeskendir as an "eternal image".

Considering that one of the special features of eternal images, as mentioned above, is “the greatest tendency to merge with other systems of images, to participate in various plots, maintaining the identity in a changing environment”, i.e., polyvalence (Lukov et al., 2010, p. 5), one can understand Yeskendir’s image, acting in different plots, and showing his many-sided personality. Comparing the main character image in the epics of Nizami, Jami, Navoi and Abai’s poem, we can say that the common thing of bilateral literary monuments is one character, and the difference is that the hero, on the one hand, is most glorified, on the other hand, is criticized.

The fact that the plots in literary works refute the notion that Yeskendir in legend and Yeskendir in history are two separate people confirms that one of the characteristics of eternal images is a tendency to combine with other systems of images. In the literary and folklore heritage there are not two different people, but two sides of one hero. Historical and legendary stories prove that great personalities are complex, full of contradictions, and not one-sided.

Abay does not doubt Yeskendir’s glory and victoriousness, but criticizes him for his arrogance on the way to glory. Through those closed gates and failed victory, he hints that it is the power of the Creator that brings a person to repentance. A wise man like Aristotle draws conclusions about what happened.

The words, said that “someone” behind the closed gate, to stop Yeskendir:
Boasting did not fit the mind,
If you are strong, conquer your lust!
You are envious and greedy, the world is not enough for you,
Such a person is not worthy of this place. (Abai, 2020, p. 14)

The gift in the form of a bone indicates the main idea of the poem. We know very well that the sign of omnipotence is the overcoming of one’s own desires and reason, which is like commandment of wise people in the history. This precept is given to Abay’s hero by the stranger.

The poet assigns Aristotle reveal the secret of the bone from the gate:
Aristotle was the wisest of men,
It is impossible not to listen to his words:
“Let them bring the scales and see,
Which is heavier: the bone or gold? (Abai, 2020, pp. 14–15)
Yeskendir accepted this offer and weighed the bone.
They put all the gold that was found,
But compared to the bone, it was like fluff.

Yeskendir sees this, he is amazed,
He throws armor and weapons on the gold.
And watched with interest.
How a light bone outweighed them. (Abai, 2020, p. 15)

Yeskendir asks Aristotle about the miraculous mystery of the bone. In response, Aristotle takes a handful of earth from the ground and sprinkles on the bone. The bone becomes lighter. The wise Aristotle tells the ruler that “this is orbital bone, and only the earth saturates the eyes of insatiable people, for whom everything is not enough, even though the whole world is in his hands”. Heeding the words of Aristotle, who warned that he should follow that example with a bone from the gate, Yeskendir returns back with his army.

The motif that expresses the main idea is the overweight of the bone of all the gold, silver and weapons on the scales, revealing the meaning of the bone.

The symbolic meaning of the gate in the poem has a deep meaning. The “gate separating the two worlds” is given as a symbolic place that cannot be opened by any person. The door (gate) that cannot be opened in fairy tales is the way to another world, to the afterlife, and to the special place, inhabited by a spirit. By the stranger’s words that “it is the gate to the Almighty” Abay hints at the path of universal humanistic ideals. Yeskendir was forbidden to pass through that gate, because, as the poet pointed out, he could not yet overcome human weaknesses. Having listened to Aristotle, the great commander realized the futility of his actions, and came to the conclusion that “God pointed this out to him”. Abay expressed his humanistic position, showing the human weakness of great personalities as Yeskendir.

According to a folk legend, one of the gates of Sairam, a city with forty gates, towards Alatau, is called “Zil kakpa” (Heavy gates). They say that Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn attacked these gates and could not open them. This motif of the legend also reminds of the closed gates for Yeskendir.

What qualities distinguish Yeskendir as an eternal image? According to Nizami’s epic, he is a hero of a special nature, who saved mankind, trapping the Yajuj tribe, which brought misfortune to people, and who sought eternal life and a glorious commander who shook the world. In Navoi’s epic he is also a glorious and just warrior, a wise commander, whose fame has spread all over the world, and a holy being, who has seen two worlds and knows the secrets of mysticism. In Abay’s poem, this is a self-satisfied, envious, greedy and conceited person. However, at the end of this poem, the main character returns to his unique nature in the legend.

The works of the poets and the poem of Abay Kunanbayuly can serve as examples of the fact that the high spiritual value, wide dissemination, conquering the boundaries of eras and peoples, the boundless space of content and meaning,

free adaptation to various subjects, that define the literary and artistic nature of Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn are inherent in the eternal image.

“This is the gate to the Almighty”... What does the gate closed for a victorious personality like Yeskendir mean? Abay’s artistic position is the chanting a perfect man with high intelligence, who can control his mind, strength and heart at the same time. Why is Yeskendir not in this category? What does the poet mean by the words “if you are strong, conquer your lust”, uttered by an unfamiliar voice from the gate? From a philosophical standpoint, Yeskendir’s actions are contrary to the requirements of a perfect man with high intelligence. The gates leading to the Almighty are open only to those who follow the Creator’s way and avoid sin.

Abai interprets the motif of the unopened gate for Yeskendir from the philosophical and humanistic point and draws a conclusion by the ancient thinker Aristotle’s judgment:

“This is a human eye bone,” he told the ruler.
Will the eyes be satisfied with thousands?
Greedy eyes can’t get enough of the whole world
But will get enough filled with sand.

Do not be angry, my king, I will tell you:
The Golden Gate did not let you in.
You asked for a gift and get a bone.
Look at this and take a lesson! (Abai, 2020, p. 15)

If we consider the human dream of searching for holy water and striving for eternal life is the basis for depicting the eternal ideal of mankind in mythical motifs, Abay’s poem suggests looking for a simple key to this ideal in pure intentions and virtuous thoughts. Thus, the poet reveals a mythical motif with the humanistic sense.

Yeskendir’s name is also found in Abay’s other poems. When Abay’s beloved son Abdirakhman died, he dedicated a poem in which he describes the glory and character of his father Kunanbay, identifying him with eternal images in our national historical knowledge:

Like Yeskendir, Temir, Genghis,
Famous among Muslims. (Abai, 2020, p. 274)

Thus, Yeskendir, criticized in the poem, is mentioned in Abay’s poems as one of the great people, glorified by historical heroism. In assessing Kunanbai’s contribution to the Kazakh people, it was not for nothing that Abay took such a wise commander and ruler as Yeskendir. Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn, blessed with eternal glory, continued his eternal life as a person walking the path of justice, serving the truth and honoring wisdom.

In this poem Abay revived the image of Eskendir in Kazakh literature. He showed the human nature of the famous commander through the contradictory character inherent in historical figures.

The legend of Eskendir is widespread in Kazakh folklore. It tells about Eskendir’s two horns. A Kazakh poet of the beginning of the XIX century Dulat Babataiuly (1802-1874) wrote a narrative poem “Shashtaraz” (barber), based on this legend. A prominent Kazakh poet who lived at the beginning of the XX century Magzhan Zhumabaiuly (1893-1938) wrote the poem “Eskendir’s two Horns”. There is a poem “Eskendir Zulkarnaiyn” by Akyt Haji Ulimzhiuly (1868-1940), a prominent representative of the religious trend in poetry, who emigrated.

The legends are associated with Eskendir, who had two horns on his head. In order to conceal his horn from people, he constantly killed the barbers, who cut his hair. So in the end, he left one barber alive. But the barber could not keep the secret about Eskendir’s horn and suffered from it. Following the advice of a priest, he went to a well in the deserted place and shouted about the secret. One day a shepherd made a pipe from the reeds growing around this well and sang. However, the words “Eskendir has horns” were sounded from the pipe and the secret spread throughout the country.

In Dulat Babaytaiuly’s poem, the story begins as:

The ruler on the throne
At the age of seventeen.
His anger makes tremble
Both friends and foe,
When he is enraged
Even the stone is rolling.
And there are two horns
On the ruler’s head.

No one dared to face him,
And to object to him,
All four sides were
Under his control.
Day after day he rose
Luck favored him.

If anyone sees his horn,
He will lose his luck.
If the secret is revealed,
Or if someone sees it.

Without showing a living soul,
Not taking the crown off his head.
But it is improper for the ruler
Be with overgrown hair. (Babataiuly, 2013, pp. 104–105)

So the ruler called the barber, declared his condition and cut his hair. However, the barber who saw the horn, although he swore to the ruler, suffered from keeping this secret in him. It seemed that his body was filled with something. He left the city and found a hole in a deserted place.

He came to the river,
When dawn came,
To the hole on the shore
He lay facing down.

Yesterday I cut
The ruler's hair,
On his holy head
"I saw two horns,
He said it lying on the ground,
Muttering under his breath,
And enjoyed his relief
It pounded in his chest.
When uttered a thousand times
Everything inside him.

"I got rid" of trouble,
The eyes lit up.
The words from his mouth
Absorbed into the ground
Words absorbed into the ground,
Kept there for seven years. (Babataiuly, 2013, pp. 107–109)

Seven years passed. The water of the river overflowed its banks and flooded the valley. That hole also filled with water and reeds grew there. The reeds remembered his words, absorbed into the ground, and all the people heard the innermost secret. The matter reached the king, and the barber was hanged...

According to Akyt Ulimzhiuly, Eskendir wanted to rule the world alone. For that, he needed to live a long time. So he worried about not dying. However, the near-death for Eskendir was his horn.

He hides his horn from the people
Even though it was from birth
As there was a vision in his dream
If people find out, then he's dead. (Ulimzhiuly, 2020, p. 132)

If others knew about the existence of his horn, Eskendir's death will come. To hide his horn from people,
He cut off the head of the one, who cut his hair
And avoided spreading the secret.

His life is safe if no one knows
The horn was his spiritual wound.
If God gives him a thousand years of life,
Barbers would be alive and well. (Ulimzhiuly, 2020, p. 132)

Akyt says that Eskendir had to kill his barbers. Since he did not want to give up his life and did not want to kill his barbers, he asked his teacher Kydyr for a way to get out of that. Kydyr (peace and blessings be upon him) was going to take Eskendir to the living water abelkhayat (Ulimzhiuly, 2020, pp. 143–145).

The narrators of this story interpret the word "Zulkarnayin" as "the ruler of two worlds", not as "two-horned". Such an idea that Eskendir was a king-prophet, who equally ruled over light and darkness, this world and the afterlife, is given in the written literary heritage "Kissa-sul Anbiya" in the XII century.

Magzhan Zhumabaiuly's poem "Eskendir's two Horns" also tells this folk legend. The content of Magzhan's poem is as follows:

At one time, Eskendir

Ruled seven worlds.
Great and holy,
Not burning in fire.

Giants like Eskendir
Will they be born twice?
Giant human body
Can it be criticized? (Zhumabaiuly, 2013, pp. 103–104)

Eskendir Zulkarnaiyn, who ruled the world, had two horns. The ruler did not show his horn to the public, covering it with his crown, and according to some legends, with his helmet.

On the head of Eskendir
There were two horns.
The two horns,
Which he always hid.

On the head of Eskendir
Two horns were a target!
If it is shown to wild people
Will it be sacred?

Hiding two horns,
from a young age
Eskendir never took
His helmet off his head.

One day he decided to cut his hair:
So many things Eskendir
Experienced in his life.
Like a lion's mane
His hair overgrew. (Zhumabaiuly, 2013, pp. 103–104)

In this poem, Eskendir instructs the barber not to tell anyone about the horn on his head, otherwise the barber will die. The barber, unable to keep this secret in himself, whispers about it to the reeds growing in the desert. The noisy reeds spread the secret to everyone. The barber was beheaded the next day.

Thus, the legend of Eskendir in Kazakh folklore became the basis of three literary works.

Many works portray Yeskendir's campaigns and character; among them, Peter Green's *Alexander the Great. King of the World* offers a sweeping account and notes how Alexander sought deification, was later mythologized, and, by the Augustan era, approached demigod status. While scholarship cannot fully resolve whether a world-ruler's repeated luck is "deserved," it affirms a core truth: Yeskendir was both exceptional commander and flawed human, and these contradictions fuel his literary image. Though his earthly career ended, his "literary campaign" endures in Firdousi, Nizami, Dehlavi, Jami, Navoi, and Abay. Plutarch provides historical data; the *Alexander Romance* (Callisthenes) shaped the Western legend. Despite debates that separate the historical and legendary figures, Eastern poetry effectively unites Zulkarnaiyn and the Macedonian into one composite archetype—an "eternal image" capable of entering diverse plots.

As an eternal image, Yeskendir appears variously: in Nizami, the seeker of eternal life and subduer of Yajuj; in Navoi, a just warrior-king with mystical knowledge; in Abay, a vainglorious, envious ruler who is ethically tested yet ultimately returns to his legendary essence. These texts exemplify the image's high spiritual value, breadth of meaning, transhistorical reach, and adaptability. Kazakh folklore—especially the "two horns" cycle about the barber's secret—underscores his fame and fate, revealing the hero's powerlessness before destiny. Not all campaigns were glorious, and legends cannot preserve every historical detail; nevertheless, Yeskendir's lasting "campaign" in literature and folklore offers a moral lesson of enduring relevance.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Yeskendir Zulkarnaiyn functions not merely as a historical protagonist but as an "eternal image" whose semantic core victory, wisdom, hubris, and moral testing travels across eras, languages, and genres. By triangulating Eastern epics (Firdousi, Nizami, Jami, Navoi), Qur'anic narrative, Western historiography (Plutarch, Arrian) and the *Alexander Romance*, as well as Kazakh folklore and Abay Kunanbayuly's poem, we demonstrated how mythic amplification both preserves historical memory and recasts it into culturally resonant symbols. Recurrent motifs the quest for living water, the closed gate, the two horns, and the presence of a wise counselor stabilize a shared typology that enables Yeskendir to embody a composite archetype of ruler, conqueror, and seeker.

Abay's "Yeskendir" intensifies this transhistorical dialogue by shifting emphasis from external triumphs to inner measure: the scales scene and the "gate to the Almighty" translate imperial ambition into an ethical test, reframing

greatness as mastery over desire. In Abay's humanistic optics, the legendary figure is simultaneously exalted and demystified: the hero's glory is acknowledged, yet his insufficiencies are laid bare to reveal the primacy of conscience over conquest. This double focus on grandeur and limitation positions Abay's text as a critical hinge between folklore's celebratory impulse and modern literature's moral introspection.

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Rendering Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) in Translating Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* From English Into Arabic

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Abstract—This paper examines the process of translating culture-specific items (CSIs) from English into Arabic in the Nigerian play *Death and the King's Horseman* by the Nobel Prize laureate Wole Soyinka. Anglophone African literary texts, particularly those rooted in indigenous belief systems and oral traditions, present unique challenges for translators due to their dense cultural and linguistic layers. Research on English–Arabic translation has largely centered on Western texts, while Anglophone African literature remains underexplored despite its distinct hybrid linguistic and cultural features. This study advances the field by examining the translation of CSIs in Nigerian literature as a double transposition process (Bandia, 1993). This study draws on Nida's (1964) cultural categorization, Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation procedures, and Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization. Through a descriptive and comparative analysis of representative CSIs, including ecological, material, social, religious, and linguistic categories, this research explores the translation problems encountered, the procedures employed, and the translator's orientation. The findings reveal that religious and social CSIs are most prevalent, often leading to untranslatability and semantic loss. The translator employed a variety of procedures with a strong tendency toward domestication, while still preserving culturally significant foreign elements to sustain original cultural flavor. Moreover, the paper concludes that translating African literary texts into Arabic involves complex negotiations between cultural adequacy and reader accessibility. This study contributes to the field of translation studies of Anglophone African literature by shedding light on how cultural and linguistic asymmetries are negotiated in Arabic translations, offering practical insights for cross-cultural translation practice.

Index Terms—culture-specific items (CSIs), translation studies, Anglophone African Literature, challenges, procedures

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation, in its broadest sense, is an act of cross-cultural understanding and negotiation (Rosman & Rubel, 2020). It helps different societies to become familiar with 'otherness' (Habtoor & Al-Qahtani, 2018). As Torop (2002) observes, translation is "inseparable from the concept of culture" (p. 593). This is especially relevant when dealing with culture-specific items (CSIs), including proverbs, religious expressions, and historical references, which demand strategies that go beyond mere linguistic transfer to ensure both adequacy and acceptability (Kastrati & Zaçellari, 2022). In recent years, translation studies have shifted from a purely linguistic orientation toward cultural perspectives (El-Dali, 2011; Bassnett, 2003).

The interplay between translation and culture has thus become increasingly central, particularly when CSIs are at stake. Culture-specific items (CSIs) are defined as concepts that are specifically associated with a given culture and lack direct equivalents in other cultures and languages (Baker, 2018; Aixelá, 1996). CSIs remain among the most challenging elements in translation (Blažytė & Liubinienė, 2016; Orudari, 2007). These challenges intensify in African-English texts, where distinct varieties of English convey hybrid cultural identities rooted in indigenous oral traditions (Bandia, 2008).

In the context of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, translation plays a crucial role in rendering deeply rooted Yoruba cultural and ritualistic practices, such as ritual suicide, ancestral veneration, and oral praise poetry, into other languages. The play epitomizes Nigeria's cultural complexity, where indigenous beliefs intersect with Islamic and Christian traditions (Nigeria Fact Sheet, 2012). This cultural multiplicity illustrates how translation is not simply a linguistic act but an interpretive process that negotiates between overlapping worldviews. As Torop (2002) argues, translation is inseparable from culture, for it is through the incorporation of new texts that cultures both innovate and

reaffirm their specificity. The present study investigates the translation of CSIs from African-English into Arabic in Soyinka's play. As an Anglophone Nigerian text, *Death and the King's Horseman* embodies a rich cultural and linguistic landscape that contains numerous CSIs where oral traditions, hybrid language varieties, and symbolic practices converge (Pereltsvaig, 2011).

Despite the vast research on English–Arabic translation, most studies have focused on texts rooted in Western cultural contexts, while Anglophone African literature remains limited. Several studies have examined the translation of CSIs from English into Arabic and vice versa in different literary contexts (Ali, 2024; Aljabri, 2020; Habtoor & Al-Qahtani, 2018; Zahrawi, 2018; Zeghar & Benlakdar, 2022; Zitouni, 2022). However, no published studies were found that specifically investigate the translation of CSIs from African-English into Arabic. The existing studies that focus on African works' translation are very scarce (Anber, 2016; Bandia, 2008; Harmoush et al., 2023; Lindfors, 2015; Tervonen, 2007; Tymoczko, 2007). Prior works on Europhone African literature have noted that it is inherently translational: African authors transpose their cultures into European languages, creating a “double transposition” when their works are later translated into another language (Bandia, 1993). This dual process presents unique challenges, especially in preserving cultural resonance, oral heritage, and postcolonial identity. Consequently, the translation of CSIs from African-English into Arabic constitutes a critical yet neglected area of inquiry. Addressing this gap not only enriches our understanding of how translation strategies address cultural challenges but also sheds light on the broader implications of translating postcolonial African texts, where CSIs function as carriers of cultural identity, historical memory, and linguistic innovation.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the translation of CSIs in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, a play filled with cultural items, the core of this study, showcasing Yoruba culture's beauty, such as drumming, dancing, symbolic clothing, and religious rituals (Kemi & Chijioke, 2017). It is a rich literary work with a multilingual nature, including Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin English, and Yoruba, exemplifying the challenges of translating Anglophone African literature (Josphine, 2011; Migliavacca, 2018). By analyzing CSIs, this research examines how translators negotiate semantic and cultural asymmetries when translating African-English texts into Arabic.

To systematically explore these issues and uncover the translator's decision-making process, this study draws on Nida's (1964) cultural categorization, Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation procedures, and Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization. It adopts a Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) approach to examine the Arabic translation of CSIs in *Death and the King's Horseman*. This framework enables a structured exploration of the translation problems encountered, the strategies employed, and the intercultural complexities influencing the integrity of the translated text. Accordingly, this research is guided by the following questions:

1. What types of CSIs are found in the selected Anglophone African literary work?
2. What are the problems encountered when translating CSIs from Anglophone African literary work into Arabic, particularly within Nida's cultural categories (linguistic, social, religious, material, and ecological)?
3. How are Vinay and Darbelnet's translation procedures applied to the Arabic translation of CSIs from Anglophone African literature?
4. How do cultural differences between Africans and Arabs influence the adequacy and acceptability of the Arabic translations of CSIs?

By addressing these questions, the study not only identifies the procedures and difficulties encountered but also deepens understanding of how postcolonial literatures, especially Anglophone African literary works, are negotiated and represented in Arabic translation, offering new insights for cross-cultural translation practices.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, various studies have examined the translation of culture-specific items (CSIs), particularly in literary texts, which are rich with culturally bound expressions (Ali, 2024; Aljabri, 2020; Habtoor & Al-Qahtani, 2018; Kuleli, 2019; Zahrawi, 2018; Zeghar & Benlakdar, 2022; Zitouni, 2022). Some studies focus on identifying the challenges involved in translating CSIs, while others explore the strategies used to overcome these challenges. The collective findings indicate that CSIs remain one of the most persistent challenges in literary translation due to the deep-rooted cultural differences between the source and target languages (Harmoush et al., 2023; Kuleli, 2019; Zitouni, 2022). Furthermore, Ali (2024), Habtoor and Al-Qahtani (2018), and Zahrawi (2018) considered that dealing with variance between languages, cultural sensitivity, and cultural identity while translating CSIs creates serious problems that may affect the achievement of accuracy and clarity. Moindjie et al. (2025) point out that “cultural-specific items are challenging in translation since they are more difficult to recognize than linguistic aspects and phenomena” (p. 258). Mounassar (2018) and Almubark (2017) also highlighted that cultural differences and the lack of cultural awareness and knowledge significantly impact the accuracy of the translation.

To address these issues, scholars have proposed several strategies and procedures for handling CSIs, including those developed by Nida (1964), Newmark (1988), Aixelá (1996), Vinay and Darbelnet (2000), and Davies (2003). Across previous studies on CSIs' translation, the most commonly observed techniques include footnotes, descriptive translation, and explication, which help convey cultural and contextual information to target readers (Ayyad et al., 2021; Zeghar & Benlakdar, 2022; Zitouni, 2022). Other studies, such as those by Ali (2024), Aljabri (2020), and Zeghar and Benlakdar (2022), identified preservation as a frequently used strategy, especially when translators aim to retain the cultural

essence of the source text. Conversely, omission or deletion tends to be rare (Aljabri, 2020; Zeghar & Benlakdar, 2022), reflecting a general preference for maintaining cultural presence wherever possible.

The findings of Ali (2024) and Kuleli (2019) further emphasized that cultural gaps should not be perceived as insurmountable barriers but as challenges that can be managed through appropriate procedural choices. Both Kuleli (2019) and Zitouni (2022) argued that identifying the *skopos* or purpose of translation enables translators to select suitable procedures that align with communicative intent. Similarly, Zahrawi (2018) and Zitouni (2022) recommended combining multiple strategies, such as explicitation with descriptive equivalence, when a single procedure fails to capture the full cultural meaning. Almubark (2017) added that exposure to real-life cultural contexts enhances translators' ability to produce accurate and culturally sensitive renditions.

Overall, previous studies highlight that translating CSIs demands a solid theoretical foundation to balance cultural fidelity and reader accessibility. However, little attention has been given to how such frameworks apply to African-English texts translated into Arabic. To address this gap, the present study adopts a multi-theoretical framework that combines three prominent translation theories: Nida's (1964) cultural categorizations, Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation procedures, and Venuti's (1995) concepts of foreignization and domestication.

A. Nida's Cultural Categorization

Nida's (1964) contribution to translation theory is particularly significant for linking translation with culture. While he is best known for developing the principle of dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes conveying meaning and effect over literal form, his categorization of culture provides a crucial analytical tool for examining culture-specific items (CSIs). Nida (1964) identifies five main cultural categories that often pose challenges in translation: ecological, material, social, religious, and linguistic. These categories help distinguish the different dimensions through which culture manifests in language and guide translators in identifying and addressing potential gaps between source and target cultures. In this study, Nida's cultural classification serves as a framework for analyzing the types of CSIs in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and assessing how these items are rendered into Arabic.

The translation of culture-specific items (CSIs) represents one of the most complex challenges in translation, as cultural differences often pose greater difficulties than linguistic ones (Nida, 1964, 2015). Nida argues that words derive their meanings from the culture to which they belong, and without sufficient cultural awareness, translators risk distorting meaning or erasing cultural identity. Sharifa (2024) similarly observes that achieving equivalence in culturally dense content requires not only linguistic proficiency but also creative and culturally informed decision-making.

Nida (1964) was the first translator and scholar to offer a cultural approach to translation. His work also underscores that cultural differences often present greater challenges than linguistic ones (Nida, 1964, 2015). He argues that words derive meaning from the cultural systems to which they belong, and that insufficient cultural awareness can lead to distortion or loss of meaning in translation. Sharifa (2024) similarly asserts that achieving equivalence in culturally dense texts requires not only linguistic proficiency but also creativity and cultural sensitivity. By integrating linguistic and ethnological perspectives, Nida was among the first scholars to conceptualize translation as an intercultural act rather than a purely linguistic process. He viewed language as a system of cultural symbols, asserting that effective translation depends on understanding the social and cultural contexts shaping meaning (Nida, 1945, 2003). In this sense, Nida introduced the notion of 'cultural difference' as a central concern in translation studies, offering one of the earliest comprehensive frameworks for analyzing how meaning operates across cultures through his theory of dynamic equivalence.

He (1981) debates that difficulties stemming from 'cultural differences' comprise the most significant challenges confronted by translators, often leading to the most profound misunderstandings among readers. Exploring cultural differences and determining the appropriate way to address them has become one of the key issues in translation and the most important concerns that contemporary translation studies should deal with. Therefore, Nida (1945) outlines that translation problems, which are basically issues of equivalence, can be effectively addressed under five categories: 1) ecology, 2) material culture, 3) social culture, 4) religious culture, and 5) linguistic culture. The following is a diagram representing Nida's equivalence theory and culture categorization in translation.

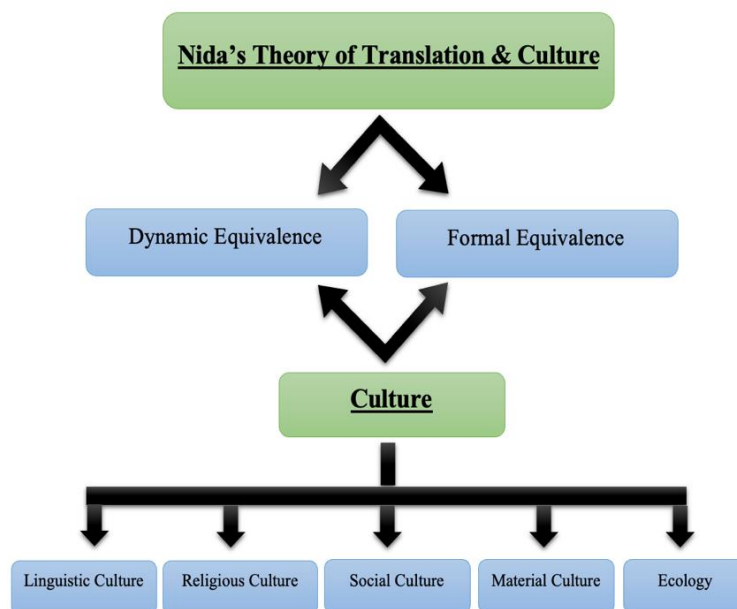


Figure 1. Nida's Theory of Translation and Culture Categorization (1945)

Although Nida's theory has been extensively applied across various language pairs in many studies, this study extends its application by exploring the translation of language varieties, specifically the interplay between standard and nonstandard forms of English, as well as Pidgin, in African literary works. Since the current research investigates the translation of CSIs in a Nigerian play from African-English into Arabic, Nida's (1964) framework is employed to examine how equivalent varieties of English are rendered in Arabic.

B. Vinay and Darbelnet's Translation Procedures

Along with Nida's (1964) theory, Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model of translation procedures is utilized to address the research questions in this thesis. In their taxonomy, translation strategies can generally be categorized into two types: direct translation and oblique translation. Seven categories of translation procedures are under these two; the three subdivisions (borrowing, calque, and literal translation) are under direct translation, and the other four (transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation) are within the oblique translation (Dayter, 2020). According to their methodology, some texts allow for literal, element-by-element translation; however, due to the metalinguistic and structural differences between languages, more complex strategies are often required (Saridaki, 2021).

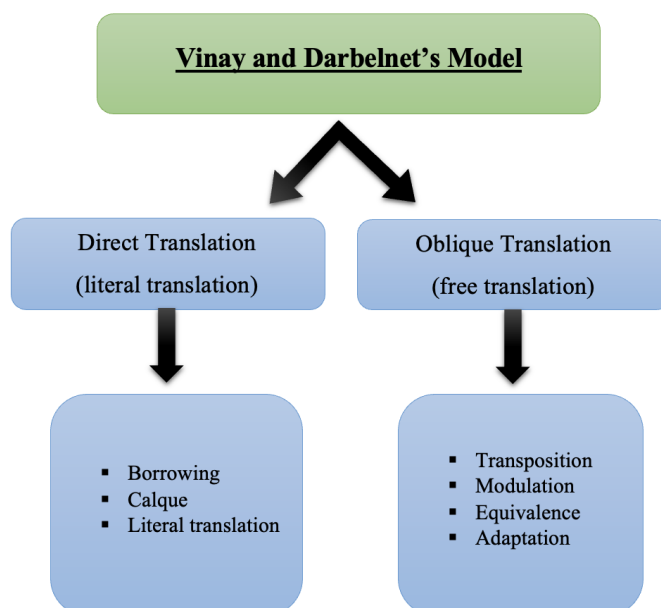


Figure 2. Vinay and Darbelnet's Model of Translation Procedures (1995)

Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model involves segmenting both the source text (ST) and target text (TT) into translation units, numbering them correspondingly to identify which translation procedure has been used (Alqunaibet,

2019). The 'translation unit' is defined as the smallest segment of an utterance whose elements are so interdependent that they cannot be translated separately (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995).

Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) approach contributes to this study by providing a practical tool for identifying and categorizing the translation techniques applied to culture-specific items (CSIs) in the selected text. When combined with Nida's (1964) cultural framework, it allows for both a qualitative cultural analysis and a procedural linguistic analysis of how cultural meaning is conveyed across languages.

C. Lawrence Venuti's Theory of Translation

Venuti's (1995, 1998) theory of foreignization and domestication introduces an ideological dimension to translation, emphasizing that it is never neutral but shaped by cultural and political choices. Building on Schleiermacher's (1813) distinction, Venuti argues that foreignization preserves the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the source text, while domestication adapts it to target-language norms, often rendering the translator 'invisible' and reinforcing dominant cultural values.

In relation to Toury's (1995) concepts, foreignization aligns with adequacy, maintaining fidelity to the source culture, whereas domestication aligns with acceptability, prioritizing target-reader accessibility. These orientations reveal the translator's ideological stance and the cultural position of the translated text.

In this study, the Arabic translation of *Death and the King's Horseman* is examined through this lens to determine whether the rendering of African-English culture-specific items (CSIs) follows a foreignizing or domesticating approach. As noticed by Bandia (1993), African Europhone literature involves double transposition, from indigenous culture to English, and then from English to another language, such as Arabic. This dual process underscores the complex cultural negotiation in translating African texts. Therefore, this framework helps evaluate how translation negotiates meaning, identity, and cultural visibility. Combined with Nida's (1964) cultural categories and Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation procedures, Venuti's (1995) model complements the theoretical foundation for analyzing the linguistic, cultural, and ideological dimensions of translation.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design grounded in translation studies. The approach aims to describe, interpret, and evaluate how culture-specific items (CSIs) are translated from African-English into Arabic in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. Myers (2009) states that qualitative research is a thorough investigation of social and cultural phenomena, with a primary focus on the text. Moreover, the qualitative method allows for in-depth exploration of linguistic and cultural nuances, focusing on meaning transfer, cultural equivalence, and the translator's strategies rather than on quantifiable data. As Miles and Huberman (1994) argue, qualitative research concentrates on a detailed exploration of research problems. Overall, a well-structured research design ensures that the study effectively addresses its objectives.

B. Data Collection

Data were collected through close textual analysis of Soyinka's play and its Arabic translation by Dr. Ali Hagag. Both versions were read line by line to identify and extract culture-specific items (CSIs) that reflect cultural practices, beliefs, and linguistic expressions. Examples include references to rituals, idioms, drumming, clothing, and religious symbolism. Therefore, the data or the sample selection will not be random; rather, coherent passages of text will be selected in accordance with the research design and purpose (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). The collected data were systematically organized in tabular form, including four columns: (1) ST, (2) TT, (3) transliteration, (4) cultural category, (5) translation procedure, and (6) back translation.

C. Data Sampling

In this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select relevant data, focusing exclusively on textual instances containing culture-specific items (CSIs) to ensure representation of diverse aspects of African culture. Following Nida's (1945, 1964) framework, the identified CSIs were categorized into five cultural categories: ecological, material, social, religious, and linguistic. Among the 338 CSIs identified, 83 were classified as ecological items, 96 as material items, 69 as social items, 76 as religious items, and 14 as linguistic items. These samples encompassed the traditional Yoruba environment, rituals, spiritual beliefs, proverbs, and idioms, reflecting both cultural depth and linguistic variation within the play.

In line with Saldanha and O'Brien's (2014), the more you are able to evaluate, the better, although factors such as cost and time are also significant considerations. It is impossible to include the whole translated text in translation research; rather, one must choose a sample of text for analysis. Accordingly, only illustrative examples from each CSI category were subjected to in-depth analysis, chosen for their representativeness and relevance to the study's objectives. These samples are presented in tabular form, showing the CSIs in both ST and TT, their number, their cultural category, and a contextual note.

D. Methods for Analysis

The analysis involves a comparative textual approach. As Williams and Chesterman (2014) state, translated text analysis entails the textual comparison of the translated text with the original text. They also mention that it is impossible to analyze all text aspects in a single research; instead, the study must be confined to a specific dimension. Therefore, the current study is limited to analyzing CSIs taken from the chosen corpus. Each identified CSI is examined in its source and target context to determine how meaning and cultural reference are transferred. The unit of comparative analysis or the coupled pair of the specified translation problems of CSIs in the ST will be analyzed by Nida's (1964) culture categories, and their solutions in the TT will be analyzed by Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation procedures model. Then, the findings will be drawn from Nida's equivalence theory to determine if the Arabic translations achieve equivalency. Furthermore, Venuti's (1995, 1998) theory of domestication and foreignization will be applied to assess the cultural orientation of the translator's choices, whether the translation maintains the foreign cultural identity of the ST (foreignization) or adapts it to suit the cultural norms of the TT (domestication).

E. Study Corpus

The corpus consists of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), published by Oxford University Press, and its Arabic translation by Dr. Ali Hagag titled *الموت وفارس الملك* /al-mawt w fares al-malk/ published in 1987 by the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literature. Soyinka, the first African Nobel laureate in Literature, portrays Yoruba cosmology, rituals, and social values through a linguistically hybrid text combining Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin, and Yoruba. Its rich cultural and linguistic layers make it ideal for examining the translation of African-English elements into Arabic. The play's lasting significance is evident in its 2022 Yoruba-language film adaptation *Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman*, directed by Biyi Bandele and distributed by Netflix.

F. Procedures

The analytical process proceeded in several stages:

1. The first stage involves the identification and extraction of CSIs from both the source and target texts.
2. The second one contains the categorization of these items based on Nida's five cultural categories.
3. During the third stage, the problems encountered in translating these items are determined, helping to define which cultural category is most problematic and why cultural mismatches occur.
4. Then, Vinay and Darbelnet's translation procedures model is applied to determine the strategy used for each CSI.
5. A comparative analysis is conducted to assess the translation equivalence based on Nida's (1964) Equivalence Theory.
6. Venuti's theory of domestication and foreignization is applied as an additional layer of analysis to determine whether they reflect domestication or foreignization.
7. The final step assesses how cultural differences between Africans and Arabs influence the adequacy and acceptability of CSIs' translation, drawing on the theoretical positions of Venuti (1995, 1998) and Toury (1995).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of *Death and the King's Horseman* and its Arabic translation reveals complex challenges in rendering culture-specific items (CSIs) that embody Yoruba cosmology, social hierarchy, and linguistic identity. Guided by Nida's (1964) cultural categories, the findings show that ecological, material, social, religious, and linguistic CSIs each present distinct issues of cultural untranslatability, with varying degrees of success in the translator's strategies. In doing so, the analysis highlights how translation problems and strategies impact cross-cultural communication between African and Arabic cultures. It also explores the broader implications of the study for both the translation of CSIs and postcolonial African literary studies.

A. Assessment of CSIs' Translation

(a). Ecological CSIs

Ecological CSIs reflect natural elements such as flora, fauna, and landscapes, often symbolizing cosmological concepts in Yoruba tradition (Nida, 1946). The study reveals that while the translator recognized the cultural role of ecological culture-specific items (CSIs) in the play, major difficulties arose in conveying their symbolic meanings into Arabic. These challenges stemmed from the environmental and cultural gap between African Yoruba and Arab societies, as well as the absence of equivalent ecological terms in Arabic. Because Yoruba ecological items are deeply tied to spirituality and communal beliefs, their meanings often become reduced or distorted in translation. When ecological and religious CSIs overlapped, the problem of cultural untranslatability intensified. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for culturally sensitive translation strategies to preserve the depth and worldview of Anglophone African texts rooted in indigenous traditions.

Scene 1 in the selected play includes a notable concentration of ecological CSIs, which emphasizes the deep connection between Yoruba cosmology and the natural environment. Expressions like "the great araba" and references to "harvest of yams", "the sap of the plantain", "Oya's riverbed- River", and "the hills of Ilesì" carry profound local and

spiritual significance. When translated into Arabic, many of these terms pose referential absence issues, as they describe environmental features unfamiliar or irrelevant to Arab culture. When translated into Arabic, however, many of these terms encounter referential absence due to unfamiliar environmental contexts, leading to a loss of cultural nuance. Using Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model, the analysis shows that while various translation strategies were applied, they often failed to fully capture the cultural and spiritual nuances of the source text.

TABLE 1
EXAMPLES OF ECOLOGICAL CSIS

Source Text (ST)	Translation (TT)	Transliteration	Category	Procedure	Back Translation
Not-I bird (p. 11)	طائر "لست أنا" (p. 39)	/Tā'ir "Lastu-Anā"/	Ecology	Calque	The "Not-I" bird
a sacred grove (p. 14)	-	-	Ecology	Omission	[Omitted in translation]

The analysis shows that while the translator maintained linguistic accuracy, significant cultural meanings were lost in translating ecological culture-specific items (CSIs) from Yoruba into Arabic. For instance, the "Not-I bird," symbolizing cowardice and avoidance of destiny, was rendered literally as "لست أنا طائر," preserving form but losing its mythological depth. A more effective approach in this case might have been the use of a descriptive equivalent or an explanatory footnote, strategies that could have clarified the cultural role and symbolic function of the reference within its indigenous Yoruba context. This aligns with the findings of Zitouni (2022), who argues that footnotes and descriptive strategies are particularly effective in conveying the meaning of culture-specific terms, as they offer additional details that enhance the reader's understanding. In addition, the "sacred grove" was completely omitted, resulting in the loss of its deep spiritual symbolism as a liminal space between life and death in Yoruba belief.

These examples illustrate the limits of source-oriented strategies and formal equivalence, which prioritize literal fidelity over cultural understanding. As scholars like Zitouni (2022), Bassnett and Lefevere (1990), and Wu (2008) note, effective translation of postcolonial African texts requires approaches such as descriptive equivalents, footnotes, or cultural substitution to preserve the symbolic and spiritual dimensions of the original. Overall, the findings emphasize that linguistic accuracy alone is insufficient; successful translation demands deep intercultural awareness to convey the cultural semiotics of Yoruba ecology and worldview.

(b). Material CSIs

Material CSIs involve tangible cultural artifacts such as clothing, tools, and ritual objects (Nida, 1946). The analysis of material culture-specific items (CSIs) shows that the translator faced significant challenges in conveying the cultural depth of objects like "alari," "Egungun," and "the constable's baton". These items hold ritual and historical meanings beyond their physical functions. Hence, translating them into Arabic required more than lexical transfer; it demanded cultural mediation, which was often limited by the lack of equivalent referents in Arab culture. These problems are also noted by Shousha (2021), who finds that the problem concerning translating material items arises from the absence of equivalents in the TL. The absence of cultural equivalents in Arabic led to strategies such as adaptation, overgeneralization, and cultural reduction, resulting in loss of symbolic meaning. Below are selected examples and their translations:

TABLE 2
EXAMPLES OF MATERIAL CSIS

Source Text (ST)	Translation (TT)	Transliteration	Category	Procedure	Back Translation
Alari (p. 9)	القماش الزاهي (p. 36)	/al-qumāsh az-zāhī/	Material	Adaptations	Bright fabric
Egungun (p. 25)	زي القدامي (p. 65)	/zayy al-qudamā'/	Material	Adaptation	Ancient costume
government knickers (p. 34)	عبدًا لحكومة أجنبية (p. 83)	/eabdan lihukumat ajnabia /	Material	Modulation	slave to a foreign government

The analysis shows that the translator used several strategies—transposition, adaptation, and modulation, to handle material culture-specific items (CSIs), though with limited success. Adaptations such as translating "Alari" as "القماش الزاهي" and "Egungun" as "زي القدامي" made the text accessible but stripped away their ceremonial and ritual meanings. Similarly, the metaphor "government knickers" was rendered as "عبدًا لحكومة أجنبية", effectively conveying political subjugation but losing its humor and sexual undertones.

These examples illustrate how target-oriented domestication, while improving readability, often diminishes the symbolic and ideological depth of postcolonial texts. Overall, the translator's approach leaned heavily toward domestication, prioritizing clarity for Arabic readers but erasing much of the Yoruba culture's distinctiveness, a tendency consistent with Venuti's (1995) critique of domestication. The study concludes that although domestication

facilitates comprehension, translators should combine it with explanatory tools such as descriptive equivalents, footnotes, or annotations to preserve the symbolic richness and cultural authenticity of Yoruba material culture.

(c). *Social CSIs*

Social CSIs reflect social organization, titles, roles, and communal practices. The analysis of social culture-specific items (CSIs) in *Death and the King's Horseman* shows that titles, roles, rituals, and proverbs, such as “Iyaloja”, “Elesin Oba”, and the “Praise-Singer”, are essential in expressing Yoruba social hierarchy and values. However, the translator faced difficulty conveying their layered meanings into Arabic due to the lack of equivalent social references and differing cultural frameworks. For example, translating “Praise-Singer” as “المداح” and “white man’s eunuch” as “الأبيض الخصي خادم الاستعمار” clarified the text for Arabic readers but weakened its symbolic, poetic, and ideological depth. This tendency to replace culturally rich metaphors with explicit explanations made the translation more accessible yet less faithful to the original’s cultural and artistic texture. As Newmark (1988) warns, prioritizing intelligibility can erase vital cultural nuances. The findings affirm that translating social CSIs in postcolonial texts demands intercultural competence, sensitivity to symbolic meaning, and awareness of the audience’s cultural and historical context, echoing the views of Zuo et al. (2025) on the importance of preserving cultural and ideological integrity in translation. Examples demonstrate the translator’s negotiation of cultural meaning:

TABLE 3
EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL CSIS

Source Text (ST)	Translation (TT)	Transliteration	Category	Procedure	Back Translation
Elesin Oba (p. 35)	إيليسين أوبا (p. 85)	/ˈĪlīsīn ˈŪbā/	Social	Borrowing	Elesin Oba
He who goes early takes the best bargains (p. 17)	وعند الصبح ملعبنا (p. 50)	/wa-ˈinda al-subḥ malabuna/	Social	Equivalence	Our playing field is at dawn

The findings reveal that while the translator employed various strategies, borrowing, adaptation, transposition, modulation, and equivalence, to render social culture-specific items (CSIs), these were often inadequate in bridging the cultural divide between Yoruba and Arabic contexts. For instance, “Elesin Oba” was borrowed as “إيليسين أوبا,” maintaining phonetic accuracy but failing to convey the character’s ritual role as the King’s Horseman. A more effective rendering, such as “إيليسين أوبا، فارس الملك,” would have balanced authenticity and clarity. Similarly, translating the proverb “He who goes early takes the best bargains” as “وعند الصبح ملعبنا” altered its meaning from encouragement to confrontation. The Prophetic saying “بورك لأمتي في بكورها” would have more effectively captured its moral intent. These examples confirm, as noted by Zitouni (2022), Baker (2011), and Aixela (1996), that translating social CSIs often requires multiple strategies to account for cultural and contextual nuances.

Overall, the translation demonstrates a strong tendency toward domestication, prioritizing readability and accessibility for Arabic readers at the expense of Yoruba cultural depth. This supports Venuti’s (1995) view that domestication, while producing fluent texts, can erase the foreignness and sociocultural richness of the original, resulting in translations that are smooth yet culturally diminished.

(d). *Religious CSIs*

Religious culture-specific items (CSIs), as defined by Nida (1964), refer to elements rooted in the sacred beliefs, rituals, and spiritual practices of a given culture. In Soyinka’s play, religion is inseparable from the social, political, and moral structures of Yoruba life, serving as a fundamental element shaping every aspect of communal life. The analysis reveals that religious CSIs in *Death and the King's Horseman* are central to the play’s thematic and symbolic framework, reflecting Yoruba cosmology, ritual duties, and spiritual hierarchies. However, these items present serious translation challenges due to the theological gap between Yoruba polytheistic beliefs and Arabic monotheism. Terms such as “Esu”, “Ifa”, and “Osanyin”, as well as metaphors like “the other market” and “seven-way crossroads”, were frequently omitted or generalized in the Arabic translation, leading to semantic loss and a weakening of the text’s spiritual dimension. This difficulty echoes Alhammad (2011), Shousha (2021), Habtoor and Al-Qahtani (2018), and Khammyseh (2015), who all note that translating religious expressions between belief systems often results in untranslatability due to a lack of equivalents and the sacred sensitivity of such terms. Overall, the findings suggest that translating Yoruba religious CSIs demands not only linguistic skill but also deep theological and cultural awareness to preserve their symbolic and spiritual meanings across cultural boundaries.

TABLE 4
EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS CSIS

Source Text (ST)	Translation (TT)	Transliteration	Category	Procedure	Back Translation
Ifawomi (p. 12)	إفاومي (p. 42)	/ʾĪfāwmī/	Religious	Borrowing	Ifawomi
Seven-way crossroads (p. 42)	الطريق ذا الممرات السبعة (p. 98)	/al-tarīq dhā al-mamarrāt al-sabʿa/	Ecology/religious	Calque	road with seven lanes
head and heart of the favourite of the gods (p. 74)	الرأس والقلب المحبين إلى الآلهة (p. 161)	/al-raʿs wa al-qalb al-muḥabbabayn ilā al-āliha/	Religious	Literal Translation	The head and heart beloved by the gods
Esu-harassed day (p. 9)	هذا هو النهار (p. 36)	/hādḥā huwa al-nahār/	Religious	Modulation	This is the day
Ifa spoke no more that day (p. 12)	-	-	Religious	Omission	[Omitted in translation]

The findings demonstrate that the translator's handling of religious culture-specific items (CSIs) reflects both a commitment to cultural authenticity and the inherent difficulty of bridging profound theological and conceptual divides. The translator primarily employed direct, source-oriented strategies, borrowing, literal translation, and calquing, such as rendering "Ifawomi" as "إفاومي" and "seven-way crossroads" as "الطريق ذا الممرات السبعة". While these methods preserved phonological and structural integrity, they often failed to communicate the deeper spiritual or symbolic meanings to Arabic readers unfamiliar with Yoruba cosmology. Literal renderings like "الرأس والقلب المحبين إلى الآلهة" risk theological friction within a monotheistic framework, while omissions of items like "Esu" and "Ifa" resulted in partial loss of meaning but helped avoid potential misinterpretation or cultural distortion.

Overall, the translator's approach reflects a tendency toward foreignization, consistent with Venuti's (1995) theory that such strategies resist the domestication of culturally foreign concepts. This method successfully preserves the text's Yoruba religious identity but simultaneously creates conceptual opacity and limits accessibility for target readers. To mitigate this, the findings suggest supplementing foreignized renderings with glosses, paratextual notes, or minimal explanations, as recommended by Sameer and Majeed (2019), to balance fidelity and comprehension. In summary, while the translation maintained surface fluency and cultural integrity, it often fell short in conveying the intricate symbolic, theological, and ritual dimensions of Yoruba spirituality to an Arabic audience.

(e). Linguistic CSIs

Linguistic CSIs include proverbs, chants, and oral idioms that carry cultural wisdom. The study reveals that linguistic CSIs in *Death and the King's Horseman*, such as idioms, Pidgin expressions, and Yoruba chants, were difficult to translate due to their deep cultural and oral roots. Many lost their rhythm, tone, and cultural meaning in Arabic, weakening the text's authenticity and expressive power. This supports Zahrawi's (2018) view that figurative and stylistic language is central to preserving a text's cultural identity, and its loss in translation diminishes the author's voice and the cultural essence of the original work.

TABLE 5
EXAMPLES OF LINGUISTIC CSIS

Source Text (ST)	Translation (TT)	Transliteration	Category	Procedure	Back Translation
Ale le le, awo mi lo (p. 41)	ترانيم النسوة الجنائزية (p. 97)	/tarānīm al-niswāh al-janāʾiziyyah/	Linguistic	Adaptation	Funeral chants of the women
Our world is tumbling in the void of stranger (p. 75)	Our world now flounders in the void of strangers (p. 162)	/ʾālamunā al-ān yatakhabbat fī farāgh al-ghurabāʾ/	Linguistic/Social	Literal Translation	Our world now flounders in the void of strangers

The findings show that the translator used strategies such as adaptation, modulation, and equivalence to reduce cultural and stylistic loss while maintaining fluency for Arabic readers. However, this domestication-oriented approach often led to the dilution of Yoruba orality and linguistic richness. For instance, the chant "Ale le le, awo mi lo" was adapted as "ترانيم النسوة الجنائزية", preserving its emotional tone but losing its performative and cultural essence. Similarly, literal translations like "عالمنا الآن يتخبط في فراغ الغرباء" retained meaning but not cultural depth. Overall, the translation favored accessibility over authenticity, resulting in a smooth yet culturally muted text. The study therefore recommends a more balanced approach that combines domestication with selective retention of Yoruba terms or explanatory notes to preserve the text's linguistic and cultural vitality.

B. Adequacy and Acceptability of CSIs' Translation

This section examines how cultural differences between African and Arab contexts influence the translation of culture-specific items (CSIs) in *Death and the King's Horseman*. Drawing on the frameworks of Venuti (1995) and Toury (1995), this analysis highlights the translator's negotiation between maintaining cultural fidelity (adequacy) and ensuring accessibility and acceptance (acceptability) in the target culture. The findings of this study indicate that cultural differences were a decisive factor shaping both the adequacy and acceptability of CSIs' translations, reflecting the translator's role as a cultural mediator.

(a). Adequacy: Source-Oriented Strategies

Adequacy refers to the extent to which a translation remains faithful to the source text's cultural, linguistic, and stylistic norms (Toury, 1995). In translating Soyinka's play, source-oriented strategies, such as borrowing, calque, and literal translation, were employed to preserve the distinctive features of Yoruba culture. These strategies align with Venuti's (1995) concept of foreignization and Nida's (1964) formal equivalence, emphasizing cultural fidelity over immediate readability.

For example, the Yoruba spiritual title "Ifawomi" is retained as *إيفومي* /'Īfāwmī/ in Arabic, maintaining its cultural and religious depth. Similarly, "Praise-Singer" is translated literally as *المداح* /al-maddāḥ/, conveying the functional role but lacking the ritualistic and communal significance inherent in Yoruba tradition. These examples illustrate how source-oriented strategies ensure the preservation of cultural uniqueness, even when such fidelity may challenge Arab readers unfamiliar with Yoruba cosmology. However, it is noted that such strategies could reduce accessibility, sometimes appearing obscure or culturally distant to readers unfamiliar with African spiritual beliefs.

(b). Acceptability: Target-Oriented Strategies

Acceptability concerns the extent to which a translation conforms to the linguistic, cultural, and stylistic norms of the target culture (Toury, 1995). To enhance accessibility for Arab readers, target-oriented strategies, including modulation, equivalence, and adaptation, were used. These align with Venuti's (1995) domestication and Nida's (1964) dynamic equivalence, prioritizing readability and cultural resonance over strict adherence to the source text.

Examples include the translation of the CSI "government knickers" into *عبداً لحكومة أجنبية*, clarifying political subjugation for Arab readers, and the Yoruba chant "Ale le le, awo mi lo" rendered as *ترانيم النسوة الجنائزية*, conveying the ceremonial function while omitting rhythmic and linguistic nuances. Such strategies improve comprehension and engagement but may reduce the symbolic depth and spiritual specificity of the original text. It is obvious that these strategies for enhancing readability, though some consider them to oversimplify the cultural richness of the original.

(c). Cultural Influence on Translation Choices

The interplay between adequacy and acceptability reflects the broader influence of cultural differences on translation decisions. CSIs deeply embedded in Yoruba cosmology, such as ancestral worship, ritual suicide, and divination, often conflicted with Arab religious and cultural norms. The translator's choices were therefore guided by the CSI's type, degree of foreignness, and communicative function, navigating between source-oriented strategies to maintain authenticity and target-oriented strategies to enhance accessibility.

In addition, integrating Nida's (1964) equivalence theory provides an additional lens for understanding these decisions. Formal equivalence corresponds with source-oriented strategies and foreignization, emphasizing fidelity to the source text, while dynamic equivalence aligns with target-oriented strategies and domestication, prioritizing natural, culturally intelligible expression in the target language. Together, these frameworks illustrate that successful translation of CSIs involves strategic negotiation between cultural preservation and communicative clarity.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the translation of *Death and the King's Horseman* required a continuous balancing act: preserving Yoruba cultural identity while ensuring the text's readability and acceptability for Arab audiences. The translator's dual orientation, employing both source- and target-oriented procedures, was shaped by cultural and ideological considerations, ultimately influencing the adequacy and acceptability of CSIs and highlighting the translator's pivotal role as a mediator of cross-cultural meaning.

V. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the translation of culture-specific items (CSIs) from African-English into Arabic in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, emphasizing the complex interplay between linguistic fidelity and cultural negotiation. The findings demonstrate that ecological, material, social, religious, and linguistic CSIs posed significant challenges for the translator due to their deep embedding in Yoruba cultural, ritualistic, and cosmological frameworks, as well as the absence of direct equivalents in Arabic. While domestication strategies, such as modulation, equivalence, adaptation, and transposition, facilitated fluency and comprehension for Arab readers, they often led to a partial loss of cultural depth, symbolic meaning, and the nuanced social and spiritual dimensions of the original text. Conversely, source-oriented foreignization strategies, including borrowing, calque, and literal translation, successfully preserved cultural specificity and the foreignness of the source text, yet sometimes rendered the text less accessible to readers unfamiliar with African traditions. The study highlights that relying exclusively on either approach is insufficient; a

more effective strategy involves a balanced, hybrid methodology that combines foreignization with explanatory devices, such as glosses, footnotes, or descriptive equivalence, to retain cultural authenticity while maintaining readability and interpretive clarity. By applying and integrating Nida's (1964) equivalence theory and culture categories, Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation procedures, and Venuti's (1995) domestication/foreignization model, the study presents a comprehensive analytical framework for evaluating CSI translation across culturally distant contexts. This research not only provides a detailed case study of an Anglophone African play translated into Arabic but also illuminates the translator's role as a cultural mediator navigating ideological, linguistic, and social asymmetries. Ultimately, the study underscores that translation is both a linguistic and cultural negotiation, advocating for heightened cultural sensitivity, theoretical flexibility, and methodological innovation in the translation of African postcolonial literature. It contributes to scholarly debates in translation studies, postcolonial literature, and intercultural communication, while offering practical insights and guidelines for translators, educators, and policymakers seeking to bridge significant cultural and linguistic gaps.

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Politeness Strategies in Interrogation Speech Acts: A Translation Case Study of *A Murder Is Announced*

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Abstract—This study investigated the translation of illocutionary acts and politeness strategies within interrogation speech events. It uses Agatha Christie's novel *A Murder Is Announced* and its Indonesian translation as a case study. The research addresses a gap in existing literature, which primarily focuses on politeness in formulaic language and lacks a detailed analysis of more complex, context-driven speech acts like interrogations. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the study utilizes document analysis and focus group discussions to examine how speech acts are used and how politeness strategies are maintained or shifted in translation. The research assesses translation quality based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The findings reveal that the most frequent interrogation purpose is confirming questions, statements, and evidence, followed by obtaining information. The dominant speech act is the representative, while the directive speech act, with commands, asking, and advice, is primarily used for suppressing suspects. Across most speech events, the bald-on-record politeness strategy is dominant, reflecting a preference for direct communication. The study also found that while many illocutionary acts and politeness strategies are preserved, some shifts occur, particularly from negative politeness to bald-on-record, due to cultural differences. These shifts, often caused by discursive creation and reduction techniques, can negatively impact translation quality by reducing accuracy and acceptability.

Index Terms—illocutionary acts, politeness strategies, interrogation speech events, quality translation, pragmatics

I. INTRODUCTION

When interrogating criminals, police officers or detectives use their power to obtain information needed for the investigation. Here, language becomes a strategic weapon shaped by intention, psychological pressure, and most importantly, politeness. As Brown and Levinson (1987) argue, politeness is a universal phenomenon embedded in every interaction, helping speakers navigate social hierarchies, save face, and negotiate relationships where information must be extracted without triggering resistance. Therefore, politeness strategies aim to maintain the face of the interlocutors and compliance, truth-telling, and cooperation.

However, when it comes to translation, translators do not only convert one language to another, but they also bridge two different cultures so that they are understandable to the target readers. Their task is to bridge communication gaps and ensure that the intended meaning of the original message resonates with target readers. As Catford (1965) posited, translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language; achieving this equivalence beyond surface-level substitution demands a deep understanding, especially when dealing with interrogation. These cultural issues give rise to linguistic phenomena in politeness strategy translation concerning the social norms and structure. Thus, to effectively maintain politeness, speakers must possess the ability to utilize appropriate politeness strategies.

Brown and Levinson (1987) maintain that politeness is a fundamental aspect of pragmatics, as it is a universal phenomenon in language use within social contexts. Gudjonsson (2003) states that interrogation, when applied in the context of police investigations, inherently involves various forms of questioning directed at witnesses, victims, informants, or suspects of a crime. From this perspective, an interrogation speech event can be defined as a communicative act to obtain information through questions and/or confirmations. These events often show the speaker's domination over

the interlocutors. Interrogative speech events follow stages showing the process of how information is gathered. These can also be found in literary works, particularly in crime novels.

Agatha Christie is a renowned author who has published at least 78 crime novels, many of which have become legendary over time. Her works are frequently reprinted in new editions and have been adapted into highly successful films. As literary works, novels present storylines and characters whose interactions form the backbone of the narrative. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate Christie's books since they show the presence of interrogation speech events to gather information and solve criminal cases. Of course, these interrogations are crucial since they reflect the storyline of how a mystery is solved. Within these interrogation events, the characters often employ politeness strategies to maintain social norms while eliciting necessary information. When such speech events are translated from English into Indonesian, they offer a fascinating study area due to differences in language, culture, and the target audience's interpretation compared to the source language. In the narrative structure of a novel, every utterance made by the characters is always embedded within a specific context that determines its meaning. Consequently, speech acts within interrogation events cannot be seen in isolation but must be understood in their contextual framework.

A considerable body of research has examined the translation of politeness strategies across languages and cultures, reflecting the growing interest in how linguistic politeness is conveyed, adapted, or shifted in translation. Some researchers, like Jakobsson (2016) and Aapakallio (2021), have investigated the use of politeness markers in honorific speech, particularly in translating Japanese into English and Finnish. The result shows notable differences in how politeness is realized across these three languages, especially given Japanese's deeply ingrained system of honorifics. Similarly, Ethelb (2015) and Chunli et al. (2021) examined the translation of politeness in greetings. These studies are valuable in understanding how conventional expressions of politeness are rendered in different cultural contexts. However, these studies are limited to comparing politeness markers between the source and target language without exploring their function. Their focuses are primarily on formulaic language and do not explore more complex or context-driven speech acts such as interrogations.

Further research by Moradi and Jabbari (2015), Sembiring (2016), Afzali (2017), Akbari and Shahnazari (2017), Alavidze (2018), Abudayeh and Dubbati (2020), and Sariaslan and İşısağ (2020) investigated the translation of politeness strategies across various cultures, including English, Italian, and Middle Eastern (particularly Saudi Arabian) contexts. Moreover, these studies examined the reflected politeness strategies in international media. They showed the way Donald Trump's speeches are reported to Middle Eastern audiences. The findings highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need to adapt politeness norms to align with the expectations of the target language audience. Meanwhile, research by Mubin (2015), Ardi et al. (2016), Alooja et al. (2018), Sukaesih et al. (2019), Havid et al. (2020), Sariaslan and İşısağ (2020), Lestari and Nababan (2021), Puruhito et al. (2022), and Ismiyati et al. (2024) focused on the translation of politeness strategies within specific speech events, such as prohibition, suggestion, invitation, and commands. Although these studies contribute to our understanding of how politeness is realized in particular social contexts, they do not address the translation of illocutionary acts in more nuanced or layered dialogue structures. Additionally, they have yet to explore the patterns of translation relationships in speech events, such as interrogations, that have a significant potential to influence how politeness strategies are interpreted and rendered in the target language. However, after reviewing all of these studies, some gaps still remain.

Distinguished from other studies, this research is a holistic investigation of politeness strategies used in interrogation speech events and how they are translated into Indonesian by analyzing translation techniques. By examining selected dialogues from both the source and target texts, this research also investigates the shifts in politeness strategies and their impact on translation quality in the forms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Exploring this phenomenon, the study investigates politeness strategy translation on interrogative speech events done by the speakers. Moreover, interrogation is not limited to questioning. It often includes confirmations, clarifications, and instructions by or to participants to gather information. By situating the analysis within these rich and complex speech events, this study offers insights into the pragmatic shifts that occur in translation and the translation quality.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Utterances spoken by a speaker express a specific intention understood by the listener. These are called speech acts, and they form a fundamental component of speech events within broader speech situations. Each speech event is governed by social and linguistic norms that guide the speaker's behavior and the listener's interpretation of the utterance. According to Austin (1962), speech acts are not merely statements but performative actions. In speaking, the speaker is simultaneously doing something. Austin categorizes speech acts into three types: (1) locutionary acts, which involve producing a meaningful utterance; (2) illocutionary acts, where the speaker aims to make the listener do or understand something, such as asserting, questioning, or requesting; and (3) perlocutionary acts, which refer to the effect or response that the speaker's utterance has on the listener. Austin's foundational theory was later expanded by Searle (1976), who refined the classification of speech acts into five categories: representatives (asserting or describing a state of affairs), directives (attempting to get the listener to do something), commissives (committing the speaker to a future action), expressives (expressing psychological states or emotions), and declaratives (utterances that bring about a change in reality, such as resigning or declaring war).

Chaer and Leonie (1995) define a speech event as a linguistic interaction that occurs through one or more forms of speech between two parties—the speaker and the interlocutor—pursuing a single communicative purpose within a specific time, place, and context. Within this framework, interrogation can be understood as a specialized form of speech event. Interrogation, according to Soesilo (1984), refers to obtaining information from individuals, such as suspects or witnesses, to solve a criminal case within formal legal settings. From these perspectives, an interrogative speech event can be defined as a structured interaction between investigators and related parties—such as suspects, witnesses, and victims—to gather clues, information, and evidence related to a criminal case. In the present study, various types of interrogation speech events have been identified, including (1) eliciting information, (2) confirming questions or answers, (3) presenting statements by all parties involved, (4) asking about the situation or sequence of events, (5) confirming suspicions, accusations, or legal violations, (6) providing additional information, (7) applying pressure to the interlocutor, and (8) issuing denials.

When obtaining such information, some strategies are implied to do it well. One of them is politeness. Politeness strategies are used to demonstrate respect to the interlocutor. Brown and Levinson proposed the most influential politeness theories centered on face, or an individual's public self-image. Their theory is grounded in the principles of rationality and face-saving, where speakers strategically manage interactions to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose four main politeness strategies: (1) bald-on-record, used to deliver a direct message without mitigation; (2) positive politeness, which appeals to the hearer's desire for approval and inclusion; (3) negative politeness, which shows deference and respects the hearer's wish not to be imposed upon; and (4) off-record, where the speaker's intention is implied rather than explicitly stated, allowing room for interpretation. These strategies are often employed in interrogative contexts, where maintaining cooperation while avoiding face-threatening acts is crucial.

In translation studies, the application of politeness strategies becomes particularly significant, as translators must navigate both linguistic and cultural nuances to preserve the originality of the source text. Some translation scholars have defined other perspectives and definitions regarding the nature and process of translation, reflecting a range of theoretical orientations. Catford (1965) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language." He highlights a formalist approach, emphasizing the substitution of linguistic forms between the source and target languages to achieve textual equivalence.

Nida and Taber (1982) offer a more dynamic view, stating that "translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." This definition highlights the importance of conveying the meaning of the source text as naturally and accurately as possible in the target language, with attention to both semantic content and stylistic form. Larson (1984) defines translation as the process of converting meaning from one form into another, whether from the source language into the target language or vice versa. This approach stresses the transformation of meaning over the preservation of specific linguistic structures. Newmark (1988) frames translation as the act of conveying the message of the source text into the target language by the original author's intent. His emphasis is on fidelity to the message and communicative purpose behind the text. Finally, Baker (2018) describes translation as "a process of intercultural communication, whose product is a text which is capable of functioning appropriately in specific situations and contexts of use." This view highlights the functional and cultural dimensions of translation, stressing that a successful translation must not only be accurate but also contextually appropriate for its intended audience. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the theoretical basis of translation, particularly in contexts where cultural and pragmatic factors such as politeness strategies play a significant role in shaping meaning across languages. For that reason, the way to know whether a translation is good or bad is by assessing the translation quality.

Nababan et al. (2012) have proposed an instrument to assess the translation quality regarding accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Their instrument assesses each indicator with three parameters: a value of three stands for the high level, two stands for the middle level, and one stands for the lowest level. The translation is evaluated by investigating each sentence's accuracy, acceptability, and readability. Each sentence must be analyzed by examining the translation techniques when assessing the translation quality. After revisiting the definition of translation techniques from several scholars, Molina and Albir (2002) state that strategies are how the translator deals with the translation process, and translation techniques affect the results. In other words, translation techniques reflect the decision made by a translator. Translation techniques can be analyzed by comparing the translation with the original. A technique can only be judged by evaluating particular contexts (Molina & Albir, 2002).

There are 18 translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002): established equivalence, adaptation, amplification (addition, explicitation, footnotes), borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation. However, when the translation process is done, the translation can sometimes shift forms and meaning when seeking equivalence. As Baker (2018) states, equivalence works from the word level, above the word level, at the grammatical level, at the textual level, and beyond equivalence. A translation shifts since a form, sentence, or expression is hard to transfer to the source text. However, rather than shifting the grammatical level, which must shift because of the adjustment to Indonesian grammatical rules, shifting in politeness strategy translation deals with shifting meaning.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative-descriptive research design, employing a purposive sampling technique. This type of sampling technique aims to determine data and data sources based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives (Santosa, 2021). Therefore, in selecting the document as one of the data sources, that is, Agatha Christie's novel *A Murder Is Announced*, the researchers referred to the following criteria: (1) it features a storyline involving the interrogation of various individuals (e.g., witnesses and suspects) to gather investigative information; (2) it is authored by a well-known and widely recognized writer in the crime fiction genre; and (3) it enjoys popularity among target language readers. The second data source comprises raters or evaluators selected based on the conditions that they are linguists, that they have expertise in translation studies, and that they are willing to participate in the study.

The data examined in this research are divided into two categories: linguistic data and translation data. The linguistic data consist of all instances of politeness strategies identified in interrogation speech events. The translation data, on the other hand, involves the translation techniques by Molina and Albir (2002), shifts, and translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The instrument used to assess the translation quality is proposed by Nababan et al. (2012). Data collection was conducted through document analysis and focus group discussions (FGDs). Document analysis focused on extracting relevant politeness strategies and their translations from the selected text. After document analysis was done, FGDs were conducted with three raters and the researchers to classify the politeness strategy used in both the source text and the target text to investigate the shift. According to Santosa (2021), engaging with informants in discussions serves as a means to construct meaningful interpretations of the phenomena under investigation.

The data were analyzed using four levels of analysis as outlined by Spradley (1980) and Santosa (2017), namely (1) Domain Analysis, which involved classifying the politeness strategies and their translation based on the staging and translation technique analysis; (2) Taxonomic Analysis, which focused on translation shifts and the translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability; (3) Componential Analysis, which combined the findings of domain and taxonomic analyses to uncover emerging patterns in the data; and (4) Cultural Theme Analysis, which contextualized these patterns within broader cultural and communicative phenomena.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

After analyzing and drawing patterns from the componential analysis, researchers found several results regarding interrogation speech events, politeness strategies, translation techniques, shifts, and translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The result shows seven purposes in interrogation by the character in *A Murder Is Announced*, as illustrated in Figure 1.

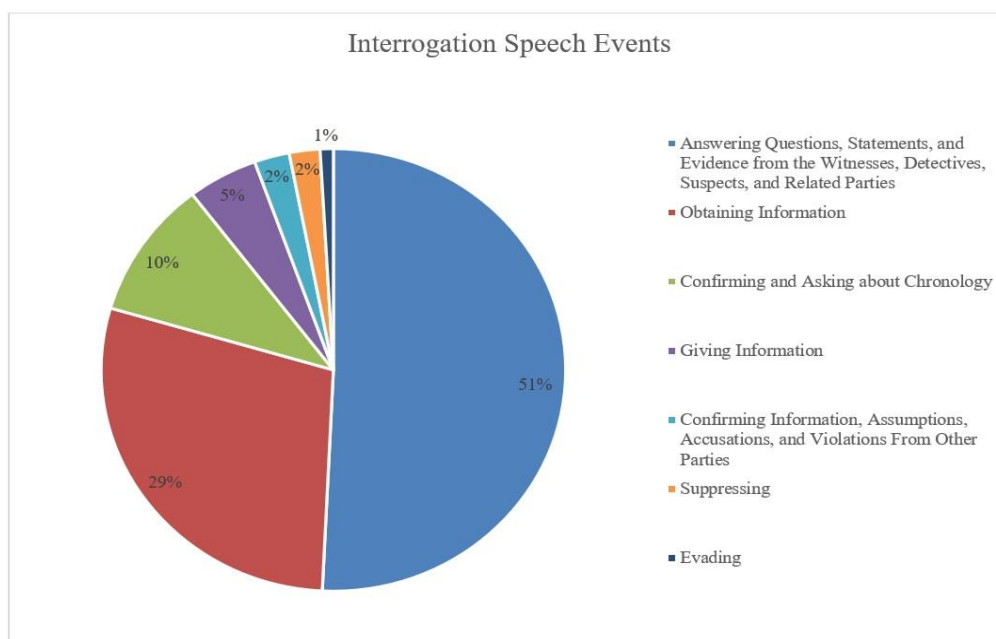


Figure 1. Interrogation Speech Events

Based on 327 data points found through this research, as illustrated in the diagram, interrogation was primarily used to confirm questions, statements, and evidence from witnesses, detectives, suspects, and other parties, followed by the collection of additional information. Soesilo (1984) states that interrogation is an act of investigating a case by gathering information from others. That is the reason why confirming statements and evidence is what mostly happened in *A Murder Is Announced*. In addition, each interrogation speech event is expressed through different politeness strategies, translation techniques, shifts, and translation quality, as explained below.

A. Answering Questions, Statements, and Evidence From the Witnesses, Detectives, Suspects, and Related Parties

The pattern shows that this speech event mostly happened when interrogation was conducted. Based on the results, the most often used speech act in this speech event was representative speech acts with statement as a specific function. This is followed by directive speech acts with specific sub-functions: asking (the dominant one), requesting, and commanding, as well as expressive speech acts with anger and thanking functions. Representative speech acts played a significant role since the suspects and witnesses intend to describe people or events or verify the question asked by the detectives. Representative speech acts (or, here, assertive speech acts) are used to utter facts, describe or report something, and so on. However, the directive speech acts used by the speaker in this novel aim to obtain verbal information from the witnesses and suspects, and the number of expressive speech acts with anger and thanking functions found in these speech events reflect the emotions of both the witnesses and the suspects while they are being interrogated.

A number of studies have explored the contribution of speech acts in various circumstances. In legal and investigative contexts, Cotterill (2003) found that assertive and directive (asking) speech acts dominate mostly. Directive speech acts, particularly asking functions, used by lawyers, judges, and detectives, aim to control the flow of information, while the people being questioned use representative speech acts to provide it. In addition, the present study is also aligned with the study conducted by Vidhiasi et al. (2023), showing that the dominance of directive, representative, and expressive speech acts is a consistent pattern in institutional discourse.

Additionally, the relationship between speech acts and politeness strategies was also analyzed. The use of bald-on-record strategies were found to be more dominant than other strategies, such as negative and positive politeness strategies. Concerning the concept of “face,” Brown and Levinson (1987) argued the use of bald-on-record strategies in this context are aligned with face since they perform a clear communication without any mitigation. Ardi et al. (2020) add that the bald-on-record strategies found in the previous research directly perform the illocutionary act without any effort to minimize the threat to the hearer’s face. However, a small number of negative and positive politeness strategies were also found, because negative politeness is oriented toward the hearer’s negative face, aiming to respect their autonomy and freedom from imposition, while positive politeness is a strategy oriented toward the hearer’s positive face, aiming to make them feel liked, admired, and part of the group (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ardi et al., 2020).

The translation quality of this speech event remained good, reaching a score of 2.89 out of 3 with detailed scores of 2.86 for accuracy, 2.83 for acceptability, and 2.99 for readability. The reason for the high score of the translation quality is the use of established equivalence, followed by other techniques, including variation, explicitation, modulation, implicitation, paraphrase, compensation, generalization, and transposition techniques. These techniques, but especially established equivalence, positively contribute to enhancing the translation quality. Some studies conducted by Ardi et al. (2020) and Jamal et al. (2024) have proven that established equivalence techniques contribute positively to maintaining all translation quality, which also highlights its role in achieving accurate and functional translation (Molina & Albir, 2002). However, Ardi et al. (2020), Jamal et al. (2024), and Sugiharti et al. (2022) found that several techniques that have a positive impact on accuracy (explicitation, implicitation, and modulation) lead to decreasing accuracy rather than maintaining it. This happens as a result of the explicitation possibly shifting politeness strategies by changing the identity marker “you” to “ayah” to adjust to Indonesian culture. Addressing “you” to parents is considered impolite in Indonesian culture. The shift in politeness strategies is supposed to decrease the accuracy. Moreover, the techniques that are used to provide a destructive impact on accuracy are discursive creation, reduction, literal translation, and deletion. The same result was also found by Ardi et al. (2020), Jamal et al. (2024), Puruhito et al. (2022), and Abudayeh and Dubbati (2020). The use of discursive creation here not only decreases the meaning but also shifts the politeness from representative speech acts to directive speech acts and negative hedging to positive politeness. Meanwhile, deletion (omission) and reduction drop the message from source text to target text.

B. Obtaining Information

The speech acts under this speech event encompass directive (e.g., asking, commanding, and requesting), representational (statement), and expressive (e.g., expressing dislike) illocutionary acts. The functions reflect the nature of obtaining information, which requires both probing questions and reactions. However, directive speech acts are used in different cases to encourage students’ participation, remind, command, plead, and clarify (Suryandani & Budasi, 2021; Hermansyah et al., 2022; Kamal et al., 2023). Therefore, while obtaining information, directives are intended to get the hearer to do something, such as providing information to the police officers. A wide array of politeness strategies is also observed, including bald-on-record, negative politeness (hedging, questioning, minimizing the imposition), and positive politeness (group markers). Bald-on-record dominates once again, followed by negative politeness. In line with the results, negative politeness, which involves using hedges and indirect questions, is employed to save someone’s face, build rapport, and elicit reliable testimony in investigative and courtroom interactions (Burgo, 2022). It provides institutional pressure while maintaining witness autonomy. Unlike these events, various strategies, including bald-on-record, negative politeness (hedges, indirect requests), positive politeness, and off-record strategies, are employed to strike a balance between professionalism and assertiveness in media interrogation (Malik & Rehman, 2025).

The translation quality of politeness strategies in obtaining information remains good, with an overall score of 2.71. The score of accuracy has failed to reach a perfect score since the introduction of discursive creation and reduction. The reduction technique applied changed the politeness strategy from hedging to bald-on-record, making the utterance more

direct in the target text. In contrast, the source text exhibits negative politeness, which serves to maintain a close relationship between the speaker and interlocutor. Moreover, Ardi et al. (2018) and Sugiharti et al. (2022) found that reducing a specific element in the target text shifts the politeness strategies from indirect to direct commands.

Additionally, acceptability reaches a score of 2.5, and readability is 2.90. Based on the result, the acceptability does not seem to remain good, as the translator applied a pure borrowing technique, which brings the term from the source text (English) into the target text (Indonesian). Some pure borrowing techniques are not acceptable in Indonesian when it comes to terms that are not names. It not only affects acceptability but also readability, since it makes the target readers struggle to understand terms that sound unfamiliar to them. However, they did not affect the shift. Even so, Jamal et al. (2024) found that the paraphrase technique reduces acceptability when it flattens complex politeness expressions into overly simplified or generalized sentences.

C. Confirming and Asking About Chronology

In the context of interrogation speech events involving confirmation and inquiry about chronology, the results indicate a consistent use of representative illocutionary acts, particularly in the form of statements. Witnesses or suspects typically deploy these to provide detailed accounts of a sequence of events. The function of such speech aligns with Searle's (1976) conceptualization of illocutionary acts as goal-oriented verbal action where language is used not merely to inform but to perform a communicative function with intentionality.

Speaking of speech function, the politeness strategy most frequently employed was bald on record, reflecting a direct communication that leads to unambiguousness and is often devoid of mitigating devices. The institutional context of interrogation prioritizes clarity, brevity, and assertiveness, particularly in criminal cases. In addition, the study conducted by Farinde et al. (2021) shows similar patterns in the context of the Nigerian police and interrogations. According to Farinde et al. (2021), Nigerian police present a high frequency of bald-on-record and restricted WH-questions to assert institutional authority and control information flow. After comparing the results of this study to others, it underlines the institutional need for control, efficiency, and procedural clarity.

Furthermore, the result also presented nine translation techniques, namely established equivalence, pure borrowing, compensation, variation, particularization, implicitation, modulation, and paraphrase. The translation techniques found through this research maintain the translation well, reaching an overall score of 2.89 out of 3. This is because these techniques do not make any translation shift but maintain the unfamiliar terms by borrowing them from the source text. This results in a translation that is unfamiliar in Indonesian; however, it is not confusing for the target readers because the borrowed terms are familiar to them. Therefore, the overall quality cannot reach the perfect score of 3. Regarding the score, according to the findings, the translators tended to use established equivalency, which indicates that they were able to keep the meaning consistent with the context, meaning the translation is very likely to be accurate (Molina & Albir, 2002). Furthermore, Nababan (2008) also adds that translation as a product and a communication tool must not only be accurate but also be natural and easily understood by the target readers. The high frequency of the established equivalence in this translation shows that the translator maintains all indicators of translation quality (Ardi et al., 2020; Puruhito et al., 2022; Jamal et al., 2024). However, this result is also different from the result of Ardi et al. (2018). The modulation technique found in present research preserves the accuracy; meanwhile, Ardi et al. changed the illocution. This happened because modulation can have 11 changes: abstract to concrete, cause to effect, manner to result, geographic changes, symbolic changes, active to passive, part to whole, point of view changes, positive to negative, space to time, and interval to limit. In the example of Ardi et al., it was found that modulation techniques changed the focus, which shifted the illocutionary from weak obligation to strong obligation by modulating *need* into *harus* (must). Thus, it affected the accuracy.

In contrast, the present study finds that modulation techniques do not shift any quality since this technique is used to achieve naturalness in the target language, as *something* and *sedikit* in *How many people make up your household here and something about them* become *Berapa jumlah orang yang tinggal di sini dan sedikit tentang latar belakang mereka*, which does not shift any politeness strategy.

D. Giving Information

In giving information, speakers dominantly employ representative illocutionary acts, as these are intended to assert or verify the truth of a proposition. Based on the storyline, this function aligns with Soesilo's (1984) assertion that interrogation is conducted to obtain information through listening to and verifying the statements of suspects and witnesses. As Searle (1976) explains, a representative illocutionary act is characterized by the speaker's commitment to the truth of their utterance.

In the analyzed speech events, three politeness strategies were identified as expressing this illocutionary act: (1) bald-on-record, (2) hedging, and (3) in-group identity markers. Among these, the bald-on-record strategy was the most frequently used. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy prioritizes communicative efficiency and directness, which corresponds with both the findings of this study and those reported by Jamal et al. (2024). Conversely, hedging and the use of in-group identity markers were rarely observed in interrogative contexts during interviews. Hedging, classified as a negative politeness strategy, functions to minimize imposition on the interlocutor's freedom, which consequently reduces the illocutionary force of the speech act. In contrast, in-group identity markers, associated with positive politeness, aim to reinforce solidarity and maintain social relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However,

during interrogation, the parties—represented in the novel as suspects and witnesses—provide the information directly, rather than expressing uncertainty or solidarity to preserve effective communication. However, as suspects and witnesses are being interviewed by the police officers and detectives, they can sometimes be uncertain about their information. As a result, the present study also found the use of hedges. Previous study has also demonstrated that hedges signal uncertainty and lack of commitment to the truth of the proposition (Hyland, 2008). Thus, both hedging and in-group identity markers are used sparingly, as they would undermine the authoritative stance required to confirm statements and evidence in interrogation scenarios.

In terms of translation quality—evaluated through the indicators of accuracy, acceptability, and readability—the overall quality is well-maintained, with an average score of 2.94 out of 3. There can be no perfect score here because of the translation techniques employed to transfer the utterances, which included established equivalence, explication, pure borrowing, paraphrase, impication, compensation, variation, generalization, modulation, discursive creation, and transposition. Moreover, the translation quality also did not achieve a perfect score of 3 due to the application of specific techniques that negatively impact individual indicators. Accuracy, for instance, is slightly reduced to a score of 2.96 out of 3 because the translator used discursive creation in rendering some bald-on-record strategies. This approach resulted in the partial omission of meaning in the target text. The results of Ardi et al. (2018) and Jamal et al. (2024) also found that discursive creation techniques can reduce the meaning but, in some cases, do not change the strategy. Nevertheless, this technique did not result in any shift of the politeness strategies, and thus the intended pragmatic function of the utterances was preserved. Acceptability is also affected, particularly by the occasional use of *literal translation*, which renders some expressions less natural in the target language. This issue results in a slightly lower acceptability score of 2.84 out of 3. In contrast, readability is the strongest indicator of translation quality, with a perfect score of 3, demonstrating that the translation is clear and easily understood by the target audience.

E. Confirming Information, Assumptions, Accusations, and Violations From Other Parties

In confirming the assumptions, information, accusations, and committing violations, this study found only the representative speech act functioning as statements with bald-on-record as the politeness strategy. Of seven speech events, this speech event is considered to rarely occur in interrogation. This happens since the police officers or detectives used this to confirm the information they got from the people interviewed in the interrogation or evidence. Searle (1969, 1976) states that representatives (or assertives) commit the speaker to the truth of expressed propositions. Therefore, no wonder that bald-on-record is frequently used to confirm the information asked by the police officers and detectives. As Brown and Levinson (1987) define bald-on-record as a strategy for performing the FTA (face-threatening act), this strategy is used to confirm and give the officers and detective clear information to support the efficient communication. However, other strategies (negative and positive politeness strategies) also resonate with this speech event. Negative politeness here is used to articulate uncertainty in the statements by avoiding the question indirectly or expressing the offense of being accused. Meanwhile, positive politeness is used to show gratefulness, to give thanks, and to express politeness for being interviewed. The application of these two strategies supports the concept of positive and negative politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Moreover, established equivalence is once again the most used translation technique analyzed to translate the utterances in these speech events. It also positively impacts translation quality as the result of research conducted by Jamal et al. (2024), Ardi et al. (2020), Sugiharti et al. (2022), and Puruhito et al. (2022). The high frequency of established equivalence techniques indicates that the translator could preserve the message in an accurate, acceptable, and readable translation. Molina and Albir (2002) also define translation techniques as the decisions made by the translator. By using the high usage of established equivalence, the translator has proven to have the competence that a translator should possess to produce a good translation (Nababan et al., 2012; Neubert, 2000; Nababan, 2008).

The overall score of the translation quality is 2.89, with accuracy reaching 2.66, acceptability at 3, and readability at 3. The accuracy is decreasing because of the use of discursive creation techniques, which translate the source text out of context so that the type of illocutionary act and politeness strategy experience shifts. This technique is found by changing the representative illocutionary act with negative politeness to a directive speech act with bald-on-record. Ardi et al. (2020) and Jamal et al. (2024) also do not recommend using this technique to translate the utterance, especially when dealing with the politeness strategies since they are culturally constructed (Marsih, 2010).

F. Suppressing

In contrast to the speech events, which need information, suppressing needs power to obtain information. However, in order to suppress suspects from committing their crimes and to force those being questioned to provide the information that the police and detectives desire, the speakers frequently used directive speech actions with command as the dominant function, followed by the inquiring and advising functions. The representative speech act with a statement function is a less than directive speech act in this speech event. Likewise, Barus et al. (2017) also confirmed that the directive speech act is the most dominant in police investigative interviews. The directive speech acts found in the present research and the research of Barus et al. present the same pattern: directive speech acts to obtain information by suppressing the interviewees. They also add that investigators use it to challenge the suspects or command them to speak. In contrast, the representative speech act is used by the suspects to describe and defend themselves. In addition, bald-on-record is once again the most often used strategy in most of the interrogation speech events. It also happens in giving commands and statements and asking. Other strategies were also found, but all were less than bald-on-record.

The score of translation quality is considered high since the overall score was 2.70. It is a bit far from the score of 3 since the acceptability decreased dramatically due to the use of pure borrowing. Nababan et al. (2012) define acceptability as how well a translation conforms to the cultural norms, conventions, and linguistic rules of the target language, making it natural and appropriate to the target audiences. Aresta et al. (2018) found the same impact on acceptability due to the discursive creation techniques. Pure borrowing techniques in both the present study and the study of Aresta et al. tend to borrow the terms and a person addressing, which do not follow the cultural issues in Indonesian as the target language. However, both studies agree that it is still considered accurate because of borrowing the terms. The intention to borrow terms from the source text might be untranslatability. Baker (2018) explained that equivalence at the word level should pay attention to number, gender, and tense, which are considered cultural issues. In addition, no shifts are found in this speech event, making it not a reason why the overall score is far from the perfect score of 3.

G. Evading

The last speech event, evading the questions or accusations, is the least speech event found in this research. It happens when the witnesses or suspects avoid being interrogated or deny the accusations. Therefore, representative speech acts are the only speech acts found in this speech event with statement functions. In an interrogation session, the suspects or witnesses get the chance to defend themselves by evading questions or accusations (Barus et al., 2017). Stating, explaining, and denying are included in the representative speech act proposed by Searle (1976). Since the representative speech act in this speech event is used for self-defense, then bald-on-record must be the strategy expressing it. As Brown and Levinson (1987) state, bald-on-record performs FTA, and the clearance of communication and interrogation sessions enables the witnesses and suspects to feel offended or not to participate in the investigation. Therefore, they sometimes make excuses for hiding facts or not participating. Speaking about the translation, the techniques (established equivalence, variation, and explicitation) used in translating the utterances in this speech event maintain the translation quality in terms of accuracy, acceptability, and readability without reducing it. They make the perfect score of 3. Hence, the translation is considered a good translation since it meets the requirements for a good translation as scholars mentioned above (Nababan, 2008; Nababan et al., 2012; Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988, 1991; Baker, 2018; Venuti, 1995).

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the most frequent speech event in the interrogation was confirming questions, statements, and evidence from witnesses, detectives, suspects, and other parties, accounting for 51% of the data. The dominant speech act in this event was the representative speech act, which functioned as a statement, followed by directives (asking, requesting, and commanding) and expressives (anger and thanking). Across most of the interrogation speech events, the bald-on-record politeness strategy was found to be the most dominant, used to provide clear, direct communication. To translate these utterances, the most frequently used technique was established equivalence, which was found to have a positive impact on maintaining all translation quality indicators. While most of the translation maintained good quality, shifts did occur, such as a shift from negative politeness to bald-on-record due to structural and cultural differences. The use of techniques like discursive creation and reduction was found to negatively impact accuracy, sometimes leading to a shift in the politeness strategy and a partial omission of meaning. This highlights that a good translation, according to scholars, must be not only accurate but also natural and easily understood by the target readers.

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Constructing “Financial Piety”: A Feminist CDA of Gendered Economic Obligations in *Rumiyah* Magazine

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Abstract—This study examines how extremist propaganda constructs gendered economic obligations through the strategic linguistic deployment of Islamic religious texts. Employing feminist critical discourse analysis and van Leeuwen’s legitimization framework, the research systematically analyses a three-page women’s section from Issue 1 of the *Rumiyah* magazine, which explicitly addresses female audiences regarding “jihad with wealth” through 19 religious citations and five historical exemplars. Systematic linguistic analysis reveals three interconnected discursive mechanisms creating what this study terms “financial piety”, positioning women’s economic contributions as simultaneously an organisational necessity and a means of spiritual salvation. First, commercial metaphorical framing transforms spiritual devotion into measurable transactions through the Quranic concept of *tijarah* (deal), establishing spiritual obligation as a commercial transaction as the foundational conceptual metaphor. Second, gendered linguistic economy constructs women as inherently sinful through evaluative asymmetry and modal obligation structures, requiring financial atonement for alleged gender-specific moral failings. Third, exemplary narrative structures featuring Islam’s most revered women model extreme financial sacrifice through consistent linguistic patterns. These mechanisms operate through van Leeuwen’s legitimization strategies: authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation and mythopoesis. The analysis reveals “constrained agency”: women are positioned as capable economic actors through agentive grammatical structures, while modal obligation and imperative constructions channel agency exclusively towards organisational needs. Lexical-semantic analysis points to systematic metaphorical framing through commercial vocabulary, while syntactic analysis exposes how modal structures and evaluative lexis naturalise obligatory giving. The findings contribute theoretically by introducing linguistically grounded concepts explaining gendered exploitation, methodologically by systematically demonstrating the analytical capacity of critical discourse analysis and empirically by revealing precise language-based manipulation tactics across lexical, syntactic and discourse levels.

Index Terms—feminist CDA, conceptual metaphor, legitimization strategies, gendered discourse

I. INTRODUCTION

In December 2016, the extremist organisation behind *Rumiyah* magazine published Issue 1, replacing its previous publication, *Dabiq*, following territorial losses (Khafaga, 2017). The women’s section (pages 18–20) explicitly addressed female audiences regarding “jihad with wealth”, deploying 19 religious citations from Islam’s most authoritative sources to construct women’s economic contributions as religiously obligatory and spiritually redemptive. This paper examines how *Rumiyah* constructs what this study terms “financial piety”, an ideological framework positioning women’s economic contributions as simultaneously an organisational necessity and a means of individual spiritual salvation, through specific linguistic and discursive strategies.

The central research question is as follows: How does extremist propaganda linguistically construct gendered “financial piety” through citation practices, lexical-semantic choices and legitimization strategies that frame women’s financial contributions as atonement for gender-specific sins and obligatory jihad? The existing scholarship has addressed extremist propaganda strategies (Ingram, 2017; Ingram et al., 2020; Khafaga, 2017; Milton, 2018) and religious legitimization in extremist discourse (Baker et al., 2013; Brookes & McEnery, 2020), but the specific linguistic mechanisms that construct gendered economic obligations remain understudied. This gap has theoretical significance for feminist critical discourse analysis (CDA) and methodological importance for applied linguistics because understanding precise linguistic strategies enables the identification of manipulation tactics across contexts (Henaku, 2024; Lazar, 2005, 2007).

This study addresses these gaps through systematic linguistic analysis of propaganda texts. Although researchers have observed that extremist organisations target women for financial mobilisation (Ingram, 2017; Milton, 2018; Thakkar & Speckhard, 2024), the precise linguistic mechanisms constructing economic obligations through religious discourse are still unknown.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature largely overlooks how discourse constructs economic obligations for women through the linguistic manipulation of religious authority. Pearson and Winterbotham (2017) and Pearson et al. (2020) note that diaspora women often control household finances (potentially mobilisable resources), yet they do not examine the linguistic and rhetorical strategies through which propaganda transforms these resources into religious obligations. The present study addresses this gap by analysing specific discursive strategies, namely, citation selection practices, commercial lexical framing, gendered evaluative language and exemplar narrative construction, through which *Rumiyah* linguistically constructs women's financial contributions as religiously mandatory.

A. Religious Discourse and Legitimation: A Linguistic Perspective

Scholarship on religious discourse in extremist propaganda has examined how sacred texts are strategically appropriated through linguistic practices. Baker et al.'s (2013) corpus analysis demonstrates that religious texts function as particularly effective legitimisation resources because they are widely regarded as containing the ultimate truth, which is not easily challenged. Their corpus linguistic approach reveals that extremist discourse operates via highly selective citation practices that decontextualise religious texts from traditional scholarly interpretation. Brookes and McEnery's (2020) corpus-based critical analysis of violent jihadist discourse reveals systematic patterns in lexical choices, collocation and cohesion, whereby ideological positions are constructed through language. Relatedly, Bhatt et al. (2025) propose a sociolinguistics of Islam that examines how language and society intersect, where the Islamic faith shapes linguistic practices. They distinguish between *ummatic* discourse (highly standardised, transnational and rooted in canonical texts demonstrating specific linguistic features) and *'urfic* discourse (localised, customary expressions with regional variations). In doing so, they shed light on how extremist propaganda appropriates *ummatic* linguistic authority, including specific Arabic terminology, orthodox citation formats and authoritative discourse markers, while recontextualising interpretations through strategic linguistic choices.

Van Leeuwen's (2007, 2008) work on legitimisation strategies provides analytical tools for examining how discourse justifies practices through language. His framework identifies four linguistic strategies: authorisation (i.e. appeals to authority through citation and attribution), moral evaluation (i.e. references to value systems through evaluative vocabulary), rationalisation (i.e. references to goals through causal connectives and logical markers) and mythopoesis (i.e. legitimisation through narrative structures). However, existing scholarship has insufficiently examined how these linguistic strategies are deployed to construct gender-specific obligations.

B. Gender and Religious Discourse: Feminist Linguistic Analysis

Feminist scholarship on religious discourse has investigated how language and linguistic structures perpetuate gender inequality. Lazar's (2005, 2007) feminist CDA provides analytical tools for examining how gendered assumptions are linguistically encoded through lexical choices, syntactic structures and discursive patterns. Lazar (2007) argues that hegemonic gender ideology functions through language to present certain understandings of gender differences as natural and justified. Accordingly, systematic linguistic analysis of how discourse advantages men while disadvantaging women is necessary. Recent developments in feminist CDA emphasise intersectional approaches and attention to diverse linguistic contexts (Chen & Gong, 2024; Henaku, 2024; Peng et al., 2024). Feminist CDA has revealed some linguistic strategies through which religious discourse naturalises gender hierarchies: selective scriptural citation practices emphasising particular textual fragments while silencing others; interpretive discursive traditions employing specific linguistic markers privileging male authority; and the construction of exemplary narratives through narrative structures modelling female subordination as spiritual virtue (Glapka, 2018; Lazar, 2005). However, feminist linguistic analyses have primarily focused on hierarchies of authority and leadership. The linguistic construction of economic obligations, that is, how evaluative language, modal structures and metaphorical framing are deployed to extract financial resources specifically from women, remains unexamined linguistically.

C. Research Gaps and the Applied Linguistic Contribution

The literature reveals significant gaps requiring systematic linguistic analysis at the intersection of extremist propaganda studies, religious legitimisation analysis and feminist CDA. Despite growing concerns about women's roles in extremist movements (Alexander, 2019; Margolin, 2020; Ulas, 2025), a systematic linguistic understanding of how discourse constructs economic obligations for female audiences is lacking, that is, what specific lexical-semantic choices, syntactic patterns, citation practices and discursive strategies transform voluntary charitable giving into obligatory financial contributions, how religious authority is linguistically marked and appropriated and through what precise linguistic mechanisms women's agency is simultaneously constructed and constrained.

Applied linguists possess analytical tools uniquely suited to addressing this gap through systematic linguistic analysis. CDA enables the examination of how power relations are linguistically enacted (Lin & Luke, 2014; van Dijk, 1993, 2015), and feminist CDA provides frameworks for analysing gendered language patterns (Henaku, 2024; Lazar, 2005, 2007). Meanwhile, the sociolinguistics of Islam offers conceptual resources for understanding religious linguistic authority in multilingual contexts (Bhatt et al., 2025), and conceptual metaphor theory reveals how abstract concepts are linguistically constructed (Kövecses, 2020; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Recent applied linguistics research demonstrates how these linguistic tools uncover ideological manipulation through language analysis (Chen & Due, 2025; Gillings & Dayrell,

2024; Nervino et al., 2024; Ye et al., 2025), indicating that applied linguistics can contribute meaningfully to understanding extremist recruitment strategies and developing counter-narrative interventions by rigorously analysing actual propaganda texts that reveal language-based manipulation tactics.

This research responds to an imperative in applied linguistics: deploying disciplinary expertise to understand linguistic manipulation. As a woman and an applied linguist, I recognise my scholarly obligation and ethical commitment to examine how religious discourse, particularly discourse appropriating texts from my own tradition, is linguistically weaponised to exploit women economically through language choices while disguising exploitation as a spiritual obligation. This positioning provides methodological rigour through systematic linguistic analysis focusing on lexis, syntax and discourse structure alongside interpretive sensitivity regarding how religious linguistic authority functions within Muslim communities and how women experience gendered religious discourse.

By revealing how extremist publications strategically deploy linguistic resources to create “financial piety”, this research provides crucial insights into linguistic manipulation and advances applied linguistics scholarship on discourse, ideology and power. The knowledge it contributes applies to diverse contexts where linguistic manipulation serves institutional interests.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs feminist CDA to examine how *Rumiyah* magazine’s women’s section linguistically constructs gendered economic obligations by strategically deploying Islamic religious texts. The analytical framework integrates three complementary theoretical approaches that enable a multilayered systematic linguistic analysis.

A. Theoretical Framework and Analytical Design

The study synthesises Lazar’s (2005, 2007) feminist CDA with van Leeuwen’s (2007, 2008) legitimation strategies and Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, updated by Kövecses (2020). This theoretical integration addresses specific dimensions of the discourse: feminist CDA examines gendered power relations, legitimation analysis reveals justification strategies, and conceptual metaphor theory uncovers cognitive framings. Together, these frameworks provide comprehensive analytical tools for investigating gendered religious manipulation through language. This analysis combines methodological rigour with interpretive sensitivity, drawing on expertise in both applied linguistics and Islamic discourse traditions. This dual perspective, balancing scholarly distance with cultural proximity, enables the recognition of subtle linguistic manipulations while maintaining respect for authentic Islamic traditions.

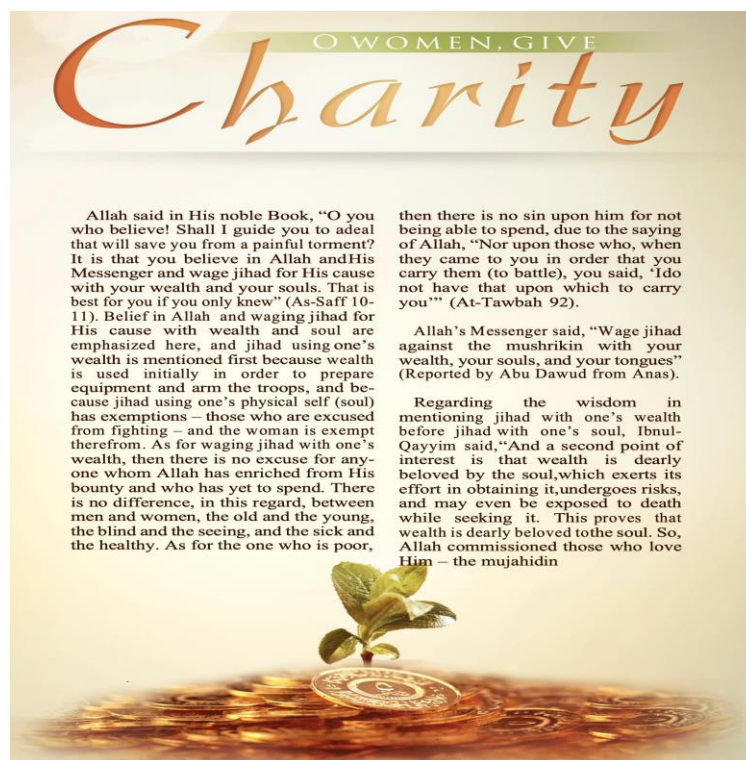
Lazar’s feminist CDA framework guides the examination of how *Rumiyah* linguistically constructs gender-specific economic obligations. The analysis investigates “constrained agency”, a phenomenon where women are potentially empowered through agentive linguistic structures (e.g. active voice, transitive verbs) yet simultaneously constrained through modal obligation and imperative constructions. Following Lazar (2007), the framework enables the identification of linguistic patterns that naturalise gender hierarchies through a systematic examination of lexical choices, syntactic structures and discursive patterns. Particular attention is paid to how evaluative language, modal structures and grammatical voice interact to position female readers.

Van Leeuwen’s framework, applied within Bhatt et al.’s (2025) sociolinguistic perspective, allows for an analysis of how *Rumiyah* appropriates *ummatic* discourse, that is, the transnational, standardised Islamic linguistic register rooted in canonical texts. The analysis operationalises van Leeuwen’s four strategies through specific linguistic markers: authorisation through citation patterns and attribution verbs, moral evaluation through axiological vocabulary, rationalisation through causal connectives and conditional structures and mythopoesis through narrative patterns. This systematic approach identifies precise mechanisms of appropriation of religious authority.

Kövecses’s (2020) extended theory provides analytical tools for examining how abstract religious concepts are reframed through commercial language. The analysis maps systematic correspondence between source domains (commerce/business) and target domains (spirituality/obligation), documenting how vocabulary choices and collocational patterns may transform voluntary charity into a transactional obligation. Special attention is paid to preserved Arabic commercial terminology and its English contextualisation.

B. Data and Analytical Framework

The corpus comprises the women’s section (Article 4) of Issue 1 of *Rumiyah* (December 2016), an English-language propaganda magazine published by ISIS and targeting female audiences (Figure 1).

Figure 1. First Page of the *Rumiya* Magazine's Women's Section

The section was selected via purposive sampling based on three methodological criteria:

- (a) *Discursive completeness*: The three-page section (pages 18–20, approximately 2,000 words) constitutes a complete rhetorical unit, enabling the analysis of how linguistic strategies develop across a full argumentative sequence.
- (b) *Explicit gender targeting*: The direct female address (“O women”) provides unambiguous data for examining gendered linguistic positioning.
- (c) *Dense intertextuality*: The concentration of religious citations (19 references) and historical exemplars (five narratives) offers rich data for analysing authority appropriation patterns.

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the corpus:

TABLE 1
CORPUS DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Feature	Description
Publication	<i>Rumiya</i> Issue 1
Article number	Article 4 (Women's Section)
Article title	“O Women, Give Charity”
Publication date	December 2016
Page range	18–20 (three pages)
Approximate word count	2,207 words
Primary audience	Female readers/potential supporters
Language	English with Arabic transliterations
Quranic verses, Hadith narrations, scholarly opinions	7, 8, 4
Total religious citations:	= 19
Historical exemplars	Five main figures (three female, two male)

The decision to focus on a single, complete text rather than a broader corpus follows established feminist CDA methodology (Lazar, 2005), which prioritises deep, multilayered analyses of strategic texts over surface-level examinations of larger datasets. This approach enables a detailed investigation of how multiple linguistic mechanisms operate interdependently within a unified discourse.

C. Three-Stage Analytical Process

The analytical process proceeds systematically from microlinguistic features to macrodiscursive patterns in three integrated stages (Figure 2). Each stage builds cumulatively, creating analytical depth through a layered examination.

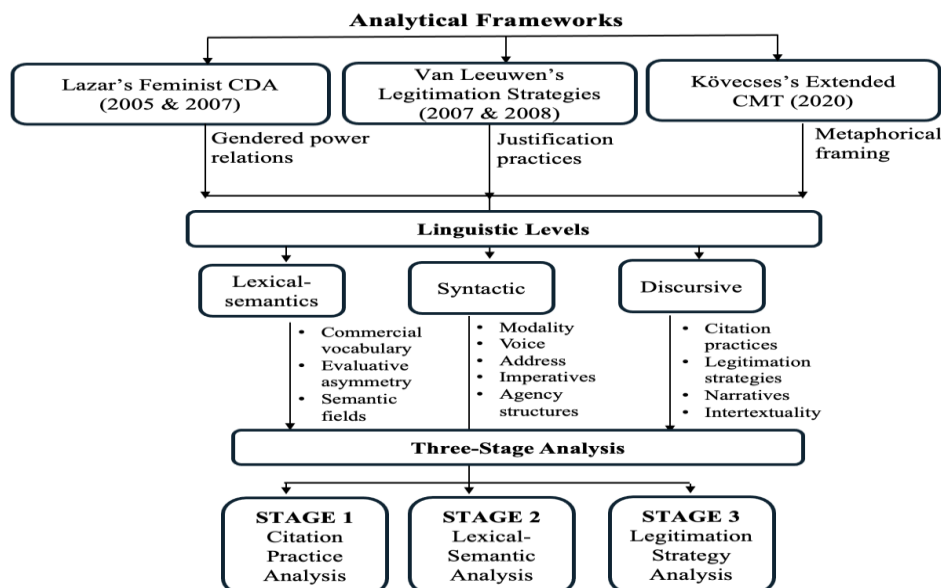


Figure 2. Analytical Framework and Process

(a) *Stage 1: Citation Practice Analysis – Linguistic Authority Construction*

The first stage involves the systematic identification and categorisation of the 19 religious citations through three-dimensional coding:

1. *Authority markers*: The analysis focuses on linguistic features establishing credibility, namely, quotation formats (direct/indirect), attribution verbs (said, commanded, stated), source identification patterns and Arabic terminology preservation. These features reveal strategies for invoking religious authority.
2. *Gender targeting*: Citations are examined for female-specific addresses through vocatives, gendered pronouns, gender-marked Arabic terms and explicit female interpellation. This distinguishes between inherently gendered texts and universal guidance recontextualised for women.
3. *Argumentative function*: Each citation is categorised by its discursive roles: establishing obligation, characterising the female nature, prescribing behaviour or promising rewards. This functional mapping reveals strategic deployment patterns.

Coding decisions are documented in analytical memos, ensuring transparency and enabling replication.

(b) *Stage 2: Lexical-Semantic Analysis – Ideological Vocabulary Patterns*

Following Fairclough's (2003) principle that vocabulary constitutes ideological work, this stage examines three lexical domains:

1. *Commercial semantic field*: All economic/commercial vocabulary is identified and mapped to reveal conceptual metaphor structures (Kövecses, 2020; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Collocational analysis examines how commercial terms co-occur with religious vocabulary, distinguishing between traditional Islamic economic terminology (e.g. *zakat*, *sadaqah*) and imposed commercial framing (e.g. *deal*, *transaction*).
2. *Gendered evaluative language*: Comprehensive inventories document evaluative terms applied to women versus men, categorised by word class, semantic prosody and evaluation type. This systematic comparison reveals potential asymmetries in gender representation. This linguistic analysis, informed by recent work on metaphor in discourse (Cameron & Maslen, 2010; Peng, 2025), reveals a systematic asymmetry in gendered linguistic representation.
3. *Modal and imperative structures*: Modal verbs, imperatives and necessity markers are categorised by deontic force and scope, examining how different modal choices construct varying levels of obligation for female readers.

(c) *Stage 3: Legitimation Strategy Analysis – Discursive Integration*

This synthesising stage applies van Leeuwen's (2007) framework to examine how legitimation operates throughout the text. The analysis identifies specific linguistic features implementing each strategy:

1. *Authorisation*: Citation markers, attribution verbs (e.g. *Allah said*, *the Prophet guided*), source identification and Arabic terminology invoking authority.
2. *Moral evaluation*: Evaluative adjectives, axiological vocabulary, virtue/vice binaries realised through antonyms.
3. *Rationalisation*: Logical patterns, including causal relationships, conditional arguments and means–goal constructions, are analysed for how they present financial contribution as a rational necessity.
4. *Mythopoesis*: Narrative structures are examined for consistent patterns (e.g. situation framing, action sequences and resolution formats) that model desired behaviour (Carthy et al., 2020; Nisa et al., 2020).

The findings of all three stages are then synthesised to identify overarching discursive mechanisms.

D. *Analytical Rigour and Linguistic Ethics*

All citations were systematically coded using qualitative data analysis methods, with Arabic source terminology cross-referenced against authentic Islamic textual sources to identify patterns of linguistic recontextualisation. The analysis was guided by an understanding of Islamic linguistic traditions and Arabic-English translational practices, which helped distinguish between extremist linguistic manipulation and mainstream interpretations. The research upholds an ethical commitment to differentiate between critiquing extremist linguistic tactics and respecting Islamic linguistic traditions. Following Bhatt et al.'s (2025) emphasis on linguistic sensitivity, rather than challenging Islamic linguistic traditions, the study investigates how specific actors manipulate religious discourse linguistically. When the discourse diverges from traditional scholarship, for instance, employing commercial metaphors for spiritual devotion, framing charity through obligation modalities or using selective citation practices, these linguistic divergences are clearly identified and contextualised within mainstream Islamic discourse, highlighting voluntary, compassionate language and family-oriented communication. The materials were accessed through reputable academic databases, and the linguistic analysis concentrates on language patterns rather than content promotion.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic linguistic analysis of the women's section (pages 18–20) of *Rumiyah's* Issue 1 reveals three interconnected discursive mechanisms through which extremist propaganda linguistically constructs “financial piety”, positioning women's economic contributions as simultaneously an organisational necessity and a means of spiritual salvation. These mechanisms operate at the lexical, syntactic and discursive levels, creating constrained agency through specific language choices.

A. Mechanism 1: Commercial Metaphorical Framing – The Linguistic Construction of Transactional Spirituality

The discourse systematically employs commercial vocabulary to metaphorically reframe spiritual devotion, linguistically transforming voluntary charitable discourse into calculable financial obligation discourse. The opening Quranic citation strategically preserves Arabic commercial terminology while providing English gloss: “O you who believe! Shall I guide you to a deal ‘tijarah’ that will save you from a painful torment?” In terms of lexical-semantic analysis, the Arabic term *tijarah* (commerce/transaction) establishes the foundational conceptual metaphor through which subsequent discourse operates. Table 2 below presents a systematic lexical analysis of the commercial semantic field.

TABLE 2
COMMERCIAL LEXICAL FIELD ANALYSIS

Lexical Item	Frequency	Collocates	Metaphorical Function
deal/ <i>tijarah</i>	3	<i>save, guide, Lord, never end poorly</i>	Frames spiritual engagement as a negotiated business transaction
business	2	<i>conducted, with Allah, reward was Paradise</i>	Constructs worship as a commercial enterprise with a divine partner
spend/spending	11	<i>wealth, extravagantly, transient worldly things, for Allah's cause</i>	Frames resource allocation as a binary economic choice
wealth	8	<i>wage jihad, dearly beloved, surplus</i>	Positions material resources as a jihad instrument/commodity
reward	6	<i>Paradise, without measure, multiplies</i>	Constructs divine return as measurable profit
give/charity	15	<i>O women, majority of hellfire, do not hoard</i>	Frames obligation through transactional giving (euphemism for mandatory contribution)

This lexical analysis reveals the systematic deployment of commercial vocabulary, constructing a metaphor of spiritual obligation as a commercial transaction (Kövecses, 2020; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The metaphor operates through consistent mapping:

(a) *Source domain (commerce)*: deal, business, spend, wealth, reward, investment, return.

(b) *Temporal target domain (spirituality)*: spiritual obligation, worship, charitable giving, divine favour, Paradise.

The discourse linguistically reinforces transactional framing through the metaphor of multiplication, which draws a parallel between investment return discourse and quantifiable spiritual profit: “Allah accepts charity, takes it by His right hand and raises it... until a morsel becomes like the size of Uhud”. The Ibnul-Qayyim citation extends commercial logic through economic reasoning: “Wealth is dearly beloved by the soul, which exerts its effort in obtaining it, undergoes risks, and may even be exposed to death whilst seeking it. So, Allah commissioned those who love Him—the *mujahidin* for His cause—to spend what is dear and beloved to them in seeking His pleasure”. This constructs value calculation: greater commodity sacrifice equals greater transaction worth.

In terms of syntactic analysis, the text employs specific modal structures constructing obligation:

(a) *Strong obligation modals*: “It is an obligation” (copula + obligation noun), establishing a categorical requirement.

(b) *Necessity negation*: “there is no excuse” (negated possibility), eliminating exemption.

(c) *Conditional obligation*: “If Allah has enriched... [then] spend”, a conditional structure implying consequent duty.

These linguistic constructions create “calculable piety” through language choices. As Fairclough (2003) argues, vocabulary choices constitute ideological work: the systematic shift from voluntary/compassionate lexis (*sadaqah, mercy, compassion*) to commercial/transactional vocabulary (*deal, business, spend, reward*) linguistically naturalises financial extraction as a religious requirement. Recent work on metaphor in discourse (Cameron & Maslen, 2010; Peng, 2025)

demonstrates how conceptual metaphors linguistically shape the understanding of abstract domains. Here, commercial framing linguistically constructs spirituality as an economic transaction, enabling discourse that measures piety in terms of monetary contribution.

This linguistic pattern diverges fundamentally from traditional Islamic discourse practices. Classical *sadaqah* discourse emphasises voluntary action through particular Arabic verb forms indicating recommended rather than obligatory action (*mustahabb* not *wajib*); it also employs compassionate/merciful vocabulary fields (*rahma*, *ihsan*, *birr*) and frames giving through relational, not transactional, metaphors. The Prophet Muhammad's statement, "even half a date", linguistically signals that the amount matters less than the intention (*niyyah*), prioritising the internal spiritual state over quantifiable contribution. *Rumiyah* discourse linguistically inverts these patterns through strategic English vocabulary choices coupled with selective Arabic terminology preservation.

Throughout the three-page section, funds are consistently directed towards generic "*mujahidin*" (11 occurrences) through nonspecific references, never explicit organisational naming. This linguistic deletion strategy (van Leeuwen, 2008) obscures the fact that contributions support specific actors, while maintaining religious legitimacy through generic Islamic fighter terminology. The discourse strategically employs plural generic nouns (*mujahidin*, *fighters*) with definite articles (*the mujahidin*), suggesting known entities while avoiding specific identification. This strategy of linguistic ambiguity enables multiple interpretations, with the organisational context guiding the preferred reading.

Rhetorical questions linguistically intensify commercial framing through presupposition, for instance: "How, then, about the charity given to help prepare the *mujahidin* for Allah's cause? Does anyone establish the religion and protect the lands of Islam other than the *mujahidin*? Does anyone defend honour and spite the *kuffar* other than the *mujahidin*?" These interrogative structures presuppose affirmative answers, linguistically positioning military funding as superlative through comparative structures (*other than*) and exclusive agency attribution. The triple repetition of "*mujahidin*" within sequential questions creates linguistic intensification while maintaining generic reference in a sophisticated rhetorical strategy that serves organisational financial extraction, masked as a religious duty.

B. Mechanism 2: Gendered Linguistic Economy – Constructing Atonement Through Evaluative Language

The discourse systematically deploys gendered evaluative language, constructing women as uniquely requiring financial atonement for alleged gender-specific sins. Explicit negative evaluation appears through lexical choices on page 18: "It is known that women—other than those whom Allah protects, and they are *very few*—often engage in *nonsense*, showing *ingratitude* towards their husbands, *backbiting*, and other *grave sins*". The phrase "it is known" presents this as an established fact rather than a contested claim, naturalising a negative representation. The qualifier "very few" universalises female sinfulness through linguistic exception: protected women are rare, which implies that the vast majority are morally deficient.

As concerns the lexis, Table 3 presents a systematic analysis of evaluative vocabulary characterising women versus men:

TABLE 3
GENDERED EVALUATIVE LEXIS

Target	Negative Evaluation	Positive Evaluation	Linguistic Pattern
Women	<i>nonsense</i> (noun), <i>ingratitude</i> (abstract noun), <i>backbiting</i> (gerund), <i>miserly</i> (adj), <i>stingy</i> (adj), <i>ungrateful</i> (adj), <i>cursing</i> (gerund), <i>majority of hellfire</i> (superlative quantifier)	[none in text]	Exclusively negative axiological markers; abstract nouns of moral failings; present participles suggesting habitual action
Men	[none in text]	[implicit through <i>mujahidin</i> :] <i>establish</i> (verb), <i>protect</i> (verb), <i>defend</i> (verb), <i>spite</i> (verb); <i>Amirul-Muminin</i> (title)	Exclusively positive; agentive action verbs; honorific titles
Contemporary women	<i>spending extravagantly</i> (adverb + present participle), <i>transient worldly things</i> (adj + adj + noun – materialistic characterisation), <i>miserly and stingy</i> (coordinated adjectives)	[none in text]	Intensified through coordination; materialistic characterisation

This systematic linguistic analysis reveals complete asymmetry in evaluative lexis. Women receive exclusively negative moral characterisation through the following:

- Abstract nouns of vice*: *nonsense*, *ingratitude*, highlighting character flaws.
- Gerunds/participles*: *backbiting*, *cursing*, *spending*, grammatically suggesting habitual/ongoing action.
- Negative adjectives*: *miserly*, *stingy*, *ungrateful*, characterising disposition.

In contrast, men are only characterised positively through the following:

- Agentive action verbs*: *establish*, *protect*, *defend*, attributing constructive agency.
- Honorific terminology*: *Amirul-Muminin* (Commander of the Faithful), elevating status.

Beyond lexical evaluation, syntactic positioning reinforces gendered obligation through multiple structures. The text employs specific syntactic strategies positioning female readers:

- Direct vocative address*: "O women, give charity" (vocative + imperative verb), a direct gendered interpellation positioning women as obligated addressees.
- Generalising quantifiers*: "women ... *often* engage", "you make up the *majority*", linguistic strategies universalising

negative characterisation.

(c) *Exception structures*: “other than those whom Allah protects, and they are *very few*”, linguistic framing making virtue exceptional and vice normative.

(d) *Strong obligation modals*: “It is an obligation for women to wage jihad with their wealth” (copula + obligation noun + infinitive), the strongest modal construction establishing a categorical requirement.

(e) *Prohibition modals*: “The Muslim woman *must not* think” (strong prohibition modal), a negative deontic modality controlling cognition.

This syntactic architecture creates multiple simultaneous positioning effects, linguistically constructing women as addressees requiring remedial action through interpellation and modal obligation.

The discourse further constructs gendered obligation through a semantic field of atonement, employing vocabulary that frames financial contribution as a remedial action:

(a) “*Atone*”: “through which they could *atone* for some of what they have committed”—presupposes wrongdoing requiring a financial remedy.

(b) “*Commit/committed*”: lexical choices imply inherent wrongdoing requiring correction.

(c) “*Guided them to*”: constructs prophetic instruction as a solution to the inherent problem rather than voluntary spiritual enhancement.

This linguistic pattern creates a “moral economy of gendered atonement” through language choices. As Lazar (2005) argues, discourse systematically disadvantages women via linguistic encoding: here, exclusively negative evaluative vocabulary paints women as morally deficient, while an exclusively positive linguistic characterisation elevates men. The linguistic pattern produces constrained agency through grammatical structures, distinguishing between when women appear in active or passive/stative constructions.

Women receive agentive constructions exclusively in the following:

(a) *Giving contexts*: *give, spend, make preparations*, with the active voice linguistically constructing capacity for financial contribution.

(b) *Negative action contexts*: *spending extravagantly*, where the active voice attributes agency for condemned behaviour.

Conversely, passive and stative constructions appear in the following:

(a) *Moral characterisation*: “*are shown*”, “*were guided*”, reduced agency positioning women as recipients rather than actors in spiritual instruction.

(b) *Obligation contexts*: “*it is an obligation*”, impersonal constructions obscuring agency and presenting requirements as preexisting conditions rather than imposed demands.

Recent feminist discourse analysis (Glapka, 2018; Henaku, 2024) demonstrates how evaluative asymmetry maintains gendered power through language. *Rumiyah*’s discourse exemplifies this through complete lexical asymmetry while grammatically constructing women as capable economic agents, a linguistic double-bind that enables exploitation. Women must be linguistically constructed as possessing economic agency to ensure that they can provide financial resources. However, that same agency must be linguistically channelled exclusively towards organisational needs through an obligation modality and a negative evaluation of alternative expenditures. This is what Lazar (2005) terms “double-binding”: women are constructed as morally deficient (creating guilt-based obligation) yet simultaneously economically capable (ensuring resource provision).

Classical traditional Islamic scholarship contextualises the “women in hellfire” Hadith within broader discussions of human moral failings, which call for continuous self-improvement for all believers, not gender-specific collective condemnation requiring financial atonement. Classical commentators such as Ibn Hajar emphasise that this Hadith addresses specific behaviours (*cursing* and *ingratitude*) that both men and women should avoid, not inherent female moral deficiencies. Classical Hadith commentary employs the following linguistic strategies:

(a) *Contextualising discourse markers*: interpretive framing situating texts within scholarly traditions.

(b) *Interpretive hedging*: “this means...”, “some scholars say ...”, acknowledging multiple interpretations.

(c) *Generic pronouns*: addressing universal human characteristics instead of a gendered direct address.

Rumiyah’s discourse diverges from this through the following:

(a) *Deletion of interpretive framing*: presenting texts without scholarly contextualisation.

(b) *Assertive modality without hedging*: employing categorical statements that eliminate interpretive flexibility.

(c) *Direct vocative address*: constructing a gender-specific obligation through “O women”, a linguistic strategy that serves organisational purposes.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence does not construct charity as gender-specific atonement, nor does it mandate financial contribution as a compensatory obligation for exemption from physical jihad. Mainstream scholars emphasise that women’s economic autonomy is protected in Islamic law, that charitable giving should be voluntary and from surplus and that family welfare obligations (*nafaqah*) take precedence over voluntary charity (*sadaqah*). *Rumiyah*’s discourse linguistically decontextualises these religious texts through selective citation, serving organisational extraction rather than reflecting comprehensive Islamic ethical teachings.

C. Mechanism 3: Exemplar Narrative Structures – Linguistic Modelling of Extreme Sacrifice

Across pages 18–20, the discourse employs five historical exemplar narratives through linguistic structures that model

extreme financial sacrifice. Three female figures, Asma Bint Abi Bakr, Sawdah and Aishah, are among the most revered women in Islamic history (Prophet Muhammad's wives and companions), and their narratives are strategically selected and framed to normalise total financial self-denial through consistent linguistic patterns. Table 4 presents a linguistic analysis of these narrative patterns:

TABLE 4
EXEMPLAR NARRATIVE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES

Exemplar	Situation (linguistic framing)	Sacrifice (verb choices)	Reward (outcome construction)
Asma	"despite her <i>poverty</i> and <i>need</i> " (concessive structure); " <i>did not own any gold</i> " (negated possession)	" <i>would ask</i> " (habitual modal); " <i>should I give?</i> " (interrogative seeking permission); " <i>give</i> " (imperative in response)	"lest Allah <i>keep</i> things from you" (negative conditional consequence)
Sawdah	"Which of us will be <i>quickest</i> ?" (superlative competition)	"had the <i>longest</i> arm" (superlative characterisation); " <i>would extend</i> it most" (modal + superlative adverb)	" <i>quickest</i> to join him" (superlative temporal priority); " <i>loved</i> giving" (stative verb + gerund)
Aishah	" <i>wore patched-up</i> garments" (past continuous – habitual state)	" <i>gave</i> 70,000... 100,000" (active voice + quantified object); "the sun <i>did not set</i> " (temporal framing total immediacy)	[no material reward]; "'Why <i>didn't</i> you say so?'" (interrogative deflecting household need)
Uthman	"prepare... <i>an entire</i> army" (quantifier intensifying scope)	" <i>came</i> with 1,000 dinars"; " <i>dropped</i> them in the Prophet's lap" (physical action verbs)	"'Whatever 'Uthman <i>does</i> ... <i>will not harm</i> him'" (universal quantifier + negative consequence = absolute guarantee)

All narratives follow the pattern [Adversity Frame] → [Extreme Action] → [Divine/Prophetic Validation] realised via:

(a) *Concessive/adversative structures*: *despite, though*, establishing challenging circumstances that maximise the significance of sacrifice.

(b) *Intensive quantification*: *entire, all, 70,000, 100,000, longest, quickest*, emphasising an extreme degree through superlatives and large numbers.

(c) *Temporal immediacy*: *quickest, the sun did not set*, linguistically constructing urgency and totality.

(d) *Validation through direct speech*: Prophetic utterances in quotation marks establish divine approval through an authoritative voice.

Female exemplars consistently receive the active voice in giving contexts (*Asma gave, Sawdah extended, Aishah gave*), stative verbs naturalising disposition (*loved giving, wore patched garments*) and negated possession emphasising deprivation (*did not own, nothing except*). Meanwhile, male exemplars receive active agentive verbs with organisational objects (*conducted business, prepared army, dropped money*), transactive structures with concrete measurable contributions (*army, 1,000 dinars*) and authority validation through prophetic speech acts conferring absolute status. Following exemplar narratives, the discourse employs specific linguistic positioning: "If this was the condition of the Mothers of the Believers and the women of the Companions regarding charity and spending for Allah's cause—and they are *who they are*—then is it *not* more appropriate for those Muslim women who are *less than them*, those whom Allah has given of His bounty, to make preparations for the everlasting life *whilst* they are able and living?"

A linguistic analysis reveals the following:

(a) *Conditional logic*: *if... then*, whereby a premise entails an obligation.

(b) *Identity tautology*: "they are who they are", linguistically constructing an unquestionable elevated status.

(c) *Comparative hierarchy*: *more appropriate, less than them*, positioning contemporary women as inferior and requiring compensation through greater effort.

(d) *Rhetorical negative*: interrogative *is it not* presupposing an affirmative answer.

(e) *Temporal urgency*: *whilst they are able*, creating immediacy.

These narratives function as van Leeuwen's (2007) mythopoesis through distinct linguistic structures. The consistent pattern documented in Table 4 creates linguistic templates presented as authentic Islamic practice. As Lazar (2007) argues, such narratives function as "naturalised models" through linguistic representation, that is, behavioural patterns that appear as genuine Islamic practice rather than constructions serving organisational needs. The female exemplars demonstrate giving despite poverty (Asma: concessive structures), consistent total generosity (Sawdah: superlatives and stative verbs) and radical sacrifice to the point of ignoring family needs (Aishah: temporal immediacy and household need deflection). In parallel, the male exemplar 'Uthman models organisational-scale military funding, receiving the ultimate reward (guaranteed Paradise), establishing military funding as a superlative charitable form and positioning organisational financial support as superseding traditional Islamic charitable priorities.

D. Linguistic Integration – Constructing "Financial Piety" Through Discourse

The three linguistic mechanisms identified through systematic three-stage analysis (citation practice analysis, lexical-semantic analysis and legitimation strategy analysis) operate interdependently across the three-page women's section to construct "financial piety" through language. The commercial lexical field (Mechanism 1) establishes transactional framing through consistent metaphorical vocabulary mapping commerce onto spirituality. The gendered evaluative asymmetry (Mechanism 2) creates guilt through systematic negative characterisation, while modal structures linguistically construct obligation. The exemplar narratives (Mechanism 3) model extreme behaviour via consistent linguistic patterns featuring the most respected female figures in Islamic history. Together, they create what can be called

“rhetorical overdetermination” through language, that is, multiple simultaneous linguistic justifications operating through lexis, syntax and discourse structure, which make resistance psychologically difficult without appearing to reject Islamic faith. A woman encountering this three-page discourse faces comprehensive linguistic positioning operating through van Leeuwen’s (2007) legitimisation strategies realised linguistically. Figure 3 illustrates how four legitimisation strategies operate simultaneously across the lexical, syntactic and discursive levels, creating layered positioning effects.

Women Layered Linguistic Positioning in *Rumiyah Magazine*

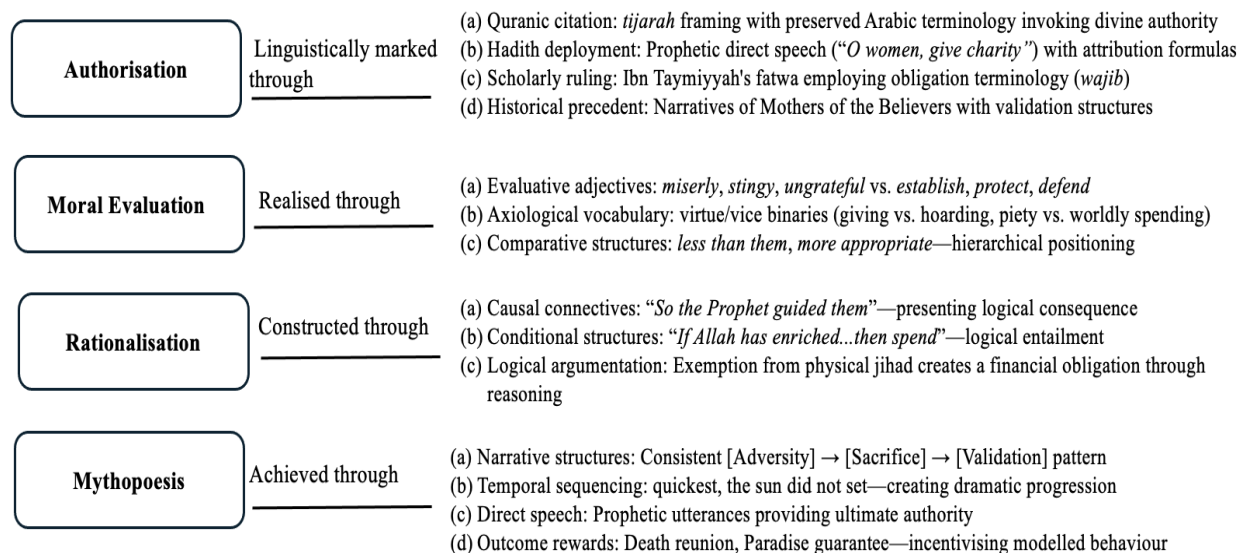


Figure 3. Comprehensive Linguistic Positioning Through Four Legitimation Strategies

As Figure 3 demonstrates, the four legitimisation strategies operate simultaneously; each is realised through distinct linguistic features, yet they all work interdependently to construct obligation. Authorisation invokes religious authority through Quranic citations (preserving Arabic *tijarah* terminology), Hadith deployment (prophetic direct speech “O women, give charity”), scholarly ruling (Ibn Taymiyyah’s *wajib*) and a historical precedent (Mothers of the Believers narratives). Moral evaluation creates virtue/vice binaries through evaluative adjectives (systematic negative lexis for women versus positive for men), axiological vocabulary (giving/hoarding opposition) and comparative hierarchies (*less than them*). Rationalisation presents logical consequences through causal connectives, conditional structures establishing entailment and logical argumentation linking physical exemption to financial obligation. Mythopoesis models desired behaviour through consistent narrative patterns, as documented in Table 4. Temporal sequencing creates urgency, prophetic direct speech validation and outcome rewards that incentivise sacrifice. The comprehensive positioning creates constrained agency realised through specific grammatical patterns. Significantly, “financial piety” is gendered here using linguistic means. While men are encouraged to support *mujahidin* through positive characterisation, women’s unique linguistic positioning is marked by guilt construction through “majority of hellfire” requiring atonement, special jurisprudential obligations (Ibn Taymiyyah’s ruling addressing women specifically), gender-specific exemplars modelling self-denial and a direct vocative address (“O women”) unavailable to male readers.

Women receive active voice and transitive verb structures in economic contexts (linguistic empowerment: *give, spend, make preparations*), while modal obligation (*it is an obligation*), negative evaluation (*miserly, stingy*) and imperative structures (*give, do not hoard*) linguistically channel this agency exclusively towards organisational needs (linguistic constraint). This grammatical pattern creates a double-bind: women must be constructed as economically capable (to provide resources), but this capability must be directed solely towards *mujahidin* through obligation and evaluation. This gendered differentiation exploits the fact that diaspora women often control household finances, receive inheritances or earn independent income, all resources that are mobilisable through religious guilt that men’s participation in physical jihad does not generate (Margolin, 2020; Pearson & Winterbotham, 2017; Pearson et al., 2020; Thakkar & Speckhard, 2024). As Bhatt et al. (2025) argue, extremist discourse appropriates *ummatic* linguistic authority, canonical texts, orthodox citation practices and authoritative discourse markers while strategically deploying English vocabulary and syntactic patterns to advance specific interpretations. The three-page section follows the orthodox Islamic epistemological hierarchy (Quran → Hadith → Scholarly opinion → Historical precedent) documented in Figure 3’s authorisation strategy, lending legitimacy to the discourse through surface linguistic features while serving organisational financial extraction masked as religious obligation through vocabulary choices, modal constructions and narrative framings.

The systematic absence of organisational identification throughout (generic *mujahidin* terminology with nonspecific references appearing 11 times, with no explicit naming) represents a sophisticated linguistic deletion strategy (van

Leeuwen, 2008), which maintains legitimacy through vague references while the organisational context guides interpretation. This linguistic pattern, analysed using applied linguistics methodologies (Brookes & McEnery, 2020; Lin & Luke, 2014), reveals how discourse naturalises organisational extraction as a religious duty through strategic language choices operating simultaneously across the lexical, syntactic and discourse levels.

V. CONCLUSION

This systematic linguistic analysis revealed how extremist propaganda constructs financial piety for women through three interconnected mechanisms operating at the lexical, syntactic and discourse levels. Commercial metaphorical framing systematically deploys economic vocabulary, constructing spiritual obligation as a commercial transaction as a foundational conceptual metaphor, which was documented through comprehensive semantic field analysis. Gendered linguistic economy employs evaluative asymmetry, namely, exclusively negative lexis for women and positive for men, coupled with modal obligation structures and a direct vocative address positioning women as in need of financial atonement. Exemplar narrative structures follow consistent [Adversity] → [Sacrifice] → [Validation] patterns, linguistically modelling extreme sacrifice as a normative female behaviour through Islam's most revered women. These mechanisms create constrained agency through grammatical means: the active voice empowers women as economic actors, while modal obligation and imperative structures channel this agency exclusively towards organisational needs. The discourse appropriates *ummatic* linguistic authority through orthodox citation practices, and English vocabulary, syntactic patterns and selective narrative framing advance interpretations that diverge from traditional Islamic scholarship.

This research makes theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions to linguistics scholarship. It introduces two linguistically grounded concepts: financial piety, which explains how voluntary action lexicon transforms into obligatory vocabulary through semantic shift, modal reconstruction and metaphorical reframing, and constrained agency, which reveals how grammar simultaneously empowers through agentive structures and constrains through obligation modality. Methodologically, it demonstrates a systematic feminist CDA integrating citation practice analysis, lexical-semantic examination and legitimation strategy identification across linguistic levels (vocabulary, syntax and discourse structure), providing a replicable analytical framework. Empirically, the study offers a detailed analysis using comprehensive tables that document commercial semantic fields, gendered evaluative asymmetry and narrative patterns, thus advancing discourse analysis and demonstrating the capacity of CDA to reveal multilayered ideological manipulation. The systematic deletion of organisational identity, with generic *mujahidin* terminology appearing 11 times without explicit naming, represents a sophisticated linguistic strategy (van Leeuwen, 2008) that deserves attention in discourse analysis examining how vague reference enables multiple interpretations and guides preferred readings.

Several limitations of the study suggest directions for future research. First, the analysis focused on a single issue of *Rumiyah*, and a comparative analysis across multiple issues and other extremist publications would strengthen the understanding of these linguistic patterns. Second, examining translations and multilingual versions could reveal how these mechanisms operate across linguistic contexts. Third, future research might also investigate reader reception and resistance strategies, particularly among the targeted female audiences.

Understanding these linguistic mechanisms will inform counter-extremism efforts, which require targeted responses. These may include challenging commercial metaphorical framing through traditional Islamic compassionate vocabulary, recontextualising decontextualised citations via interpretive hedging, providing comprehensive exemplar contextualisation emphasising family welfare priorities, exposing organisational identity deletion and emphasising women's economic autonomy in traditional teachings. Notably, protective education should foster CDA skills for recognising manipulation through commercial metaphors, decontextualised citations, obscured organisational identity and selectively framed narratives.

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Construal Recreation in Song Lyrics Translation: Cognitive Operations and Motivations — A Case Study of Liu Yong's *Wanghaichao*

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Abstract—This study proposes a cognitive translation model integrating Langacker's latest construal theory and category transformations. The model outlines a three-stage process from source text construal decoding, category transformations, to target text construal recreation. An analysis of Liu Yong's *Wanghaichao* and its translations by Xu Yuanchong, and Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie reveals that translators dynamically recreate five dimensions of construal. This process is motivated by embodied cognition, cultural cognition, and iconicity; constrained by the subjectivity and objectivity of construal; and guided by cognitive equivalence. The research offers a cognitive framework for balancing fidelity and adaptability in translation, thereby facilitating the global dissemination of Chinese traditional culture.

Index Terms—construal recreation, cognitive translation model, category transformations, motivations, Song lyrics

I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese classical poetry, a carrier of historical memory and aesthetic cognition, holds profound cross-cultural significance (Ye, 2017). As an integral literary tradition, Song lyrics, hailed as the “representative literature of an era”, are distinguished by graceful rhythm and profound artistic conception, and Liu Yong's *Wanghaichao*, as a key cultural carrier, is renowned for its elaborate depictions of geographical features, historical narratives, and urban customs. However, English translations of classical Chinese poetry have long faced the dilemma of achieving literal equivalence but distorting artistic conception (Jia & Li, 2021). This issue is compounded by Western translators' partial cultural understanding, which often leads to distorted or inaccurate cultural transmission (Pan, 2004). The key challenge thus lies in restoring poetic artistic conception through precise transfer of conceptual meaning.

Rooted in empiricism, cognitive linguistics emphasizes the experiential nature of human cognition, facilitating the understanding of lyrics' artistic conception and providing a new paradigm for translation studies (Wen, 2018). Cognitive translation studies argue that translation involves transferring conceptual meaning between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) (Wang & Chen, 2022), while highlighting the joint role of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge in meaning construction (Si et al., 2025). A core tool for analyzing this meaning transfer is “construal”, defined as conceptualizers' ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate (Langacker, 2019), with its central position in explaining translation processes having been widely acknowledged by scholars.

Construal research in translation focuses on four main aspects, affirming its explanatory value. Theoretically, Tabakowska (1993) first applied construal to literary translation, defining equivalence as image correspondence. Halverson (2003) elaborated on meaning construction through domain-construal integration. Tao (2024) equated translation's decoding and encoding to construal manifesting at both cognitive and linguistic levels. Text-type studies cover various genres like novels (Feret, 2017), public signs (Lu, 2022), etc. Process-oriented studies view construal recreation as a constrained cognitive activity (Tan, 2016), with Tao (2024) further emphasizing translators' subjectivity. Studies on the construction of translation models involve the cognitive equivalence model proposed by Jin and Lin (2015), which has been influential.

Despite these advances, three gaps persist. First, theoretical applications lag behind, as most rely on Langacker's early construal theory without adequately integrating the newly added dimensions of dynamicity and imagination. Second, operational mechanisms for construal recreation remain vague, lacking clarity on specific operations. Third, research on classical Chinese poetry, particularly culturally rich genres like Song lyrics, remains scattered. Therefore, this study investigates Liu Yong's *Wanghaichao* and its two prominent English translations, Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie's faithfulness-oriented version and Xu Yuanchong's three beauties version. Drawing on Langacker's (2019) updated construal theory, it aims to answer: (1) What are the manifestations of construal recreation in translation? (2) What cognitive operations are employed to achieve this recreation? (3) What motivations underpin translators' choices in this process?

II. CONSTRUAL AND CATEGORY TRANSFORMATIONS

A. *Dimensions and Properties of Construal*

Construal theory has evolved dynamically. Langacker (2019) expanded it to include five dimensions: perspective, selection, prominence, dynamicity, and imagination. The addition of dynamicity and imagination is particularly crucial. Dynamicity introduces a temporal dimension, while imagination enables the conceptualization of abstract phenomena, like metaphor and metonymy, that go beyond direct experience (Langacker, 2017, 2019). This study therefore adopts this latest framework to ground its analysis.

Across all dimensions, construal exhibits both subjectivity and objectivity. The former stems from conceptualizers' perceptual experiences, while the latter pertains to the context being construed (Zhang, 2023). These properties are relative: cognition, shaped by the former, is grounded in real-world contexts, ensuring that construal is neither arbitrary nor purely objective. Together, they constrain translational construal recreation, striking a balance between the flexibility to adapt to TT readers and the fidelity to preserve ST's original intent.

B. *Feasibility and Rationale of Category Transformations as the Cognitive Operations of Construal Recreation*

(a). *Feasibility*

The concept of "category" was introduced to translation studies by Catford (1965), with Neubert (1985) and Snell-Hornby (1988) later applying prototype theory to classify ST and TT. Halverson (2000, 2002) empirically confirmed prototype effects in translation, revealing the absence of absolute equivalence. Subsequent research (Wen et al., 2019; Wen & Si, 2020) has solidified category transformation as a core cognitive activity in translation.

This cognitive activity is driven by construal recreation, defined as translators' reconstruction of ST construal in TT. The goal is to achieve cognitive equivalence, ensuring TT readers undergo a cognitive experience comparable to that of ST readers (Jin & Lin, 2015; Tao, 2024). This equivalence is realized through two principles of relevance: maximum relevance requires translators to maximally replicate ST author's construal operations, while optimal relevance involves constructing necessary elements using cognitive operations familiar to TT readers, thereby achieving a maximally comparable experiential effect (Jin & Lin, 2015).

Category transformation, the primary cognitive operation manifesting construal recreation, is divided into linguistic and non-linguistic types (Wen et al., 2019). Linguistic category transformations involve internal adjustments within the language system, and encompass six forms. Word class category transformation alters words' grammatical class; tense-aspect-voice category transformation reconstructs temporal reference, event phase, and agent-patient relationships to replicate ST temporal and relational construal in TT; syntactic category transformation converts ST structures into functionally equivalent but formally different ones in TT to maintain propositional meaning across typological differences; semantic category transformation redistributes semantic roles like agent and patient to fit TT semantic frames while preserving core relational meaning; pragmatic category transformation adjusts ST pragmatic functions to align with TT contextual rules; stylistic category transformation matches ST stylistic features through corresponding ones in TT to ensure comparable aesthetic or interpersonal effects (Wen & Si, 2020).

In contrast, non-linguistic category transformations address relationships between non-linguistic entities or event categories, employing three operations based on categorical correspondence. When ST and TT categories fully correspond, an equivalent category transformation is achieved through direct substitution. For non-corresponding categories, a dislocated category transformation is achieved either through prototype category integration, which involves replacing ST prototypes with TT counterparts, or through hierarchical recategorization, which entails shifting between superordinate, subordinate, or basic-level categories. Finally, when ST categories lack TT equivalents, a vacant category transformation is realized through recategorization, which redefines category boundaries, or through cross-categorization, which converts to another category with reference to cultural or social categories (Wen et al., 2019; Wen & Si, 2020).

(b). *Rationale*

The rationale for framing category transformations as the cognitive operations of construal recreation lies in their logical congruence and theoretical validation. Translation inherently involves construal conflicts stemming from cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences. For instance, Chinese features topic-prominent syntax while English is subject-prominent, and Chinese favors implicit logic whereas English requires explicit cohesion (Chen, 2012). Resolving these conflicts demands reconstruing ST conceptual meaning to align with TT cognitive patterns, ruling out direct replication of the ST construal. Instead, translators aim for optimal or maximum relevance to the ST construal (Jin & Lin, 2015; Tao, 2024).

Category transformations serve as the essential bridge in this process. They convert abstract construal into target-encodable language. Specifically, linguistic category transformations prioritize surface alignment, and non-linguistic category transformations resolve deep cognitive gaps, with preferences shaped by specific construal dimensions and types of category transformation. This forms a logical chain that includes construal conflicts, linguistic and non-linguistic category transformations, and construal recreation. This link is validated by cognitive linguistics, which posits that linguistic structures encode conceptualizations of experience. Categories are thus linguistic manifestations of construal; transforming them aligns TT construal with ST cognitive intent, making category transformations the operational carrier of construal recreation (Wen & Si, 2020).

Practically, the relationship is flexible, with no rigid one-to-one mapping between construal dimensions and category transformation types. For instance, emphasizing an action's agent might involve linguistic adjustments such as subject modification and passive voice or non-linguistic adjustments such as adding cultural background depending on language-system differences, text style, translators' cognition and target audience's capacity. This flexibility arises from construal's subjectivity and objectivity because translators must ground their work in ST content and intent while adapting to TT cognitive habits, manifesting their subjectivity, cognitive ability and creativity (Zhang, 2023). Ultimately, translators' choices of category transformations are guided by both objective constraints adhering to ST content and intent, and subjective factors involving their proficiency, cultural framework, translation philosophy, and evaluation of TT audience comprehension, etc. This balance ensures precise conceptual delivery with adaptive flexibility.

C. Cognitive Translation Model Based on Construal and Category Transformations in Song Lyrics

Translation is a cognitive activity involving comprehending ST and reconstructing its conceptual meaning in TT (Wang & Chen, 2022). For song lyrics translation, this cognitive process is divided into intralingual and interlingual translation, corresponding respectively to the two core sub-processes of cognitive translation. The former focuses on transferring conceptual meaning from classical to modern Chinese by resolving diachronic gaps such as archaic syntax, allusions, and diction; the latter seeks to recreate ST construal under dual constraints, including linguistic differences between Chinese and English and cultural incommensurability (Chen, 2012).

Building on this, the study integrates Langacker's (2019) construal theory with song lyric translation, operationalized through category transformations. It proposes a three-stage cognitive translation model (see Figure 1): (1) decoding ST construal, (2) maintaining or adjusting construal via category transformations, and (3) recreating construal in TT. This model follows two guiding principles: the dual properties of construal and the principle of cognitive equivalence. Its goal is to ensure TT readers attain cognitive experiences analogous to those of ST readers (Jin & Lin, 2015).

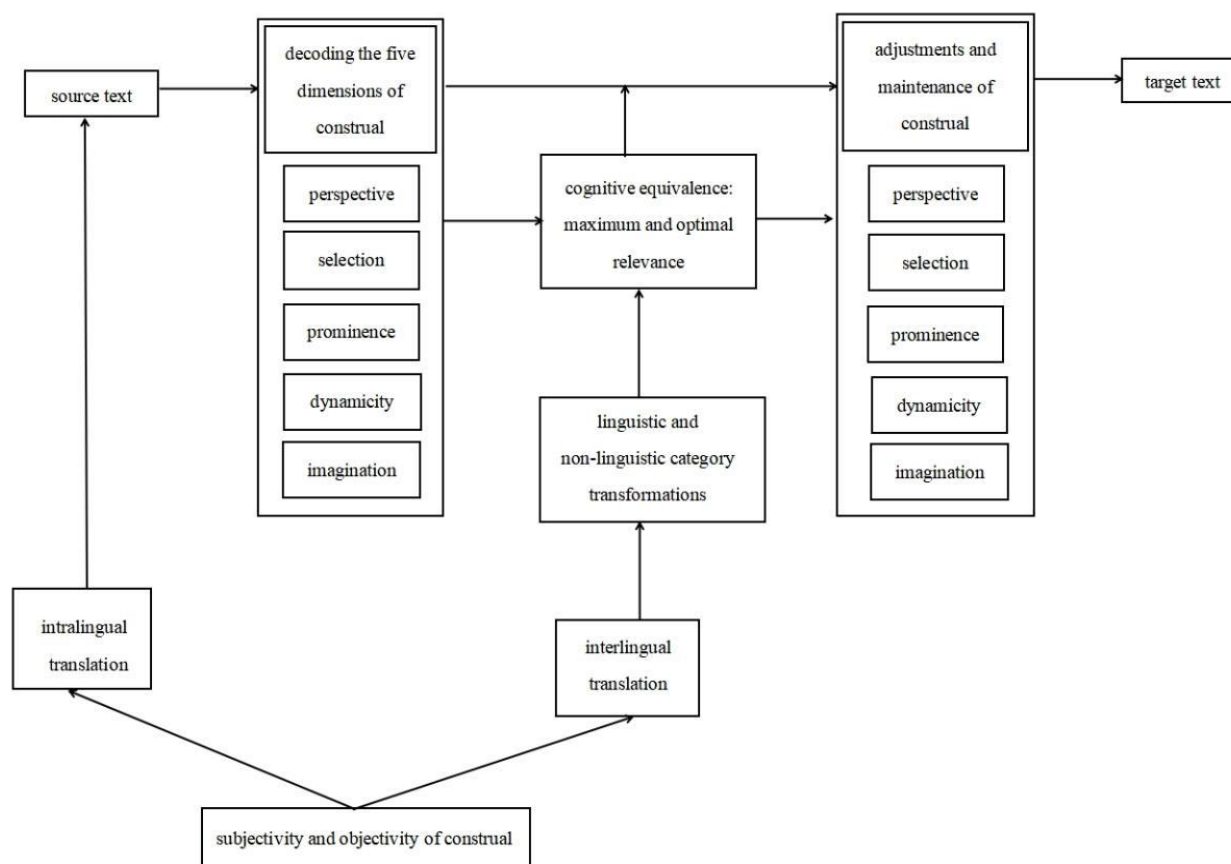


Figure 1. Cognitive Translation Model Based on Construal and Category Transformations

(a). Intralingual Translation

Intralingual translation, the premise for interlingual reconstruction (Jia & Li, 2021), focuses on decoding ST construal by resolving diachronic cognitive barriers such as classical allusions, archaic syntax, and culturally specific items. Translators must possess both encyclopedic knowledge of Song Dynasty history, traditions, and lyricists' worldviews, and a firm grasp of classical poetic conventions.

As a paradigmatic diachronic text requiring intralingual translation, Song lyrics exhibit distinct traits: obscured personhood, numerical ambiguity, imagery juxtaposition, and indistinct tense-aspect. They also include non-linguistic,

culturally loaded elements, such as symbolic images, proper names, and the rhetorical devices of *Bi* (metaphor) and *Xing* (affective evocation). *Bi* functions as similarity-based comparison, while *Xing* evokes affective association through contextual relevance (Feng, 2021), all reflecting ancient Chinese people's unique conceptualization. These elements are critical to decoding ST construal, a process constrained by construal's inherent subjectivity and objectivity.

(b). *Interlingual Translation*

Guided by intralingual decoding, interlingual translation recreates ST construal through linguistic and non-linguistic category transformations. Adhering to cognitive equivalence, translators decide whether to maintain or adjust the construal by assessing the similarity between ST and TT construal dimensions, based on linguistic typology and cultural conceptualization. When dimensions are similar, they employ category transformations to meticulously replicate the poet's construal, aiming for maximum relevance to ST; otherwise, they prioritize optimal relevance, using category transformations to recreate necessary elements and adapt the construal to TT readers' familiar dimensions (Jin & Lin, 2015). Both linguistic and non-linguistic category transformations are essential; the former adapts to TT linguistic habits, while the latter handles heavily culturally loaded items like allusions and proper names. These operations collectively guarantee effective ST construal recreation in TT.

This model operationalizes the five-dimensional construal theory through category transformations, integrating the theory's dual properties with cognitive equivalence. Its core process involves two stages: intralingual decoding of ST construal to resolve diachronic and cultural barriers, followed by interlingual recreation in TT via linguistic and non-linguistic category transformations. By balancing fidelity to ST construal with cognitive adaptability for TT readers, the model advances the "cognitive turn" in translation studies. Applied to two English translations of *Wanghaichao*, it demonstrates efficacy across all five construal dimensions.

III. CONSTRUAL RECREATION AND COGNITIVE OPERATIONS IN THE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF *WANGHAICHAO*

This section investigates how Yang and Dai and Xu achieve construal recreation through systematic category transformations.

A. *Perspective Recreation and Category Transformations*

Perspective, defined as the angle of event description, encompasses subject-object asymmetry, vantage point, reference point, and scope, reflecting how lexical-grammatical structures shape event perception (Langacker, 2019). In Song lyrics, perspective is often obscured by implicit subjects, covert tense-aspect-voice, and culturally specific vantage and reference points, rooted in classical Chinese's topic-prominent syntax and cultural cognition (Feng, 2021). Construal recreation thus requires linguistic and non-linguistic category transformations to bridge cross-linguistic and cross-cultural gaps.

Example 1

ST: 东南形胜，三吴都会，钱塘自古繁华。

TT (Yang and Dai): A place of scenic beauty in the southeast, the metropolis in the region of the Three Wu's (Three prefectures of the ancient State of Wu.), Qiantang (Former name of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province) has flourished since ancient times.

TT (Xu): Scenic splendor southeast of River Blue, And capital of ancient Kingdom Wu, Qiantang's as flourishing as e'er.

(a). *Intralingual Translation*

The perspective in Example 1 is decoded by resolving diachronic and cultural barriers. First, the subject-object relationship presents an implicit binary structure of a hidden poet-explicit scenery, with the observer indirectly manifested through descriptions. Second, the vantage point is a super-spatiotemporal panorama originating from "东南", embedding the cultural-geographical presupposition of "southeastern territory within Huaxia". Third, the scope hierarchy follows a logic of spatial contraction, moving from the macro "东南" to the meso "三吴" and finally to the micro "钱塘". Fourth, the reference points "三吴" and "钱塘" are culturally specific historical-geographical categories. The former refers to three Wu-related regions, while the latter refers to the sand dike of the Qiantang River in today's Hangzhou. Finally, subjectivity and objectivity are integrated through a fusion of geographical and administrative facts with implicit poetic evaluation.

(b). *Interlingual Translation*

Yang and Dai reproduce the ST's perspective through various category transformations, enabling TT readers to experience its macro panoramic view and layered focus.

To address subject-object asymmetry, they employ syntactic category transformation: paratactic noun phrases are converted into hypotactic clauses with explicit subjects, establishing an "interpreter-scenery" relationship that aligns with English's subject-prominent syntax. Regarding the vantage point, equivalent category transformation rephrases "东南" as "in the southeast", a neutral spatial term that strips its "Huaxia territory" presupposition to align with TT readers' universal geographical cognition. Scope hierarchy is recreated through syntactic and pragmatic category transformations, turning the ST's parataxis into a nested structure and contextualizing "钱塘" with "Zhejiang Province" to establish an

explicit hierarchy. This transforms the ST's implicit spatial contraction into a clear nested structure. For reference points, pragmatic category transformation clarifies “三吴” via annotation, while the combination of this transformation and transliteration anchors “钱塘” to “Hangzhou”. This coordinated strategy activates the reader's geographical cognitive schema to compensate for a lack of historical-cultural knowledge. On the subjectivity-objectivity axis, hierarchical category transformation downgrades the basic-level category “形胜” to the subordinate category “scenic beauty”, isolating the aesthetic dimension. Additionally, word class and tense category transformations shift the nominal “繁华” to the verbal phrase “has flourished”, which conveys continuity explicitly and precisely, thereby weakening poetic subjectivity and strengthening the transmission of objective fact.

By contrast, Xu prioritizes poetic cognitive logic, employing category transformations that enable TT readers to experience the ST's fusion of scene and emotion. For subject-object asymmetry, hierarchical category transformation converts “形胜” to “scenic splendor”, intensifying the poetic evaluation and shifting the subject from an implicit observer to an explicit aesthetic appreciator. Regarding vantage point, hierarchical category transformation renders “东南” as the poetic image “River Blue”, replacing geographical division with a space of poetic association. For scope hierarchy, syntactic category transformation splits “东南形胜” into a compact, parallel focus, aligning with the principle of beauty in form. For reference points, hierarchical category transformation elevates “三吴” from an administrative division to “ancient Kingdom Wu”, evoking historical-poetic cognition and matching the /u:/ rhyme in the preceding line, but lacking accuracy. “钱塘” is retained as a transliterated poetic symbol, prioritizing cultural exoticism over geographical precision. In balancing subjectivity and objectivity, hierarchical category transformation blurs temporal logic by converting “自古” to “e'er”, weakening objective historical continuity and sacrificing factual details to strengthen lyrical mood. This approach is less accurate than Yang and Dai's version.

B. Selection Recreation and Category Transformations

Selection, a cognitive process managing mental complexity, involves observing entities through activating a conceptual substrate. It encompasses attentional hierarchy, specificity, and profile choice (Langacker, 2019). Song lyrics, characterized by conciseness, image Juxtaposition, implicitness of number/tense/logic, and deep cultural embedding (Feng, 2021), require translators to properly recreate such selection strategies through various category transformations to align with TT readers' cognitive habits while preserving the poet's observational focus.

Example 2

ST: 烟柳画桥，风帘翠幕。

TT (Yang and Dai): Clouded willow trees and bright painted bridges; windbreak window drapes and kingfisher-feathered curtains.

TT (Xu): The smoke like willows form a windproof screen; adorned with painted bridges and curtains green.

(a). Intralingual Translation

Decoding the ST's selection involves resolving condensed syntax and culturally embedded imagery. Attentional hierarchy establishes a macro Jiangnan water town scope, with “烟柳” and “画桥” as primary static foci, while “风帘” and “翠幕” as secondary details, constructing an objective “foreground-background” cognitive framework. Specificity is achieved through lexical precision: “烟” specifies the willows' hazy quality, and “翠” denotes a vivid color, though their full interpretation depends on cultural associations with Jiangnan scenery. Profile choice operates via metonymy, where “烟柳” and “画桥” trigger part-for-whole associations, requiring readers' shared knowledge to construe a holistic aesthetic world.

(b). Interlingual Translation

Yang and Dai prioritize structural fidelity, reflecting an objective adherence to the ST's form and the subjective mediation of cultural gaps. Regarding attentional hierarchy, syntactic category transformation retains parallelism through “and”, preserving the primary-secondary focus. However, the macro-cultural context of “Jiangnan” is adjusted through vacant category transformation. As English lacks a direct equivalent for the cultural landscape symbol “烟柳画桥”, its implicit regional association is stripped, reducing the scene to a purely visual one. For example, “clouded willow trees” retains the hazy quality but severs its link to “Jiangnan spring mist”, shifting the focus from cultural presupposition to the physical object. For specificity, multiple category transformations are employed to clarify visual details. Word class category transformation converts the noun “烟” to the adjective “clouded”, directly describing the willows. Semantic category transformation amplifies “画桥” with “bright”, adjusting its semantic role from implicit decoration to explicit color intensity. “风帘” is rendered as “windbreak window drapes”, shifting its semantic role from dynamic imagery to a functional-locational one. This preserves visual detail while stripping away cultural connotations. Additionally, vacant category transformation recategorizes “翠”, the superordinate cultural color connoting jade and vitality, into the object-attribute “kingfisher-feathered”, concretizing the color through a specific visual referent. For profile choice, the metonymic mechanism is reconstructed from a “cultural whole” to a “visual part”. A typical example is the prototype category integration of “画桥” into “bright painted bridge”, emphasizing visual vibrancy over cultural refinement.

By contrast, Xu prioritizes aesthetic equivalence by balancing maximal relevance, preserving core ST elements, and optimal relevance, minimizing TT readers' cognitive efforts. Regarding attentional hierarchy, syntactic category transformation converts the condensed parallel four-character phrases to a main clause and participial phrase. This reduces the syntactic prominence of “风帘” and “翠幕”, but compensates with semantic prominence: “windproof” highlights the former's function and “green” preserves the latter's color, maintaining the core hierarchy to align with the ST's “human-nature harmony” construal. For specificity, coordinated category transformations preserve the lexical fine-grainedness and imagery density of ST. Word class transformation converts “烟” from a noun into the prepositional phrase “smoke like” to retain haziness via a familiar simile. Semantic and pragmatic category transformations adapt the attribute focus by shifting “风帘” from “natural vitality” imagery to “windproof screen”, aligning with English conventions. Stylistic category transformation uses the poetic syntax “curtains green” to mimic the ST's “color-entity” juxtaposition, partially retaining its conciseness. The ST's “part-to-whole” metonymy, rooted in cultural knowledge of Jiangnan scenery, is reconstructed through two types of transformation. For “烟柳”, prototype integration merges the cultural concept of “Jiangnan spring mist” with the visual prototype of “smoke” via simile, shifting the logic from cultural association to visual similarity. For “翠幕”, hierarchical recategorization simplifies the culturally rich color “翠” to the basic-level green, reducing cognitive load. The resulting phrase “curtains green” compensates for this loss of cultural granularity with stylistic specificity.

C. Prominence Recreation and Category Transformations

Prominence, arising from conceptual asymmetry in profile-base and trajector-landmark relationships (Langacker, 2019), is often conveyed indirectly in Song lyrics through image juxtaposition and ellipsis. Its expression is constrained by formal brevity, contextual dependence, and cultural symbolism, making its recreation in translation a process of balancing fidelity with cognitive accessibility. This process necessitates category transformations to bridge cross-linguistic and cultural gaps, and is shaped by the dynamic interplay between the objective prominence structure and the translators' subjective choices.

Example 3

ST: 千骑拥高牙，乘醉听萧鼓，吟赏烟霞。

TT (Yang and Dai): With a flag surrounded by a mounted retinue a thousand strong; to enjoy music while in my cups, to chant verses while admiring the mist and clouds at twilight.

TT (Xu): With flags before and guards behind you come; drunken, you may listen to flute and drum, chanting the praises loud of the land beneath the cloud.

(a). Intralingual Translation

The ST's prominence emerges from hierarchical profile-base dynamics and trajector-landmark interactions, integrating objective structure and subjective interpretation. Three progressive scenes establish the base. The first is ceremonial where “拥” foregrounds authority against the landmark “高牙”; the second is feasting where “听” is foregrounded against “箫鼓”, with “醉” subjectively elevating the experience; the third is natural where “吟赏” integrates expression and appreciation against the landmark “烟霞”. These scenes are paralleled by trajector-landmark interactions that create objective images, which are then subjectively interpreted by readers. Consequently, prominence progresses from the external action of “拥” and sensory perception of “听” to an internalized feeling-scene integration in “吟赏”. This trajectory reflects both an objective scene sequence, and its corresponding subjective emotional deepening, advancing from power to relaxation and finally to transcendence.

(b). Interlingual Translation

Yang and Dai prioritize structural fidelity, retaining the ST's prominence structure through subjective category transformations to achieve cognitive equivalence. For profile-base dynamics, they preserve the progressive base across the three scenes. For the ceremonial base, they use syntactic category transformation to convert the S-V-O structure of “千骑拥高牙” into a prepositional phrase, preserving the background-foreground relationship and retaining the power imagery. For the feasting base, pragmatic category transformation explicates the implicit trajector as the first-person “my”, aligning with English conventions, and keeping the protagonist's emotional perspective as the focal point, thus preserving the base's function of shifting from physical to spiritual experience. For the natural base, pragmatic category transformation adds “at twilight” to anchor “烟霞” to a concrete spatiotemporal frame, resolving cultural presupposition gaps while retaining the landmark for natural harmony. Parallel to preserving profile-base dynamics, Yang and Dai sustain trajector-landmark relationships across scenes. For the ceremonial scene, the interaction between the trajector “千骑” and landmark “高牙” is retained via word class transformation, reclassifying the noun “骑” as an adjectival participle “mounted retinue” to explicate the riding state and reinforce the imperial grandeur imagery. In the feasting scene, hierarchical category transformation elevates the basic-level instruments “箫鼓” to the superordinate term “music”, enhancing sensory immersion and mirroring the shift from physical intoxication to spiritual relaxation. In the natural scene, part-to-whole metonymy is retained, with the trajector interacting with “烟霞” through “吟赏”, preserving the evocation of human-nature harmony.

Xu, conversely, focuses on cognitive accessibility, using category transformations to bridge cultural gaps and enhance reader comprehension, while maintaining the ST's essential prominence. For profile-base dynamics, he adjusts the cognitive schemas to ensure accessibility for TT readers. In the ceremonial scene, hierarchical category transformation converts “高牙” into “flags”, reducing the cultural specificity of the base to activate a more familiar and generalized schema. In the leisure scene, word class transformation elevates the verbal phrase “乘醉” to the adjectival “Drunken”, emphasizing the trajector's agency. In the aesthetic scene, hierarchical category transformation shifts the base from the abstract symbol “烟霞” to the concrete visual landscape “land beneath the cloud”. This subjective schema expansion makes the base more accessible by providing a tangible backdrop for the foregrounded action. Corresponding adjustments to trajector-landmark interactions include preserving objective interaction in the ceremonial scene through syntactic restructuring while introducing a second-person perspective to enhance engagement; retaining “flute and drum” in the leisure scene to foreground sensory input and listener agency; and facilitating direct interaction in the aesthetic scene through the trajector's “chanting the praises loud of the land”, explicitizing the human-nature connection while retaining the landmark's symbolic role as a site of transcendence.

D. Dynamicity Recreation and Category Transformations

Dynamicity, a newly added construal dimension, stems from the temporal unfolding of conceptualization, distinct from the described situation's time (Langacker, 2019). It involves two mental scanning processes: sequential scanning processes events step-by-step and is crucial for verbs profiling evolving relationships, while summary scanning captures a holistic gestalt by activating all temporal phases simultaneously (Zhang, 2023). In Song lyrics, dynamicity is often implied by verbless clauses and vague or implicit tenses, requiring category transformations to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps.

Example 4

ST: 羌管弄晴，菱歌泛夜，嬉嬉钓叟莲娃。

TT (Yang and Dai): The sound of flutes soars up to the sunny skies, the singing of folk songs breaks the silence of night, happy are the old anglers and girls collecting water chestnuts.

TT (Xu): Northwestern pipes play with sunlight; water chestnut songs are sung by starlight; old fishermen and maidens young all beam with smiles.

(a). Intralingual Translation

The ST's dynamicity is constructed across four dimensions. In processing time, three sequential clauses create a linear cognitive flow: from the auditory perception of “羌管” to “菱歌”, ending in the audio-visual perception of “钓叟” and “莲娃”. In conceived time, “晴” and “夜” establish a day-night sequence, with the first two clauses creating a temporal leap while the final one extends continuity via summary scanning. For mental scanning, sequential scanning operates in “弄” and “泛”, characterized by incremental sound propagation, while summary scanning in “嬉嬉” activates the temporal phases of collective joy to perceive the figures “钓叟莲娃” as a static and holistic group. In dynamic-static construal, “弄” and “泛” merge the static “晴” and “夜” into dynamic components, framing sound as an active entity to integrate isolated temporal elements into a cohesive landscape.

(b). Interlingual Translation

Yang and Dai prioritize preserving the objective dynamic structure of ST while employing subjective category transformations to align with TT readers' habits. For processing time, they use syntactic category transformation to convert parallel subjectless clauses into subject-predicate structures by adding explicit subjects while retaining the ST's clause order. This preserves the cognitive flow from the sound of “羌管” to the main figures “钓叟莲娃”. Equivalent category transformation renders “钓叟” as “old anglers”, and hierarchical category transformation elevates “晴” to “sunny skies”, anchoring cognitive extension from sound dynamics to characters' state and environment. In terms of conceived time, tense-aspect category transformation converts implicit tenses to English simple present, enhancing immediacy and scene dynamism. For mental scanning, sequential scanning is preserved through verb expansion: “弄” expands to “soars up” for vertical sound diffusion, and “泛” expands to “breaks the silence” for horizontal song spread. Summary scanning is reinforced through syntactic category transformation: the inverted structure fronts “Happy” to emphasize collective joy, while adding “collecting water chestnuts” embeds action details, balancing static imagery with a sense of process. Prototypical category transformation adjusts the scanning objects by rendering “羌管”, a Qiang instrument without an English equivalent, to the superordinate term “flutes”, retaining the wind instrument's sound properties familiar to TT readers. In dynamic-static construal, syntactic category transformation preserves the dynamic essence through verb phrase expansion. Prepositional phrases like “to the sunny skies” and “of night” transform static backgrounds into dynamic propagation carriers, continuing the ST's static-to-dynamic activation. Additionally, prototypical category transformation adjusts interaction modes: “菱歌” is rendered as “folk songs”, shifting focus to the general sound-environment relation and aligning with English cognitive schemas for folk music. “莲娃” is converted to “water chestnut-picking girls” through cross-scenario integration, unifying the imagery and retaining the dynamic role of female pickers to ensure consistency in the reader's cognition of character actions.

In contrast, Xu prioritizes cross-cultural cognitive accessibility, enhancing readability while retaining the ST's dynamic essence through various category transformations. For processing time, Xu uses syntactic category transformation to add subjects as shown in the translation, maintaining the cognitive hierarchy of "from object to sound to person". Basic-level category correspondence renders "钓叟" as "old fishermen", and hierarchical category transformation recategorizes "莲娃" to "maidens young", omitting the culture-specific lotus-picking scene to adapt to English readers' unfamiliarity. This ensures semantic and syntactic equivalence between TT and ST, while anchoring cognitive extension from sound dynamics to human states. In conceived time, hierarchical category transformation converts abstract "晴" and "夜" to concrete "sunlight" and "starlight" to keep the day to night timeline, fusing temporal sequence with vivid imagery. For mental scanning, syntactic category transformation converts "弄" and "泛" to "play with sunlight" and "are sung by starlight", shifting from active propagation to environmental interaction. This dynamism is compensated by semantic concretization of "晴" and "夜" to form interactive scenes. In dynamic-static construal, prototypical category integration renders "羌管" as "Northwestern pipes" to address cultural conflicts. Voice category transformation adjusts the interaction mode by changing "弄晴" to "play with sunlight" and "泛夜" to "are sung by starlight", shifting from dynamic dominance to dynamic-static accompaniment, with the passive voice "are sung" weakening action.

E. Imagination Recreation and Category Transformations

Imagination, a newly added dimension of construal, encompasses four interrelated mental abilities: extensionality, referring to unifying multiple entities in a single representational space; integration, involving connecting entities through mental operations; disengagement, entailing projecting cognition beyond the immediate context via mental simulation; and abstraction referring to the reduction of specific information in the process of forming mental representations, that is, distilling specific experiences into information-poor symbolic structures (Langacker, 2019; Zhang, 2023). In Song lyrics translation, the cognitive contrast between intuitive, image-based thinking in ancient Chinese thought and rational, logic-driven Western thinking (Lian, 2010; Feng, 2021) necessitates strategic deployment of linguistic and non-linguistic category transformations to recreate ST's imagination.

Example 5

ST: 异日图将好景，归去凤池夸。

TT (Yang and Dai): When one day you win promotion with glory, you will praise this place at Phoenix Pool (the imperial cabinet or court in general) profusely.

TT (Xu): You may picture the scene another day, and boast to the Court where you'll go in full array.

(a). Intralingual Translation

The imagination in this line is decoded as follows: Extensionality unites the entities "异日", "好景", "图", "归去", "凤池", and "夸" in a single representational space. Integration forges them into a causal chain: "异日" prompts "图将好景", which enables returning to "凤池" to "夸", linking static scenery to dynamic action. Disengagement projects the poet's perspective into a simulated, non-actual scenario, creating the line's imaginative power. Abstraction distills concrete experience into symbols: "好景" is stripped of specific sensory details and elevated to represent the poet's successful tenure, while "凤池" evolves from the Central Secretariat, ancient Chinese bureaucratic institution, to a symbol of power and success.

(b). Interlingual Translation

Yang and Dai prioritize preserving the ST's objective imaginative framework while adapting to English cognitive patterns through coordinated category transformations. For extensionality, they unify the six ST entities through coordinated category transformations. The core "time-means-process-place-action" framework is retained through semantic role explicitation. "异日" is rendered as "when one day" via tense-aspect category transformation to explicitize the implicit futurity, complemented by hierarchical category transformation that generalizes a specific future point to a universal temporal domain, aligning with English demand for overt temporality. The abstract "好景" symbolizing fine prospect and success is semantically downgraded to the concrete "this place" through hierarchical category transformation, anchoring TT readers in a tangible location. The action "图" and the process "归去" are merged into the single outcome "winning promotion", streamlining the causal logic through syntactic category transformation. The culture-specific term "凤池" is translated directly to preserve its symbolic label through equivalent category transformation, supplemented by pragmatic category transformation that adds "the imperial cabinet" as an annotation to bridge cultural gaps.

For integration, these transformations are synthesized: "归去凤池夸" is restructured syntactically into "praise this place at Phoenix Pool", demoting the process to a locative adverbial to align with English focus-fronting. This is paired with semantic role redistribution, which compresses the entire means-to-an-end sequence into the single, goal-oriented concept of "winning promotion". For disengagement, temporal projection is made explicit through markers like "will praise" and "when one day", collectively signaling a simulated future scenario. For abstraction, symbolic meaning is balanced with accessibility; "凤池" retains its symbolic label, while "好景" is concretized to "this place", offset by the context of "winning promotion", implicitly restoring its abstract connotation of success.

In contrast, Xu prioritizes cognitive accessibility, using category transformations to lower the reader's cognitive load

while preserving the ST's imaginative core. For extensionality, the representational space is unified through syntactic restructuring, where hypotactic coordination replaces the ST's paratactic clauses. This frames the entities under the superordinate concept of "future planning", aligning with the English preference for explicit logical connectors. For integration, the causal chain is simplified. Specifically, semantic category transformation clarifies the implicit agent, the poet, as the generalized "you", providing a shared reference point for linking entities. The chain is condensed to the sequence of "depicting a scene" and then "boasting at court", thereby retaining the "means-to-goal" logic while omitting procedural details for conciseness. For disengagement, the simulation of a non-actual scenario is strengthened through tense-aspect and semantic category transformations. The modal verb "may" converts the ST's assertive future into an open, hypothetical scenario. The agent "you" elevates personal imagination to a shared cognitive experience, weakening the scene's tie to a concrete reality. For abstraction, Xu focuses on cross-cultural symbolic transmission. "好景" undergoes semantic generalization to "the scene", shifting its meaning from a specific "beautiful scenery" to the more abstract "scene worth depicting", which is then linked to "图" to imply a "depictable achievement". For "凤池", pragmatic category transformation is employed by translating it as "the Court", activating a corresponding concept of a "center of power" for TT readers. This is complemented by hierarchical recategorization, elevating the specific bureaucratic term to the superordinate, cross-cultural symbol of "the ultimate stage of success".

F. Summary

Cognitive incommensurability between ST and TT necessitates construal recreation through category transformations. These transformations serve as a technical bridge, operationalizing the balance between fidelity and accessibility. Specifically, linguistic category transformations address surface-level typological gaps, while non-linguistic category transformations resolve deeper cultural-cognitive incommensurability.

Across the five construal dimensions, Yang and Dai prioritize structural fidelity through hybrid category transformations, thereby preserving the ST's cognitive architecture for readers seeking historical-cultural accuracy. In contrast, Xu emphasizes cognitive accessibility through adaptive transformations, recreating construal to resonate with TT readers' aesthetic schemas. Together, these approaches enable cognitive equivalence by aligning the objectivity of construal with the subjective cognitive experience of readers.

IV. MOTIVATIONS BEHIND CONSTRUAL RECREATION

Cognitive translation studies emphasize both description and explanation (Wen et al., 2019), thus requiring an exploration of the underlying motivations behind construal recreation. In Song lyrics translation, this process is driven by the dynamic interplay of embodied cognition, cultural cognition, and iconicity. These three factors collectively guide translators to balance fidelity to ST with TT readers' acceptability, aiming for cross-cultural cognitive equivalence.

A. Embodied Cognition

Embodied cognition, arising from body-environment interaction, provides the fundamental perceptual material for construal. Its universality offers a shared platform for cross-linguistic transfer (Lakoff, 1987; Halverson, 2003).

For instance, the brightness of "晴" and darkness of "夜" are universally perceived, allowing direct translation. However, cultural specificity challenges this transfer when perceptual paths are embedded, as with the Chinese "烟柳", which evokes the culturally specific image of "Jiangnan spring mist". To bridge this gap, translators employ category transformations. Yang and Dai use a semantic category transformation to render it as "clouded willow trees", preserving the hazy visual while stripping the geographical presupposition. Xu opts for prototype category integration, translating it as "The smoke like willows" to map the unfamiliar "misty" prototype onto the English readers' familiar "smoke" imagery, and to pursue the aesthetic meaning of ST. This strategy of preserving common experiences while adapting culturally specific ones defines the feasible boundaries for subsequent cultural and formal choices.

B. Cultural Cognition

Building on this perceptual foundation, cultural cognition shapes raw experience into sociocultural conceptual frameworks. As translation is inherently intertwined with culture (Bernárdez, 2013), language, cognition, and culture intersect profoundly, with culture shaping language structure and realizing experiential conceptualization through cognitive structures like imagery and categories (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007). Construal recreation thus must retain the ST's cultural core, such as untranslatable cultural imagery or historical allusion connotations, while aligning with the TT's cultural cognitive framework to avoid "cultural mismatch" (Wen, 2024).

Specifically, for universal cultural experiences, meanings are conveyed via equivalent category transformations. For culturally specific expressions like "三吴" or "凤池", rooted in historical geography or bureaucratic culture, translators reconstruct cognitive frameworks through dislocated or vacant category transformations, retaining the cognitive framework for TT readers. This process endows embodied perception with sociocultural significance, setting aesthetic boundaries for formal expression.

C. Iconicity

Iconicity, as the formal carrier of construal, reinforces the link between form and meaning through intrinsic similarity

between linguistic symbols and cognitive experiences (Calfoglou, 2014), guiding translators to preserve “form-meaning isomorphism” via category transformations. Main types of iconicity include order, quantity, distance, and symmetry (Tabakowska, 2013; Wen, 2018). It reflects the cognitive principle of recognizing the world through similarities, and allows for an analysis of the underlying cognitive models that govern how meaning is expressed in TT (Chen, 2023).

Objectively, iconicity is anchored to the ST’s inherent features: linguistic order must align with event sequences, as in “羌管弄晴，菱歌泛夜”，where both Xu, and Yang and Dai retain the “day-night” timeline to preserve temporal cognition. Subjectively, translators adapt to TT cultural norms: the Chinese “four-character structure” parallelism of “烟柳画桥，风帘翠幕” is rendered by Yang and Dai with “and” to maintain structural symmetry, while Xu uses a semicolon and rhyming “green” to compensate with rhythmic harmony. This formal adjustment, guided by cultural cognition’s demand for readability within cultural norms, ensures iconicity reinforces rather than conflicts with cultural meaning transmission.

V. CONCLUSION

This study develops a cognitive translation model, analyzing two English translations of Liu Yong’s *Wanghaichao*. It finds that translators recreate the ST’s construal through linguistic and non-linguistic category transformations, which is constrained by the dual properties of construal, guided by cognitive equivalence, and motivated by embodied cognition, cultural cognition, and iconicity. Theoretically, it integrates Langacker’s updated five-dimensional construal theory with category transformations, offering insights into translation cognitive operations. However, focusing on a single text limits its generalizability to other classical Chinese poetry, and lacking empirical data weakens model validation. Future research should expand the scope of poetic texts, and adopt empirical methods.

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From *Zāy* to *Ẓā'*: A Linguistic and Qualitative Contrastive Study in *Lisān al-‘Arab*

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Abstract—This study hypothesizes that the Arabic consonant *ẓā'* historically developed from *zāy* through early phonological transformations. It examines this proposition via a qualitative reading of *Lisān al-‘Arab*, focusing on *z/ẓ* root pairs that share a common semantic nucleus. The analysis aims to identify the phonetic contexts and trajectories of sound development that explain this evolution as a process of emphatic drift rather than a systemic phonological shift. The study also addresses the absence of a precise historical explanation for the origin of *ẓā'*, whether it represents an original Proto-Semitic sound or a later derivation from *zāy* within dialectal environments that later stabilized in Classical Arabic. Using an internal descriptive-contrastive approach, the research traces loci of alternation within root structures and their semantic environments, analyzing letter position, vowel quality, gemination, and adjacency to emphatic or velarized consonants. Only root pairs that exhibit a demonstrable shared semantic nucleus are included. Findings indicate a directional shift from *z* to *ẓ*, where *zāy* denotes motion, fluidity, and openness, while *ẓā'* represents heaviness, enclosure, and stillness. These distinctions reveal meaning-driven functional specialization rather than incidental phonetic variation. Future research should expand quantitative analysis through phono-morphological tagging and articulatory experiments to verify the hypothesis of emphatic drift across early Arabic texts.

Index Terms—*ẓā'*, phonological alternation, emphatic drift, sound change, semantic nucleus

I. INTRODUCTION

Phonological development has been one of the most pronounced indicators of linguistic change in Arabic and other Semitic languages. A language that is still spoken changes its forms and pronunciation due to dialectal, social, and geographical influences that can be easily detected. The variations among the different Arab tribes had an impact on Qur'ānic recitations and thus created a big area for the early Arab philologists who were very careful in describing and analyzing speech sounds to work with (Al-Jallad, 2020).

This scholarly attention is evident in the foundational works of al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad in *al-‘Ayn* (Ibn Aḥmad, 1999), Sībawayh in *al-Kitāb* (Sībawayh, 1988), and Ibn Jinnī in *Sirr Šinā‘at al-I‘rāb* (Ibn Jinnī, 2000). Through their categorization of the manner of articulation, variations of sounds (*ibdāl*), assimilations (*idghām*), and vowel changes (*i‘lāl*), and their connection with real linguistic use, the pioneers have established the foundations of Arabic phonology (al-Jubūrī, 2023). The contributions of these researchers thus signal the advent of a systematic approach to and reasoning of Arabic phonetics.

Arabic is distinguished by the letter '*ẓā'*' as one of the most peculiar and multifaceted letters in its whole alphabet because not only do various dialects possess their own pronunciation of the letter but also different time periods in the language's history have their own pronunciations (Ben ‘Īsā, 2017). For a long time, the differences in the sound of '*ẓā'*' have been a major factor that kept *fuṣṣḥā* (classical Arabic) and the spoken language apart to such an extent that the mastering of '*ẓā'*' pronunciation has turned into a marker of linguistic precision. Lexical works, with *Lisān al-‘Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr (1994) being the most important, note a large number of roots that alternate between *zāy* and *ẓā'*, the meanings of which are often related: (*ẓann / zann*), (*ẓahar / zahr*), (*ẓarf / zarf*). The phonetic-semantic convergence of this nature is not merely a result of dialectal variation; rather, it incites one to reflect on whether *ẓā'* is a primary sound in the Arabic and broader Semitic system or a sound that is later emerged through the influence of *zāy* due to phonetic and environmental factors.

To answer the question, the present research returns to *Lisān al-‘Arab* considering it to be the most comprehensive source of linguistic proof from early philological traditions. The lexicon joins the material from *al-‘Ayn*, al-Jamhara, al-Muḥkam, and *Tahdhīb al-Lughā*, thus enabling the comparative tracing of roots exhibiting *z/ẓ* alternation together with their semantic range and contextual distribution. Drawing on this corpus, one can reveal the phonetic and semantic convergence patterns corresponding to the historical sound changes in the Arabic language.

The central hypothesis thus emerges: the letter *ẓā'* was a historical offshoot of *zāy* during the gradual transformation of the early Arabic dialects (Chang, 2019). This is supported by the great amount and uniformity of the lexicographical evidence, which proposes that the emphatic *ẓā'* was a product of articulatory and semantic intensification of *zāy*, hence a "thickened" variant. This process has been dubbed *emphatic drift*. Comparative Semitic data provide further backing for this interpretation, as the corresponding sounds in the cognate languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian) often show

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up as *ṣ* or *ṭ*, thus marking an articulatory and acoustic trajectory from lenis to emphatic consonants ('Abd al-Tawwāb, 1997).

In the study of phonetics of Classical Arabic, both the consonants were produced from almost the same place inside the mouth. The famous grammarian Sībawayh described to us the position of production of *z*, *s*, and *ṣ* as follows, "between the tip of the tongue and the bases of the upper incisors;" and that of *ẓ*, *d*, and *ṭh* as "between the tongue tip and the edges of the incisors" (Sībawayh, 1988, Vol. 4, p. 433). This articulatory relationship provides a good basis for the interchange. Both consonants are voiced alveolar fricatives which are the same in voicing and place of articulation, the only difference being the degree of pharyngealization or emphasis (Al-Masri & Jongman, 2004; Al-Raba'a & Davis, 2020).

Nonetheless, the two sounds exhibit great differences in their auditory and semantic functions. *Zāy* is a soft, whistling, and fluent sound that is associated with lightness and high frequency, while *ẓā'*, a sound produced through pharyngeal constriction and partial occlusion, gives off heaviness, resonance, and intensity (Bunī Bakr, 2016). The heavy sound not only links *ẓā'* with grave, solid, and closed meanings but also *zāy* with dynamic, bright, and open ones (Najjār, 2010).

The systematic phonetic differences in accents are linked to the systematic semantic specialization. Words that contain the Arabic letter *ẓā'* nearly always carry meanings related to pressure, stability, and completion, while the words with *zāy* convey the opposite ideas of motion, flow, and dispersion. Therefore, the phonetic variation serves as a clear indicator of a "semantic division of labor" functionally rather than just a case of accidental variation. The interaction of different layers in this case is very much what Ibn Jinnī (1952, Vol. 2, p. 158) referred to when talking about *taṣāqub al-laḥẓayn li-taṣāqub al-ma'nayn*, "the affinity of sounds mirroring the affinity of meanings." The phonological changes in Arabic have never been seen as arbitrary but rather as an outcome of the essential similarities existing among the features of articulation that are very much like meaning.

Studies on phonetic symbolism back this relationship. The experimental proof (Sidhu & Pexman, 2018; Imai & Kita, 2014; Preziosi & Coane, 2017) suggests that sounds produced in the back of the oral cavity and pharyngealized ones are interpreted as heavier, denser, or more powerful, whereas front and palatal sounds are associated with lightness and fluidity. The Arabic *ẓā'* is a very good example of this tendency: it brings the perceptive weight of the word to the point, thus increasing its physical and emotional resonance.

Consequently, the switch between *zāy* and *ẓā'* is a phonetic-semantic process that is internally motivated rather than a dialectal irregularity. The phonological system of Arabic considers *zāy* as the sign of movement and openness, while *ẓā'* is the sign of reinforcement and sound where the meaning needs it most. The interchange between them illustrates how the sound structure of Arabic incorporates a universal conceptual logic, where phonetic gradation reflects semantic hierarchy.

The present paper has four aims which are closely related to each other and build the base of the study's analytical framework together. The first aim is to carry out a morpho-semantic analysis of the root pairs with *zāy* and *ẓā'*. This consists of defining the common meaning of each pair and showing the direction of phonetic and conceptual change between them, namely how the lightness and liquid quality of *zāy* go to the heaviness and solidity of *ẓā'*. The uncovering of this linguistic logic through the analysis of the internal alternation of forms represented in the text of *Lisān al-'Arab* is the goal of the study.

The second goal, in turn, brings up the issue of methodological calibration, which involves the development of clear-cut standards to tell apart the real cases of *ibdāl* (phonetic alternation) from the scribal or writing system variants. This move makes sure that the data set is still philologically correct and the switching of *zāy* and *ẓā'* is seen as a real linguistic occurrence instead of being the outcome of transcription error or dialect mixing.

The hypothesis that *ẓā'* was originally a variant of *zāy* will be mainly checked through the analysis of distributional frequency and phonetic environments of each sound. The study particularly focuses on instances where the consonant *zāy* is next to the phonetically strong or back consonants as these environments are the most suitable for the articulatory process of *emphatic drift* to take place. The mapping of these occurrences will allow us to decide whether the development of *ẓā'* can be understood in terms of assimilation and fortition which are common processes in the phonology of Arabic distinctions.

The main objective is to create a comprehensive explanatory model that integrates this alternation within a wider semantic and phonological framework. The model has established that *zāy* conveys concepts of movement, separation, and rhythmic continuity, whereas *ẓā'* signals power, quietness, and containment. This interpretive harmony is supported by the conventional phonological analysis of Arabic as well as by contemporary theories of sound symbolism, thus uniting historical philology and modern linguistic understanding within a shared explanatory structure.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Historical Development of Sounds

The Arabic language has experienced phonological changes right from its beginning, and this is one of the most general features of living languages: the sounds change gradually, and this is done through dialects, time, and environment. The language operates like a social organism that is formed by geography and culture and is constantly adapting to the speakers' experiences (Anīs, 1972, p. 160).

The documentation of tribal phonetic differentiation through poetic practices and Qur'ānic recitation readings was then confirmed by the early grammarians. Ibn Aḥmad (1999, p. 58) developed the first systematic division of articulation areas in *al-'Ayn*. Sībawayh (1988, pp. 431, 117, 378) allocated separate chapters in *al-Kitāb* to *idghām* (assimilation), *imālah* (vowel inclination), and *hamz* (glottalization). Ibn Jinnī (2000, Vol. 2, p. 203) in *Sirr Šinā'at al-l'rāb* regarded *ibdāl* and phonological causation as principal analytical tools, establishing a connection between sound change and semantic function. Subsequently, al-Lughawī (1961, Vol. 2, p. 140) in *Kitāb al-Ibdāl* not only reiterated these concepts but also compiled the first exhaustive array of Arabic sound correspondences. As a whole, these scholars laid the foundation for Arabic phonology to be considered as one of the most advanced and fully developed linguistic systems in the medieval world.

Phonological development encompasses a series of changes impacting pronunciation, the nature of the sound waves produced, and the sounds' place or function, respectively, in the structure of the words. As an illustration, one might notice such alternations as *thā' → tā'* (e.g., *thalātha → talāta*), *qāf → hamzah* (*qalam → ʔalam*), or *nūn → lām* (*ithnān → itnān*). Among such changes, the switch between *zāy* and *zā'* stands out (al-Lughawī, 1961, Vol. 2, p. 140). In several dialects of the Levant, *zarf* is widely accepted in place of *ẓarf*, which means "bag, pouch", thus highlighting the ongoing interchange of *z/z'* as a living phenomenon.

The mentioned alterations are the results of articulatory economy, the natural tendency to pronounce easier, and the interaction with other dialects or languages (Rāḍī, 2020, p. 56). Through Comparative Semitic research, it has been discovered that nonetheless, these changes of sound can be found in other languages besides Arabic, too. For example, the distinction between *šīn* and *shīn* is made in Hebrew systematically; Aramaic and Akkadian also show gradual divergence via alternations like *shamash/shams* (Sa'dī, 2020, p. 238).

Additionally, the Arabic *zā'* has a corresponding sound in the other Semitic languages as it is related to the Ethiopian *tā* and the Hebrew, Akkadian, and Aramaic sounds respectively ('Abd al-Tawwāb, 1997, pp. 57, 86; Takács, 2022). This phenomenon in different languages places Arabic besides the other Semitic languages in the development of voiced alveolar consonants going through emphatic articulation in certain phonetic environments.

The pattern is further corroborated by comparative lexical evidence. The lexeme *ẓifr* ("fingernail, claw") is parallel to Hebrew *špr*, Aramaic *ṭefrā*, Syriac *ṭefrā*, and Ethiopic *sefr*, while Modern South Arabian *žefr* maintains the Arabic emphatic feature ('Abbābneh & al-Za'bī, 2014, p. 290). Likewise, *ẓahara* ("to appear, to become visible") is equivalent to Hebrew and Moabite *šhr* ("noon") and Syriac *ṭahrā*; *zūr* ("fertility, emergence") has a reflex in Old South Arabian as *žwr* and in Hebrew as *zār* ("to approach"), exemplifying different changes from a common proto-root ('Abbābneh & al-Za'bī, 2014, pp. 455, 458, 593).

Other root pairs indicate a similar distribution between Arabic and its cognates in Semitic languages. The Arabic *zalla* "to stay" or "to give shade" is mapped to the Hebrew's *šālal* "to shadow" and the Nabataean's *ṭll* "to cover," which means that the Arabic emphatic form always corresponds to the basic meaning of stability, protection, and enclosure. On the contrary, the less stressed form *zalla* gives a different meaning of movement and deviation "to slide" or "to miss," which is more in line with the ideas of openness and impermanence. Likewise, *ẓilf* "hard ground" or "covering" correlates with the Hebrew *zlp* "to crush" and the Aramaic *zəlaf* "to sprinkle," which shows that the Arabic language is moving from the presence of heaviness and solidity towards the existence of finer, more dispersed actions in cognate languages.

The above-discussed similarities among the meanings of the letters, together with their phonetic and semantic developments in the process of linguistic evolution, ultimately prove again that the Arabic *zā'* is inclined towards heaviness, enclosure, and blackness, whereas *zāy* is still associated with lightness, liquid, movement, and even dispersion. In the middle of the Semitic continuum, Arabic seems to have created a distinctive *z* for making meanings stronger or "heavier" while the cognate languages just retained the unmarked reflexes (*z*, *ṣ*, *ṭ*).

The said distribution backs the supposition that *zā'* in Arabic came from the older *zāy* through a gradual process of lexical diffusion and dialectal variation instead of a sudden systemic change. Arabic probably created an emphatic series in a part of its vocabulary, similar to but different from other Semitic phonological changes.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Hypothesis

The phonological theory and modern linguistic analysis provide the basis for the qualitative descriptive-contrastive approach adopted by the study. The principal objective is to ascertain whether the Arabic consonant *zā'* (ﺯْ) was developed by either *zāy* (ز) or through a slow and overlapping reinforcement that signifies both semantic and phonetic involvement. Internal linguistic proof from *Lisān al-'Arab* (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994) is the main source for the research, which is a large lexicographic corpus that keeps the linguistic and semantic texture of early Arabic. The hypothesis of this study is that the phonological changes in Arabic are not random but rather the outcome of the relationships between sound and meaning which are operated by rules.

B. Analytical Instruments

The investigation integrates two analytical precepts. The foremost is phonetic proximity, which presupposes that sounds having the same articulatory characteristics, particularly place and manner of articulation, are more likely to be substituted. The latter is semantic coherence, which claims that the change in sound is accepted in the vocabulary only when it represents a distinction that is either functional or conceptual. It is from this point that the interchange between *zāy* and *zā'* is analyzed as a phonetic event placed within a significant semantic structure.

The analysis was only based on the corpus of *Lisān al-ʿArab*, which was chosen due to its wide scope, the depth of its philological study, and its combination of earlier works such as *al-Ayn* (Ibn Aḥmad, 1999), *Tahdhīb al-Lughā* (al-Azhārī, 2001), *al-Muḥkam wa al-Muḥīt al-Aʿẓam* (Ibn Sīdah, 1996), and *Jamhara al-Lughā* (Ibn Duraid, 1987). The reliance on this corpus, which is a very important one, has guaranteed that the investigation is still connected with the phonological reasoning of the early Arabic period while providing a common framework for comparison. Only those roots that appear in the forms of *zāy* and *zā'* and share a demonstrable semantic nucleus were considered. The cases that were excluded were done so in order to prevent the mixing up of occasional homonyms with real instances of alternation, in which the meanings were inconsistent or even the opposite of each other.

C. Data Collection and Procedures

Phonetic mapping, semantic naming, and comparative verification were worked out to keep the analysis going. Each root pair was considered within its articulatory context, focusing on the placement of the switching consonant, the adjacent sounds, and the quality of the vowels. Special attention was given to the contexts where emphatic or back consonants such as *ṭ*, *q*, and *r* were present, as these consonants have a historical tendency to promote the spreading of pharyngealization. The next step was to conduct the interpretation of the relationship between the two by means of textual and contextual interpretation. Only those instances were allowed which had a distinct semantic gradient, for instance the gradual change from motion to stability or from brightness to density, for the interpretation.

The work of ʿAbbābneh and al-Zaʿbī (2014) and Brockelmann (1977) included a comparative analysis that consisted of the cognate Semitic languages, namely Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ethiopic, it was this analysis that helped to judge whether the Arabic alternations were indicative of a wider regional articulation tendency or were innovations that were solely internal to the Arabic dialects. The study disclosed that even though other Semitic languages had similar emphatic developments, Arabic had the philosophical use of both the lighter and the heavier variants, which is indicative of a conscious internal differentiation of semantic precision and on the other hand, external borrowing.

The voicing of *zā'* was subjected to an additional investigation through the lens of classical phonological theory. Sībawayh (1988, Vol. 4, p. 433) placed *zāy* and *zā'* together at the same location with the only difference being the pharyngeal tension associated with *zā'*. He drew the line at the upper incisors by the tongue tip. Ibn Jinnī (2000, Vol. 1, p. 23) pointed out that such closeness allows for the interchange of sounds without breaking the phonotactic order, provided that the meaning remains understandable. The results of modern phonetic research (Imai & Kita, 2014) are in accordance with this classical view, as they reveal that pharyngealized sounds create lower formant frequencies and perceptual heaviness, which are typically linked with the meanings of weight and hardness. Hence, the proof grants the support to the interpretation that the metamorphosis from *zāy* to *zā'* is a case of emphatic fortition, which is an articulatory enhancement that gradually got the semantic value and phonological independence.

Next, a thorough semantic classification was performed to trace the conceptual relationships between the two forms that keep coming up. The researchers found seven main patterns in total, which were movement vs. stability, lightness vs. weight, openness vs. containment, continuity vs. finality, fluidity vs. solidity, brightness vs. density, and externality vs. inwardness. These were the categories that data-based induction brought to light and were the reason behind the strong link between heavier articulation and meanings of permanence, closure, or intensity being revealed. Hence, it seems that in Arabic, phonetic effort and semantic gravity work in parallel, making it possible for sound structure to embody conceptual distinctions.

D. Verification and Reliability

Throughout the entire analysis, strict verification procedures were enforced to ensure that the results obtained were accurate and authentic. The verification process was conducted using the most widely used Arabic dictionaries, and only those roots that were confirmed by two or more sources were accepted. Furthermore, morphological consistency was also taken into consideration in order to eliminate forms that could have resulted from scribal variation or analogical derivation. By combining various sources, it not only became harder for coincidences to happen, but also the dependability of the results was increased. Therefore, the approach of the study integrates linguistic abstraction and philological accuracy together. It views the lexicon as a historical document not only of cognitive and articulatory behavior but also as a meeting point where the descriptive richness of classical Arabic scholarship and the analytical brightness of modern linguistics converge. The study is based on internal textual evidence as opposed to throwing back the phonetic system speculation and thus placing the sound of *zā'* in Arabic phonological development, revealing how its birth is the result of the interaction of articulation, perception, and meaning. This interpretative model suggests that the sound changes in the Arabic sound system were not random alterations but rather the process of meaning-driven adaptations that gave *zā'* the quality of being expressive and indefinite in its semantic area thus making it prominently phonetically and conceptually distinguished in the language landscape.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey of the vocabulary of *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994) has revealed the existence of a complete set of forty original root pairs that illustrate the phonetic and orthographic interchange between the letters *zāy* (ز) and *zā’* (ظ).

Each pair contained a semantic nucleus that could be verified, linking together the two forms and, at the same time, their differences reflecting a phonetic-semantic polarity that is consistent rather than random replacement. The sounds indicate that *zā’* is a marked sound in the semantic field and, therefore, is used to express the maximum, the close, or the stable, whereas the sound *zāy* denotes the opposite by being a-footed in notions of lightness, openness, and motion. The alternation's consistent unidirectionality, from *zāy* to *zā’*, reinforces the idea of *emphatic drift*, a gradual change that is the result of the prominence given in articulation and the amplification of meaning.

A. From Movement to Stability

The majority of the root pairs show a shift from the meanings of motion or coming into being that are connected with *zāy* to the meanings of stability and completion that are indicated by *zā’*. To illustrate, the difference between *zahara* and *zahara* is that the latter expresses “to come out or to be seen,” while the former makes clear the meaning “to come out or to be seen with power or light.” Ibn Manẓūr (1994, Vol. 4, p. 523) interpreted *zuhūr* as “what has become settled on the top of the visible surface,” thus agreeing that the emphatic pronunciation indicates a state of being. The two words *ḡalafa* and *ḡalafa* have the same meaning of closeness but *ḡalafa* suggests coming near with the enclosure or full, thus changing the movement into the proximately achieved state.

B. From Lightness to Weight

In a number of cases, the switch from *zāy* to *zā’* is an indication of profundity through stages from light, fleeting meaning to one of density and strength. The *zafara* verb has the meanings of “to exhale softly” or “to emit a faint scent,” but *ḡafara* means “to triumph or prevail,” which is an intensified perception of energy and fulfillment. A similar differentiation can be seen in *zīf* and *ḡīf*, the former referring to a soft edge, while the latter connotes thickness or hardness (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994, Vol. 9, p. 97). These illustrations verify that the pharyngealization of *zā’* brings in both physical and semantic weight.

C. From Expansion to Containment

The data also indicate that roots with *zāy* usually connote openness and expansion, whereas roots containing *zā’* are associated with confinement and enclosure. *Zār* denotes “to visit” or “to come near” being, thus, an outwardly directed motion, while *ḡār* indicates “to press” or “to surround” and hence implying a non-moving action of contained. Similarly, *zamma* meaning “to gather lightly” gets transformed into *ḡamma* if it refers to “seizing or enclosing firmly” (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994, Vol. 7, p. 245). This change in form captures the inherent relationship between forceful pronunciation and idea being small in number through the process of being compressed.

D. From Continuity to Finality

Multiple root pairs exhibit a transition away from either a continuous or an iterative action and towards a final and decisive action. The verb *Zarra* implies “to scatter multiple times,” pointing to a free and unending process, whereas *ḡarra* means “to squeeze out grains,” a final effort. In a like manner, *zanna* (“to consider or believe”) is set against *ḡanna* (“to know for sure”), the movement from presumption to assurance being emphasised. The and louder articulation in ‘*ḡā*’ then signals the end or settling of the meaning, sound physically supportive of the concept of closing.

E. From Fluidity to Solidity

A recurring change, once more, is the change from liquid and temporary states to solid and permanent ones. *Zalla* refers to “to slip or move lightly,” which is a brief and unstable movement, while *ḡalla* stands for “to stay” or “to endure under shade,” which carries the meaning of stability and continuity. Likewise, *zulāl* (“clear water”) is contrasted with *ḡulāl* (“thick shade”), the latter being a metaphor of the movement from clarity to obscurity. The occurrence of *zā’* in these cases indicates a process of semantic crystallization where movement is replaced by stillness and form by matter.

F. From Brightness to Density

In rare cases, the switching of terms accentuates the transition from surface shine to deep glory. *Zaw’* signifies “light or glow,” which is a transient characteristic, but at the same time, *ḡaw’* means “the source or core of light,” thus alluding to a light that is kept (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994, Vol. 7, p. 338). Similarly, it is with the words, *zahr* (“flower” or “outer surface”) versus *ḡahr* (“back” or “support”) where the former refers to the showy aspect and the latter to the utilitarian one. The emphatic consonant, through its greater resonance, actually transforms the aesthetic expression into structural permanence.

G. From External Manifestation to Inner Force

Some roots indicate the change from outside the body expression to inside the spirit. *Zakar*, which means male, is a physical characteristic, whereas *ḡakar*, in its dialectal and more general meaning, suggests vitality or energetic power and thus, the meaning is transferred from outer to inner. Similarly, *zār*, which means visiting or moving outward, is the

opposite of *zār*, which means encircling pressure or influence. The process demonstrates a change in conceptual focus from outer surface to inner substance, in line with the semantic effect of emphatic articulation.

TABLE 1
MORPHO-SEMANTIC CHARACTERIZATION OF (Z / Z') PAIRS

Semantic Domain	Root Pair	Semantic Division	Source (<i>Lisān al-ʿArab</i>)
Fullness / Constriction	<i>kazẓ / kazza</i>	Unified sense of “tightness”: <i>kazẓ</i> = internal congestion and retention; <i>kazza</i> = external contraction and closure.	7/457; 5/400
	<i>kazama / kazama</i>	Inner restraint contrasted with outward contraction.	12/519; 12/517
Manifestation / Appearance	<i>zahara / zahra</i>	Substantive emergence and dominance (<i>zahara</i>) versus brightness and aesthetic radiance (<i>zahra</i>).	4/523; 4/331
Proximity / Frontality	<i>zūra / zūra</i>	Physical nearness or frontal position (<i>zūra</i>) versus moral or social prominence (<i>zūra</i>).	4/529; 4/333
	<i>ẓill / zalal</i>	Stable protective shade (<i>ẓill</i>) versus instability or slippage (<i>zalal</i>).	11/415; 11/419
	<i>ẓūf / zūf</i>	Comprehensive grasp (<i>ẓūf</i>) contrasted with relaxed or light movement (<i>zūf</i>).	9/232; 9/142
Release / Displacement	<i>naẓafa / nazafa</i>	Achieved purity (<i>naẓafa</i>) versus depletion or drainage (<i>nazafa</i>).	9/336; 9/325
	<i>malaz / malaz</i>	Controlled detachment (<i>malaz</i>) versus spatial removal (<i>malaz</i>).	7/464; 5/412
	<i>raʿaz / raʿaz</i>	Fine-grained precision (<i>raʿaz</i>) versus sharper, more abrupt movement (<i>raʿaz</i>).	7/445; 5/354
Direction / Influence	<i>waʿaz / waʿaz</i>	Persuasion through reasoned guidance (<i>waʿaz</i>) versus direct command or admonition (<i>waʿaz</i>).	7/466; 5/429
Force / Intensity	<i>bahhaz / bahaz</i>	Oppressive weight or severity (<i>bahhaz</i>) versus forceful action or thrust (<i>bahaz</i>).	7/436; 5/314
Phonetic Thickening	<i>maẓaʿ / mazaʿ</i>	Prolonged absorption or tension (<i>maẓaʿ</i>) versus rapid dispersion or release (<i>mazaʿ</i>).	8/339
	<i>laḥaz / laḥaz</i>	Lateral inclination (<i>laḥaz</i>) versus sharp visual deviation (<i>laḥaz</i>).	7/458; 5/404

H. Quantitative and Positional Observations

Among the forty root pairs that are confirmed, thirty-one of them (77.5%) are following the *zāy* to *zāʾ* transition which is shown to be characterized by semantic intensification. Five pairs (12.5%) alternate in a neutral way without any semantic differentiation being clear, while four (10%) provide ambiguous results which are probably caused by dialectal convergence or layered etymologies. The pattern of *z* → *z* being the most common one reinforces the hypothesis that *zāʾ* is a consonant in Arabic that is derived and semantically specialized.

The positional analysis shows that *zāʾ* is found mostly in the beginning or in the middle of words, which are the places where the tension of articulation and the spread of emphasis are favored, while *zāy* is still allowed in all positions. This distribution pattern points to the hypothesis that *emphatic drift* began as a phonetic adaptation and later got lexical reinforcement through semantic change.

TABLE 2
QUANTITATIVE DISTRIBUTION AND DIRECTIONALITY OF (Z / Z) ALTERNATIONS

Category	Number of Root Pairs	Percentage	Description of Pattern
Directional alternation ($z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$)	31	77.5 %	Clear progression from light to emphatic articulation, with ḡ functioning as a semantically intensified form expressing stability, closure, and permanence.
Neutral alternation (no semantic contrast)	5	12.5 %	Alternations showing phonetic substitution without distinct semantic differentiation, often reflecting dialectal or morphological leveling.
Ambiguous or irregular alternation	4	10 %	Pairs affected by mixed etymology, rare lexical usage, or potential scribal influence; no consistent direction of change identified.
Total	40	100 %	Corpus of verified root pairs extracted from <i>Lisān al-ʿArab</i> (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994).

The principal directional alternation ($z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$) confirms that in Arabic phonetic means, over the years, the stressing of a word no longer was purely by phonetic and finally by semantic necessity. The very few neutral or ambiguous pairs back the claim that ḡ is a marked, context-dependent innovation rather than an inherited Proto-Semitic phoneme.

1. Phonetic and Semantic Correlation

The correlation between pronunciation and semantics is to be seen vividly throughout the roots under investigation. Words that have ḡ in their structure mostly refer to force, protection, and seriousness of either moral or physical nature, whereas the ones with zāy feature movement, light, and scattering. This has provided support for Ibn Jinnī's (1952) claim that sound similarity is a significant factor in determining the meaning of words, and it is also consistent with modern-day research in phonosemantics which reveals that large sounds are associated with the quality of being solid as perceived (Imai & Kita, 2014; Preziosi & Coane, 2017).

Semantic clustering analysis shows that the roots which are related to physical effort, resistance at a spatial level, or exertive power prefer the phoneme ḡ , while those which are linked to light, sound, or the lack of restrictions in movement keep the phoneme zāy . This relation supports the view that the Arabic language classifies phonetics and semantics in accordance with a basic characteristic of equal proportion between sound and sense.

TABLE 3
PHONETIC-SEMANTIC CORRESPONDENCE OF SELECTED (Z / Z) PAIRS

Root Pair	Core Meaning	Phonetic Environment	Direction	Functional Shift
$\text{ḡahara} / \text{zahara}$	Emergence and manifestation	Open vowel + laryngeal	$z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$	Heaviness signals stability and dominance
$\text{ḡanna} / \text{zanna}$	Mental assumption and conviction	Nasal environment	$z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$	Emphasis expresses certainty and firmness
$\text{ḡalaf} / \text{zafaf}$	Nearness and approach	Liquid consonant context	$z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$	Closure and semantic compression
$\text{ḡilf} / \text{zilf}$	Surface texture or contact	Fricative + vowel cluster	$z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$	Transition from light contact to dense cohesion
$\text{ḡafara} / \text{zafara}$	Emission versus victory	Labial + open vowel	$z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$	From exhalation to strength and conquest
$\text{ḡalla} / \text{zalla}$	Shade and stability	Initial emphatic context	$z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$	From motion to endurance and continuity
$\text{ḡār} / \text{zār}$	Visitation or pressure	Glottal adjacency	$z \rightarrow \text{ḡ}$	From external contact to inward influence

There is no significant evidence of the reverse alternation ($\text{ḡ} \rightarrow z$) in the data, which implies that the process was always from the lighter sound to the heavier sound. Such a direction gives ḡ the status of an innovatory feature, which has been introduced for lexical and semantic emphasis rather than for phonetic variation alone. The restricted occurrence and specific semantic range of ḡ indicate that it is a morphological sign of intensification, while zāy remains the neutral, unmarked articulation.

The patterns that were observed completely align with both the classical and the comparative studies. Sibawayh (1988, Vol. 4, p. 433) pointed out that the differences in the utterance of zāy and ḡ were very close articulatory-wise and he distinguished them by the degree of pharyngealization. Ibn Jinnī (1952) explained the semantic connection of such alternations, while al-Lughawī (1961) recorded them as instances of *ibḍāl* based on systematic correspondence. In a comparative way, both ʿAbd al-Tawwāb (1997) and Brockelmann (1977) referred to ḡ as a second emphatic consonant that was gradually formed within Arabic to signify a conceptual weight that was not present in other Semitic languages.

The passing of *zāy* to *zā'* showcased a shift from the unrestrained and the indefinite to the intensified and the restricted, thus changing the articulatory effort into the semantic depth. The whole process of sound change accompanying meaning shift illustrates that the Arabic language had assimilated the association between phonetic weight and conceptual substance, and at the same time, it was still able to articulate them with its sound system that was already built up of the different layers of meaning.

The outcomes of this research support the notion that the interchange between *zāy* (ز) and *zā'* (ظ) in the Arabic language took place unidirectionally, from *zāy* to *zā'*. This change in direction is in line with both the way of speaking and the meaning that slowly changed over time. The phonetics of *zāy* would point out that it is a voiced alveolar fricative characterized by holding a neutral and unmarked position of articulation with fluid resonance and easy production as its main features. The production of *zā'*, on the other hand, brings into play pharyngeal constriction and sublingual pressure which results in a heavier acoustic resonance that is associated with the evolution of the meaning. The transformation is a part of what Brockelmann (1977) and 'Abd al-Tawwāb (1997) referred to as emphatic fortition, a universal linguistic process in which soft consonants turn into emphatic ones through tension or in situations where the meaning needs to be stressed. The reverse process of *zā'* to *zāy* was not found as a systematic phenomenon in *Lisān al-'Arab* (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994), and therefore the hypothesis of a one-way transition from lighter to heavier articulation is further supported.

This phonological development also mirrors a general functional principle of sound change in Arabic: phonemes are going to become stronger when they carry more semantics or emotions. The continuous linking between emphatic articulation and the concepts of hardness, seriousness, or power implies that the speakers unconsciously supported those meanings by using louder sounds with the pharyngeal aspect. Gradually, these emphatic articulations got established as independent word forms, thus changing what was a mere variation in articulation initially into a proper phoneme in the Arabic sound system.

Thus, replacing *zāy* with *zā'* and vice versa is not a random interchange but on the contrary a system of semantic specialization. In other words, all the words with *zāy* are connected to the concepts of openness, movement, and continuity, whereas those with *zā'* are connected to solidity, closure, and restraint. This connection exemplifies the doctrine laid down by Ibn Jinnī (1952, Vol. 2, p. 158) regarding the principle of *taṣāqub al-laḥẓayn li-taṣāqub al-ma'nayn*, which asserts that sound similarity reflects semantic similarity. The pronunciation of '*zā'*', that is a heavy sound, makes the speaker think of the meanings of fixation or confinement, while *zāy*, which is a soft sound, points to the ideas of flowing and moving. The sound change thus reflects the association between sound and meaning in a unified structural polarity of Arabic that is both functional and expressive.

This result corresponds to the modern theory of sound symbolism (Imai & Kita, 2014; Preziosi & Coane, 2017), which connects heavy articulation with gravity perception and cognitive salience. The *zā'* phoneme's pharyngealization lowers the second formant frequency and creates an auditory impression of thickness and depth, which listeners associate with strength or stability. The semantic transition from dynamic to static, or from superficial to profound, thus reflects an acoustic transition from lightness to density. In this way, *zā'* takes on the function of a semantic intensifier, representing the embodied perceptions of effort and gravity involved in physical articulation.

Theoretical implications concerning Arabic phonological motivation are quite dynamic in the case of Sībawayh (the famous grammarian) to mention some non-theoretical linguists, Sībawayh (1988, Vol. 4, p. 433) among them, was the first to talk about *zāy* and *zā'* being adjacent in articulation, having only pharyngealization difference and nothing more. Their closeness managed to keep the historical interchange while increasing the functional differentiation between them when the pharyngealized consonant *zā'* was accented (theoretically). In most cases of *Lisān al-'Arab* phonological alternation the phonetic environments consisting of emphatic or velar consonants such as ṭ, q, or r and also *zāy* are directly responsible for the occurrence of alternation through spread of phonological changes. The whole process can hence be viewed as a case of emphatic contagion in which the articulatory characteristics of the neighboring sounds force a partial emphasis on *zāy* that eventually latches onto it and becomes the new sound quality of *zā'* (Flynn, 2024).

The linguistic viewpoint of evolution is evident through a recognized sequence of events: the close articulation first becomes strong merging, then the meaning is transmitted and finally, the lexical stabilization occurs. This path is a clear indication of the interaction of phonetics and semantics in the formation of Arabic vocabulary. The use of *zā'* in the meanings connected with solidity, power, enclosure, and authority, is a good example of the Arabic economy of speech which by very subtle phonetic changes creates new meanings without being repetitive. The presence of roots such as *zahara/zahara*, *zanna/zanna*, and *zalaḥa/zalaḥa* signifies not the duplication of words but the splitting of their meanings: the language keeps both forms because each one serves a distinctive expressive purpose within the same conceptual domain.

An examination from a comparative viewpoint supports the inherent reasoning here. In Hebrew and Aramaic, cognates of Arabic roots that have the phoneme *zā'* are mostly replaced by the sounds of either *šād* or *ṭā'* ('Abbābneh & al-Za'bī, 2014, pp. 290–593). The Arabic word *ẓifr* (meaning "claw") is consistent with the Hebrew word *špr* and the Syriac word *ṭeḫrā*; *zahara* ("to appear") is compared with Hebrew *šhr* and Syriac *ṭahrā*. Such relationships across languages show that Arabic is part of a region-wide trend towards the strengthening of emphatic sounds, but at the same time it keeps both *zāy* and *zā'* forms, which means that the emphatic variant was developed internally, not through

direct inheritance. Consequently, Arabic manifests a new tendency where it goes beyond just giving the same sound to the semantic function but rather enhancing the Semitic pattern into a more sophisticated duality.

The $z \rightarrow \text{ẓ}$ transitions have predominated diachronically with a frequency of 77.5% which gives support to the view that this interchange is a regular development and not an overlapping dialect influence at times. The early dialects might have started the interchange as a phonetic variant that was conditioned by being next to the emphatics or by the stress placement, slowly obtaining semantic weight as the speakers were linking the heavy articulation with the ideas of intensity and permanence. They made the majority of their way through repetition and analogy, which led to these associations being recognized lexically in the canonical sources like *Lisān al-‘Arab*.

Accordingly, the findings are interpretable in terms of the process of functional phonologization, which is characterized by the gradual change from allophonic variation to the separation of meaning and lexemes. What was originally a physiological change in speech became a cultural-provided and widely used indicator of meaning. This transformation brings out the interaction that was taking place among sound, perception, and cognition in the Arabic linguistic system. During the period of language change, the phonetic variation would be perceived as an instrument of semantic precision, and so that it was able to pronounce subtle distinctions through sound itself.

The research from a theoretical viewpoint is in favor of both the classical and modern linguistics views. The assessments of the two Arabian scholars, Sībawayh and Ibn Jinnī, did not only criticize but also laid the groundwork for several concepts in modern cognitive linguistics by linking sound change to functional and semantic factors. Their findings on the average relationship between sounds and meanings are quite a lot like those of the present phonosemantics where it is accepted that sound patterns often signify the same as the given feelings and perceptions. The $z/\text{ẓ}$ interchange is an example of 'semantic phonotaxis' where the surprise element in the sound formation is the same as the one in the concept. As a corollary, Arabic could be the case in point of the oldest sound–meaning system that was shaped by both the articulatory and cognitive factors.

The change from $zāy$ to $ẓā'$ at a cognitive level shows the strong inter-connections among articulation, perception, and meaning in a dynamic way. One can link the speaker's extra effort in articulation to the listener's perception of an added emphasis that has been transferred to the semantic weight. This cyclical reinforcement between production and perception gradually becomes fixed and accepted in the language as a convention. Hence, one could see the alternation not only as a phonetic phenomenon but also as a cognitive-symbolic process whereby the physical effort involved points out the conceptual depth. The link between physicality and the communication of thought classifies Arabic as a language that, alongside Somali and some other Southeast Asian languages, taps into universal psycholinguistic mechanisms that allow the noise to function as the meaning's carrier, rather than as its neutral signifier.

To sum up, the study accentuates the deep analytical nature of the traditional Arabic dictionary-making. *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Ibn Manẓūr, 1994) provides not only the listing of words but also the demonstration of phonological and semantic intuitions. The fact that semantically related different roots were grouped under one lexicon was an indication of an early linguistic motivation awareness, somewhat similar to the medieval Arabic scholars' that going in a proto-structuralist framework. The modern-day linguistics helps to look back at such texts and thus, connects the early philological insight and the contemporary scientific method. The change of the letter $ẓā'$ into $zāy$ is not just a sound change example but also a sign of the Arabic language's self-regulation, refining, and creating new meanings. The phonetic change and semantic specialization in Arabic contributed to the development of a close unity between form and meaning that has been very important in the language's claiming to be one of the most systematically expressive ones among the Semitic family.

V. CONCLUSION

According to research, the correlation of $zāy$ (ز) and $ẓā'$ (ظ) in Arabic phonetics and in meaning was systematic and governed by phonology and semantic considerations throughout history. It was established that the direction of the transformation between these two sounds was from $zāy$ to $ẓā'$ through a qualitative analysis of *Lisān al-‘Arab* utilizing phonetic theory and comparative Semitic evidence. The best explanation for this transformation is the principle of *emphatic drift*, which is the cause of the gradual strengthening of voiced dental sounds under articulatory pressure and environmental factors until they turned into phonemes that are represented in the language with the meanings having and losing.

The results show that the sound $ẓā'$ emerges as a clear, contextually active sound which stands for semantic strengthening and structural unification, while $zāy$ still functions as the unmarked and common base for meanings such as motion, openness, and fluidity. Hence the two phonemes are in a functional complementarity relationship: $zāy$ reveals the lively and short-lived, whereas $ẓā'$ locks the fixed, drawn-out, or entire. This "semantic division of labor" provides Arabic with the capability to take in the possible lexical overlap within a single root field, thus obtaining precision with no redundancy.

The phonological alternation, in a diachronic view, reflects a major phonetic economy of the Semitic languages where not only articulatory ease but also the need of the semantic and the strong reinforcement of the expressive change have their say in sound change. The coexistence of the two forms in the lexicon, with each carrying a meaning that is different yet closely related, is a striking case of the dependency of sound and meaning as the main factor in the morphological process of Arabic.

Ultimately, the study confirms that the relation between *zāy* and *zā'* is an example of the organic unity of the Arabic language system in which the phonetic and the semantic components are working together and creating a very finely balanced case of the symbolic correspondence in the history of language evolution, the case of the relationship between *zāy* and *zā'*.

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Making Endangered Languages Prestigious: The West Papuan Locals Hedging Against the Grip of Modernity

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Abstract—Against a backdrop of linguistic assimilation, with the dominance of the Indonesian (Papuan Malay) language, this study describes how prestige dynamics influence community engagement in language revitalization efforts, a case study of the West Papuan local language in Kaimana Regency, Indonesia. Using a qualitative and participatory approach, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and sociolinguistic surveys, the findings reveal a paradox: while indigenous languages are deeply embedded in cultural identity and traditional ritual, they are often perceived as lacking economic and social utility in modern society. However, this study documents emerging counter-narratives in which indigenous communities are strategically reconfiguring the prestige of their languages to assert cultural identity and reclaim socio-political agency. These efforts include integrating indigenous languages into formal education, leveraging digital media for cultural expression, and revitalizing linguistic domains through grassroots initiatives. This study demonstrates that effective language revitalization requires a nuanced conceptualization of prestige and making a network between stakeholders as both a sociocultural construct and an instrument of power negotiation, thereby advancing sociolinguistic discourse on indigenous language maintenance.

Index Terms—West Papua, endangered languages, prestige, modernity, language maintenance

I. INTRODUCTION

Prestige in sociolinguistics refers to the social status or value assigned by a community to a particular language or language variety. Prestige is not inherent in language itself but is socially constructed, influenced by factors such as politics, economy, history, education, and media (Holmes, 2013). According to Labov's (1972) classic works, there are two broad varieties of prestige: overt prestige and covert prestige. Overt prestige is tied to the formal, widely accepted standard of language that society's top groups usually use. Covert prestige, on the other hand, values non-standard languages that specific groups cherish for their cultural and symbolic worth. Language prestige has become an important component of culture and is the main sign of group membership across generations (Edwards, 2009, 2012; Fishman, 1991). It embodies the members of a community's identity, culture, and history in a broad sense. When a language is in danger or is replaced by or alternates with other languages, not only does linguistic diversity disappear, but also the community's cultural identity is at risk (Crystal, 2000).

In the context of traditional West Papuan culture, language prestige constitutes a fundamental aspect of cultural identity

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and functions as a primary vehicle for transmitting traditional social values and tribal histories (Rumbrawer, 2006). However, the combined forces of migration, urbanization, and national education policies that privilege the use of Indonesian and Papuan Malay have increasingly threatened the vitality of local languages in West Papua, placing many on the brink of extinction (Bromham et al., 2021). In this context by strengthening community identity through specific local languages, West Papua language revitalization became relevant and is usually conducted and prioritized by strengthening community identification with specific local languages, as this connection is crucial to reclaiming political and cultural identities (Hinton, 2001). Conceptually, effective revitalization will involve the active participation of stakeholders in education and literacy initiatives, particularly through intergenerational language transmission and the training younger speakers (Himmelman, 2006). By integrating the practical and theoretical language discussed above, revitalization efforts in West Papua have not yet succeeded because the local language is widely recognized as an integral element of community identity, and community members must be engaged and committed to the revitalization process (UNESCO, 2022).

In the power relations of language, Bourdieu (1991) argued that educational institutions legitimize certain languages, thereby reinforcing class hierarchies. As dominant languages often carry greater economic and political capital than minority languages, this disparity frequently contributes to language shift (Fishman, 1991). Power relations in Indonesian language practices become particularly salient when languages are institutionalized through education, disseminated via written media, and embedded in broader societal discourse, such as communicating or working, as is the case in West Papua. Thus, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power elucidates how the institutional legitimacy of dominant languages like Papuan Malay strengthens existing language hierarchies and pushes minority languages to the side. Consequently, linguistic prestige and power are deeply embedded in social life, influencing patterns of local language use in daily life.

In some cases, indigenous people in several parts of the globe have managed to revitalize their languages, and the efforts in those countries could serve as valuable lessons for West Papuans. For instance, the revitalization of the Maori language in New Zealand speaks of the necessity to provide support for bilingual education and media, which raises the status of the language and its usage (Hill, 2016; May, 2013, 2017). Likewise, the attempt to revitalize the Hawaiian language demonstrates that community and political action are needed to alter perceptions and behaviors toward the language (No'Eau Warner, 2001). Similarly, efforts to revitalize indigenous languages in Papua New Guinea are actively supported by government policies that promote the use of local languages as the medium of teaching in schools (Malone & Paraide, 2011). Comparative studies of Papuan language between the Kaimana indigenous people in the South Head of Bird and those in the Yapen Islands Regency have highlighted the need for a deliberate and systematic approach to sustaining minority languages through community education, linguistic documentation, and community mobilization (Budiono et al., 2025; Gasser, 2017; Tamrin et al., 2024). In addition, Galla (2009) emphasized that digital media has played a significant role in the revitalization of Indigenous languages, particularly through platforms that allow for cultural expression, documentation, and language teaching. By putting their languages on digital platforms, these communities can reach a wider audience and make younger people proud of their heritage and languages. This technology creates a link between the older and younger generations, enabling the continued transmission of language and culture.

This study situates the indigenous languages of Kaimana Regency, West Papua, within broader discourses of linguistic prestige, power, and modernity, integrating both practical and theoretical insights. It also explores how intergenerational transmission, language ideologies, and local policies affect language endangerment and resilience, while considering revitalization strategies that sustain their cultural significance, as well as the role of cultural and educational initiatives in promoting their continued use.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistically, West Papua belongs to the Trans-New Guinea phylum, encompassing 481 languages. Within this classification, the Asmat-Kamoro subgroup divides into 11 language clusters: 6 in Asmat, 1 in Wei, 1 in Kawori, 2 in Sabakor (including Buruwai and Oburauw), and 1 in Sepang. National surveys by the Indonesian Language Agency document 652 regional languages, with Papua hosting a significant proportion. However, vitality assessments from 2011 to 2017 reveal that merely 71 languages have been systematically evaluated. In West Papua Province, out of 100 documented ethnic languages, over 54% are no longer actively used, with many communities shifting to Papuan Malay. Modern documentation efforts remain minimal, with only a handful of languages receiving systematic linguistic attention (Sawaki, 2016, 2019; Sawaki & Arka, 2018).

Observational data indicate a marked decline in the use of West Papuan local languages across both public and private domains (Handayani, 2021). In fact, in public space settings, including schools, churches, and government offices, the Indonesian language dominates as the primary medium of communication, with minimal use of the indigenous language. According to Sawaki, these processes are increasingly leading minority languages to a gradual decline, with many instances of language shift from native to dominant languages. The sole exception occurs during traditional ceremonies and rituals, where the vernacular persists.

In Kaimana Regency, there are eight indigenous tribes: Mairasi, Miereh, Koiway, Oburauw, Kuripasai, Madewana, Irarutu, and Kuri, each with its respective language. However, Indonesian and Papuan Malay are becoming more and more widespread and common in schools and everyday life, which is putting these languages at risk. In addition, inter-ethnic marriages, especially in urban areas, are contributing to the decline of these indigenous languages. Furthermore,

the extinction of a language in West Papua is not merely the loss of a communication tool but also the erosion of unique ecological knowledge, oral traditions, and cultural heritage embedded within these languages (Kafryawan & Mursyid, 2024). In the intricate tapestry of West Papua, especially in Kaimana, linguistic diversity faces unprecedented challenges, with numerous regional languages teetering on the brink of extinction, necessitating urgent and comprehensive conservation efforts (Handayani, 2021). In the local people's communications, the interplay between local languages and Bahasa Indonesia illustrates the tension between cultural preservation and national integration (de Vries, 2012). Within this context, the Kaimana languages, spoken in remote villages, exemplify the struggles faced by smaller minority languages under the pressure of globalization and modernization (Bromham et al., 2021; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

However, there are still efforts to develop and preserve the language, such as printing the Bible in the Irarutu language, carried out by Japanese researcher Takashi Shimamora. The defense of regional languages is also carried out by using them in traditional ceremonies, such as Sinara, and popular songs shared on social media platforms like YouTube (Warami, 2020). Studies by Budiono et al. (2025), Gasser (2017), and Tamrin et al. (2024) suggest that language preservation efforts for minority languages in Papua need to receive deep attention because a large number of languages have a limited number of speakers, so the threat of extinction is quite strong. The result is that the vitality of the West Papuan language can be categorized as critical. Local languages exhibit a weak condition in all indicators of language vitality, with the primary cause being the absence of intergenerational transmission. The lowest indicators that require immediate language preservation efforts are (1) availability of teaching materials and literacy, (2) domain and new media, and (3) language documentation.

Although studies on language endangerment and revitalization in West Papua are increasing, most focus on the general linguistic situation between dominant and minority languages, leaving micro-level sociolinguistic studies on smaller language communities underexplored. Language preservation is intricately linked to community perception and identity (Fishman, 1991; Crystal, 2000), whereas the language ideologies influence how communities respond to pressures that lead to language shift (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). This study uses the UNESCO (2003) framework of language vitality, which identifies nine indicators to assess endangered languages, including intergenerational transmission, speaker numbers, language domains, media presence, literacy, government and speaker attitudes, and documentation. These indicators are essential for understanding the responses of West Papua minority languages to modernization and national language programs.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative and participatory approach to explore the sociolinguistic dynamics of a local language community in Kaimana Regency, West Papua, engaging the community members as research collaborators rather than mere informants (Bodó et al., 2022, 2025; Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009). Their perspectives were essential in examining language vitality, status, prestige, and identity in relation to Indonesian and Papuan Malay. The analysis, based on UNESCO's (2003) language vitality indicators, integrates Fishman's (1991) concept of intergenerational transmission, Crystal's (2000) perspectives of language as cultural identity, and Woolard and Schieffelin's (1994) framework on language ideology to elucidate sociolinguistic resilience and endangerment.

Fieldwork was conducted for two months (January and February 2025). Kaimana Regency, West Papua, was selected for critical investigation because it represents an area facing severe language endangerment, yet demonstrating sincere efforts toward language preservation by its inhabitants. The selection process included preliminary meetings with key local informants—such as indigenous leaders and government representatives—to ensure continued access and contextual relevance.

Primary data collection consisted of sociolinguistic surveys with 30 respondents and in-depth interviews with 32 informants, including local government officials, community leaders, representatives of religions, educators, and community members. The interviews aimed to gain deeper insights into language use, sociocultural practices, attitudes, and the institutional frameworks involved. Participant observation was conducted during cultural ceremonies, language documentation sessions, and community meetings to directly observe language practices, language-related interactions, and social behaviors related to the resilience and endangerment of languages.

Secondary data were systematically reviewed and thematically analyzed within the UNESCO (2003) framework for language vitality. This provided contextual support for primary findings and revealed underlying patterns of linguistic resilience, community attitudes, educational implications, and institutional dynamics that shape the vitality of Kaimana's local languages.

Table 1 presents an overview of the various informants and institutional sources involved in this study. The informants were divided into three major groups: government and stakeholders, religious and community figures, and members of the educational framework. The groups provided information relevant to an understanding of the sociolinguistic factors affecting local languages in Kaimana, collectively forming a comprehensive and multifaceted foundation for examining language vitality within broader institutional and cultural contexts.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF INFORMANT TYPES AND INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES

Informant Group	Institution / Source	Focus of Analysis
Government and Stakeholders	Kaimana Culture and Tourism Office, Regional Planning Agency, Kaimana Library, Education Office, District Office	Local language policies, institutional roles, implementation challenges, and strategic plans
Community and Religious Leaders	Protestant Church of Indonesia, Kaimana Customary Council, Farmers and Fisherfolk, Customary Leaders, Village Officials	Language attitudes, cultural practices, and community perceptions on language vitality and maintenance
Educational Sector	SMKN 2 Kaimana, Kaimana Regency Elementary and Junior High Schools	Local curriculum integration, educational support, teacher roles, and attitudes

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Language Vitality

The indigenous tribes in Kaimana Regency exhibit distinct patterns of bilingualism and multilingualism across generations. The grandparents and older generations typically maintain multilingual competence, demonstrating fluency in three linguistic codes: (1) their indigenous language, (2) Indonesian as the national language, and (3) Papuan Malay as the regional lingua franca. Members of the older generation maintain not only their language but also proficiency in neighboring ones. In contrast, younger generations predominantly exhibit bilingual proficiency limited to Indonesian and Papuan Malay. The Kaimana regional languages have undergone significant functional attrition in village contexts. Although it served as the primary communicative medium until the early 2000s, current fieldwork data collected in 2025 documents its restriction to (1) elderly speakers and (2) informal domains such as domestic interactions, agricultural spaces, and casual street conversations.

Ethnographic observation reveals asymmetric bilingual interactions in which parents initiate communication in the regional language but receive responses exclusively in Papuan Malay. In extreme cases, caregivers code-switch to Papuan Malay due to children's complete lack of comprehension of the vernacular, marking an advanced stage language shift. The vitality of the Kaimana languages was observed through focus group discussions, interviews, and documentation sessions, and can be explained as follows.

(a). Intergenerational Transmission

The intergenerational transmission of Kaimana's local languages is sharply declining, placing them at risk of endangerment. These languages are primarily used by the older generations, such as grandparents and elders, and it is mostly used in conversation between their peers. In contrast, parental generations tend to communicate in Papuan Malay, especially with their children, despite their ability to understand and use local languages, whereas younger generations prefer Indonesian or Papuan Malay, particularly in educational and social settings. Among the younger generation, only a few individuals still understand the local languages.

The main factors causing this trend include school policies that prohibit the use of local languages to accelerate mastery of Indonesian, increased contact with Indonesian speakers due to the presence of workers from outside, and shifting attitudes among younger generations, who regard Indonesian as more prestigious and practical for daily communication. This trend is further reinforced by the development of infrastructure, education, and health services managed by non-local workers, leading Indonesian to function as the lingua franca in most public interactions.

Another reason for this trend is intermarriage. In Yarona Village, where Madewana is spoken, mixed marriages—such as between Madewana and Tanibar speakers—often lead to the use of Papuan Malay or Indonesian for mutual understanding. In these families, informal domestic communication increasingly excludes the local vernacular. Without intervention, the local languages may face extinction within a few generations.

TABLE 2
INTERGENERATIONAL SHIFT

Speaker Addressee	Older Generation	Parental Generation	Children Generation
Older generation	L, PM, ID	L, PM, ID	PM, ID
Parental generation	L, PM, ID	L, PM, ID	PM, ID
Children generation	L, PM, ID	PM, ID	PM, ID

Legends:

L = Local language

MP = Papuan Malay

ID = Indonesian

(b). Number of Speakers

The local languages in Kaimana are currently in a worrying situation regarding the number of speakers. The field data collection results estimate the Madewana, Oburauw, Mairasi, and Koiwai populations at around 2,000 people each. However, only around 1,000 people still actively use the local languages in their daily lives. These active speakers are

primarily from the older generations, including grandparents, parents, and adults.

In contrast, the younger generation and children in Kaimana tend to use Indonesian more often, both in school environments and in daily social interactions. The widespread use of Indonesian among the younger generation indicates a language shift, in which the local Kaimana languages is increasingly losing its function as the main means of communication in domestic and public life. The level proficiency in local Kaimana languages among the younger generation also shows worrying variations. Many of them understand the language only passively, without being able to use it actively, and some have almost no ability to speak local languages at all. The decline in the number of active speakers is a significant indicator that, without systematic preservation, the local Kaimana languages are at high risk of extinction within the next one or two generations. This condition highlights the importance of implementing systematic and planned language preservation interventions, to ensure that the local Kaimana language remains alive and thriving within its community in the future.

(c). Proportion of Speakers

The younger generation, comprising both teenagers and children, currently plays the role of passive listeners in communication using the local Kaimana languages. They almost never speak the local languages. The level of fluency in local Kaimana languages shows significant differences across generations. The generation born in the 1950s to 1970s remains fluent in the local Kaimana languages, using relatively pure forms with minimal mixing with other languages. Meanwhile, those born between the late 1970s-1990s began to show the influence of Indonesian in their speech. This generation can still speak the local Kaimana languages but often mix elements of Indonesian into their conversations. They tend to have difficulty forming sentences entirely in the local languages.

The condition is even more critical for the generation born after 1990. This generation has become passive listeners in conversations using the local Kaimana languages and is no longer able to speak them. This generation recognizes only some basic vocabulary and cannot form sentences or communicate actively in their native languages. These indicators show that the local Kaimana languages are experiencing a significant decline, with only the older and middle-aged generations still actively using them. If this trend continues without preservation efforts, local speakers in Kaimana will likely switch to Indonesian in the near future, potentially leading to the extinction of the local Kaimana languages within the community.

(d). Domain of Language Use

The use of language in various domains reflects the extent to which the local Kaimana languages maintain their communicative function amid pressure from dominant languages such as Indonesian. The local Kaimana languages remain prevalent in a multilingual social environment, although their use has declined notably. In certain social contexts, the local Kaimana languages remain alive, especially in traditional and informal domains. Based on focus group discussions with Waho villagers, the Oburauw language was found to still be used in village development planning meetings. However, it is often mixed with Indonesian.

In contrast, the Madewana language is not used in village administrative activities, primarily because the village chief belongs to a different ethnic group. In traditional events, such as ceremonies and weddings, the local languages remain the main language, particularly through traditional songs and dances.

On the other hand, in the religious domain, the use of the local languages is almost nonexistent. All worship activities in the church are conducted in Indonesian due to external factors—specifically the pastor's background, as he comes from the Maluku Islands and does not speak the local Kaimana languages. This condition encourages the local Kaimana communities, including the younger generation, to become more accustomed to using Indonesian in religious activities. In everyday social interactions such as in the gardens, on the beach, or when passing each other, the local languages are still often used, especially among community members. However, in functional domains such as official meetings or events involving outsiders, the use of Indonesian and Papuan Malay becomes much more dominant. Overall, these findings suggest that the local Kaimana languages are currently more prevalent in internal, informal, and cultural domains, whereas in formal and external domains, there is a dominant shift toward the use of Indonesian.

(e). The Social and New Media Domains

The survival of a language can be assessed through its adaptation to various social and new media domains. One important indicator of a language's resilience is its ability to adapt to changing times, including its use in digital technology, communication media, and naming systems in public spaces. This includes the use of language on the internet, social media, signboards, announcements, advertisements, and other visual displays integral to modern society. No instances of local languages were observed on any public media platforms. Villages use Indonesian for place-name boards, announcements, and various public signs or advertisements. This indicates that the local languages have not developed in the written domain, and their use in official and public communication remains highly limited.

Based on observations of digital media use, the younger generation spends much of their time on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, which have become their primary sources of entertainment, offering a wide range of video and music content. Their preferred music predominantly consists of Indonesian and East Malay songs, including Papuan Malay, Kupang Malay, and Ambon Malay. The prevalence of Indonesian and East Malay within digital entertainment spaces indicates an ongoing shift in language use, as younger generations are becoming progressively less familiar with

their local languages.

In terms of communication technology, local speakers more often use telephones and video calls to communicate with fellow community members. Only a few use SMS or messaging applications. Even when they communicate through written messages, the majority prefer using Papuan Malay rather than local languages. This situation shows that the local languages are not used in written form at all. These languages rely entirely on oral communication among their active speakers with no apparent effort to adapt or develop written forms in digital communication or public spaces. If this situation continues, the local Kaimana languages will become increasingly marginalized and risk losing their role in future generations, particularly in the digital era, which increasingly prioritizes text-based communication.

(f). Availability of Teaching Materials

Our research found written sources in the Irarutu and Mairasi languages, including Bibles and village histories, but none in teaching materials. The absence of teaching materials and literacy highlights the languages' vulnerability to extinction, as there is no written support for intergenerational transmission. The dominant use of Indonesian in schools, driven by the fact that most teachers come from outside Kaimana and lack proficiency in the local languages, further exacerbates this situation. Without local content that supports the local languages, children interact less and less with the local Kaimana languages in educational environments.

In Kaimana City, local languages are being incorporated into the educational curriculum, particularly at SMKN 2 Kaimana. However, implementation remains quite limited, lacking proper written teaching materials. The learning process primarily depends on oral instruction from teachers, as there are no textbooks or organized documentation available. Given these conditions, the developing teaching materials—such as textbooks, dictionaries, and documentation—is highly necessary. Integrating the local Kaimana languages into school curricula and strengthening community literacy programs are strategic steps to maintain their sustainability.

(g). Government Support

One external factor that can be used to evaluate language vitality is the government's support for the existence and protection of local languages. Government support through language policies can contribute to language maintenance or, conversely, accelerate language shift. In Kaimana, the local government encourages the active assimilation of local languages, although the approach taken is more symbolic than policy-driven. The local government demonstrates its appreciation for local languages through the representation of these languages in everyday conversations and their presence in public spaces. One example is the establishment of a monument displaying inscriptions in Mairasi, the language used by the dominant tribe in the Kaimana regency. However, at the village level, Indonesian is still more dominant in public representation.

However, we found that the local languages were used on objects related to community life. For instance, on fishing boats funded by government assistance, several inscriptions in the Oburauw language were found, including DD 2022 *Yogara Waho, Er Wewera Awesima Uwogorewasi, and Way Bus Fen Waho*. In addition, at the local health center, there are also writings in the Oburauw language, such as *Na Gisira Ao Bara E Danana*. This shows that although there is no specific policy from the village government requiring the use of the Oburauw language in formal environments, the language still holds a place in community life. Language assimilation in local villages does not result from coercion by Oburauw speakers; rather, Oburauw speakers integrate naturally. Thus, small initiatives such as creating nameplates in the Oburauw language and reproducing them in various places can be a beneficial first step toward preserving and strengthening the existence of the Oburauw language in the village.

(h). Speaker Attitude

The attitudes of language speakers reflect how a community values its language as part of its identity. While most speakers claim to support language preservation, findings from focus group discussions reveal otherwise. The older generation values the local language as a symbol of cultural identity, primarily using it in traditional activities and among equals. Nevertheless, Papuan Malay is the preferred option, particularly when communicating with younger family members. The parental generation, on the other hand, perceives the local language as less prestigious therefore tends to speak Papuan Malay as the primary language at home, believing it will benefit their children socially and educationally. For the younger generation, the local language is rapidly becoming irrelevant in their lives, as Indonesian and Papuan Malay are perceived as more practical and dominate the education system, media, and digital entertainment.

(i). Language Documentation

The documentation of the local Kaimana languages remains limited. For instance, Oburauw and Madewana are represented only by around 120 wordlists compiled in the 1980s by SIL, which are currently available online. Neither dictionaries nor grammars exist for either language. Comparatively, Mairasi has better coverage, with a dictionary, grammar, and Bible in the language. However, none of these documentation projects have been deposited in established international archives such as PARADISEC or ELAR, and their absence limits access and hinders long-term preservation efforts. The BRIN research team is currently documenting the Oburauw, Madewana, Mairasi, and Koiwai languages. The project involves recording audio-visual materials, including folk tales, life histories, livelihood narratives, and traditional songs. Data processing and transcription are currently in progress, with the goal of archiving the materials in an

established repository to ensure accessibility for future research and revitalization efforts.

B. Language Use

Social, cultural, and economic factors shape language use within a community. In a multilingual society such as the Oburauw and Madewana communities, language plays varying roles depending on context. It serves as the primary means of communication in public spaces, educational and religious institutions, and economic and governmental interactions.

TABLE 3
DOMAINS OF LANGUAGE USE IN KAIMANA VILLAGES

	Home	Farm/Garden	Beach	School	Church	Public place
Local Language	√	√	√			
Papuan Malay	√	√	√	√		√
Indonesia				√	√	√

Table 3 illustrates that both Indonesian and the local Kaimana languages are prominent in public spaces within the community. Indonesian is used in various settings, including schools, churches, and healthcare services, particularly where interaction with outsiders is frequent, such as among teachers and healthcare workers from outside the village. Conversely, local languages are commonly used during healthcare, church gatherings, and village meetings. Although there are few immigrants in Kaimana, they can communicate freely in their own languages, with Indonesian often preferred for administrative purposes.

Local languages are commonly used in various settings such as rivers, gardens, fields, houses, and beaches. This is primarily because few speakers marry outside their language group, allowing them to continue using their local language. Both men and women in the community, including grandparents and parents, often converse in the local language, especially in communal areas. If parents introduced more local languages to their children, it could strengthen intergenerational language transmission. However, future efforts are needed to ensure that the local Kaimana languages are used more widely in more public spaces.

Within the family domain, three distinct patterns of language usage emerge across generations. First, some members of the younger generation are capable of speaking the local languages but often switch to Indonesian when communicating with peers and older generations, influenced by schooling and social media, which are primarily in Indonesian. The parental generation uses other languages to ensure their children excel academically. Second, the parental generation exhibits varied patterns. Those marrying within the tribe continue using the local language actively, while those who marry outside switch to using Papuan Malay. Third, the older generation primarily communicates in the local language with peers and children but mixes Indonesian when speaking with grandchildren. There is no gender dominance in language use among them, although attitudes toward sons-in-law from different language backgrounds tend to change—often beginning in Indonesian before shifting to local languages as mutual understanding develops.

V. DISCUSSION

This section outlines strategies employed by communities to reconfigure the prestige of their languages, alongside examples of integrating Indigenous languages into formal education, digital media, and grassroots initiatives. Interviews with representatives from the Kaimana Education Office (Mr. SW) and the Culture and Tourism Office (Mrs. CC) revealed that a Regional Regulation (Peraturan Daerah, or *Perda*) on language protection has been initiated through collaboration among multiple stakeholders—the Education Office, the University of Papua (UNIPA), the traditional council, and the vocational school SMKN 2 Kaimana. The Education Office is represented by the regional language education sector, while UNIPA is represented by its Language Institute. The traditional council's representation includes tribal leaders and the council secretary. SMKN 2 Kaimana participates as the vocational education partner.

The proposal for regional language protection has reached the discussion stage within the Kaimana Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) during the term of Regent Freddie Thie. However, formal approval is still pending, as the draft regulation requires evaluation and endorsement from the Language Center in Jayapura. From a financial standpoint, the proposal is integrated into the existing budget framework of the Education Office, ensuring preliminary funding is not a major constraint. Pilot implementation of local language instruction has begun in two schools—SMKN Teologia and SMKN 2 Kaimana—the latter showing more consistent activity. Nonetheless, widespread adoption is limited due to several challenges. These include a shortage of qualified teachers—most of whom are civil servants from local tribes volunteering their time—a lack of standardized teaching materials, and inadequate instructional modules. Teachers are compensated informally at IDR 100,000 per session, referred to locally as *uang pinang* (betel nut money). Instruction typically occurs after school hours, contributing to decreased student motivation, as classes are scheduled when students are already fatigued and hungry.

Despite supportive responses from government and educational institutions, efforts to elevate regional language education to the district policy level remain constrained. Major barriers include the absence of formal teaching materials across school levels (elementary to high school), insufficient pedagogical training for local language instructors, and the lack of legal infrastructure needed to allocate budgets for materials and personnel. Moreover, preservation efforts in Kaimana tend to prioritize dominant languages, particularly Mairasi, whose speakers constitute the urban majority. For

instance, signage at the airport and city monuments predominantly features Mairasi-language inscriptions and symbols. However, this emphasis marginalizes smaller tribal languages, as non-Mairasi residents and migrants often cannot interpret these inscriptions. As a result, the current approaches to language strengthening risks reinforcing the linguistic dominance of the majority while neglecting minority languages with fewer speakers.

Interviews with the Madewana and Oburauw tribal leaders revealed that the prohibition of local languages in schools began in the 1960s, during the *sekolah rakyat* (people's schools) period. Most teachers at that time were not Papuan but came predominantly from Ambon, Maluku province. Due to their unfamiliarity with indigenous languages, such instructors discouraged and often prohibited the use of regional languages in classrooms, believing it hindered effective communication and teaching. Consequently, Indonesian (Papuan Malay) became mandatory as a medium of teaching and communication. This policy shift had a focal effect on the gradual decline in the use of indigenous languages, as older generations began learning Indonesian for daily communication (Fishman, 1991; Hornberger, 2008).

A second reason for the decline of local languages is the absence of schools in indigenous villages. To pursue secondary or tertiary education, most children must attend school in urban centers such as Kaimana City. There, Papuan Malay serves as the lingua franca, compelling families to adopt it at home so their children can integrate into school (UNESCO, 2003). As a result, regional languages are increasingly marginalized in favor of more widely used Malay varieties. Third, the geographic domains where local languages are used have become very limited. Today, these languages are primarily spoken during traditional ceremonies such as weddings or traditional celebrations. In other contexts, aside from those culturally determined, everyday use is rare. In some cases, older generations continue to sing traditional songs or use Madewana to communicate, but such acts are rare and largely symbolic (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

In both households and broader community interaction, language transmission varies across generations. The elderly speak their native languages to their children (the middle generation) but switch to Papuan Malay when interacting with grandchildren. The same pattern is observed in community interaction, as intergenerational transmission of local languages is increasingly replaced by the socially and economically dominant Papuan Malay (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991).

The above description presents a decisive and proper investigation into the sociolinguistic phenomena that affect the oversight of the revitalization of the local Kaimana language according to UNESCO's (2003) indicators and theoretical insights from Fishman (1991), Hornberger (2002, 2003, 2008), and Woolard and Schieffelin (1994). The analysis closely relates language use to implications from the surrounding environment, educational policies, and societal attitudes, which call for specific revitalization strategies. This study provides evidence that closely aligns with Fishman's (2001) assertion that a disruption in parent-child language transmission will critically endanger language continuity, as reflected in the declining intergenerational transmission of language. Like other minority communities, younger Oburauw speakers exhibit only passive competence in their language. Still, they demonstrate an active preference for using Indonesian, largely due to the influence of external aspirations and educational norms (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). This phenomenon shares similar incidences with others in Papuan situations, such as Tamrin et al. (2024) on the Wabo language, emphasizing how those sociocultural pressures can severely threaten intergenerational transmission.

Another critical factor is the absence of written materials in Oburauw and the limited biliteracy opportunities within formal education, which hinder the application of Hornberger's (2002, 2003) *Continua of Biliteracy framework*. This framework assumes that literacy encompasses both orality and writtenness for effective language maintenance. In contrast, Sawaki (2016) documented other concerns about the Wooi community, highlighting that collective language documentation efforts have nurtured a structured educational framework that fosters language vitality. Oburauw, however, lacks such institutional support and heightening its vulnerability.

Government attitudes and policy implementation are among the most significant factors shaping language vitality. The largely symbolic, rather than practical, support for local Kaimana languages mirrors other cases in Indonesia, where government recognition rarely translates into tangible preservation measures. The more visible installation of Mairasi—language signage compared to the limited representation of Oburauw reveals unequal state involvement and differential treatment of minority languages within the same administrative region.

Meanwhile, the physical and practical context of the local Kaimana language community presents challenges distinct from those discussed above: limited interaction with linguists, scarce technical expertise, few curricular materials, and inconsistent government action. This situation contrasts sharply with that of languages such as Wabo and Wooi, which have benefited considerably from well-organized community initiatives supported by external institutions. This contrast highlights that resilience of a language largely depends on the availability and continuity of institutional, academic, and community partnerships.

These comparisons suggest that, despite some similarities across regions facing language shift, the presence or absence of synergy among revitalization programs significantly affects a language's capacity to survive and resist assimilation pressures. Therefore, the future of any language depends on collective intervention that affects intergenerational transmission, educational integration, institutional support, and positive community attitudes toward language preservation.

VI. CONCLUSION

The linguistic profile of Kaimana, West Papua, is highly diverse, both in terms of the numbers of languages and their structural characteristics. However, these languages face increasing risks of shift and extinction due to pressure from dominant local languages and from Indonesian, the national language. Research indicates that urbanization, economic development, cultural assimilation, interethnic marriage, political centralization, educational policy, mass media, mobile technology, and the internet all contribute to language loss across Indonesia, indirectly affecting Kaimana's linguistic vitality. The endangerment of Kaimana's languages can be assessed along two principal dimensions: the number of speakers and the functional domains of use. A language remains viable only when it is used in regular, everyday communication. Currently, the Koiwai language shows significant attrition, being used mainly by older speakers, while younger speakers primarily use Indonesian or Papuan Malay. Strikingly, younger generations show minimal active use of the heritage language, despite being able to understand Koiwai when addressed by elders—likewise echoed by observation from local community members.

Province-wide, Papua's Law on Special Autonomy (UU OTSUS) No. 2/2021 addresses education and culture in Chapter 16, and Article 58(1) dutifully requires the provincial government to “preserve, develop, and promote regional languages and literature to safeguard and strengthen Papuan cultural identity.” However, the absence of implementing regulations has hindered effective enforcement, resulting in minimal tangible protection for indigenous languages. In Kaimana, conservation efforts are sporadic and lack systematic documentation or revitalization planning. One community-based initiative involves tribal elders offering local language classes at SMKN 2 Kaimana, limited to a single ad hoc hour per week and focused primarily on lexical translation from Indonesian. Research indicates the primary stumbling blocks: limited government support for local language teachers, insufficient instructional time, and a lack of teaching materials (e.g., textbooks, dictionaries). These systemic gaps underscore the precarious state of language preservation in spite of legislative intent.

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Agency Construction in AI English Language Learning Applications: A Transitivity Analysis of Promotional Discourse

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Abstract—This study explored how AI tools and human learners are represented in the promotional texts of AI-based English learning applications through quantitative and qualitative methods. The study aims to analyze promotional texts from globally popular applications—Grammarly, QuillBot, Mondly, Lingopie, and ELSA Speak—collected from App Store descriptions and official websites employing Halliday’s transitivity system. Quantitatively, the analysis of 148 clauses showed that only three process types were employed: material (83.73%), relational (11.49%), and mental (4.73%). Learners were foregrounded as central actors (83.7%) and beneficiaries (16.3%), while the AI tools were less frequent as actors (56.1%) but appeared more often as instrumental circumstances (24.2%). Qualitatively, three themes emerged: (1) AI tools as active, supportive, and authoritative agents, (2) human learners as autonomous yet dependent agents, and (3) shared agency in which learners remained central doers, but their abilities were consistently enabled by AI tools. These findings highlight how promotional discourse constructs a learner-centered orientation while normalizing AI’s authority. The study contributes by illustrating how transitivity analysis can reveal patterns of representation and agency in promotional texts, offering insights for researchers, educators, and developers of AI English learning tools.

Index Terms—agency, English learning applications, AI tools, promotional discourse, transitivity analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed many sectors, including education. It is capable of providing personalized learning and enhancing accessibility and flexibility (Holmes et al., 2023). According to Chen et al. (2020), AI improves the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of education by using adaptive systems and smart tutoring. AI helps learners learn at their convenience, reducing geographical and socioeconomic barriers. It also reduces the workload of instructors regarding automated grading and feedback, offering time for them to focus on deeper student engagement (Alsaedi, 2024). Building on these developments, Miller (2025) emphasized the significance of incorporating AI technologies into curricula to foster AI literacy and prepare students for an increasingly technology-advanced educational environment.

In the field of English language learning, AI applications such as Grammarly, QuillBot, Mondly, Lingopie, and ELSA have significantly impacted students’ learning process in helping them to strengthen their language skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Applications such as Grammarly and QuillBot are used by learners to help them improve their writing-related task accuracy, focusing on grammar, spelling, punctuation, paraphrasing, and lexical diversity. These tools offer quick feedback, allowing learners to engage in self-directed revision. Mondly, on the other hand, provides interactive classes focused on vocabulary enhancement, phrases, and dialogues, incorporating gamification components such as augmented reality features for increased engagement. Lingopie uses TV series and movies to learn the language in context. ELSA focuses on speaking skills, employing speech recognition to improve pronunciation.

These applications have emphasized in their promotional discourse that they allow students to engage in self-directed learning at their convenience. Such discourse portrays learners as actors with agency controlling their learning process. However, little research has been done on how these applications linguistically represent the agency of learners compared to the agency of the AI applications through the transitivity system. Therefore, this study aims to examine the depiction of AI tools and human learners in the promotional discourse for five AI-powered English learning applications. The purpose of this study is to detect the frequencies of transitivity process types and participant roles assigned to AI tools and human learners in the advertising texts of AI-powered English learning applications, as well as to identify the themes of agency and representation that emerge from the transitivity patterns used.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. English Learning Applications

Recent research has examined the educational advantages of AI applications and the way in which students engage with them in language learning. Llausas et al. (2024), Wulandari et al. (2024), and Ismailia and Novawan (2025) evaluated the advantages and drawbacks of tools like Grammarly and QuillBot. Their findings demonstrated that these applications effectively facilitate ESL/EFL learning, resulting in measurable enhancements in language fluency, improved understanding of syntactic structures, and fewer grammatical errors. Furthermore, they have been proven to enhance students' writing confidence, promote learner autonomy, and mitigate persistent linguistic challenges faced by EFL learners. However, they also raise challenges, including excessive dependence on technologies and insufficient feedback for advanced writing skills (Llausas et al., 2024). Similarly, Mondly promotes autonomy and flexibility. Nushi et al. (2024) reported the gamified elements of Mondly, such as stars, daily lessons, and notifications, enhance motivation and alleviate learner anxiety in contrast to traditional classroom assessments. Mondly's simple design, engaging visuals, and extensive variety of language possibilities render it particularly attractive and advantageous for beginners.

On the other hand, ELSA distinguishes itself through its specific pronunciation enhancement capabilities, employing integrated speech recognition technology that ranks it among the top five AI applications globally. While students benefit from significant advantages in pronunciation acquisition, they also face problems in navigation and usability (Nushi & Sadeghi, 2021). Despite these challenges, Arbain et al. (2023) indicated in their comparative research that ELSA's enhanced efficacy, with students exhibiting a 15.21% proficiency improvement against 13% with alternative applications—a statistically significant difference in learning outcomes. Nevertheless, a major obstacle for ESL/EFL learners remains the limited availability of free language learning applications.

B. Promotional Discourse in Education and English Learning Applications

Promotional discourse has been significantly adopted in education. Universities and educational AI applications employ marketing and advertising language to attract students and learners. They employ compelling language to market their programs and applications. Universities increasingly use promotional discourse as a strategic communication strategy to enhance institutional identity and attract potential students (Hoang & Rojas-Lizana, 2015; Al-Qahtani, 2021; Shahnaz & Suleman, 2023). Hoang and Rojas-Lizana (2015) analyzed the linguistic representation of two Australian universities on their official websites. The analysis revealed that the university websites exhibited a promotional discourse reflecting the impacts of globalization and the trend of academic marketing in higher education. This rhetorical strategy is utilized by institutions to strengthen their attractiveness and draw in more students and resources. Similarly, Al-Qahtani (2021) studied the representation of five Saudi universities by analyzing the textual content on their websites. The results demonstrated a systematic promotional discourse centered on prestige and credibility and highlighted how universities controlled the messages presented to their audiences. The findings also showed that the websites displayed a lack of diversity in their depiction of gender and race. In a more recent study, Shahnaz and Suleman (2023) explored university prospectuses in Pakistan to illustrate the impact of marketization on their discourse and representation. The findings showed that although marketing efforts are apparent, old hierarchies persist unaltered. Prospectuses continue to emphasize authority figures and majestic architecture, while students are inadequately represented and seen as lacking agency. This goes in line with the hierarchical cultural norms of Pakistan, which embrace authority, exhibit a significant power distance, and maintain a hierarchical structure.

Regarding English learning, similar trends were found in their promotional discourse. Alkhalil (2018) explored the promotional discourse in English language teaching (ELT) institutes in Saudi Arabia. The data were collected from a corpus of 45 internet advertisements using critical discourse analysis (CDA). The results indicated that institutes promote English as a worldwide language and highlight its benefits for career possibilities, travel, and education to attract potential students. The ads portray English learning as personally powerful, enjoyable, and confidence-boosting. Establishing credentials was the most common rhetorical strategy for persuasion, achieved through the use of the institute's name, logo, and recognized textbooks and teaching methods. Additionally, the results indicated that the use of English as a symbolic language is a convincing method for institutions to demonstrate their proficiency in the language.

In regard to language learning applications, Florez (2024) examined the promotional discourse for language-learning applications and found that it is characterized by personalized, joyful language and design. The promotional materials of the applications highlighted simplicity, fun, and social interaction, depicting language learning as an enjoyable and accessible endeavor that enhances learners' lives. Additionally, their promotional discourse frequently emphasizes the application's significance and reliability by displaying user statistics and success stories from learners, while ensuring an engaging experience. This promotional language corresponds with the broader tendency of educational technology businesses merging instructional assertions with marketing exaggeration. Recently, Tan et al. (2025) conducted a comparative analysis of classroom-based and app-based preschool English instruction in China through the examination of teacher interviews and the promotional discourse of two applications. The findings indicated that the applications consistently portrayed children as independent, self-directed English learners who could study without teacher interference. Applications were promoted as “self-learning” alternatives for professional education, with automatic

feedback (e.g., “amazing” or “try again”) and gamified prizes. However, classroom teaching emphasized professionalism, with educators using EFL expertise, research-informed pedagogy, and embodied activities. Lessons adhered to organized sequences and child-centered materials, facilitating responses to children's interests and developmental requirements. Thus, the researchers called for a careful balance and integration of both approaches; classroom teaching ensures quality and responsiveness, while applications enhance accessibility. Similarly, Nusra (2025) explored advertising discourse for Bangladeshi e-learning entrepreneurs' language to advertise their platforms. The results indicated that entrepreneurs used formal and informal registers and code-switched between Bangla and English to appear authoritative but relatable change agents. They employ motivational narratives, rhetorical questions, and emotive appeals to position themselves as mentors, advisers, and guarantors of success. Students are discursively constituted as active but dependent actors who must enroll, practice, and endure. Entrepreneurs as opportunity providers and learners as responsible agents reflect neoliberal self-reliance and market-driven success. Visuals, testimonies, and interactive behaviors help entrepreneurs discursively and socially establish their authority in cultural narratives of hard labor, social mobility, and national progress.

C. Halliday's Transitivity Framework

Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic theory that views linguistic structures as functional selections that are influenced by context and communication intentions. SFL conceptualizes language as a social semiotic system, indicating that it is predominantly a resource for constructing meaning within social contexts (Koller, 2020). Within SFL, Halliday (1985) provided the systemic functional grammar (SFG), which emphasizes the analysis of grammar alongside the semantic meaning they express at the clause level. Halliday (1978) classified the meaning that we can make through language into three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction relates to human experience and concerns with clauses as representations. The interpersonal metafunction relates to the social world, while the textual metafunction relates to what is written or said, particularly the organization of information within a text (Halliday & Webster, 2014).

The central grammatical system of the ideational metafunction is transitivity. The transitivity system helps in investigating how actions, events, and relationships are represented in grammar at the clause level. It focuses on three elements: processes, participants, and circumstances. Processes are represented by verbs describing the types of activities. Participants are concerned with the entities involved in these processes and represented by the nominal groups. Circumstances offer additional contextual information related to time, manner, or place and are represented by adverbial or prepositional phrases (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Halliday (1994) identified six process types: material, mental, relational, existential, behavioral, and verbal. The material processes relate to action and doing, including two participants: an actor, who performs the action, and a goal that is affected by the action. The relational processes describe a state of being or possession, categorized into attributive and identifying processes, involving two participants: a carrier and an attribute. The mental processes encode the processes of sensing, cognition, perception, or affection, involving two participants: a sensor and a phenomenon. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the material, mental, and relational processes are the main processes, and the other three, existential, behavioral, and verbal, are minors placed between these major processes. The existential process is placed between relational and material processes, the behavioral process is positioned between material and mental processes, and the verbal process is situated between mental and relational processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The existential processes express the existence of an entity, involving one participant: an existent. The behavioral processes relate to physiological and psychological behaviors, involving a behavior that performs the action, such as staring and dreaming. The verbal processes represent the acts of saying, involving two participants: a sayer and a verbiage. Thus, the transitivity system, including the processes along with participants and circumstances, provides a framework to reveal how language is used to represent human experiences, agency representations, and shape social reality.

D. Transitivity System in Education and English Learning Applications Discourse

Transitivity analysis provides a strong framework for investigating how language choices carry meanings. It has been extensively utilized across various discourse forms, including political (Alhumsi & Alsaedi, 2023), advertising (Alsaedi, 2024), and educational discourses. It has been widely utilized in the realm of education to examine agency and how learners are represented in different educational genres, such as students' written essays (Ignatieva et al., 2021), course syllabi (Alhumsi et al., 2024), and academic textbooks (Salsabila et al., 2023). Language in education not only mirrors social roles and identities but also actively shapes them. Ignatieva et al. (2021) performed an investigation of 80 academic papers written by students in three different disciplines. The results revealed various disciplinary patterns, with material processes being predominant in literature, verbal processes more frequently utilized in history, and relational processes applied in geography, illustrating how each field represents agency and interprets knowledge and experience.

In a similar vein, Alhumsi et al. (2024) examined the transitivity analysis of seven English course syllabi, determining that material processes comprised 68% of all process occurrences, much more than mental, relational, or verbal processes. This frequency analysis indicated the representation of students' agency and emphasized the action-oriented focus in syllabi. The study also revealed an absence of existential processes, indicating that the texts rarely convey information as abstract existence and instead prioritize active representations. Similarly, Salsabila et al. (2023)

investigated transitivity in two English textbooks to reveal gender disparities in agency. Males in textbooks were represented as active participants in business, travel, and other activities and portrayed as strong and rational. However, females were marginalized and only appeared in activities related to traditional women's roles. Thus, males were actors, while females were found in fewer agentive roles. This pattern is identical to the traditional representations and consistent with the broader gender-biased content. These studies used transitivity analysis to reveal the construction of the learner's agency and power dynamics through grammar.

With the rapid rise of AI and learning applications, researchers also analyzed technology discourse to examine the agency construction of AI tools as non-human actors. Heaton et al. (2024) explored how linguistic choices construct ChatGPT as an actor to clarify implications regarding trust and blame via agency and transitivity. The data was gathered from 88,058 tweets regarding ChatGPT during its launch. The findings indicated that 87% of tweets depicted ChatGPT as an agent possessing human-like abilities, illustrated by phrases such as "ChatGPT writes," "ChatGPT explains," and "ChatGPT says." This personalization granted authoritative agency to ChatGPT while also raising questions regarding trust. Only 13% of tweets depicted ChatGPT as a passive tool under the influence of human developers, using terms like "trained" and "released." Consequently, users emphasized ChatGPT's role in content production, information dissemination, and influence by using personalization and agency metaphors. However, users eventually altered their perception of it as a creative actor, concentrating instead on its limitations, such as committing errors and fabricating references. The evolving representations of agency complicate the distinction between ChatGPT as a tool or an actor, obscuring the identification of whom to trust, blame, and hold accountable.

In a similar vein, Heaton et al. (2023) examined public discourse on Twitter regarding the 2020 A-Level grading system in the UK, which replaced traditional examinations with automated computations during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 18,239 tweets were examined to uncover the attribution of blame and agency. The findings demonstrated that the algorithm was shown as an active social agent possessing decision-making authority (e.g., "the algorithm is going to screw you"), thereby shifting accountability to the technology itself. The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation was depicted as a crucial social actor, serving as both the owner and operator of the algorithm, often held accountable for its shortcomings through dynamic verbs such as "ignored" and "created." The UK government was depicted as possessing active agency, highlighting its failures and reluctance to take action, as in "the government failed you." In contrast, students were portrayed passively as victims, lacking agency in the discourse. Thus, the findings showed how linguistic selections, especially transitivity and personalization, influenced perceptions of agency in public discussions. In a recent study, Huang and Gadavanij (2025) examined the discourse about artificial intelligence in Education by investigating 100 news articles. The results indicated that corporate leaders (41%) and government officials (21%) predominantly influenced the discourse, whereas parents and students represented merely 11%. Government and corporate entities were mobilized as leaders and facilitators of state objectives, while public actors were rendered inactive as mere recipients. The findings also showed corporate-parental discourses co-occurring, which risks commercial interests over educational equity. This connection decreased after 2021 due to government efforts to restrict educational commercialization.

To this end, although researchers have widely applied transitivity analysis to examine different educational discourses, limited studies have explored how AI is represented in the discourse of learning applications. More specifically, no study, to the best of our knowledge, has investigated the promotional discourse of AI-powered English learning applications using the transitivity system as the analytical tool. To address this gap, the current study examines the promotional discourse of five AI-powered English learning applications to discover the agency construction of learners vs. AI tools using transitivity analysis. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are the frequencies of transitivity process types and participant roles assigned to AI tools and human learners in the promotional texts of AI-powered English learning applications?
2. What are the themes of agency and representation that emerge from the transitivity patterns?

III. METHODOLOGY

To explore how AI tools and human learners are represented in the promotional texts of AI-based English learning applications, this study utilized qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach was employed to analyze transitivity patterns, focusing on the frequency of process types and participant roles. To provide deeper insights, a qualitative approach was used to explore agency and interpretive use of transitivity processes.

Five promotional texts were taken from five AI-powered English learning applications: Grammarly, QuillBot, Mondly, Lingopie, and ELSA Speak. Data were primarily collected from App Store descriptions. When the application is not found in the App Store (e.g., ELSA Speak), the promotional text was taken from the official website. All texts were combined into a single dataset and analyzed. Rather than app-by-app comparison, the focus was to identify overall transitivity patterns and participants' representation across these tools. These five applications were selected because of their global popularity and accessibility. For example, Grammarly is used by more than 30 million daily users (Roza, 2025). In addition, the five applications collectively targeted different English language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, and comprehension. Lastly, limiting the analysis to five applications produced a dataset that is both comprehensive enough to detect transitivity patterns and focused enough to enable in-depth examination.

For analysis, the five texts were segmented into clauses. A total of 148 clauses were analyzed using Halliday's transitivity system to identify process types, participants, and circumstances (see Table 1). Where texts included fragments or imperatives, implied subjects or verbs were noted in brackets for clarity (e.g., the phrase "Install today" was analyzed by indicating that the actor is [you] implied). The frequencies of process types and participants were counted using Microsoft Excel.

TABLE 1
PROCESS TYPES AND PARTICIPANT ROLES

Process type	Semantic meaning	Participant roles	Example	Process analysis
Material	Doing/ Happening	Actor, Goal	She chased the cat.	She (<i>actor</i>) chased (<i>material process</i>) the cat (<i>the goal</i>)
Mental	Sensing/ Thinking/ Feeling	Sensor, Phenomenon	She remembered the appointment.	She (<i>sensor</i>) remembered (<i>mental process</i>) the appointment (<i>Phenomenon</i>)
Verbal	Saying	Sayer, Verbiage	He asked a question.	He (<i>sayer</i>) asked (<i>verbal process</i>) a question (<i>the verbiage</i>)
Behavioral	Behaving	Behaver	She smiled.	She (<i>behavior</i>) smiled (<i>behavioral process</i>)
Existential Relational	Existing	Existent	There was a storm last night.	Was (<i>existential process</i>); a storm (<i>Existent</i>); last night (<i>circumstance</i>)
	Being/ Describing	Carrier, Attribute	She is happy.	She (<i>carrier</i>) is (<i>relational process</i>) happy (<i>attribute</i>)
	Being/ Identifying	Identified, Identifier	She is the leader.	She (<i>identified</i>) is (<i>relational process</i>) the leader (<i>identifier</i>)
	Having	Possessor, Possessed	They have a restaurant.	They (<i>possessor</i>) have (<i>relational process</i>) a restaurant (<i>possessed</i>)

To enrich the quantitative findings from transitivity analysis, thematic analysis was also conducted to critically examine the representation of AI tools and human learners. Thematic analysis involved coding the data to identify relevant themes and providing in-depth descriptions (Creswell, 2013). Thus, by combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study offered a comprehensive view of how AI tools and human learners are represented in the promotional texts of AI English learning applications.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Quantitative Part

The five promotional texts contained 148 clauses. Table 2 presents a sample of transitivity analysis for selected clauses rather than the entire dataset.

TABLE 2
SAMPLE ANALYSIS OF PROCESS TYPES IN THE PROMOTIONAL TEXTS

Clause	Participant	Process	Participant	Circumstance
Grammarly for Safari is your always-on assistant for clearer, more compelling communication.	Carrier (Grammarly)	Relational (is)	Attribute (your always-on assistant)	For Safari; For clearer, more compelling communication
It helps you	Actor (It)	Material (helps)	Goal (you)	-
Brainstorm ideas	Actor (you-implied)	Material (brainstorm)	Goal (ideas)	-
Grammarly does more than correct mistakes	Actor (Grammarly)	Material (does)	Goal (more than correct mistakes)	-
Grammarly works right where you do—in your browser	Actor (Grammarly)	Material (works)	-	Right where you do; In your browser
You do (embedded clause)	Actor (you)	Material (do)	-	-
With Mondly, you'll take your English skills to the next level	Actor (you)	Material (will take)	Goal (your English skills)	With Mondly; To next level
Strict but caring.	Carrier (ELSA-implied)	Relational (is-implied)	Attribute (strict but caring)	-
The ELSA AI Coach pays close attention to every bit of progress	Sensor (ELSA AI Coach)	Mental (pays attention)	Phenomenon (every bit of progress)	-

To answer the first research question—“*What are the frequencies of transitivity process types and participant roles assigned to AI tools and human learners in the promotional texts of AI-powered English learning applications?*”—the analysis revealed that only three process types were employed in the promotional texts: material, relational, and mental—while verbal, behavioral and existential processes were absent. Table 3 displays the frequency distribution of each process type.

TABLE 3
FREQUENCIES OF TRANSITIVITY PROCESS TYPES IN PROMOTIONAL TEXTS OF AI ENGLISH LEARNING APPLICATIONS

Process Type	Frequencies	Percentage
Material	124	83.78%
Relational	17	11.49%
Mental	7	4.73%
Total	148	100%

Note: Percentages are calculated from the total number of clauses (N=148).

The material process was the most frequently used, dominating 83.78% of the clauses. The relational process ranked second (11.49%), while the mental process was the least frequent, accounting for only 4.73%.

The heavy reliance on material processes indicated that these promotional texts were action-oriented, focusing on performance, achievements, and capability rather than thinking or feeling (mental), saying (verbal), or being (relational). Through material processes, AI tools were represented as instruments of action and empowerment. They “*Help*”, “*generate*”, “*build*”, “*sharpen*”, “*offer*”, “*revolutionize*”, “*make*”, “*give*”, “*analyze*”, and “*evaluate*”. On the other hand, human learners were positioned as active agents who “*learn*”, “*write*”, “*read*”, “*practice*”, “*communicate*”, “*apply*”, “*improve*”, and “*master*”. This construction presented language learning and acquisition as a goal-oriented process, in which both AI tools and learners were described in terms of specific actions and outcomes.

Although relational processes were less frequent, they were used to assign attributes to AI tools and the learning process (e.g., *Grammarly for Safari is your always-on assistant*; *Quillbot is a free AI writing assistant*; *ELSA is a fun and engaging app*; *ELSA gets smarter*; *Learning a new language has become more accessible*). Thus, relational processes fostered credibility by positioning the applications as smart and trustworthy assistants. Lastly, the minimal use of mental processes showed that perception and cognition did not play a central role in this promotional discourse.

In addition to process types, the analysis examined participant roles assigned to AI tools and human learners (see Table 4). The results revealed that human learners dominated as actors (83.7%), indicating that the promotional texts represented learners as the primary active agents. In contrast, AI tools were less frequent as actors (56.1%), though they appeared more visibly as goals (19.7%) and circumstances (24.2%), where they served as instruments or resources (e.g., *with Mondly*; *through role-plays and personalized AI feedback*). When learners were depicted as goals (16.3%), they were beneficiaries of AI tools (e.g., *It [AI tool] helps you*). Importantly, learners were never depicted as circumstances, which reinforced their central role as active participants. Moreover, learners were assigned a total of 92 roles across the texts, compared with 66 roles for AI tools. This distribution reflects how the promotional texts foregrounded the learners and reinforced their centrality and visibility. To sum up, the promotional texts emphasized a learner-centered orientation: learners were active agents and beneficiaries, while the AI tools were portrayed as supportive assistants and instruments facilitating the learning process.

TABLE 4
PARTICIPANT ROLES IN PROMOTIONAL TEXTS OF AI ENGLISH LEARNING APPLICATIONS

Participant	Actor	Goal	Circumstance	Total
AI Tool	37 (56.1%)	13 (19.7%)	16 (24.2%)	66 (100%)
Learner	77 (83.7%)	15 (16.3%)	0 (0.0%)	92 (100%)

Note: Percentages indicate the distribution of roles within each participant's total roles.

These findings are in line with previous research that employed transitivity in promotional discourse. For example, Nugraheni et al. (2023) also reported the use of material, relational, and mental processes in promotional texts with the absence of verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. Similarly, Nugraheni et al. (2023) and Alsaedi (2024) observed the use of material process as the dominant process in advertisements. Finally, although Zapata et al. (2025) analyzed calibrated AI-generated feedback rather than promotional texts, their results are relevant to this study in showing how linguistic choices shape the roles assigned to learners. Similar to the promotional texts analyzed in this study, they found that the prominent use of material processes portrayed learners as active doers rather than passive recipients, emphasizing the centrality of learners.

To conclude, the quantitative data provided a descriptive overview of process types and participant roles. The following section examines the qualitative dimension with particular attention paid to the themes of agency and representation that arose from these patterns.

B. Qualitative Part

To answer the second research question—“*What are the themes of agency and representation that emerge from the transitivity patterns?*”—three primary themes emerged from data: (1) AI tools as active, supportive, and authoritative agents, (2) human learners as autonomous and dependent agents, and (3) shared agency.

(a). First Theme: AI Tools as Active, Supportive, and Authoritative Agents

Although AI tools appeared less frequently as actors compared to human learners, they were consistently represented as active agents performing different actions such as “*generate*”, “*build*”, “*sharpen*”, “*revolutionize*”, and “*make*”. The repeated use of the verb “*help*”—alongside verbs such as “*enable*” and “*support*”—constructed AI tools as intelligent and expert mentors providing technological support to learners. Even when functioning as goals or circumstances, AI

tools served as instruments or resources that enhanced learners' productivity and made language learning "*easier*", "*faster*", and "*fun and rewarding*".

Beyond supportive agency, AI tools were also framed as authoritative assistants possessing superior knowledge and technical power. They "*evaluate*", "*correct mistakes*", and "*give immediate detailed feedback*". In addition, AI tools were attributed with qualities typically associated with human teachers. For example, ELSA was described as "*strict but caring*", able to "*pay close attention*", and even as "*getting smarter*". Such descriptions reflected a teacher-student relationship in which the AI tool has not only the role of a supportive mentor but also the authority traditionally held by the teacher.

It is worth mentioning that this agency—whether supportive or authoritative—was often backgrounded or embedded. Examples such as "*Grammarly supports originality with built-in plagiarism*", "*Grammarly works right where you do—in your browser offering real-time feedback as you type*", "*Grammarly adapts to your goals as you write*", and "*enjoy QuillBot... everywhere you write online*" illustrated how these tools are seamlessly integrated into learners' daily activities. This embedded integration normalized and reinforced AI's accepted authority in English language learning.

(b). *Second Theme: Human Learners as Autonomous and Dependent Agents*

Across the five promotional texts, human learners dominated as actors (83.7%), carrying out the essential tasks of education such as learning, writing, reading, practicing, applying, improving, and mastering. This positioning portrayed learners as autonomous, central agents, and decision-makers, accountable for their learning, personal growth, and self-development. In addition, the use of imperative verbs combined with consumerist prompts (e.g., *Install today; get instant access; try our two free AI rephraser modes*) framed learners as active consumers. This usage of the imperative form with an implied "you" strategically addressed learners/customers directly, drawing their attention and persuading them to take an action and install the applications.

However, when depicted as goals, learners frequently appeared as beneficiaries of AI services (e.g., *helps you; putting you in control; reminds you; enables you*). Learners also never appeared in circumstance roles. This means they were never backgrounded, which further emphasized their autonomy and visibility.

This dual representation created a paradoxical agency. On one hand, learners were portrayed as autonomous actors responsible for their learning experience. On the other, their abilities and development were framed as dependent on AI tools. Phrases such as "*works right where you do—in your browser*", "*as you type*", and "*everywhere you write online*" highlighted the seamless integration of AI into learners' routines, while simultaneously making this dependency invisible.

(c). *Third Theme: Shared Agency*

The analysis of the first two themes suggested that the promotional texts of AI English learning applications constructed a model of shared or distributed agency. Human learners were the primary actors (83.7%) in the learning experience, carrying out a wide range of tasks such as installing, accessing, writing, reading, practicing, and applying. Their centrality and visibility were reinforced by their absence from circumstance roles and by the large number of roles assigned to them (92) compared to AI tools (66).

At the same time, when AI tools were actors, they were represented as enablers and helpers who guided and supported learners (*helping you, putting you in control*). Their influence extended beyond facilitating action to shaping learners' affective states, as in "*Boost your confidence by getting instant feedback...from Mondly*" and "*Stay motivated with interactive games and challenges*". Even when backgrounded as circumstances, AI tools remained integral as instruments and the resources that learners relied on to enhance their performance.

Thus, learners were consistently portrayed as the primary doers of action, but under the guidance and with the help of AI tools. The learners' agency was amplified, but it was dependent on the use of AI tools. This interdependence constructed a theme of shared agency in which AI systems enhanced learners' abilities without replacing them. The promotional texts thereby strategically balanced the empowerment of AI tools with the preservation of learners' central role, ensuring that human agency was not overshadowed.

These findings align with previous research on promotional discourse across English learning platforms and institutional websites. Although this study is grounded in CDA and guided by Halliday's transitivity system, the three themes also resonate with Fairclough's (1995, 2001) neoliberal education (as cited in Nusra, 2025). Fairclough described English learning as a market activity in which learners are framed as customers and education (English language learning) is commodified as a product. Self-improvement is not only represented as personal growth but also as a demand, where individuals are expected to continually enhance their skills to remain competitive in the job market.

The promotional texts in this study reflected this ideology by positioning learners as active agents/customers and decision-makers responsible for their self-development. This was achieved through the repeated use of the material process "*improve*", alongside other processes such as "*master*", "*achieve*", "*refine*", "*strengthen*", and "*boost*". Success in English learning was portrayed as dependent on AI tools, with learning framed as "*fun*", "*easier*", and "*faster*", and framed within a discourse that treated it as a purchasable service. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Florez (2024), Nusra (2025), and Alkhalil (2018), who also found neoliberal ideologies in promotional discourse of English language learning.

The theme of shared agency identified in this study was also discussed in previous research, though in a different way. Alm (2024) used the same term, while Godwin-Jones (2024) referred to it as *distributed agency*. Several studies have also raised concerns that over-reliance on AI may diminish learner agency, as passively adopting AI outputs can affect learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Llausas et al., 2024; Wah, 2025). In response, the notion of shared agency has been proposed as a solution. According to Alm (2024) and Godwin-Jones (2024), human-technology interaction created a complementary form of agency in which AI tools empower learners and facilitate language learning, while learners remain responsible for recognizing AI's limitations, critically evaluating its outputs, and adapting them to their own objectives.

Finally, it is important to note that the theme of shared agency discussed in this study reflected a discursive balance in promotional texts, where learners were positioned as central agents and AI tools functioned as enablers. Although this differs from how Alm (2024) and Godwin-Jones (2024) conceptualized shared agency in pedagogical contexts, there are resonances between the two perspectives. In both cases, agency is framed as complementary, with human learners and AI tools collaborating rather than replacing one another.

V. CONCLUSION

This study utilized quantitative and qualitative methods within a CDA framework, guided by Halliday's transitivity system, to explore how AI tools and human learners are represented in the promotional texts of five AI-powered English learning applications. Through CDA guided by Halliday's transitivity system, this study answered two questions. In response to the first question, the quantitative analysis revealed that only three process types were employed—material (83.73%), relational (11.49%), and mental (4.73%)—with material process dominating. Learners were foregrounded as central actors (83.7%) and beneficiaries (16.3%), while the AI tools were portrayed as supportive actors (56.1%) and instrumental circumstances (24.2%). In addressing the second question, the qualitative analysis presented three primary themes: (1) AI tools as active, supportive, and authoritative agents, (2) human learners as autonomous and dependent agents, and (3) shared agency. Taken together, these findings showed that agency is framed as complementary, with learners positioned as the primary doers of action, but consistently supported and enabled by AI tools.

This study has several limitations. This study examined five promotional texts from five popular applications, considered collectively rather than app-by-app. Future research could expand the dataset and adopt a comparative approach, examining how different applications frame AI and learners' agency, including those targeting specific skills such as writing. In addition, since promotional texts are dynamic and regularly updated, longitudinal studies are required to track changes over time. Finally, this study analyzed only written discourse; a multimodal approach would provide insights into how textual and visual elements can interact to shape representation and agency.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to understanding how linguistic choices in marketing construct public perceptions of language learning and learner agency. It also offers practical implications: advertisers should carefully consider how their messages shape notions of agency; app developers should empower rather than diminish learners' roles (Tan et al., 2025); and educators should guide students in using AI tools critically, raising awareness of both their potential and their limitations (Nusra, 2025). Future investigations can therefore enrich our knowledge of how AI-mediated language learning is framed and how learners' agency is shaped in diverse contexts.

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Stance, Framing, and Indexicality: A Multimodal Discourse Study of the #KaburAjaDulu

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Abstract—The hashtag #KaburAjaDulu has gone viral among Indonesian netizens, functioning both as a light-hearted expression of escapism and as a political vehicle for critiquing governance and socio-economic stress. This study aims to examine how hashtags—particularly #KaburAjaDulu—operate as multimodal semiotic resources that construct meaning through the interaction of text, image, and affect in digital discourse. Rather than treating hashtags as mere metadata, this research conceptualizes them as indexical, stance-taking, and framing devices within multimodal communication. While prior studies have explored hashtags as tools for solidarity and memes as instruments of humor and resistance, their role as semi-productive discursive hubs that fuse linguistic and visual elements for ironic political critique remains underexplored. Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) integrated with corpus-based collocation analysis. A total of 150 public posts on X (formerly Twitter) containing the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu were systematically collected between February and July 2025 through manual screenshot documentation. Each post was examined for textual, visual, and intertextual features, focusing on how multimodal resources co-construct meaning and stance. The findings reveal that hashtags function as discursive synapses, weaving together humor, irony, and critique into polysemous narratives of resistance. #KaburAjaDulu encapsulates both withdrawal and resistance, demonstrating how humor and satire act as forms of political commentary. The study contributes to digital semiotics by showing that hashtags are dynamic multimodal constructs shaping collective identity and political expression in contemporary digital culture.

Index Terms—#KaburAjaDulu, multimodal tweet, stance-taking, framing devices, indexical marker

I. INTRODUCTION

The user-generated discourse of social media is increasingly centered on multimodal signs, where meaning is co-constructed through combinations of text, images, videos, memes, and emojis (Koltsova & Kartashkova, 2022). Among these, hashtags have emerged as distinctive semiotic resources that encapsulate complex communicative functions. They serve not only as metadata markers but also as participatory indicators that shape identity building, online coordination, and affective alignment within digital communities. At the same time, hashtags often convey ambivalent intentions, functioning as sites of critique, irony, humor, or resistance (Cao et al., 2022; Rezeki et al., 2024; Zappavigna, 2015).

One such example is the trending Indonesian hashtag #KaburAjaDulu, which has evolved into a significant discursive practice among Indonesian netizens. While at first glance it may appear as a humorous or self-deprecating reaction to daily struggles, the hashtag also serves as a subtle critique of social and political conditions that prompt young people to imagine opportunities abroad. Rhetorically, its positive interpretations index aspirations for skill acquisition, educational advancement, and social mobility, whereas negative readings evoke questions of national identity, belonging, and loyalty (Austin et al., 2021; Simis-Wilkinson et al., 2018). In this way, the hashtag has become a socially meaningful discourse practice, mediating how belonging and agency are (re)negotiated within precarious national contexts.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in hashtags as communicative and ideological tools, existing research has remained limited in two crucial ways. First, prior studies have largely examined hashtags within static or monomodal media such as print advertising, posters, or cinema (Rossolatos, 2014; Wong, 2019; Zantides, 2016), thereby overlooking how users interact dynamically and multimodally through memes, emojis, and visual text on social media platforms. Second, while social tagging has been explored as an information-organizing practice, its pragmatic and ideological functions in digital discourse—especially in non-Western, multilingual contexts like Indonesia—remain underexplored.

This study addresses these gaps by situating #KaburAjaDulu within the framework of internet linguistics and digital pragmatics (Crystal, 2011). It examines how hashtags operate as indexical, stance-taking, and framing resources in multimodal digital communication, revealing how users construct meanings, negotiate social identities, and express

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ideological positions. In doing so, this study highlights the semiotic complexity and social significance of hashtags as tools that generate collective imaginaries in Indonesian digital discourse—an area that calls for deeper, context-sensitive investigation in the global study of online communication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Pragmatics of Escapism, Multimodal Discourse and Social Semiotics*

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) points to the fact that communication in the contemporary world is not confined to written or spoken human language, but involves “the use of other symbolic resources” (Kress & Bezemer, 2023; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). MDA is intended as a mixed approach that encompasses Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), social semiotics, mediated discourse analysis, and conversation analysis. As O’Halloran (2011) illustrates, language and other semiotic modes—such as gesture, image, and layout—operate within SFL to make meaning simultaneously across multiple modes. Halliday’s metafunctions—the ideational, interpersonal, and textual—constitute the central framework through which verbal and visual constructs interact across channels to articulate such multilayered communicative contexts as those found on social media. An interesting case of combining text, emoji, and images is seen in online posts: emojis, in particular, derive their meanings relationally from the words they accompany, thus allowing for more subtle affective expressions than either modality alone would convey (Cappallo et al., 2018; Illendula & Sheth, 2019).

Building on Halliday’s social semiotics, Kress and Bezemer (2023) foreground the creator, rather than any stable code of practice, in a selective, feature-wise combinatory system encompassing all sign systems within it. For them, text, image, and sound are not neutral carriers of information but socially situated opportunities for meaning negotiation. Alongside this, mediated discourse analysis (Scollon et al., 2012) extends its focus to the material and bodily conditions of discourse, demonstrating how objects, spatial arrangements, and physical practices contribute to both textual and visual communication. While conversation analysis provides a micro-analytic perspective on sequential organization and turn-taking, it also offers methodological techniques for exploring the interplay of multimodal resources in real-time spoken interaction—both in face-to-face encounters and through video protocols.

These lines of inquiry have also been advanced by recent contributions to critical multimodal discourse studies, which critically examine the ideological and material dimensions of multimodality. Ledin and Machin (2020) argue that multimodal analysis requires not only a description of metafunctions but also attention to how spatiality, visibility, and embodiment naturalize or counteract power relations. Within the context of social media investigations, this is particularly relevant, as meaning is constructed through multimodal expressions and the performance of identities—claims to affiliation or stances.

Empirically, people on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are reported to use combinations of text, hashtags, emojis, and images to generate multilayered multimodal meanings (Chandrasekaran et al., 2021; Jovanovic & van Leeuwen, 2018; Zhang et al., 2022). Unsurprisingly, these semiotic resources are strategically arranged to display attitudes, influence others to participate as the sender does, and achieve communicative aims ranging from self-promotion to activism (Luzón, 2023; Poulsen & Kvåle, 2018). How users deploy hashtags, for instance, is shaped by platform affordances. Conventions of form—such as tag length, capitalization, and searchability—both enable and delimit users’ creative expression within these sociotechnical environments (Highfield, 2017). By using emoticons and affiliative hashtags, users seek support, signal identity, and attract collective attention. Emotional emojis, particularly when associated with positively valenced messages, have been found to enhance engagement and social connection (Alfano et al., 2023; Ko et al., 2022).

Importantly, hashtags function as indexing devices and as emotional and discursive resources. Combined with images and emojis, they create additional semantic layers that increase a message’s level of persuasion and resonance (Alfano et al., 2023; Highfield, 2017; Zhou & Ai, 2022). Since multimodality is crucial to the creation, dissemination, and contestation of meaning on social media platforms, MDA provides a crucial starting point for the investigation of *#KaburAjaDulu*.

In this respect, *#KaburAjaDulu* can be situated within a broader typology of hashtag practices that emphasize its function as a socially significant discourse practice. At the most mundane level, it performs an indexing function—one through which users organize and retrieve conversations around shared experiences of uncertainty or frustration. At the same time, its stance-taking features, indicating ironic resignation or critique, are further intensified through multimodal couplings with emojis or memes. As a framing device, the hashtag condenses complex socio-political phenomena (for example, governmental pathologies or economic uncertainty) into a brief narrative of “escaping” that gratifies users’ affective sensibilities. Its use also expresses the delegitimization of institutions and authorities, as these are perceived to have failed to attend to the public good, thereby fostering in-group solidarity through laughter and shared disappointment. Lastly, *#KaburAjaDulu* serves as an identity and community marker, especially for younger, digitally savvy publics who employ the hashtag as a vernacular expression of generational sentiment. Cross-cutting all of these is how hashtags function less as purely technical tags and more as multimodal semiotic resources, contributing to meaning-making, identity work, and ideological mediation within Indonesia’s densely layered digital ecology.

B. On Hashtag #KaburAjaDulu

Hashtags have become powerful discourse markers in digital communication, performing multiple roles in indexing, affecting attitudes, and forging collective identity. In Indonesia, the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu illustrates how even seemingly mundane linguistic expressions can be redeployed as socially significant discursive practices. Similar to other viral expressions, its meaning lies not only in what it denotes but also in its pragmatic and semiotic flexibility across digital platforms. Corpus-based analyses of hashtags (Page, 2018; Zappavigna, 2011) highlight their high degree of polysemy—the ability to generate diverse meanings in different contexts. The hashtag symbol (#) functions as an indexical marker that not only aggregates discourse but also functions as a semiotic resource with performative potential, enabling the construction of solidarity, resistance, and collective humor.

#KaburAjaDulu encapsulates this dynamic multifunctionality, operating simultaneously as a humorous, critical, and escapist polemic in response to Indonesia's tumultuous social and political circumstances. As Zappavigna (2015) observes, hashtags offer spaces for negotiating meaning within digital publics and contribute to the formation of temporary discourse communities, or what other scholars describe as “campsites”—ephemeral sites of shared sentiment and commentary (Rambukkana, 2015; Scott, 2015). This conceptual model is particularly useful for understanding #KaburAjaDulu as both a communication strategy and a cultural symbol in Indonesia's online environment.

The widening polysemy of #KaburAjaDulu becomes especially evident when viewed through a social semiotic lens. On one hand, the hashtag indexes a literal sense of withdrawal or avoidance, reflecting a pragmatic act of “escaping” from an oppressive or overwhelming reality. On the other hand, it functions as a tunnel of ironic satire, expressing social critique regarding governmental failure, systemic corruption, or broader social crises. Much like formulaic expletives, the meaning of this hashtag is shaped by its co-text (captions, memes, comments) and co-semiotic modalities (grids, GIFs, emojis). In a multimodal environment, its meaning expands: when paired with memes, it frames criticism humorously; when juxtaposed with news screenshots, it conveys disillusionment and despair. Its functional elasticity demonstrates how digital discourse materializes affect, stance-taking, and collective mood within networked publics.

A comparison with #IndonesiaGelap [“Dark Indonesia”] further illustrates this semiotic versatility. Unlike #KaburAjaDulu, which articulates individual withdrawal as collective escapism, #IndonesiaGelap functions as a metadiscursive crisis signal, circulated in response to political scandals or national tragedies. It encapsulates multilayered sociopolitical commentary and foregrounds structural critique, drawing attention to national decline. Both hashtags exemplify how Indonesian digital users mobilize tagging practices not merely for categorization, but for discursive legitimization and delegitimization—legitimizing affective solidarity among users while delegitimizing state institutions or criticized authorities.

From a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) perspective, hashtags constitute semiotic condensations of discourse strategies into recognizable digital signs (Dawson, 2020; Larionova & Demkina, 2021; Scott, 2015). They operate as linguistic and multimodal short forms, reinforced through typographic variation (capitalization, lengthening), visual juxtaposition with images, and recirculation within networked publics (Calude et al., 2024; Giaxoglou, 2018; Zappavigna, 2015). This hybrid quality positions hashtags as both linguistic objects and discursive practices. The #KaburAjaDulu discourse thus demonstrates that digital expression in Indonesia relies not solely on propositional language but also on the indexical meanings of hashtags as tools for stance-taking, identity construction, and social commentary. In this sense, hashtags are not an “afterthought” but an integral part of the semiotic economy of Indonesia's contemporary digital culture—reflecting its political thumbprint, affective registers, and evolving cultural trajectory.

III. METHOD

The data for the #KaburAjaDulu discourse were collected as systematically documented digital artifacts in the form of screenshots of public posts on Twitter (now X) that used the #KaburAjaDulu hashtag. A total of 150 screenshots were collected between February and July 2025. Each screenshot contained textual as well as multimodal information, consisting of at least one of the following elements: hashtags, caption text, and images or memes.

The methodical use of online screenshots as the primary, rather than secondary, data was justified on the grounds that this approach preserved the multimodal integrity of communication, maintaining the interrelated contributions of text, image, and layout in meaning production (Barthes, 1985; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020). Consistent with the principles of digital ethnography, screenshots were regarded as legitimate “cultural traces” of online behavior and were treated as naturalistic qualitative data (Hine, 2020; Kozinets, 2015). In the context of internet linguistics, digitally documented language has been recognized as a valid corpus source, provided that data collection is systematic and interpretation remains contextual (Crystal, 2011; Paulus et al., 2013).

From an ethical standpoint, this study drew exclusively on publicly available posts, thereby adhering to the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) guidelines, which permit the use of open-source digital material so long as anonymity and confidentiality are maintained when appropriate (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Consequently, the approach to data capture through screenshots ensured both trustworthiness and ethical responsibility while allowing for a robust multimodal discourse analysis. Although the captured data were screenshots, the textual content within the posts was transcribed to identify key collocations surrounding the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu. The analysis was conducted by applying the Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) method and focused on four analytical categories. Specifically, the investigation concentrated on the relationship between text and image across two primary dimensions. First, Anchorage

and Relay (Barthes, 1985) were used to analyze how textual components delineated (anchored) or generated (relayed) interpretative boundaries around accompanying images and memes. Second, Visual Grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) was employed to examine (1) representational aspects—what or who was represented, (2) interactional aspects—the nature of engagement with the audience, and (3) compositional aspects—the visual organization of elements, including salience and framing.

This study was grounded in Halliday's social semiotic framework (Halliday, 2014), within which the analysis was carried out in a multimodal setting by considering the three metafunctions of language: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These metafunctions were used to interpret how meanings were constructed and interwoven across textual and visual modes in the #KaburAjaDulu discourse.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

The multimodal X screenshot featuring the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu (see Figure 1) illustrates the intricate relationship between lexical choices, discursive call structures, and the visual representation of collective action.

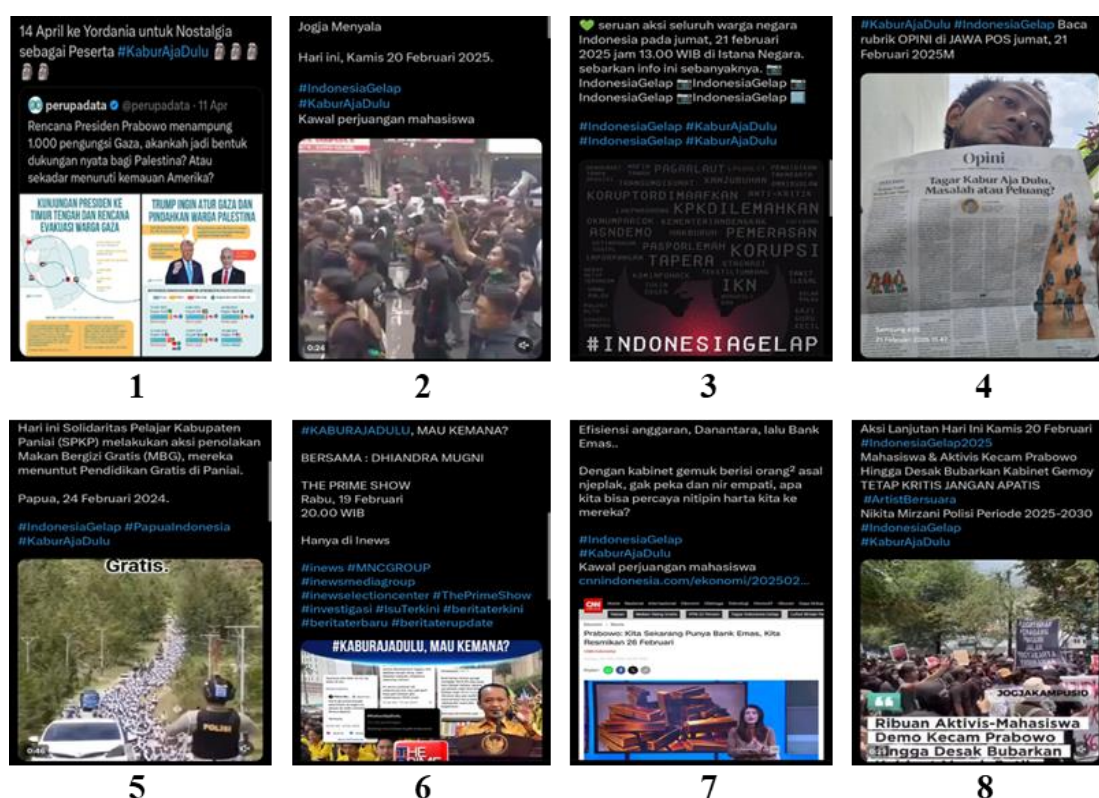


Figure 1. Social Functions Form Affective Communities That Share Satire and Fantasies of Mobility

In Figure 1.2, the collocation “*Jogja Menyala*” (“Yogyakarta Lights Up”) employs light as a metaphorical resource for constructing a narrative of resistance against socio-political crisis. This metaphor is further intensified through its reversal in the counter-hashtag #IndonesiaGelap (“Dark Indonesia”), which establishes a binary opposition between light and darkness. Such polarization produces a stratified semiotic configuration: the nation is depicted as being engulfed in darkness, while students emerge as the illuminating force—a metonymic embodiment of hope and agency. At the ideational level, this representation positions students as transformative social actors who challenge hegemonic structures through symbolic struggles of good versus evil, thereby reaffirming their agency in socio-political transformation.

Conversely, the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu introduces a layer of multimodal irony. Literally meaning “just run away first”, it evokes an act of withdrawal or retreat. Yet, in the multimodal configuration, the textual and visual elements resignify this literal meaning: rather than depicting disengagement, the posts portray students actively gathering, speaking up, and reclaiming their collective voice. This ironic inversion destabilizes both the literal and ideological logic of resistance, producing a humorous yet subversive stance toward institutional authority. Through humor, satire, and discursive playfulness, the multimodal text enacts a subtle critique of power, transforming protest into an affective space where dissent is articulated through wit rather than confrontation. On a personal and interpersonal level, this irony fosters emotional proximity between authors and audiences—it creates a sense of shared laughter, reflective camaraderie, and collective understanding, enabling participants to “laugh together” while critically engaging with political realities.

Another salient discourse layer appears in the collocation “*Kawal perjuangan mahasiswa*” (“Stand for students’ struggle”). This phrase functions as a lexical gesture of solidarity, positioning the audience not merely as passive observers but as active participants in the broader activist cause. The visual representation of massed student crowds reinforces this alignment by embodying the collective presence of protest, which text and image mutually anchor and relay (Barthes, 1985). From a social semiotic perspective, the findings reveal the dynamic interplay of the three metafunctions within the digital artifact. The ideational metafunction is realized through the metaphor of light and darkness, symbolizing the moral and political dimensions of national struggle. The interpersonal metafunction is enacted through appeals to solidarity, affective irony, and collective humour, which strengthen communal bonds and shared emotions among viewers. Meanwhile, the textual metafunction is achieved through the strategic integration of hashtags, slogans, and visual layout—anchoring coherence, sequencing meaning, and framing protest as both a moral and enduring social action. This multimodal case demonstrates how digital communicative practices orchestrate lexical selection, visual composition, and semiotic affordances to articulate layered political meanings. Through irony, metaphor, and affective participation, *#KaburAjaDulu* transforms online discourse into a performative act of socio-political commentary, where protest, play, and affect converge in the construction of collective voice (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
CALL TO ESCAPE WITH VISUAL INSISTENCE ON RESISTANCE

Fig	Collocation	Multimodal Discourse Analysis	Social Semiotic Metafunctions
2	<i>Jogja Menyala</i>	A rallying text accompanied by visuals of student crowds: The metaphor of light (“ <i>menyala</i> ”) is anchored in concrete acts of protest.	Ideational: Students are represented as agents of change, with light functioning as a symbol of resistance. Interpersonal: The collective chant constructs solidarity and a shared movement identity. Textual: The phrase connects the narrative of the city (Jogja) to a broader national movement.
3	<i>#IndonesiaGelap</i>	A negative-evaluative hashtag: In contrast to “ <i>menyala</i> ”, it reinforces the binary opposition of light versus darkness.	Ideational: The nation is personified as “dark”, symbolizing moral or political crisis. Interpersonal: Readers are invited to adopt a critical evaluative stance. Textual: It functions as a moral discourse anchor that frames the protest action.
1-8	<i>#KaburAjaDulu</i>	A multimodal irony: While the text calls for escape, the visual simultaneously depicts collective resistance.	Ideational: A productive contradiction emerges between “escape” and “resist”. Interpersonal: The satirical effect reinforces resistance against authority. Textual: Humor and irony are interwoven with serious representations of demonstration.
7	<i>Kawal perjuangan mahasiswa</i>	A direct call-to-action text, reinforced by visuals of collective bodies, emphasizing audience engagement.	Ideational: Student struggles are positioned as shared struggles. Interpersonal: The text establishes solidarity and urgency as a collective stance. Textual: It anchors a temporal action (20 February 2025) within a larger movement narrative.

Multimodal collocations thus illustrate and highlight the interrelations between text, image, and symbolism in meaning construction. Using a metafunctional framework, this study demonstrated how student movements expose and utilize semiotic resources to sustain resistance. *Jogja Menyala* represents light as a metaphor for hope and agency, juxtaposed against *#IndonesiaGelap*, which constructs darkness as a symbol of moral and political crisis. The ironic tension in *#KaburAjaDulu* juxtaposes a textual call to “escape” with a visual insistence on “resistance,” thereby amplifying its satirical force. *Kawal Perjuangan Mahasiswa* positions its audience within a shared struggle—rooted in the immediacy of the moment yet extending across a broader activist timeline. These patterns demonstrate the orchestration of image, language, and metaphor in conveying solidarity, critique, and political identity within protest discourse.

In Figure 2, Twitter posts are organized according to indexical indicators of youth identity, migratory aspiration, and socio-political critique.

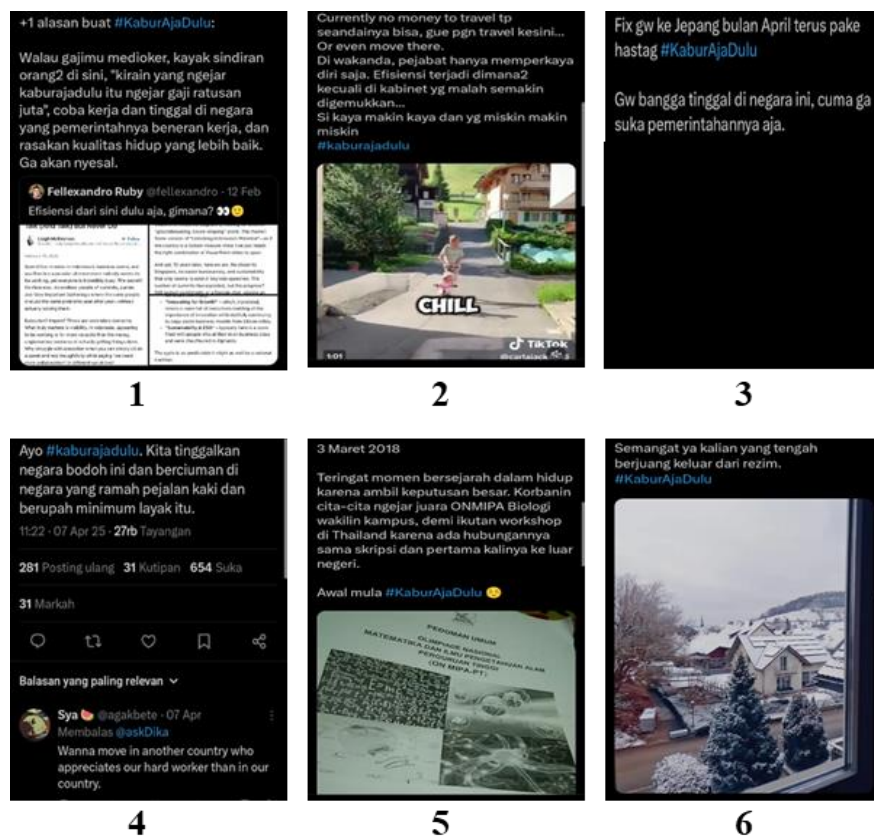


Figure 2. #KaburAjaDulu as Indexical Marker

The multimodal collocation surrounding the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu demonstrates how digital discourse constructs migration both as critique and aspiration. In Figure 2.1, the phrases “*gaji, medioker, ratusan juta, tinggal di negara pemerintahnya beneran kerja*” (“salary, mediocre, hundreds of millions, living in a country where the government actually works”) are presented through a sarcastic tone, employing words such as “*mediocre*” and the conditional comment “*try working in a country that...*”. The hashtag #KaburAjaDulu serves as a stance marker, indexing dissatisfaction with domestic realities. The ironic juxtaposition of “salary” and “government that actually works” epitomizes frustration toward home governance, where sarcasm operates as a relational tool to build alignment among users. Similarly, the phrases “*negara bodoh, minimum layak, negara ramah pejalan kaki*” (“stupid country, minimum standard, pedestrian-friendly country”) in Figure 2.4 present migration as a collective imperative through the clause “*Ayo #KaburAjaDulu*” (“Let’s escape for now”), embedding a dichotomy between a “stupid country” and a “pedestrian-friendly country.” Here, stance-taking occurs through both evaluative labeling and the mobilization of audience participation.

Figure 2.5 features the collocation “*bersejarah – cita-cita – ONMIPA – luar negeri*” (“historic – aspiration – ONMIPA – abroad”), articulated through a retrospective personal narrative recalling “*the beginning of #KaburAjaDulu*.” The discourse is primarily textually anchored, supported by a visual of an exam handbook that symbolizes academic pursuit. Ideationally, it frames migration as an academic achievement; interpersonally, it constructs personal credibility through ethos; and textually, it situates the hashtag as an interpretive frame. Figure 2.5 therefore recontextualizes the hashtag within a personal academic trajectory, where the multimodal combination of text and exam-related visuals presents migration as the culmination of intellectual struggle. This pattern echoes Figure 2.6, where the depiction of a “struggle to escape” reframes migration not merely as physical movement but as symbolic resistance to authoritarian control. Collectively, these co-occurrences center on three overarching dimensions of meaning: (1) destination (abroad, global mobility), (2) cause (economic injustice, low quality of life, authoritarian repression), and (3) identity performance (personal ethos, collective resistance, ironic stance). Within the Hallidayan metafunctional framework, these discursive practices demonstrate how protest hashtags function as multimodal semiotic assemblages that integrate irony, critique, and aspiration into coherent digital narratives.

Table 2 illustrates multiple mechanisms through which collocations operate in the #KaburAjaDulu discourse to express identity negotiation, hope, and critique. Texts often serve as points of departure that link economic realities (Figure 2.1) with political criticism or highlight the contradictory relationship between international mobility and corrupt domestic politics (Figure 2.2). Relay visuals, by contrast—such as documents and landscapes—broaden the interpretive scope by presenting idealized alternatives or visual evidence that reinforce such critiques (Figures 2.1 to 2.6).

TABLE 2
#KABURAJADULU ARTICULATE CRITIQUE, ASPIRATION, AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

Fig	Collocation	Multimodal Discourse Analysis	Social Semiotic Metafunctions
1	<i>gaji – ratusan juta; tinggal di negara pemerintahnya beneran kerja</i>	The text functions as anchorage, foregrounding economic injustice, while the visual of official documents reinforces the legitimacy of critique.	Ideational: Representing economic inequality. Interpersonal: Employing irony and sarcasm to invite audience alignment. Textual: Operating as a discourse anchor.
2	<i>travel – no money – pejabat memperkaya diri</i>	As a relay, the image of a “chill scene” draws a distinction between political reality and idealistic mobility.	Ideational: Creating a desire for worldwide movement. Interpersonal: Showing support for audiences that are irritated. Textual: Using the hashtag to connect political assessment with storytelling.
3	<i>bangga tinggal – suka pemerintahan</i>	The text serves as anchorage contextualizing a photo of Japan, while the visual affirms a temporary migratory decision.	Ideational: Distinguishing between nationhood and governance. Interpersonal: Negotiating a nationalist–critical stance. Textual: Using the hashtag as a stamp of critique.
4	<i>negara bodoh – minimum layak – negara ramah pejalan kaki</i>	The text acts as anchorage through the imperative “Let’s #KaburAjaDulu,” while reply comments serve as social validation.	Ideational: Creates a dichotomy stupid country versus pedestrian-friendly country. Interpersonal: Frames a collective invitation. Textual: Using the replies to reinforce argumentative force.
5	<i>bersejarah – cita-cita – ONMIPA – luar negeri</i>	The content serves as the primary anchor, while the image of the exam handbook symbolizes academic perseverance.	Ideational: Encouraging migration as a means to succeed academically. Interpersonal: Creating ethos and believability. Textual: Using the hashtag as mode of interpretation.
6	<i>berjuang keluar – rezim</i>	The use of a distant winter forest image symbolizes the idealized “elsewhere”.	Ideational: Distinguishing between peaceful human nature and repressive politics. Interpersonal: Promoting empathy and solidarity. Textual: Using the hashtag to support the opposition.

Three semiotic dimensions interact within Halliday’s metafunctional framework. First, the ideational function highlights systemic inequalities and oppositional dichotomies (e.g., “stupid country” vs. “pedestrian-friendly country”), framing migration as both an economic necessity and an aspirational pursuit. Second, the interpersonal function strategically employs irony, sarcasm, and collective appeals to align audiences affectively with the stance of critique. Third, hashtags operate within the textual function as anchoring devices that not only secure interpretive coherence but also circulate solidarity across digital publics.

The key collocations in Figure 3.1 include “*riset mandiri*” (independent research), “*S2 duluan*” (get a master’s degree), and “*kerja sambil kuliah*” (working while studying). These lexical choices construct an academic discourse entangled with the economic precarity of education, articulated through the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu. From a multimodal discursive perspective, the reflective SpongeBob visual acts as a relay that reinforces the post’s introspective tone. In social semiotic terms, the ideational metafunction mirrors students’ financial instability, particularly the risk of layoffs following COVID-19. The interpersonal metafunction is realized through emojis and playful phrasing to foster audience solidarity and empathy, while the textual metafunction manifests in the hashtag’s role as a semiotic mechanism embedding “escape” within the broader social discourse.

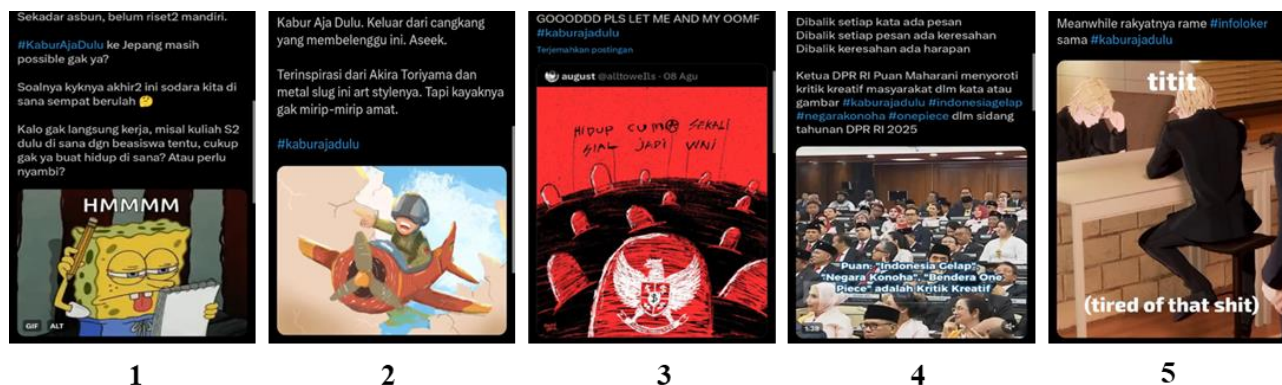


Figure 3. Discursive Repertoire and Structural Problem

In Figure 3.2, the collocation “*keluar dari cangkang*” (coming out of the shell) signifies maturity and personal growth, while references to “Metal Slug” and “inspiration from Akira Toriyama” demonstrate a blend of pop culture discourse and metaphors of freedom. From an MDA perspective, the animated visual of a flying character serves as anchorage that reinforces the notion of “escape”. The hashtag #KaburAjaDulu consolidates this as a subtle articulation of resistance to socio-political confinement. Social semiotically, the ideational metafunction represents “escape” as an alternative mode of resistance, the interpersonal metafunction emerges through humor and nostalgic pop culture cues inviting solidarity,

and the textual metafunction materializes through the hashtag's function in bridging political discourse with digital popular culture.

Figure 3.3 features a tweet juxtaposed with a red poster reading "*Hidup cuma sekali sial jadi WNI*" (You only live once, damn it, as an Indonesian citizen). The central collocation "*hidup cuma sekali*" (you only live once), combined with national emblems and a red-dominant palette, constructs urgency and defiance. From an MDA lens, the text functions as anchorage, focusing existential immediacy into social critique. The red color serves as a semiotic code of intensity, resistance, and danger. Social semiotically, the ideational metafunction articulates political critique through a life-and-death metaphor; the interpersonal metafunction adopts a poetic and emotionally charged tone that invokes affective tension (semantic gravity); and the textual metafunction emerges through the interplay of linguistic text, visual codes, and hashtags that collectively perform critical protest narratives.

Linguistic elements blend formal political rhetoric with popular idioms in Figure 3.4, where key collocations such as "*Indonesia gelap*" (Dark Indonesia) and "*Bendera One Piece Adalah Kritik Kreatif*" (The One Piece flag is a creative critique) appear. From an MDA perspective, the extended text anchors a visualized parliamentary session video, while on-screen netizen comments amplify alternative discourses. Social semiotically, the ideational metafunction highlights public dissent toward elite authority, the interpersonal metafunction operates through political humor to express collective discontent, and the textual metafunction unfolds through phrase repetition and hashtags such as *#IndonesiaGelap* and *#NegaraKonoha* as digital framing devices.

Finally, Figure 3.5 employs informal English to project a global yet sarcastic tone. The image of an anime character bending in resignation serves as anchorage, foregrounding fatigue amid job insecurity and economic instability. Social semiotically, the ideational metafunction depicts systemic disappointment over limited opportunities, the interpersonal metafunction manifests through humor-inflected cynicism that elicits empathy, and the textual metafunction coheres through hashtags that interlink individual frustration with collective narratives of migration and escapism.

TABLE 3
POLITICAL DISILLUSIONMENT AND ARTICULATING TRANSLOCAL IMAGINARIES

Fig	Collocation	Multimodal Discourse Analysis	Social Semiotic Metafunctions
1	<i>#KaburAjaDulu ke Jepang masih possible gak ya?</i>	The visual of SpongeBob thinking seriously functions as a relay, emphasizing the dilemma of educational costs; the accompanying text and hashtag anchor the narrative to a collective stance.	Ideational: Representing the crisis of educational expenses. Interpersonal: Using humor and emoticons to build intimacy with the audience. Textual: Using the hashtag as a node of coherence.
2	<i>keluar dari cangkang, Metal Slug, inspirasi Akira Toriyama, #kaburajadulu</i>	The anime or illustrated image of a flying character serves as anchorage for the metaphor of freedom; pop culture elements extend the discourse's appeal.	Ideational: Representing "escape" as resistance. Interpersonal: Using pop culture nostalgia to invite solidarity. Textual: Using the hashtag to bridge political issues with popular culture.
3	<i>hidup cuma sekali, sial jadi WNI, #kaburajadulu</i>	The dominant red color codes power and protest; the text functions as existential anchorage, while the national emblem reinforces the message of resistance.	Ideational: Constructing a political life-and-death metaphor. Interpersonal: Using poetic-emotional style to create urgency. Textual: Using the integration of text, visual, and hashtag to construct protest narrative.
4	<i>Indonesia gelap, kritik kreatif, Negara Konoha, #kaburajadulu</i>	The parliamentary video is anchored by extended text, while irony is reinforced through netizen comments and the inclusion of a popular culture image (One Piece).	Ideational: Representing public opposition to the ruling elite. Interpersonal: Collective grievances are channelled through political humour. Textual: Collective framing is provided by hashtags and phrase repetition.
5	<i>rame infoloker, tired of that shit, #kaburajadulu</i>	Structural exhaustion is anchored by the anime visual of resignation, while the ironic tone is extended to a global register through informal English.	Ideational: Reflecting disillusionment with the economic conditions. Interpersonal: Employing humorous-cynical tone to evoke empathy. Textual: Using the hashtags to interconnect personal experiences to form a shared narrative.
6	<i>#KaburAjaDulu ke Jepang masih possible gak ya?</i>	SpongeBob's serious expression serves as a relay, highlighting the burden of educational expenses; the text and hashtags ground the narrative in a shared perspective.	Ideational: Standing for the financial problem in education. Interpersonal: Fostering closeness with the audience through emotional cues and humour. Textual: Using the hashtag as a coherence node.

Throughout Table 3, the ideational function foregrounds crises related to education, the economy, and governance; the interpersonal function strategically employs humor, sarcasm, and pop culture to foster affective solidarity; and the textual function consistently positions the hashtag as a discourse anchor, weaving together fragmented individual expressions into a coherent narrative of resistance. In this sense, *#KaburAjaDulu* operates not merely as a digital slogan but as a multimodal repertoire that articulates collective disillusionment with political realities while constructing translocal imaginaries of hope, critique, and mobility.



Figure 4. Economic, Political, and Ecological Struggles

The discursive constellation surrounding the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu syncretizes the text, imagery, and socio-political context through expressions such as “the highest salary”, “a suitable planet”, “a historical figure”, “escaping only to be returned”, and “tropical fish migrating”. These linguistic and visual motifs transform humor, hyperbole, and irony—along with reification—into compositional strategies for articulating social critique. Across Figures 4.1 to 4.5, the interplay of text and image demonstrates how escapist discourse is re-signified through diverse semiotic maneuvers. The absurdity of economic insecurity is visualized through juxtapositions of menial labor and aspirational fantasies of achieving prosperity elsewhere (Figure 4.1), while exaggerated imagery—such as cosmic “escapes”—signals the magnitude of imagined departure from oppressive realities (Figure 4.2). By framing escape as a historically embedded mode of resistance, this discourse simultaneously reveals its containment: the release of migratory energy that fuels exile also exposes the state and its ruling structures as caricatured forms of authority. The narrative culminates in the ecological dimension (Figure 4.5), where climate crisis and species migration become metaphors for human displacement and adaptation within the semantics of “escape”. Collectively, these multimodal configurations illustrate how #KaburAjaDulu transforms private fantasies of flight into public acts of critique, employing satire, irony, and intertextuality to weave together economic, political, and ecological struggles into a shared digital rhetoric of resistance.

B. Discussion

The findings reveal that the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu embodies a complex discursive meaning. Rather than emerging as a spontaneous expression, it operates as an orchestrated discursive strategy that channels political resistance through the semiotics of escapism. The recurring lexical collocations demonstrate linguistic innovation, showing how the hashtag integrates humor, critique, and social commentary into a shared space of meaning-making. Accordingly, the results affirm that hashtags function as discursive anchors, bridging visual and verbal modalities to construct coherent digital narratives.

Moreover, the multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) confirms that Halliday’s metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—work dynamically in the evolution of the hashtag. Conceptually, the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu encapsulates disaffection and disenchantment with everyday political and social realities. Interpersonally, it communicates through irony and satire, creating spaces of affective alignment and symbolic reconciliation. Textually, the hashtag establishes multimodal continuity by connecting captions, imagery, and intertextual references—from historical figures to scientific facts—into a unified message. These findings underscore that digital discourse is inherently multimodal, assembling diverse semiotic resources to craft a collective story of critique and resistance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020; Machin, 2013).

From this perspective, a key contribution of the study lies in demonstrating how hashtags—often treated as trivial or colloquial digital practices—constitute a new form of online political vernacular. The hashtag #KaburAjaDulu simultaneously deploys humor as a coping mechanism and as a discursive tool for critical reflection on migration, exile, and state critique. This dual function extends the definition of hashtags beyond mere tools for categorizing content; they emerge as rhetorical media that generate counter-narratives and alternative publics in the digital sphere.

These insights are consistent with previous research emphasizing hashtags’ role in fostering affective solidarity (Zappavigna, 2011) and collective identity formation. However, this study adds a distinctive perspective: beyond

solidarity, *#KaburAjaDulu* privileges satire and irony as means of transforming “escape” into a mode of political critique. While earlier scholarship on political memes has recognized the subversive power of humor (Milner, 2018; Shifman, 2014), this study extends that argument by illustrating that hashtags—particularly when integrated with captions and visuals—serve as more flexible discursive hubs than memes, enabling layered and multimodal political expression.

Theoretically, this research contributes to multimodal discourse studies by demonstrating that hashtags themselves operate as a mode of meaning-making, linking linguistic and visual signs. Methodologically, it showcases the value of combining corpus-based collocation analysis with screenshot-driven MDA to capture the ephemerality of online texts. This approach validates visual documentation as empirical evidence for examining epigrammatic practices on social media (Marwick & Boyd, 2014; Tagg et al., 2017). The study thus contributes both conceptually and methodologically—advancing theoretical awareness of digital semiotics and offering practical strategies for multimodal corpus research.

Nevertheless, the limited dataset of twenty-five screenshots constrains the generalizability of these findings. Future studies could build upon this work by conducting large-scale quantitative analyses that map hashtag dynamics across time and platforms. Integrating social media APIs (e.g., Twitter, Instagram) and Python-based scripts would enable researchers to capture broader data on user interaction, temporal flow, and networked meaning circulation (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Lomborg & Bechmann, 2014). Such a computationally assisted multimodal approach would not only enhance analytical precision but also deepen understanding of how digital discourse operates as a socio-semiotic system linking language, image, and ideology.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has developed the concept of hashtag migration discourse as a multimodal semiotic phenomenon, with *#KaburAjaDulu* serving as a paradigmatic case. Through the analysis of digital expressions across platforms, the research demonstrates that the hashtag embodies multiple, intersecting layers of meaning, where linguistic play, humor, irony, and visual semiotics converge to construct a polysemous narrative of critique and aspiration. The collocational patterns surrounding *#KaburAjaDulu* reveal not only discontent with domestic political and economic realities, but also a symbolic projection of global mobility as an imagined alternative to local disillusionment. Despite their diverse forms, these multimodal expressions converge toward a shared communicative purpose: to articulate dissatisfaction with the sociopolitical order while simultaneously imagining or parodying the fantasy of “escape”.

The findings therefore have broader implications for understanding the semiotic dynamics of irony, humor, and critique in migration-related hashtags. The recurring characteristics of *#KaburAjaDulu*—its reliance on humorous framing, ironic detachment, and multimodal layering—illustrate how digital discourse can embed social and political critique within playful or parodic forms. These features are not determined by any fixed linguistic pattern; rather, they emerge through the affordances of digital platforms and are sustained by the participatory practices of online communities that continuously remix and reinterpret shared cultural signs.

Importantly, the study demonstrates that humorous and ironic discourse functions as a legitimate mode of public critique, enabling users to engage politically without the risks associated with overt dissent. The fluidity of hashtags, with their capacity for recycling, parody, and recontextualization, allows participants to negotiate meaning creatively and collectively. In doing so, users open a discursive space for subtle resistance and reflective engagement, transforming humor into a social strategy of critique and solidarity.

A key theoretical contribution of this research lies in showing that the semiotic functions of digital hashtags—including critique, humor, solidarity, and identity negotiation—resonate with, yet reconfigure, traditional theories of multimodal communication. In digital environments, these functions take on new complexity as text, image, and cultural citation interact fluidly within a single message. This intermingling enables users to express frustration, irony, and belonging simultaneously, generating hybrid rhetorical practices that transform digital spaces into arenas of cultural and political negotiation. Humor and irony thus operate not as mere entertainment but as discursive strategies through which collective identities and critiques are articulated—redefining what constitutes resistance in the contemporary digital age.

In conclusion, the examination of *#KaburAjaDulu* as a pragmatic meaning-maker in networked communication makes a substantive contribution to the study of digital semiotics and multimodal discourse. It provides empirical evidence that meaning in online environments is contextual, fluid, and multimodal, emerging from the interplay between linguistic creativity, platform affordances, and participatory culture. Ultimately, this study underscores how younger generations, through hashtags like *#KaburAjaDulu*, are reshaping communicative norms, using the resources of the digital sphere to express critique, humor, and solidarity—and, in doing so, redefine the modes through which political voice and cultural identity are articulated in a mediated, multimodal world.

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The Limit of *Karuṇā*: Fostering and the *Samsāric* Cycle in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

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Abstract—This study analyzes Úrsula Iguarán's crucial role as a fostering figure in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) by applying a Buddhist ethical lens, primarily utilizing the concepts of *Karuṇā* (compassion) and *Samsāra* (cyclical suffering). Drawing specifically on ethical definitions from Buddhist thought and supported by humanistic principles of sympathy, this research fills a scholarly gap by interpreting Úrsula's persistent caregiving as a moral identity within a decaying family. Employing qualitative textual analysis of twenty-two selected excerpts, the study examines how Úrsula's compassionate fostering of non-biological children, including Rebeca and Arcadio's offspring, constitutes the novel's primary resistance against abandonment. The analysis establishes *Karuṇā* as the operative ethical framework—defined as an unwavering commitment to alleviate suffering—that resists *Samsāra*, the structure of cyclical fate. The study argues that *Karuṇā* is a vital principle for sustaining human existence. It suggests that Úrsula's *Karuṇā*-guided fostering is a vital human act that affirms dignity; her efforts are ultimately undermined by the family's pervasive delusion and repeating taboo of incest. The study significantly contributes to Márquez scholarship by providing a novel, virtue-based ethical lens that moves beyond fantastic, ordinary, post-colonial, and identity allegories to interpret the limits of moral action within the Buendía family's generational suffering.

Index Terms—fostering, *Karuṇā*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Samsāra*, Úrsula Iguarán

I. INTRODUCTION

Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) presents a profound chronicle of the Buendía family and demonstrates how their deeply ingrained flaws—isolation, pride, and the failure to learn—establish a communal, inescapable generational destiny. The novel's significance lies in its depiction of time as a recurring pattern of consequences, rather than a progression. However, within this cyclical doom, Úrsula Iguarán emerges as the story's moral anchor. Her defining act is one of persistent caregiving (fostering), a continuous effort to provide stability and affection to the children of Macondo who are not her own, including Rebeca and Arcadio's offspring. While extensive scholarship has focused on the novel's macro elements—fantastic realities, political allegory, and repeated identity traits—it stops short of explaining the ethical force that resists this decay.

Scholarship on *One Hundred Years of Solitude* consistently identifies the Buendía family's cyclical suffering (*Samsāra*). However, a strong ethical framework for analyzing interventional moral resistance is rarely seen. While existing ethical readings focus on individual pride or fate, they have not adequately characterized Úrsula's lifelong caregiving as an active, sustained, and theoretically grounded moral intervention. Specifically, no comparative study provides a structure for interpreting her acts of fostering as a consistent practice of generational responsibility designed to alleviate the family's perpetual suffering. This study suggests that the crisis is essentially an ethical one, based on the family's cumulative failure of compassion. Therefore, the central thesis is that Úrsula's fostering is fundamentally guided by the Buddhist principle of *Karuṇā*, defined here as an active, mindful commitment to alleviate suffering. This principle serves as the operative ethical framework against the family's *Samsāra* (cyclical suffering), offering the novel's primary moral resistance to abandonment.

To model this ethical dynamic and address the critical deficit in analyzing Úrsula's generational responsibility, this study employs the Buddhist principles of *Karuṇā* (compassion) and *Samsāra* (cyclical suffering). Without claiming that García Márquez was directly influenced by Buddhist teachings, this framework is utilized not only as a universal ethical lens but as a structural model capable of distinguishing between the Buendía family's inherited moral debt and Úrsula's active and selfless redemption. Therefore, this interpretation does not displace the novel's established themes (such as fantastic realism and political critique). Specifically, *Karuṇā* is the relentless counterforce to the karmic cycle—the principle that accrues debt from every selfish act. The tragic, repetitive nature of the Buendía lineage which culminates in the final erasure of Macondo, illustrates *Samsāra* as the prevailing existential cycle. Only Úrsula's persistent and compassionate care provides a temporary, vital affirmation of dignity within that tragic loop.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Márquez's work is profoundly rooted in the circumstances resulting from the colonial ventures of Spain and North/English America in South/Latin America and can only be comprehended by considering the (post-)colonial experience (Ahmad & Afsar, 2014, p. 1). The whole saga follows seven generations of the Buendía family as they face

the rise and fall within the mythical town of Macondo. The novel's critical acclaim rests on its virtuosic use of extraordinary realism, which fuses the historical with the fantastic to explore Latin American identity. Scholars emphasize this blending: Geetha (2010) asserts that Márquez masterfully blends seemingly elements—the miraculous with the mundane, the historical with the fantastical, and the psychological with the surreal (p. 345). Similarly, Jaafar (2023) describes the novel as a remarkable example of magical realism that captures the political climate of Latin America at the time of its publication (p. 348). This blending is achieved through language that dissolves traditional boundaries, as Tyagi (2020) explains, it involves crafting an ideal fantasy in which factors such as time and language lose their significance (p. 342).

More fundamentally, the novel's narrative is built around a cyclic view of history and inherited consequences. This thematic focus on recurring patterns of fate and trauma is key to understanding the Buendía family's tragedy. Critics note that the narrative challenges traditional notions of linear time and progression. Estorino (1995) reflects that Márquez often leaves readers wondering whether the fate of his characters might have changed if they had truly understood their past. The portrayal of this recurring pattern of familial trauma and historical inevitability is central to its meaning, establishing the core problem this study addresses.

A. Thematic Context: Úrsula's Moral Role and the Fostering Motif

Within the expanding world of the Buendía family in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, several characters are vividly portrayed: José Arcadio Buendía with his grand visions, Colonel Aureliano Buendía with his relentless wars, and Amaranta with her cycles of longing and denial. Among them, it is Úrsula who emerges as the heart of the novel and the sole character whose moral consistency attempts to break these damaging cycles. Not only does she live through more than a century of her family's rise and decline, but she anchors the Buendía lineage with moral identity and emotional strength. As the matriarch of the Buendía family, Úrsula preserves continuity in a house often shaken by isolation and despair. Her persistent fostering—whether of Rebeca, who was not of her blood, or of other children left vulnerable within the family—reveals her underlying compassion and serves as the primary example of her moral action.

The concept of fostering is central to understanding Úrsula's moral role. As fostering is a human act of care, emotional support, and moral responsibility, in the novel it refers to taking in and nurturing a child who is not one's own by birth, providing them protection and guidance. Academically, foster parenting involves “nurturing, promoting child development, and providing guidance and discipline” (Barbell & Freundlich, 2001, p. 20). Beyond formal structures, fostering also captures family life: sibling companionship and parental love, affirming that “Foster care is family care” (Sinclair, 2005, p. 16). However, this caregiving context is fragile, often marked by hardship, including the “confusion, fear, loss, sadness, and anxiety” experienced by children (Bruskas, 2008) and the potential for emotional abuse (Masha & Botha, 2021, p. 504). Drawing on these insights, this study defines fostering as an ongoing act of care and emotional support extended to a child not one's own by birth within the family sphere—an act that provides guidance and affection. This understanding frames the analysis of Úrsula's role in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which her consistent nurturing reflects a profound care amid moral decadence.

B. Philosophical Framework: *Karuṇā* and *Samsāra* as the Ethical Lens

While fostering often takes place within vulnerable circumstances, *Karuṇā*, or compassion, becomes not only helpful but essential. The word *Karuṇā* in *Pāli* (or *Karuna* in Sanskrit) refers to compassion, a deep, heartfelt desire to ease the suffering of others through kindness and care. It is one of the four sublime states (*Brahmavihāra*), alongside loving-kindness (*Mettā*), equanimity (*Upekkhā*), and sympathetic joy (*Muditā*), each representing important spiritual dispositions that cultivate emotional balance. In Buddhist philosophy, *Karuṇā* is not simply a feeling of sympathy, but an active moral force in awareness and responsibility. Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Hanh (2010) states that as our ignorance decreases, so do craving, hatred, pride, doubt, and rigid views, while love, compassion, joy, and equanimity grow (p. 30). Similarly, Thai Buddhist scholar Payutto (2011) emphasizes that by cultivating love and kindness toward others and striving for their welfare, we will also find happiness within ourselves (p. 8).

The application of *Karuṇā* as a universal ethical lens is formally supported by the tradition of virtue ethics across disparate philosophical traditions. For instance, Xenophon (2013) notes that humans are endowed with the principles of both friendship and discord. Friendship arises from their need for one another, their sympathy for each other's struggles, their willingness to help in times of need, and their gratitude for the support they receive from others (p. 69). This focus on mutual sympathy and active support aligns with the core impulse of *Karuṇā* to alleviate suffering. In addition, Harvey (2014) emphasizes that being alienated from nature also means being disconnected from our species' true potential. This disconnection sparks a sense of rebellion, turning words like dignity, respect, compassion, caring, and love into revolutionary calls, while values such as truth and beauty take the place of the harsh logic of social labor (p. 262). Harvey's argument justifies the use of compassion and dignity as essential acts of ethical resistance against social collapse. Therefore, this study adopts *Karuṇā* as a moral principle: an active, mindful commitment to alleviate suffering. In the context of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, this commitment manifests as Úrsula Iguarán's consistent practice of compassionate fostering, providing moral stability and affirming dignity to children who are not her own. This precise understanding informs the analysis of Úrsula's role, allowing us to examine how her compassion confronts the family's pervasive delusion and repeating cycles of suffering.

Recent scholarship confirms a strong and growing interest in applying the Buddhist ethical principle of *Karuṇā* (compassion) to diverse literary traditions, which lays the critical groundwork for the current study's framework. Comparative analyses have specifically tackled the complex relationship between Western concepts of compassion (like *agape*) and the Eastern concept of *Karuṇā*, arguing for the necessity of cross-cultural ethical models in understanding global narratives (Augustine & Wayne, 2019). This comparative approach is reinforced by studies that examine the evolution of compassion—its theological and secular boundaries—within European literature from the Medieval period onward, confirming that the concept of merciful care is a fluid, evolving structure within the Western canon (Barnes, 2022). Moreover, the effectiveness of *Karuṇā* as an analytical tool is demonstrated in non-Western fields, particularly in Indian drama, where the application of Karuna Rasa theory successfully reveals how narrative compassion shapes emotional depth and audience empathy (Chakravarty & Thenmozhi, 2024). Collectively, these works signal a critical movement toward transcending geographical and cultural boundaries in ethical literary analysis, thus justifying the present study's approach to apply the non-Western principle of *Karuṇā* to interpret Úrsula's role in García Márquez's Latin American masterpiece.

Although neither Úrsula Iguarán nor Gabriel García Márquez are situated within a Buddhist tradition, analyzing *One Hundred Years of Solitude* through Buddhist philosophy, specifically *Karuṇā* and fostering, allows for an exploration of moral caregiving that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. Characterized by cycles of suffering and abandonment, the novel reflects key concerns in Buddhist thought, particularly the notion of *Samsara* (the cycle of birth, suffering, and death), which this study later returns to as understanding familial trauma. Within this context, Úrsula's enduring acts of caregiving emerge as stabilizing forces that counteract chaos and decline. Buddhist concepts such as *Karuṇā* provide a key concept for interpreting her actions as a virtue-based response to suffering. By foregrounding moral awareness and selfless care, the Buddhist framework values how Úrsula's role extends beyond duty becoming a mental and spiritual stability. Therefore, the use of Buddhist philosophy does serve as interpretive aspects, a way to draw meaningful connections between universal human experiences and moral philosophies across traditions.

What emerges is more than an interpretation. In this study, *Karuṇā* is defined as an awareness of another's suffering paired with a sincere and consistent effort to ease that suffering through everyday love and patience. This definition shapes the analysis of Úrsula's behavior, revealing how her fostering acts are imbued with a compassionate spirit that supports those around her. The research objectives are: (1) to analyze how Úrsula Iguarán's fostering of children not her own by birth is portrayed in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; (2) to examine how the fostering reflects *Karuṇā* as a moral force within the novel's larger social and familial context.

III. METHODS

To rigorously verify the central thesis that *Karuṇā* operates as the novel's ethical counterforce, this study employs a qualitative, interpretive textual analysis design. This approach synthesizes literary analysis of the primary text with an interdisciplinary application of Buddhist moral philosophy. The reliance on close reading and coding is essential to isolating and analyzing the granular relationship between the novel's portrayal of familial suffering and the character's ethical responses.

This study's analysis is centered on Úrsula Iguarán's role in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2014, Kindle edition) and draws on a focused interdisciplinary framework to interpret her caregiving acts. The primary source analysis is specifically scoped to Úrsula, the matriarch and moral anchor of the Buendía lineage, focusing on her caregiving toward children who are not her direct offspring: Arcadio, Aureliano José, Rebeca, and Arcadio's children. The secondary sources are drawn from three interdisciplinary categories: Literary Criticism, which provides selected scholarly articles on Márquez's fiction; Social/Developmental Studies, which offers definitions and concepts related to foster care and child development from social work and developmental psychology (e.g., Barbell & Freundlich, Sinclair, Bruskas); and Philosophical/Ethical Texts, which supply definitions and theological discourse on *Karuṇā* (compassion) from Buddhist teachings (e.g., Hanh, Payutto).

This study uses the defined concepts of fostering and *Karuṇā* as a two-part analytical framework to interpret Úrsula's actions and establish her moral role. These core concepts are operationally defined: Fostering is interpreted through social work and developmental psychology as the practical, ongoing act of providing protection, guidance, and emotional support to a child not one's own by birth within the family sphere; *Karuṇā* is defined through Buddhist teachings as an active, mindful commitment to alleviate suffering, serving as the moral principle underpinning Úrsula's caregiving acts. To conduct this analysis, twenty-two key textual excerpts detailing Úrsula's interactions with the specified fostered children (Aureliano José, Arcadio, Rebeca, and Arcadio's children) were selected based on the explicit depiction of a caregiving or disciplinary act aimed at restoring stability or offering moral guidance. Each selected excerpt was subjected to a coding process to link textual actions directly to the operational definitions of compassionate caregiving (e.g., "Compassionate Discipline," "Nurturing for Stability").

IV. RESULTS

A. Úrsula's Fostering: *Karuṇā* as Consistent Moral Response to Abandonment

The study substantiates that Úrsula Iguarán's fostering reflects a *Karuṇā*-driven consciousness, defined as a compassionate awareness of *Samsāric* suffering expressed through consistent and heartfelt effort. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, her fostering is presented as more than a grandmother's duty which demonstrates an enduring commitment shown through love and patience. The analysis examines Úrsula's persistent moral initiative toward children abandoned within the Buendía lineage and signifies how this active *Karuṇā* provides a generational anchor against the inherited trauma perpetuated by *Samsāra*.

(a). Aureliano José and Rebeca: The Affirmation of Dignity

Although born into the Buendía family, Aureliano José is abandoned: "PILAR TERNER'S son was brought to his grandparents' house two weeks after he was born" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 38). The phrase *was brought* obscures who takes responsibility. Moreover, the naming *PILAR TERNER'S son* frames him as an appendage to a mother who cannot care for him. This erases any sense of him as an individual. Pilar herself, already raising two other children alone, is described in terms that reflect emotional depletion and isolation: "Pilar Ternera, who lived alone at that time with her two younger children" (p. 69). The phrase *lived alone* signals her social detachment, and when combined with the phrase *two younger children*, it suggests continued motherhood without support emotionally or socially. The disappearance of a stable partner and Pilar's responsibility for two other young children likely left her unable to care for another infant, which helps explain why Aureliano José was brought to his grandparents' house instead.

Meanwhile, Aureliano José's father, Colonel Aureliano Buendía, retreats physically and emotionally: "he went back to concentrate on his work as if nothing had happened" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 79). The clause *as if nothing had happened* reveals a denial that escalates into erasure—of the child, the act, and the relationship. His later statement, "The only effective thing," he would say, "is violence" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 101), signifies a full abandonment of fatherhood in favor of a personal mission that leaves no room for family. In the space left by these emotional and moral awareness, Úrsula's fostering emerges with unwavering determination. From then on, Aureliano José has adults around him (like Úrsula, Amaranta, or others) who look after him in some way. None of them take full responsibility for him as their child. Within the disregard and partial bonds, Úrsula becomes the one enduring support. Her fostering provides more than physical shelter; it conveys a sense of being truly watched over.

This fostering arises from the failure of biological parents. One is constrained by trauma; the other is limited by distance. Pilar, although nearby, is burdened by past suffering: she was "dragged along [...] to separate her from the man who had raped her at fourteen" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 27). The phrase *dragged along* signals a lack of control and independence. It suggests that her life has been formed more by survival than by choice. Even worse, the rape implies lasting psychological harm and a disrupted path to adulthood that may limit her capacity to provide emotional security to others.

Pilar's limits as a mother arise from prolonged hardship. This leaves her emotionally depleted and socially isolated. Aureliano José is born and passed into another household: "When the son of Aureliano and Pilar Ternera was born and brought to the house [...] with the name Aureliano José, [...] he would be considered their oldest child" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 90). The clause *he would be considered* focuses on how his status is constructed instead of in true belonging. In other words, he becomes a child who exists within the family space and is looked after, but he lacks the secure recognition and unconditional acceptance that would give him true belonging. Providing stability that neither parent could provide, Úrsula's fostering stands out.

Úrsula's care extends to others in need, even when they are not her biological children. This shows that her fostering is guided by inner resolve. The distinction is important: her fostering responds to personal compassion. One example is Rebeca, an orphan who arrives unannounced: "They kept her, because there was nothing else they could do. [...] call her Rebeca, [...] the letter was her mother's name" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 42). The phrase *nothing else they could do* signifies the family's initial reluctance while it suggests that Rebeca's entry into the household was not planned. Even her name, appeared in a letter, underlines her unclear identity and outsider status. However, this uncertain beginning gradually transforms. The narration later reads: "So that she finally deserved, [...], the name of Rebeca Buendía, the only one [...] she bore with dignity until her death" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 44). The key word *finally* captures a long process of transformation. The words *deserved* and *the name* imply that identity within the Buendía family is not simply granted by birth. It is cultivated through actions and moral growth. At the same time, it demonstrates Rebeca's transformation into a morally upright figure who stands in binary opposition to Arcadio, whose cruelty reflects inherited power. Úrsula's fostering plays a significant role in this transformation. Her fostering unfolds over years. It provides Rebeca shelter and recognition. Therefore, her fostering restores what abandonment once erased: identity and belonging.

Úrsula's persistent fostering is the primary expression of *Karuṇā* within the Buendía household; it establishes the moral stability that allows even emotionally fragmented characters like Amaranta to extend care. Amaranta's care for Aureliano José, however, takes place within the structure and emotional stability maintained by Úrsula. Úrsula's natural strength supports the environment in which others, like Amaranta, are able to extend care. Most importantly, in a household often overshadowed by incestuous bonds and emotional fragmentation, Úrsula's decision to raise a child not her own becomes more than a maternal duty. In fact, it becomes protection. Her fostering reflects *Karuṇā*: a consistent moral force providing

human support without expectation of return. Úrsula's fostering resists abandonment. In a world of disconnection, Úrsula's love is unwavering, affirming dignity.

Úrsula's fostering continues into the next generation. After Arcadio's execution, Santa Sofía de la Piedad, the mother of his children, is left with three children. At this point, Úrsula again steps in: "The house was full of children. Úrsula had taken in Santa Sofía de la Piedad [...] born five months after Arcadio had been shot" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). The description *the house was full of children* evokes not only physical space but emotional burden. This shows that her fostering expands even when all circumstances are already overburdened. The phrase *Úrsula had taken in* demonstrates an intentional choice to take responsibility amid loss. Moreover, this moment presents Arcadio's own past when he was left behind and raised by Úrsula. In Arcadio's children, abandonment could have repeated, just like in Arcadio's own childhood, but it doesn't, because Úrsula steps in to foster them. In choosing to raise Arcadio's children, Úrsula interrupts that form by refusing to let another generation experience the same abandonment that Arcadio once faced. In other words, her fostering breaks the cycle of abandonment. The descriptive qualities of stability, continuity, and protection suggests that her fostering provides more than survival; it provides grounding. Through such qualities, *Karuṇā* becomes generational. The repetition of care, as moral initiative, transforms compassion into legacy. Where trauma could reproduce itself, *Karuṇā* intervenes. Compassion becomes not only a feeling but a structure passed forward. As a result, *Karuṇā* manifests as a moral feature—a force that holds the falling apart family together across time.

Úrsula is not alone in extending care; her strength is supported by Amaranta, whose turn toward responsibility is initially complicated by her own emotional burdens. Amaranta's early life is defined by a refusal to connect, yet her most notable fostering act involves Aureliano José: "Amaranta took charge of Aureliano José. She adopted him [...] who would share her solitude and relieve her [...]" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 91). The phrase *took charge* suggests not only initiative but a necessity, a compelled response to circumstance rather than a free choice. Furthermore, the clause *share her solitude* implies a life structured by isolation, while *relieve her from the involuntary* conveys emotional burdens Amaranta cannot escape. These expressions reflect a woman struggling with unresolved grief. Amaranta's fostering appears to arise more from a desire to ease her own loneliness than from maternal awareness. Thus, her initial act of fostering functions as a coping mechanism, a way to transform personal solitude into a manageable form of attachment.

Despite her initial self-motivated approach, Amaranta gradually reflects her mother Úrsula in her consistency and commitment, ensuring that Úrsula's moral project is sustained. This consistency is established after Arcadio's execution when Amaranta steps in to help raise his daughters: "The twins were named José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo. Amaranta took care of them all" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). Her continued fostering, first for Aureliano José and later for Arcadio's twin daughters, demonstrates a growing reliability in a role that was initially foreign to her. While her motivations may begin in personal guilt or emotional deficit, her action serves as an essential buttress to Úrsula's enduring support. Amaranta's role does not replace Úrsula's primary act of *Karuṇā*; rather, by becoming the second stable figure of care, she helps to preserve familial stability and continuity in the face of abandonment. This proves that the compassionate impulse can be learned and sustained across the generations.

Just as Úrsula attempts to shape Arcadio in the face of emotional disorder, she also restores dignity to those already touched by abandonment. This restoration of dignity begins first with Rebeca. When she enters the Buendía household under uncertain circumstances, Rebeca has not been left rootless because of Úrsula's long-term fostering. Later, this restoration of belonging extends beyond Rebeca. After Arcadio's execution, Úrsula also takes in Santa Sofía de la Piedad and her children: "The twins were named José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo. Amaranta took care of them all" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). Although Amaranta is mentioned directly, Úrsula's moral authority and fostering remain central to the household's functioning. The emphasis on naming the twins situates them within the Buendía inheritance; Amaranta's role in raising them demonstrates how fostering continues to be redistributed after loss.

This redistribution of care reflects *Karuṇā*, compassion that takes responsibility where abandonment has left gaps. At the same time, the fact that fostering must begin again with another generation reflects the persistence of *Samsāra*: cycles of suffering that repeat until deeper transformation occurs. This act provides stability to a broken family. If caring for Aureliano José and Arcadio interrupts abandonment at its start, then caring for Rebeca and Arcadio's children affirms that dignity can be recovered after it has been lost. Úrsula's actions insist that no child should be cast aside.

(b). Arcadio: *Karuṇā* Tested by Tyranny and Accountability

Whereas the two boys are shaped by Úrsula's consistent fostering, Arcadio exposes another side of her challenge through disobedience and defiance. Although he is her biological grandson, raising him becomes a sharper test of her compassion. His story reflects a different kind of struggle structured by his biological parents' abandonment. First, this detachment can be traced back to his father José Arcadio when he returns to Macondo "so poor that Úrsula had to give him two pesos to pay for the rental of his horse" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 92). This moment signals not only financial ruin but a moral failure because his inability to provide for even basic needs reflects a withdrawal from paternal responsibility. That failure leaves Arcadio without a father figure, forcing Úrsula once again to shoulder the burden. Later, the narration states, "He [the son Arcadio] did not succeed in becoming incorporated into the family. He slept all day [...], making bets on his strength" (García Márquez, 2014, p. 94). Just as his father abandoned responsibility, Arcadio himself exhibits withdrawal and disengagement, repeating the same form of disregard across generations. Additionally, the abandonment reveals itself in his mother, Pilar Ternera, who fades from the narrative and takes no consistent role in his life.

In contrast, Úrsula attempts to interrupt this cycle: when Arcadio is brought into the Buendía household, she agrees to foster him “with no privileges or discrimination” (García Márquez, 2014, p. 113). The balanced phrasing demonstrates her intent to promote fairness, treating Arcadio equally within the household, neither excusing his illegitimacy nor punishing him for it. Although García Márquez presents this account retrospectively—after narrating Arcadio’s cruelty on page 108—the placement underscores Úrsula’s role as the moral anchor of the family, whose fairness seeks to resist the abandonment and disregard that structured Arcadio’s early growth.

As Arcadio grows tyrannical, Úrsula’s fostering is tested. The story narrates: “‘I dare you to, murderer!’ [...] ‘[...] son of an evil mother. That way I won’t have the eyes to weep [...] having raised a monster’” (García Márquez, 2014, p. 108). This passage contains multiple sharp clauses. The expression *I dare you to, murderer!* assert moral resistance, while *I won’t have the eyes to weep* conveys the pain of seeing her fostering twisted by power. They also capture the paradox of compassion turned into sorrow, where fostering becomes both moral strength and profound grief. Crucially, the phrase *son of an evil mother* intensifies the moment. It not only condemns Pilar Ternera’s withdrawal from parental responsibility but places Úrsula in stark contrast as a moral character who steps in where the biological mother has failed. The word *evil* primarily refers to the moral vacuum created by Pilar’s absence, and its consequences are reflected in Arcadio’s cruelty.

Pilar’s disappearance becomes more than disregard; it suggests complicity in shaping Arcadio’s descent into tyranny. Úrsula’s role, then, is doubly burdened: she must care and confront what others neglected to correct. Likewise, the word *monster* affirms the depth of Úrsula’s disappointment and shows that no matter how loving or devoted her fostering is, it still has limits. Úrsula’s fostering, however, also carries protection and accountability. Therefore, her compassion aligns with Karuṇā, clear-eyed and morally firm. She does not abandon Arcadio; instead, she meets his cruelty with confrontation. As a result, Úrsula reveals that true compassion includes the strength to hold even those we love responsible for the harm they cause.

Despite their different roles, the fostering of Aureliano José and Arcadio reflects Úrsula’s consistent response to abandonment, not a preference for bloodline. Arcadio experiences care characterized by discipline:

... she had raised him [Arcadio] as a son, [...], with no privileges or discrimination. Nevertheless, Arcadio was a solitary and frightened child during the insomnia plague, [...], during the delirium of José Arcadio Buendía, the hermetism of Aureliano, and the mortal rivalry between Amaranta and Rebeca. (García Márquez, 2014, p. 113)

The phrase *no privileges or discrimination* emphasizes fairness. It shows that Úrsula’s fostering is never distorted by hierarchy. At the same time, the description of Arcadio, *a solitary and frightened child*, suggests that even her firm guidance could be destabilized by the emotional chaos surrounding him, seen clearly in the following conditions: the initial insomnia epidemic, the driven practicality of Úrsula, the descent into madness of José Arcadio Buendía, Aureliano’s self-imposed isolation, and the fatal feud shared by Amaranta and Rebeca. Therefore, Úrsula’s fostering becomes the deliberate shaping of character amid abandonment, moral resistance shaped through disorder.

In spite of his cruelty and the failure of her guidance, the underlying strength of Úrsula’s *Karuṇā* is still evident in Arcadio’s rejection of his Buendía identity. His dignity rests on the fostering Úrsula provides. It gives both Arcadio and Aureliano José the confidence to stand apart. Here, compassion is moral guidance, an enduring force that enables one to face rejection without losing self-respect. The effect of Úrsula’s fostering appears again during Arcadio’s brief dictatorship. When Aureliano José is arrested for betrayal, he is publicly mocked: “‘You [Aureliano José] don’t deserve the last name you carry.’ [...] Arcadio did not have him shot. ‘To my great honor,’ he said, ‘I am not a Buendía’” (García Márquez, 2014, p. 114). The expression *You don’t deserve the last name you carry* questions identity itself. It casts the family name as something earned rather than inherited. Arcadio’s unexpected responses—*To my great honor* and *I am not a Buendía*—transform that exclusion into self-definition. The responses show pride in detachment and suggest that Arcadio distances himself from a family legacy.

Meanwhile, his defiance remains paradoxical: in rejecting the Buendía name, he still affirms its power. He takes pride in distancing himself from the family inheritance, but that very act shows he remains bound to it. His pride rests on resisting the Buendía identity, which remains part of him no matter how much he rejects it. This moment may even characterize recognition between two fostered children, formed by abandonment but tied in complex ways to the Buendía name. Beneath this rejection lies a strength reflected by *Karuṇā*: neither Arcadio nor Aureliano José pleads for belonging, because Úrsula’s compassion has already affirmed their worth.

While all these children benefit from Úrsula’s fostering, each experience is formed by distinct moral needs. Aureliano José is raised under Amaranta’s guardianship, which arises more from solitude than tenderness, as previously shown in the study; Arcadio is brought up with structure and discipline. In particular, Rebeca, arriving from outside the family, gains identity and belonging. Arcadio’s children are accepted as lives worth protecting. These acts reveal a consistent moral intention: to step in where emotional responsibility and parental care have collapsed. Úrsula’s fostering is an enduring expression of resolve.

Úrsula’s fostering emerges as an enduring response to emotional breaks. It transforms each child’s experience of abandonment into care, and that care gradually fosters subtle growth in those she raises. Her interventions reflect protection. Moreover, they provide a consistent moral presence that sustains the possibility of order and care in a household often shaken by deprivation and disorder. The analysis consistently demonstrates that *Karuṇā* functions as the key moral force in the narrative, explicitly expressed through Úrsula’s persistent fostering and providing stability for the

children not biologically her own. This compassionate intervention is vital for affirming dignity and sustaining human existence within Macondo; however, despite the unwavering application of *Karuṇā*, the family remains ultimately trapped in the pervasive, catastrophic cycle of *Samsāric* decline.

B. Karuṇā as Resistance: Fostering Within the Samsāric Cycle

Demonstrating the compassionate feature of Úrsula's fostering as an expression of *Karuṇā*, these findings also raise a question: why must this fostering be repeated across generations? And why does emotional abandonment persist despite the presence of such moral figures? Although Úrsula fosters the abandoned with compassion, the Buendía family remains trapped in cycles of abandonment and incest. Her moral resistance holds back the collapse but cannot resolve its underlying causes. In Buddhist philosophy, the path to *Nirvāṇa* (liberation) requires not just *Karuṇā* (compassion), but also wisdom. Úrsula embodies the former; her struggle reveals the tragedy of acting without the latter. To understand the recurring structure of the family's suffering, it is helpful to turn to the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*. Keown (2004) defines *Samsāra* as the recurrent succession of lives and deaths through which individuals pass, persisting until they reach the ultimate spiritual goal of Nirvana (p. 248).

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the repetition of names, traits, and failures—often described as a curse or non-linear history—aligns with the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*, serving as a powerful metaphor for inherited familial trauma. In Buddhist philosophy, *Samsāra* refers to the cyclical nature of existence: birth, suffering, death, and rebirth—all driven by ignorance, attachment, and delusion. It is not simply a metaphysical cycle, but a moral and emotional structure that governs human experience, especially when suffering remains unresolved across time. As Hanh (2015) explains, the cycle continues because “there is being in this life, in the next life we shall have to be born, grow old, and die, and we shall have to continue in samsara” (p. 228). According to the meaning of *Samsāra*, fate does not sustain the cycle; it endures because individuals remain trapped in blindness and suffering. Promta (2024) similarly emphasizes repetition, observing that “People are born and born again in the samsara, and this has been considered as suffering” (p. 88).

Fostering and incest in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are not merely personal or familial; they are manifestations of *Samsāra*. The novel presents a vision that aligns with the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*: a world where suffering is inherited, and where even compassion delays collapse without proposing liberation. Viewed through *Samsāra*, Úrsula's fostering, discussed earlier as expressions of *Karuṇā*, takes on new significance. It becomes a recurring form that spans generations. Despite Úrsula's strength and belief, the Buendía household remains defined by abandonment which requires the cycle of fostering to begin.

Within this cycle, Amaranta clearly steps into a similar role without resolving the conditions that make such fostering necessary. Emotionally restrained and often consumed by inner sorrow, Amaranta becomes a fosterer to the next generation of abandoned children. The novel recounts that Aureliano José was taken in by Amaranta and formally adopted to serve as a companion, thereby mitigating her deep sense of loneliness (García Márquez, 2014, p. 91). This indicates that her decision stems more from personal loneliness than from deliberate moral responsibility. Later, her fostering expands to include Arcadio's children: “The twins were named José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo. Amaranta took care of them all” (García Márquez, 2014, p. 134). These acts demonstrate Úrsula's earlier efforts. Within the *Samsāric* framework, Amaranta's fostering becomes a karmic repetition: compassion formed by unresolved sorrow, but not guided by liberating insight. While the impulse to protect and nurture remains noble, it does not free the family from generational suffering. Instead, it re-enacts it, binding even the fosterers (Úrsula and Amaranta) to the same structures they hope to resist.

The family's descent into *Samsāra* is defined by two recurring patterns—fostering and incest—which, though appearing morally opposed, are two sides of the same cyclical trap of inherited suffering. Úrsula's initial desperate resistance to incest and her consistent recourse to fostering are both non-liberatory attempts to escape the same generational curse. The repetition of fostering finds its darker counterpart in the recurring model of incest, this time in confusion and blindness.

In Buddhist thought, *Samsāra* is sustained not only by suffering but by delusion, the failure to attain wisdom, especially when individuals fail to see the consequences of their desires. This blindness is evident in the incestuous acts of Úrsula and Amaranta, which, though separated by time and intention, reflect the same inability to break from destructive repetition.

In the novel's early pages, Úrsula resists consummating her marriage to José Arcadio Buendía because they are cousins. It is because she fears that their children will be born with deformities. However, her resistance is broken: “José Arcadio Buendía went into the bedroom [...]: ‘Take them off.’ Úrsula had no doubt about her husband's decision” (García Márquez, 2014, p. 22). This moment becomes the origin of the Buendía family's recurring cycle of incest and suffering.

Generations later, the same taboo resurfaces in Amaranta's relationship with her nephew, Aureliano José. What begins as maternal fostering evolves into a blurred intimacy as García Márquez narrates: “He kept on examining her, discovering the miracle of her intimacy [...] he contemplated the way her skin tingled [...] waking up in Amaranta's bed” (2014, p. 146). The repetition of incest suggests that even those raised within Úrsula's moral household are not liberated from the same emotional errors. In *Samsāric* terms, this is not only inheritance; it is entrapment. The Buendía family does not learn from the past; it relives it. Compassion and desire become cyclical forces that trap each new generation in the same moral disorientation that *Samsāra* describes.

The repeated acts of fostering and incest in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* reveal a family caught in the cycles described by the Buddhist concept of *Samsāra*. Without progressing toward healing or transformation, the Buendía household re-enacts abandonment and misguided love across generations. Úrsula's compassionate fostering, Amaranta's emotionally driven fostering, and their entanglement in forbidden desires form a closed loop, a cycle of care and harm that mimics the spiritual wheel of rebirth. Even the most morally sound actions, such as fostering, are not liberatory unless accompanied by awareness and wisdom. Compassion must be joined with insight into suffering and abandonment within karmic repetition; it risks becoming part of the cycle it hopes to break. The repetition of good intentions alongside moral confusion encourages the idea that emotional endurance alone cannot free one from suffering.

Within *Samsāra*, *Karuṇā* can slow the family's decline but cannot break the cycle of suffering, and Márquez's portrayal of fostering and incest shows that without the moral clarity of *Karuṇā* and the insight needed to escape *Samsāra*, human beings remain trapped in the very suffering they seek to overcome.

This study begins with the premise that if abandonment is a persistent condition in human relationships, as human experience suggests, the question that follows is how *Karuṇā*, or compassion, can meaningfully respond. In Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, this study finds that Úrsula does not respond to abandonment with despair, but with consistent moral fostering amid it. Her nurturing of children who are not her own, particularly Aureliano José and Arcadio, represents more than a grandmother's duty. She also fosters Rebeca, a girl of unknown origin, and later cares for Arcadio's children, giving each not only shelter but the moral grounding and dignity missing from their family. This leads to the main focus of the study: Úrsula's fostering reflects *Karuṇā*, compassion expressed through patience and responsibility.

C. *Karuṇā* and *Samsāra*: The Limits of Compassionate Resistance

While previous studies on *One Hundred Years of Solitude* often focused on political allegory (Jaafar, 2023), fantastic realism (Geetha, 2010; Tyagi, 2020), or narrative structure (Estorino, 1995), this study redirects attention to the moral dimension of care within the Buendía family. These existing perspectives successfully emphasize the richness of Márquez's symbolic design; they rarely address the ethical decisions characters make amid political and social collapse. In contrast, this research stresses the lived experience of compassionate action. Úrsula's consistent fostering emerges as the novel's primary form of moral resistance, a sustained expression of *Karuṇā*, practiced across generations. Furthermore, her unwavering ethical choice, juxtaposed against the family's repeating trauma, illustrates *Samsāra*'s cycle, where unresolved suffering recurs through time.

Although magical, ordinary, and political readings have long defined the novel, this study centers on the internal collapse catalyzed by abandonment within the Buendía home. Existing scholarship often portrays Úrsula as the embodiment of simple moral strength (Kapoor, 2021); this view overlooks the tragic limits of her ethical agency. This research is justified by a strong and growing interest in applying the Buddhist principle of *Karuṇā* to diverse literary traditions, providing the critical foundation for this cross-cultural analysis. Recent comparative studies have affirmed the necessity of such ethical models by examining the complex relationship between Western concepts of compassion and the Eastern concept of *Karuṇā* (Augustine & Wayne, 2019), and by tracing the evolution of compassion across the Western canon (Barnes, 2022). Furthermore, the effectiveness of *Karuṇā* as an analytical tool is demonstrated in non-Western fields, where it successfully reveals how narrative compassion shapes emotional depth (Chakravarty & Thenmozhi, 2024). While Úrsula's persistent *Karuṇā* is indeed a powerful moral act, a refusal to let others be discarded, this analysis demonstrates that it is ultimately caught in a cyclical trap. This study's core finding is that her ethical efforts to interrupt abandonment through compassionate fostering (*Karuṇā*) are consistently undermined by the family's pervasive delusion and repeating taboo of incest. This reading offers a new theoretical model that defines her failure not as a personal or narrative flaw, but as a *Samsāric* consequence of virtue.

This study establishes that the Buendía saga functions as a case study in non-liberatory virtue. Fostering guided by *Karuṇā* is presented not just as a family duty but as a human necessity, capable of restoring emotional bonds and affirming dignity within broken households. The repetition of both the fostering cycle and the incest cycle within the Buendía family is best read as a *Samsāric* struggle, where the cycle of suffering cannot be broken. This study argues that Úrsula's immense compassion (*Karuṇā*) is never fully joined with the wisdom required to achieve moral freedom. This theoretical framework provides an avenue for future literary analysis, where the interplay between *Karuṇā* and wisdom can be applied to post-colonial literature that grapple with cycles of generational trauma.

V. CONCLUSION

Tracing her fostering across generations, this research uses a qualitative literary method and insights from Buddhist philosophy to analyze how Úrsula's consistent care for Aureliano José, Arcadio, Rebeca, and Arcadio's children reflects *Karuṇā*, the concept of compassion expressed through moral clarity and emotional presence. Úrsula's *Karuṇā* is never abstract; it arises from conviction, manifesting as an enduring, adaptive force that restores dignity and identity. Her methods vary, from gentle support to confrontational accountability, but always constitute a moral resistance to abandonment, embodying *Karuṇā* through consistent love and fostering that affirms dignity.

This study contributes to Márquez scholarship by offering a new reading that redirects attention to fostering as the novel's central moral dynamic. The analysis contends that the family's suffering is not only generational but *Samsāric*, a cycle sustained by inherited pain and delusion. This *Samsāra* is defined by two interlocking, recurring patterns: the cycle

of fostering (representing the desperate efforts to mend the family) and the cycle of incest (representing the failure to see the root cause of the curse).

Karuṇā emerges as a necessity, the power to protect and to love in a world that is continuously unraveling. However, Úrsula's tragedy lies in the limits of compassion, because her moral resistance, though profound, is executed without the wisdom into the root causes of the Buendía curse. Her actions can only delay the collapse, not stop the cycle. The repetition of good intentions alongside moral confusion encourages the idea that emotional endurance alone cannot free one from suffering.

Fostering guided by *Karuṇā* is not merely a woman's duty. It is a vital human act that affirms dignity and rebuilds broken bonds. Márquez's portrayal signifies that without the moral clarity *and* the insight needed to escape *Samsāra*, human beings remain trapped in the very suffering they seek to overcome. Further studies could expand the *Karuṇā* framework to analyze other enduring characters in Latin American literature. Research could explore how Amaranta's flawed *Karuṇā* reflects a gendered response to abandonment.

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Traces of Foreign Language Absorption in the Lexicon of Packaged Cooking Spices in Indonesia: An Etymological Study

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Abstract—This study maps the traces of loanword absorption in the lexicon of packaged spices in Indonesian by linking the historical-cultural dimensions of the spice trade and inter-regional contact at the level of naming ready-to-eat food products. This study aims to identify the source language, types of borrowing, and patterns of orthographic-phonological, morphological, and semantic adaptation, as well as to map code-switching or code-mixing practices on bilingual labels. A descriptive-analytical design was used in this study. Data were collected from spice packaging through offline documentation of the front and back panels, spelling normalization, and variable coding covering source language, type of borrowing, form adaptation, meaning change, and code-switching or code-mixing. The analysis was conducted at the micro level, namely etymology and form-meaning correspondence, while the analysis at the macro level took the form of distribution tabulation and n-gram collocation. The results of the study show that three layers of stratification were found: *first*, local-historical, which makes the naming of Indonesian the anchor of identity; *second*, English as the language of instruction on labels for technical categories and descriptors; *third*, East Asian or ASEAN elements as an index of origin or culinary authority. The Indonesian morphotactic pattern is N + N; N + N + Adj, adaptation of loanword spelling, and code-switching or code-mixing directed by the ID-EN or vice versa arrangement pattern, which shows glocalization, namely local readability juxtaposed with global access without obscuring the core product categories.

Index Terms—packaged spice lexicon, loanword etymology, morphophonemic adaptation, code-switching or code-mixing, glocalization of naming

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I. INTRODUCTION

The lexicon of spices and seasonings in Indonesian, including a variety of terms from different regions, reflects the long history of language contact. This historical trace was formed through the South Asian spice trade route, the China-Archipelago trade network, and the colonial influence of Portugal and the Netherlands (Basundoro & Nugroho, 2024; Siregar, 2024). The spread of terms related to classic spices, fermentation techniques, and processed food commodities shows how trade and migration flows shaped the culinary vocabulary (Rohmawati, 2024; Mufrodi, 2022). Thus, the mention of spice lexicon functions not only as language naming, but also acts as a socio-historical archive that records inter-regional interactions and culinary cultural transformations in maritime Southeast Asia (Schapper & Zielenbach, 2025; Syukur, 2025; Wijaya, 2019).

This study examines the origins (etymology) and absorption pathways in the spice lexicon, highlighting sound, morphological, and semantic adaptations after the process of nativization. Phonotactic adjustments such as consonant cluster simplification and vowel normalization are among the main strategies for integrating loanwords (Suhandano et al., 2024; Hoogervorst, 2024). In addition, the productivity of affixation allows loan forms to function actively in everyday speech, demonstrating how foreign elements merge into the recipient language system (Cenderato et al., 2023). From a semantic perspective, the dynamics of meaning shifts in the form of narrowing or broadening often occur, especially in the culinary context, resulting in cross-linguistic synonyms and register differences between market, household, and industrial terms (Parti, 2023; Schapper & Zielenbach, 2025).

The naming of cooking spices is the focus of this study, with four main objectives: *first*, to trace the source language from which the names of products and variants on labels are derived or adapted; *second*, to analyze the orthographic-phonological and morphological adaptation patterns that appear in product brand names and flavor descriptors; *third*, to examine the possibility of narrowing or broadening meanings as a result of naming and branding strategies; *fourth*, examining the practice of code-switching or mixing Indonesian and foreign codes or vice versa, for example, *Garam Meja* (Refined Salt), *Bumbu Gulai* (Oriental Curry), and *Sarden Saus Tomat* (Tomato Sauce), which affect the consistency of standard terms on food labels (Lestariningsih et al., 2023; Silviyanti et al., 2024; Cacciafoco et al., 2024; Rohbiah, 2020). Practically, the results of this study enrich the linguistic documentation of spice packaging and can form the basis for compiling a reliable glossary of names, including the source language, equivalents in Indonesian, spelling rules, and label writing conventions. Theoretically, this study explains how language contact and commercial strategies shape the lexicon of spice packaging in Indonesian.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on lexical borrowing generally identifies four main mechanisms, namely: direct borrowing (loanwords), translation of meaning (calque), shift in meaning due to conceptual mapping from the source language (semantic loan), and matching of sound and meaning so that it appears natural in the recipient language (phono-semantic matching). Recent studies emphasize that the culinary realm is one of the most productive domains for borrowing, in line with the mobility of commodities, processing technologies, and cross-border lifestyles (Cacciafoco et al., 2024; Cook, 2018). In the context of naming spices in packaging, this pattern is present not only in the naming of the core ingredients, but also in product categories, flavor variants, and functional descriptors such as Mushroom Bouillon, Thousand Island Sauce, or Creamy Sauce—in line with findings that food labels often feature a hybrid Indonesian-foreign strategy to strengthen product identity and marketability (Siahaan, 2022; Purnanto et al., 2022).

Identification of borrowing usually combines phonotactic evidence, for example, simplification of consonant clusters. Meanwhile, morphological features include, for example, denativization with the affixes *ber-*, *peN-*, and *-an*. Historical records of trade and colonial routes, geographical distribution, and correspondence between form and meaning with the etymons of the source language. The linguistic study of packaging labels adds orthographic dimensions, mixed code transliteration or code-switching at the bilingual level, and the emergence of *pseudo-loanwords* (forms that appear foreign but are local creations). Findings show that brand names tend to retain their original loan forms, while product categories and flavor descriptors are more easily indigenized, resulting in Indonesian-foreign equivalents that coexist in the market (Aziz et al., 2019).

Historically, linguistic and culinary studies confirm three main layers in the lexicon of cooking spices in Indonesian. *First*, the local or historical layer, which consists of regional or Indonesian names based on dish names that have been relabeled as spice names or variants, for example, *Bumbu Rendang*, *Bumbu Soto Ayam*, *Bumbu Gulai*, *Bumbu Opor Ayam*, as well as long-established loanwords such as *sop*, *sarden*, *cokelat*. *Second*, the English layer as the language of labels, which dominates technical categories and descriptors, for example, *Instant Seasoning (mix)*, *Multi Purpose Crispy Seasoning Flour*, *Mushroom Bouillon*, *Gourmet Powder*, *Corned Beef*, *Tuna Flakes in Sunflower Oil*, *Thousand Island*, and *creamy* or *crispy* for technical communication and export needs. *Third*, East Asian or ASEAN elements that emphasize culinary origin or authority, especially *Kimchi*. Similar patterns in Southeast Asia show that these terms tend to be more stable at the ingredient name level, while modern influences are prominent on packaging through marketing-oriented category terms and descriptors (Matwick & Matwick, 2019; Sari et al., 2024). By linking findings from several of these literature sources, this study positions itself at the intersection of etymological absorption and commercial naming

strategies, offering a map of the process of adaptation of sound, morphology, and meaning that is relevant to the standardization of terms as well as an understanding of the evolution of the spice lexicon in Indonesian.

III. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive-analytical design with a focus on the naming of packaged cooking spices. The research population includes packaged cooking spice products available in Indonesian through packaged food powder stores. The sample was determined purposively to represent the main categories, such as basic spices, powdered spices, pastes or sauces, seasonings, and other ready-to-use packaged spice mixes, as well as to take into account variations among manufacturers. The unit of analysis in this study is the lexical elements on the label, namely the product name and functional descriptor. For example, *bumbu gulai*, *Garam Meja*, and *Kimchi*—in line with previous research that confirms food labels as a hybrid linguistic arena (Cacciafoco et al., 2024).

Data documentation was carried out by documenting the front and back of labels in the form of main text, subtitles, claims or descriptors that archive product page captures. The data is then normalized by separating elements (brand names) from genetic lexical (categories, variants, or descriptors), deduplicating spellings, and standardizing writing. Each element is then coded into variables that include: *first*, the source language, for example, Indonesian or regional languages, English as the lingua franca of labels, and East Asian languages; *second*, the type of borrowing, which consists of lexical borrowing or loanwords, literal or borrowed translations, semantic borrowing or meaning borrowing, phonetic-semantic matching or borrowing, and pseudo-borrowing; *third*, orthographic, phonological, and morphological adaptation; *fourth*, semantic change; and *fifth*, code-mixing or code-switching in bilingual labels, followed by additional explanations (Isnaniah et al., 2024).

The analysis was conducted at two levels: the micro level, which involved analyzing lemmas or elements by identifying etymons and proving their etymology through form-meaning correspondence, phonotactic features, and historical consistency; and the macro level, which involved analyzing a corpus of labels in the form of source language frequency tables, distribution of borrowing types per product category, proportion of code-mixing or code-switching, as well as n-gram collocation analysis on flavor descriptors, for example, *hot*, *spicy*, *garlic*, *powder*, grilled beef flavor as practiced in corpus-based loan lexicon studies (Wilie et al., 2024). The results are visualized in summary tables, source language category relationship maps, and collocation networks (Kaiping & Klamer, 2018).

In maintaining data stability, some of the data was recorded by three researchers and the level of agreement was measured using a simple coefficient before applying the coding scheme to the entire corpus. Ethical aspects were maintained by using publicly available product labels, referring to brands solely as linguistic objects rather than commercial evaluations. However, the limitations of this study include the challenge of words that are considered loanwords or pseudo-loanwords that are difficult to verify and the ambiguity of certain etymologies (Rohbiah, 2020; Siahaan, 2022).

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From an analysis of twenty-nine spice labels or ready-to-eat food products, three main layers of absorption traces were found: *First*, the local or regional layer, which has a history of being used as the name of Indonesian dishes as spice names. For example, *Rendang* Seasoning, *Coto Ayam* seasoning, *Gulai* seasoning, *Opor Ayam* seasoning, *Nasi Goreng* seasoning, and *Nasi Kuning* seasoning—as well as several old European loanwords that have been Indonesianized, such as *sop* (< *soep*), *sarden* (< sardine), *cokelat* (< chocolate). *Second*, English as the language of labels that dominate technical categories and descriptors: Instant Seasoning (Mix), Multi Purpose Crispy Seasoning Flour, Mushroom Bouillon, Gourmet Powder, Corned Beef, Tuna Flakes in Sunflower Oil, and Thousand Island. *Third*, East Asian or ASEAN elements that indicate culinary origin or authority, namely *Kimchi*, which is a romanization of Korean, often accompanied by the claim “Made in Korea,” and Tom Yum (Thailand), which is used as the name of a seasoning variant. Morphologically, the most productive Indonesian patterns remain N + N (*Bumbu Rendang*, *Tepung Bumbu*, *Kaldu Rasa Jamur*), N + Adj (*Bumbu Nasi Kuning*, *Garam Beryodium*), along with the formulas “*kaldu rasa* + X” and “*bubuk* + [*es krim*] + *rasa* + Y”; The affixes *ber-* (*ber-yodium*, iodized) and *PeN-* (*pe-nguat rasa*, flavor enhancer) emphasize the localization of technical terms. Orthographic-phonological adaptation is consistent: Instant→*instan*, crispy→*krispi*, chocolate→*cokelat*, *soep*→*sop*, *sardine*→*sarden*; meanwhile, there is also the application of code-switching or mixing of ID-EN bilingual codes or vice versa. For example, *Bumbu Opor Ayam* ‘instant spices for chicken braised in coconut milk’, Mushroom Bouillon ‘mushroom-flavored broth’. Thus, the core name remains local, but global access is maintained. Semantically, labels often engage in *relabeling*, where the name of the dish is used to indicate the flavor or product variant, for example, *rendang*, *gulai*, *soto ayam*, *nasi goreng*, *nasi kuning*, using stylistic metonymy (Kentucky, for fried chicken style), and in the MSG category, using euphemisms (*Gourmet Powder*) to frame the product image.

TABLE 1
ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF INDONESIANIZED REGIONAL LANGUAGES THROUGH HISTORICAL PROXIMITY IN THE NAMES OF PACKAGED SPICES IN
INDONESIAN

No.	Name of Packaged Spices	Source language	Type of absorption	Orthographic-phonological adaptation	Morphological adaptation (ID)	Change in meaning	Code switching or mixing	Additional explanation
1	<i>Rendang, Bumbu spesial (Instant Seasoning Mix)</i>	ID + Minangkabau + EN	Adapted loanword; the rest are equivalents in the EN category	instant→ <i>instan</i> ; “ <i>rendang</i> /wet” form ID; EN retained	N+Adj+N (seasoning+instant+ <i>rendang</i>); N+Adj marker (spice+wet)	Relabeling dishes→spice names; “wet” classifies the form	yes (ID↔EN)	“Special Seasoning” is a quality tagline, not a core name
2	<i>Bumbu Soto Ayam (Yellow Clear Chicken Soup)</i>	Indonesian	Pure ID name; EN as descriptive equivalent	Standard ID; EN retained	N+N+N	dish→seasoning	no	EN explains the color and clarity of the broth
3	<i>Bumbu Gulai (Oriental Curry)</i>	Melayu (Indic branch) + EN	“ <i>Gulai</i> ” = long-established absorption; EN linkage to global terminology	The spelling “ <i>gulai</i> ” is stable; EN <i>curry</i> is intact.	N+N	Dishes→seasonings	yes	Combining local flavors with curry
4	<i>Bumbu Sayur Asem</i>	Indonesian (Jawa)	Pure ID name	Standard ID	N + [N N]	Dish→seasoning	no	Regional variant; no EN row in the panel
5	<i>Bumbu Sayur Sop (Instant Seasoning for Vegetable Soup)</i>	ID + Dutch (“soup”)	“Sop” = long absorption; EN equivalent function	soep→ <i>sop</i> (historical)	N + [N N]	Dish→seasoning	yes	“Sop” is retained as the ID format
6	<i>Bumbu Nasi Goreng (Instant Seasoning for Fried Rice)</i>	Indonesian	Pure ID name; EN function equivalent	Standard ID; Complete EN	N + [N V]	Dish→seasoning	yes	Cross-brand generic naming formula
7	<i>Bumbu Nasi Goreng Cabe Merah (Red Chili Fried Rice Instant Spice)</i>	Indonesian	Pure ID name; EN equivalent taste+function	Standard ID; Complete EN	N + [N V] + N	Dish→seasoning + flavor enhancer	yes	EN contains the descriptor <i>Red Chili</i>
8	<i>Bumbu Opor Ayam (Instant spices for Chicken braised in Coconut Milk)</i>	Indonesian	Pure ID name; descriptive EN	Standard ID; EN explanatory phrase	N + [N N]	Dish→seasoning	yes	EN emphasizes coconut milk and technique
9	<i>Garam Meja (Refined Salt)</i>	Indonesian	Conceptual translation from EN	Standard ID; EN <i>refined</i> indicates quality	N+N	Technical label, not taste	yes	Common retail terms
10	<i>Tepung Bumbu Bakwan ‘Bakwan Seasoning Flour’ (Coating Mix)</i>	Indonesian + EN	Pure ID name; EN technical category	Standard ID; EN remains unchanged	N+N+N	Stable (menu specific)	yes	“Bakwan” remains ID; EN = category
11	<i>Tepung Bumbu Serbaguna (Multi Purpose Crispy Seasoning Flour)</i>	Indonesian + EN	Pure ID name; EN complete equivalent	Standard ID; Complete EN	N+N+Adj	Function generalization	yes	Describing function and texture
12	<i>Bumbu Nasi Kuning (Turmeric Rice Seasoning)</i>	Indonesian + EN	Pure ID name; EN material focus	ID baku; EN turmeric	N + [N Adj]	Dish→seasoning	yes	EN highlights turmeric
13	<i>Garam Beryodium ‘iodized salt’</i>	Indonesian (+ element “iodine”)	Loan-element affixation	+ <i>iodine</i> →yodium; prefix <i>ber-</i>	<i>ber-</i> + N (<i>ber</i> +yodium)	Composition claims (fortification)	no	Regulatory nutrition terminology
14	<i>Bumbu Nasi Kuning ‘Yellow Rice Seasoning’ (Bumbu Aduk ‘Seasoning mix’)</i>	Indonesian	Pure ID name (series)	Standard ID	N + [N Adj]	Dish→seasoning	no	<i>Bumbu Aduk</i> = procedural category of the brand
15	<i>Bumbu Rendang ‘rendang spices’ (bumbu aduk ‘seasoning mix’)</i>	ID + Minangkabau	Pure ID name (series)	ID baku	N+N	Dish→seasoning	no	Variants in the same series
16	<i>Sarden Saus Tomat (Tomato Sauce)</i>	Eropa (sarden) + ID	Loanword, long established	<i>sardine</i> →sarden; <i>sauce</i> →saus	N+N+N	Stable	yes	EN name the sauce medium

17	Mushroom Bouillon (<i>Kaldu Rasa Jamur</i>)	EN ↔ ID	Technical matching: long- term absorption <i>broth</i>	<i>Bouillon</i> is retained EN; <i>kaldu</i> is established ID	“Flavored broth + N” template	Category matching (bouillon↔broth)	yes	English is placed first according to instructions

A. Naming Patterns Using Indonesianized Regional Languages

The data shows a pattern of naming packaged seasonings dominated by the term “seasoning dish”: the word *bumbu* (seasoning) becomes a phrase, followed by the name of a local or regional dish such as *rendang*, *gulai*, *soto*, *opor nasi goreng*, or *nasi kuning*. Variants are added through flavor or ingredient markers such as *red chili* or *turmeric*, which have versatile functions (Fitrisia et al., 2020). In terms of form, spice packaging follows the Indonesian noun phrase template, for example, *bumbu + kaldu rasa + N*, with normalization of loanwords in between, *instan*, *sop*, *sarden*, *saus*, *yodium*, and even affixation (*beriyodium*) (Syaputri et al., 2023). Code-switching or mixed English codes are limited to explaining medium colors or technical-regulatory categories, for example, in the words *yellow*, *clear*, *refined*, *bouillon*, *coating*, and *mix*, not as substitutes for core names (Setyaningsih, 2020).

The packaging shows a strong location, namely Indonesian language and regional elements are used to index authenticity and cultural closeness, while English is used for technical export precision, thus realizing a stable division of functions (diglossia). Thus, this data reinforces the productive evidence of Indonesian morphology in the commercial sphere, which can be seen in patterns (N + N composition, “*kaldu rasa + N*” pattern, affixation), while also capturing established semantic absorption, calques, and borrowing. From a language planning perspective, this pattern normalizes Indonesian as the core language of labels, providing space for local terms, while suggesting that English be used sparingly for technical claims, thereby highlighting the potential for dialectal variation to be leveled when regional terms are nationalized in the global market (Siahaan, 2022).

TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF ENGLISH OR THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION ON PACKAGING LABELS IN INDONESIAN

No.	Name of Packaged Spices	Source language	Type of absorption	Orthographic–phonological adaptation	Morphological adaptation (ID)	Change in meaning	Code switching or mixing	Additional explanation
1	Multi Purpose Crispy Seasoning Flour (Tepung Bumbu Krispi Serbaguna)	EN + ID	mixture: “krispi” loanword adapted; the rest ID	<i>crispy</i> → <i>krispi</i> (c→k, y→i)	N+N+Adj+Adj	Texture+functionality becomes part of the name	yes	Official EN equivalent on packaging; not “Coating Mix”
2	Saus Creamy Serbaguna (spicy)	ID + EN + ID	Loanword, adjectives on “creamy”	“creamy” left EN; others ID	N + Adj (EN) + Adj (ID)	repositioning: from “mayones” to “saus serbaguna”	yes	“Mayumi” brand; “spicy” = variant
3	Thousand Island	EN	Loanword, name of global sauce	Proper EN <i>Thousand Island</i> maintained	N + Proper EN	Stabil (name of a type of sauce)	yes	EN serves as a distinctive name
4	Super Crispy Kentucky (Tepung Bumbu Ayam)	EN + ID (toponym)	Loanword, personal name (toponym→style)	“Kentucky” maintained	N + N + N	Metonymy: place→style	yes	American fried chicken style branding
5	Crispy Chicken Seasoned Flour (Tepung Bumbu Ayam Krispi)	EN + ID	Loanword, adapted to “ <i>krispi</i> ”	<i>crispy</i> → <i>krispi</i>	N + N + Adj	Texture as a characteristic of variants	yes	Standardized spelling
6	Corned Beef (Classic Original)	EN	Loanword frasa EN utuh	EN spelling is retained	EN name structure, N+N; not nativized	Stable (processed meat category)	no (pure name EN)	The market equivalent of “beef corned beef” is not printed on the name
7	SUN BELL TUNA WITH RED BEANS – MEXICAN SALAD (Ikan Tuna dengan Kacang Merah – Mexican Salad)	EN ↔ ID	Bilingual; “tuna/salad” long-standing absorption in ID	EN intact; in ID “Mexican Salad” left as EN	N N + Prep “with” + N + Adj (ID)	Stabil (name of a ready-to-eat dish)	yes	EN as the main name; ID as the explanatory equivalent
8	Sarden Saus Tomat (Tomato Sauce)	Eropa (sarden) + ID	Loanword, long-established	<i>sardine</i> → <i>sarden</i> ; <i>sauce</i> → <i>saus</i>	N + N + N	Stable	yes	EN name the sauce medium
9	Tuna Flakes in sunflower oil (Tuna Flakes dalam minyak bunga matahari)	EN ↔ ID	EN main name + ID equivalent	EN retained; ID explanatory phrase	Nama EN + frasa prepositional ID	Stable	yes	ID provides information on oil mediums
10	Gourmet Powder (Penguat Rasa)	EN ↔ ID (chemistry)	Loanword, phrase + derivation ID	<i>monosodium</i> ↔ <i>mononatrium</i> ; <i>glutamate</i> → <i>glutamat</i>	peN- + kuat ‘strong’→ <i>penguat</i> ‘amplifier’; phrase N+N	marketing euphemism for MSG	yes	EN as a trade name; ID explains the function and composition
11	Ice Cream Mix Chocolate (Bubuk Es Krim Rasa Cokelat)	EN ↔ ID	EN main name; ID formulaic equivalent	<i>chocolate</i> → <i>cokelat</i> ; <i>cream</i> → <i>krim</i> ; <i>ice</i> → <i>es</i>	Template “powder + [ice cream] + flavor + N”	Flavor as a variant, not a category	yes	Consistent bilingualism

B. Bilingualism and English Assimilation

Names on packaging that use English as the primary language tend to be bilingual (EN↔ID) or entirely in English for global terms. English is used for texture or function attributes, for example, in words such as *crisp*, *creamy*, *classic* or *original*, and multi-purpose, as well as in international names such as *Thousand Island*, *Corned Beef*, and the toponym *Kentucky*, which is known as a global style of fried chicken (Cacciafoco et al., 2024). Indonesian elements are still used as category heads, for example, *spice flour*, *sauce*, *flavor enhancer*, *ice cream powder*, with productive Indonesian phrase patterns (Syaputri et al., 2023). The pattern is: N + N + Adj (EN) + Adj (ID) or EN name + ID prepositional phrase in *Tuna Flakes in Sunflower Oil* (Setyaningsih, 2020). There is standardization of spelling or complete absorption based on the rules of English to Indonesian, as seen in the words *crispy*→*krispi*, *chocolate*→*cokelat*, *cream*→*krim*, *ice*→*es*, *sauce*→*saus*, and *sardine*→*sarden*, to direct adoption of Indonesian words in chemical terms, as seen in the words *monosodium*→*mononatrium* and *glutamate*→*glutamat* (Sari & Martiwi, 2020). Some labels also show a repositioning of

meaning or a commercial strategy, for example, in the phrase gourmet powder (*flavor enhancer*) as a euphemism for MSG (Fitrisia et al., 2020).

These findings show that code-switching or functional or diglossic code-mixing in Indonesian serves as a marker of category and core information, while English indexes prestige, global standardization, and technical precision (type of oil, type of sauce, and functional claims). There is lexical borrowing and morphological integration into Indonesian patterns without changing the basic syntax, as well as metonymy seen in the word Kentucky as a style. The practice of bilingualism reinforces glocalization, i.e., products feel local but read globally, but it also has the potential to flatten local variations in terminology when English equivalents are considered more formal. For linguistic studies and language planning, these results suggest the following: *first*, establish Indonesian as the core of the name; *second*, use English sparingly for technical or export terms; and *third*, standardize loanwords according to the rules so that the packaging remains easy to understand while meeting international market conventions.

TABLE 3
ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE USE IN EAST ASIA OR ASEAN (THAILAND AND KOREA) ON SPICE PACKAGING IN INDONESIAN

No.	Name of Packaged Spices	Source language	Type of absorption	Orthographic–phonological adaptation	Morphological adaptation (ID)	Change in meaning	Code switching or mixing	Additional explanation
1	<i>Bumbu Pasta Tom Yam</i> (Tom Yum Paste)	ID + Thailand	Loanword; name of a dish	Romanization of Tom Yam is used	N + Proper	Thailand dishes→spices	yes	Thailand culinary style markers
2	<i>Fermentasi Sayur</i> 'Vegetable Fermentation' (Kimchi)	Indonesian + Korea (romanization)	loanword, (global name)	Romanization of Kimchi according to standards	Single + N	Stable	yes	Indexing Korean authenticity

C. Code-Switching or Code-Mixing Patterns in Thailand-Korean-Indonesian Language Acquisition

The two names discussed are *Bumbu Paste Tom Yam* (Tom Yum Paste from) Thailand and fermented vegetables (Kimchi) from South Korea. Both use loanwords in the form of dish names written in standard romanization (Tom Yum, Komchi). In terms of form, Tom Yum Paste follows the pattern of head noun + proper noun, so that its meaning shifts from a Thailand dish to a spice or paste; whereas Kimchi is used as a single noun with a stable meaning (denoting the Kimchi race or identity) (Samantha & Wulandari, 2025; Cho, 2006). Both are code-switching or code-mixing, with Indonesian and English present as supporting elements, for example, the words *bumbu*, *pasta*, and *paste* as markers of the global market. In addition, the main elements of both words function to index the style or authenticity of the original cuisine (Qisthi et al., 2022; Farghal et al., 2023).

The spice packaging displays targeted glocalization, with Indonesian remaining the categorization framework (spices), the source languages of Thailand and South Korean romanized to represent cultural identity and trigger flavor associations, while English is used sparingly for functional labels and international access. This pattern shows: *first*, lexical borrowing integrated into Indonesian phrase morphology, namely head-noun + proper noun or singular noun; *second*, metonymy of dish names into seasoning names; and *third*, the need for standardization of romanization for consistency in the market. For example, choosing Tom Yum or vs. Tom Yam, standard Kimchi. For language research and planning purposes, these results support the principle of Indonesian as the core language, English as a technical supplement, and Thailand and South Korean as indices of authenticity, resulting in a function that maintains readability and cultural value on the packaging.

V. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study found clear stratification in the lexical matrix of packaging, namely: *first*, a local or historical layer that places Indonesian naming as the anchor of identity; *second*, an English layer as the language of the label that acts as a technical and marketing medium; and *third*, Asian or ASEAN elements that serve as an index of origin or culinary authority. These three layers operate simultaneously through stable morphotactic patterns, namely nominal and adjectival composition and productive derivation, accompanied by consistent orthographic normalization in accordance with Indonesian spelling. In the realm of meaning, the mechanisms of resemantization, metonymization, and euphemism work to align product categories with market expectations, while code-switching or code-mixing is directed from Indonesian to foreign to regional or vice versa, thereby mediating local readability and global accessibility without obscuring the core categorization.

The results of this study provide an operational basis for the standardization of naming practices, starting from the selection of a core lexicon, consistency in bilingual equivalents, to spelling and morphology guidelines, which are useful for lexicographical policy, labeling compliance, and increased consumer literacy. Given the limitations of this study, there are recommendations that need to be implemented in the future, namely: *first*, expansion of the corpus at the brand, category, and distribution area levels; *second*, diachronic testing to map terminological changes; *third*, corpus-based quantitative analytical integration; *fourth*, a study of perceptions of label clarity and trustworthiness; *fifth*, reconciliation

with regulatory guidelines and romanization conventions; and finally, cross-country comparisons within the region to assess terminology transfer within the ASEAN ecosystem.

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The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Translation Skills: EFL Instructors' Perspectives at King Khalid University

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Abstract—This study explores the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the teaching of translation within the English as a foreign language (EFL) program at King Khalid University. The aim was to assess the perceptions and attitudes of faculty regarding the effectiveness, challenges, and cultural adaptability of AI-driven learning systems in translation education. Descriptive statistical analysis of survey data reveals overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward AI integration, with high levels of agreement on its benefits for enhancing translation accuracy, pedagogical efficiency, student engagement, and confidence. However, the participants identified several challenges, including insufficient institutional support, a lack of training, ethical concerns, and difficulties in selecting appropriate tools. Although AI tools were perceived as valuable in improving linguistic skills and providing immediate feedback, their limitations in addressing cultural nuances and fostering learner autonomy were noted. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive institutional strategies, including targeted professional development, infrastructure enhancement, and culturally responsive AI design, to ensure effective and responsible implementation. This study contributes to the growing body of research on AI in language education and offers practical insights for educators, policymakers, and technologists who aim to integrate AI in EFL contexts.

Index Terms—King Khalid University, role of artificial intelligence, EFL students, perspectives of instructors, translation skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have profoundly transformed global educational practices. In general, AI offers innovative tools to enhance teaching and learning across disciplines. In the field of English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction, AI technologies have emerged as valuable assets for developing translation skills, which constitute an essential component of linguistic competence, cultural literacy, and effective global communication. Real-time error correction, personalized feedback, and adaptive learning environments promote learner autonomy, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning; these tools effectively complement traditional pedagogical approaches (Albahiri et al., 2025; Hwang & Coss, 2025). Within Saudi Arabia, institutions such as King Khalid University are increasingly integrating AI in alignment with the national priorities outlined in Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasizes digital transformation as a key driver of educational reform and socioeconomic development (Al-Shahrani et al., 2025). However, while AI-powered tools, such as machine translation (MT) engines, chatbots, and intelligent tutoring systems, offer scalable and personalized learning experiences, they also present complex pedagogical and ethical challenges. Concerns have emerged that overreliance on generative AI tools, including ChatGPT, may undermine academic integrity by evading the cognitive demands of translation tasks, which may impede the development of critical thinking and original language production skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Educators must adopt thoughtful instructional designs, inclusive pedagogical strategies, and continuous professional development to implement AI tools effectively in EFL translation instruction, especially within the multicultural and multilingual context of Saudi higher education. Teachers need digital and pedagogical competencies to integrate AI ethically and equitably while addressing the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students (Altamimi, 2025). Additionally, the success of AI-enhanced pedagogy depends on the readiness and attitudes of instructors and learners, which are shaped by technological self-efficacy, digital literacy, and trust in the educational value of AI. Despite the growing presence of AI in education, empirical research that specifically examines its role in EFL translation instruction within the Saudi context is lacking. Only a few studies have explored how AI tools are currently being integrated into translation pedagogy, how effectively they address the linguistic and cultural needs of students, or how educators balance innovation with established teaching practices. This gap is particularly pressing given the need for culturally responsive and pedagogically sound AI applications in diverse EFL classrooms. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the integration of AI technologies in EFL translation instruction at King Khalid University. Current usage patterns are explored, faculty's perceptions and readiness are assessed, and the key challenges and opportunities associated with AI adoption are identified. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide strategic, evidence-based recommendations for the effective and ethical use of AI to increase translation proficiency, support sustainable

educational innovation, and align with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 and international benchmarks for quality education (UNESCO, 2021).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Concept of Artificial Intelligence*

AI is considered one of the most advanced and rapidly evolving fields within computer science; it focuses on defining the nature and dimensions of human intelligence and then attempting to simulate certain aspects of it via computational methods. The goal of AI is not to compare or equate the human mind—created by God—with machines, which are human-made tools, but rather to understand the complex cognitive processes involved in human thinking and translate them into corresponding computer algorithms that can enhance the ability of a machine to solve intricate problems. AI aims to develop intelligent systems and software capable of mimicking human behavior, such as the ability to think, see, hear, speak, and move (Ismail & Ahmed, 2023). As Al-Sayyid (2004) described, AI is a combination of science and engineering that enables computers to perform tasks requiring human-like intelligence, including comprehension, speech, vision, and reasoning. Similarly, Arnous (2008) defines AI as a subfield of computer science that focuses on intelligent computer systems that possess features associated with human-like intelligence, decision making, and behavior, particularly in areas such as language processing, learning, reasoning, and problem solving.

B. *Features of Artificial Intelligence*

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing education by enabling personalized, efficient, and accessible learning experiences through the analysis of large datasets that adapt instruction to individual student needs, thereby enhancing engagement and effectiveness (Al-Sayyid, 2004; Ismail & Ahmed, 2023). AI automates routine tasks such as grading, allowing educators to focus on more complex teaching activities (Arnous, 2008), while also supporting learners with disabilities through assistive technologies and fostering language development via natural language processing (Al-Sayyid, 2004). Theoretically, AI models cognitive functions including reasoning and learning by managing symbolic processing, uncertainty, and experience-based adaptation, which facilitates flexible decision-making in educational settings (Al-Sayyid, 2004). These capabilities collectively empower AI to enhance learner autonomy, improve instructional precision, and promote inclusive access to education.

C. *Importance of Using Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*

AI significantly transforms education by enabling personalized learning experiences that cater to the individual abilities, cognitive styles, and learning speeds of students. When large datasets on student performance are analyzed, AI creates adaptive learning pathways that help improve academic outcomes, close learning gaps, and increase engagement. AI also enhances teaching efficiency by automating assessments, delivering real-time feedback, and generating customized instructional materials tailored to diverse learner needs. In higher education, AI supports second language acquisition and helps bridge knowledge gaps, which can accelerate skill development. Importantly, AI promotes educational equity by expanding access to high-quality resources for marginalized groups, including students with disabilities, refugees, and learners in remote or underserved areas. These digital tools and platforms offer flexible and inclusive learning opportunities that support autonomous learning and critical thinking. As such, AI integration into education is more than a technological trend: it is a strategic move aligned with global digital transformation and sustainable development goals, which can reshape education into a more intelligent, responsive, and inclusive system that prepares learners for the challenges of the future.

D. *AI Translation Technologies*

Teacher training and teacher education represent two distinct approaches to preparing language teachers. Teacher training focuses on practical solutions and adherence to prescribed curricula, whereas teacher education emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical principles underlying teaching practices (Johnson, 2009). Simultaneously, AI translation technologies have evolved from rule-based systems to neural models, which can greatly improve language learning by enhancing translation accuracy and learner engagement (Lee, 2020). Google Translate and similar tools support vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and communication skills in the EFL context. Moreover, AI applications in education, such as automated grading and adaptive feedback systems, facilitate personalized learning by reducing cognitive load and promoting motivation and proficiency (Davis, 1985; Guo et al., 2022).

E. *Previous Studies*

Previous research has extensively explored the integration of AI and MT tools in language learning and translation training, highlighting their potential benefits and challenges. Niño (2009) reported that while students appreciated tools such as Google Translate for vocabulary building and understanding sentence structures, instructors were concerned about overreliance and the risk of errors in meaning and syntax. Subsequent studies, such as that of Aljohani (2021), reported positive attitudes among EFL teachers and students in Saudi Arabia toward AI integration, emphasizing its usefulness in language acquisition. Bowker (2020) demonstrated how MT post-editing tasks can enhance MT literacy, which fosters critical thinking and editing skills in translator training. Similarly, Lee (2020) showed that guided use of Google Translate

could improve the reading and writing skills of students, although instructors stressed the need for critical engagement. Fan et al. (2023) investigated ChatGPT as a feedback tool and reported that it improved lexical diversity and cohesion, whereas human feedback remained more effective for syntactic accuracy, which suggests a complementary role for AI. Alshahrani (2024) noted that while tools such as ChatGPT and Duolingo were praised for promoting engagement and personalization, concerns remained regarding teacher preparedness and potential misuse. Hazaymeh et al. (2024) reported that instructors generally hold favorable views of AI for enhancing teaching and learning strategies, although challenges such as a lack of training persist regardless of teaching experience. Lin et al. (2024) supported these findings, highlighting the capacity of AI to reduce workload and support learner autonomy, alongside concerns about ethics, assessment, and job security. Collectively, the literature underscores the value of AI in supporting translation education via personalized feedback, vocabulary development, and autonomy while cautioning against its uncritical use. Notably, effective AI integration should complement rather than replace human instruction and must be supported by clear institutional policies, continuous professional development, and context-specific pedagogical approaches (Bahari & Hashim, 2021; Lin & Lee, 2022). While educators are optimistic about the potential of AI to enhance language instruction and reduce workload, issues such as student dependency, validity of assessments, and insufficient training remain critical (Chen et al., 2023). Despite widespread scholarly attention, a literature gap remains in the in-depth exploration of the experiences of educators and learners with AI in Saudi EFL contexts, particularly in translation instruction. This study addresses this gap by investigating how AI tools are utilized to increase translation proficiency among EFL students at King Khalid University. The aim is to gather insights for informing future pedagogical practices and policy development in AI-assisted language education.

The study is guided by three research questions:

1. How are AI tools currently implemented in teaching translation skills within EFL programs at King Khalid University, and what challenges do educators face when these tools are integrated with traditional teaching methods?
2. What are the perceptions and attitudes of faculty toward the use of AI technologies in EFL translation education?
3. To what extent do AI-driven learning systems support the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of Saudi EFL learners?

Furthermore, this study considers sociocultural factors affecting AI adoption (Al-Surimi, 2020), the importance of stakeholder attitudes, and the balance between AI tools and human translation skills (Kiraly, 2015). In alignment with Saudi Vision 2030 (2016), this research seeks to inform the strategic integration of AI in EFL translation pedagogy.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Approach

Descriptive research was applied as a study methodology to explore the views of 100 EFL instructors at King Khalid University on the role of AI in improving the translation skills of students. A questionnaire served as the main data collection tool for gathering current insights into the perceptions of instructors (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The descriptive survey method allows for systematic analysis of trends and attitudes within a specific timeframe (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2019). The findings were objectively interpreted to provide relevant insights within the broader educational context.

B. Participant Recruitment and Sampling

Participants in this study comprised 100 EFL instructors from King Khalid University. To ensure a representative sample and reduce selection bias, a simple random sampling technique was utilized. A comprehensive list of EFL instructors was collected from the university's faculty database, and participants were randomly chosen using a pseudo-random number generator. This approach ensured that each instructor had an equal chance of being included in the study. Invitations to participate in the research were sent via official university email, explaining the purpose of the study, ensuring confidentiality, and requesting voluntary participation. Instructors who agreed to participate completed the questionnaire electronically. This method of random sampling and voluntary participation helped to boost the appropriateness and reliability of the results while also diminishing potential bias in the process of selection.

C. Demographic Characteristics of the Research Sample

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the members of the research sample in accordance with the specific demographic variables. The primary variables that were examined included the following:

(a). Years of Experience

The participants in the study were grouped according to their years of academic experience, categorized as less than 5 years, between 5 and 15 years, and more than 15 years. The distribution is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE VARIABLE "YEARS OF EXPERIENCE"

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	10	10%
From 5 years to 15 years	20	20%
15 years or more	70	70%
Total	100	100%

Approximately 70% of the respondents had more than 15 years of academic experience, which ensures that the study would primarily reflect the insights of seasoned scholars with deep expertise. Approximately 20% are middle-career academics with 5–15 years of experience who have provided valuable perspectives on evolving trends. The remaining 10% were early-career academics, who have contributed fresh views on emerging pedagogical approaches. This balanced distribution across career stages strengthens the study findings by capturing a wide spectrum of academic perspectives.

(b). *Academic Qualifications*

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE VARIABLE "ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION"

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's Degree	13	13%
Master's Degree	26	26%
Doctorate (PhD)	61	61%
Total	100	100%

The data indicate that a substantial majority of the study sample (61%) possessed a doctorate degree, which indicates a highly qualified and academically advanced cohort. Similarly, 26% of the participants held a master's degree, representing a significant proportion of those with advanced postgraduate qualifications. Only 13% of the sample holds a bachelor's degree, which suggests that individuals with solely undergraduate credentials are underrepresented. This distribution implies that the sample primarily comprises well-educated faculty members or professionals, likely affiliated with specialized academic or research institutions. The predominance of doctorate holders contributes to the robustness and credibility of the research findings, whereas the limited presence of bachelor's degree holders may reflect the specialized nature of the setting, where higher academic qualifications are customary or needed.

D. *Instruments*

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool and was designed to address the study objectives effectively by capturing standardized and comparable responses.

E. *Validity of the Research Instrument*

A panel of experts reviewed the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and completeness to ensure the validity of the instrument used in this study. Their feedback was incorporated to enhance content validity and ensure accurate measurement of the intended constructs.

F. *Internal Consistency Reliability*

Internal consistency was assessed by calculating correlation coefficients between each item and the total score within its dimension. The items could reliably measure their respective constructs.

TABLE 3
PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN EACH ITEM AND OVERALL ATTITUDES TOWARD AI IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

Item Number	Statement	Correlation Coefficient
1	I trust AI tools to provide accurate translation assistance	0.547**
2	AI technology enhances my teaching effectiveness	0.695**
3	Using AI in the classroom increases student engagement	0.744**
4	I am interested in learning more about AI tools for translation teaching	0.669**
5	AI tools help reduce the instructors' workload in translation teaching	0.700**
6	AI tools can motivate students to improve their translation skills	0.658**
7	I believe AI tools can significantly support translation teaching	0.702**
8	I feel confident using AI tools to assist students in translation tasks	0.768**
9	AI tools complement traditional teaching methods effectively	0.778**
10	The integration of AI in translation teaching aligns with modern educational trends	0.668**

Table 3 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between each questionnaire item and the overall construct of attitudes of instructors toward the use of AI in translation teaching. All the items are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$, indicating strong internal consistency and construct validity (Field, 2018). The correlation values ranged from $r = 0.547$ to $r = 0.778$. According to Cohen (1988), this range reflects moderate to strong positive relationships. The highest correlation ($r = 0.778$) was with the ninth item about AI as a complement to traditional teaching. The eighth item ($r = 0.768$) highlights the importance of instructor confidence in the use of AI tools. The lowest correlation ($r = 0.547$) was

with the first item about trust in the translation accuracy of AI. While still moderate, this value suggests some reservations about AI reliability in translation tasks. This finding aligns with the literature highlighting concerns over AI-generated errors (Koponen, 2016; Bowker, 2020). Overall, the findings suggest that positive attitudes are driven by confidence and perceived usefulness, whereas concerns about accuracy remain a barrier. These insights can help guide the integration of AI in translator training programs.

TABLE 4
PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN EACH ITEM AND “CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING AI IN TRANSLATION TEACHING”

Item Number	Statement	Correlation Coefficient
1	There is insufficient institutional support for incorporating AI in teaching	0.620**
2	The time required to learn and implement AI tools is a barrier	0.797**
3	Students sometimes rely too heavily on AI tools, reducing their learning effort	0.749**
4	Lack of sufficient training limits my ability to use AI tools effectively	0.807**
5	AI tools are not always compatible with the curriculum requirements	0.723**
6	There is a lack of clear guidelines on how to use AI tools in translation teaching	0.732**
7	Limited access to AI resources and technology hinders their use in class	0.821**
8	I find it difficult to select appropriate AI tools for translation teaching	0.781**
9	I am concerned about the ethical implications of using AI in language teaching	0.680**
10	Technical problems frequently disrupt the use of AI tools	0.783*

Table 4 shows the Pearson correlations between each item and the overall construct of “challenges in implementing AI in translation teaching.” All the items show significant positive correlations ($p < 0.001$), confirming their relevance to the perceived challenges. The strongest correlations were related to practical barriers: limited access to AI tools ($r = 0.821$), lack of training opportunities ($r = 0.807$), and the time required to learn and use AI ($r = 0.797$). These findings highlight the key obstacles faced by educators. Technical issues also rank high. Problems during implementation ($r = 0.783$) and difficulty in selecting suitable tools ($r = 0.781$) point to usability and system complexity as major concerns. Moderate correlations are found for institutional support ($r = 0.620$) and ethical concerns ($r = 0.680$). While important, these items are viewed as secondary to more immediate practical issues. In summary, the main challenges to AI integration in translation teaching are access, training, and time. Addressing these issues can support more effective and sustainable use of AI in the classroom.

TABLE 5
PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN EACH ITEM AND THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF AI TOOLS IN ENHANCING THE TRANSLATION SKILLS OF STUDENTS

Item number	Statement	Correlation Coefficient
1	AI tools improve students' vocabulary and grammar in the target language	0.782**
2	AI assists students in understanding cultural nuances in translation	0.795**
3	The use of AI in translation teaching leads to better overall student performance	0.764**
4	Using AI encourages students to learn from their translation mistakes	0.790**
5	AI tools can effectively supplement teacher feedback in translation	0.754**
6	AI tools help students produce more accurate translations	0.838**
7	AI tools provide useful immediate feedback to students during translation tasks	0.790**
8	Students show greater confidence in their translation abilities when using AI tools	0.699**
9	AI tools help students develop critical thinking skills related to translation	0.645**
10	AI tools foster independent learning among EFL students	0.731**

Table 5 shows the significant and positive correlations ($r = 0.645$ – 0.838) between specific uses of AI tools and their perceived effectiveness in improving the translation skills of students. The highest correlation ($r = 0.838$) is with the belief that AI helps students produce more accurate translations, which highlights the advantage of using AI for grammar and vocabulary support. Strong correlations ($r = 0.790$) also appear for understanding cultural nuances, learning from mistakes, and receiving immediate feedback, which reveals the role of AI in deep learning. Moderate correlations ($r = 0.645$ – 0.731) are related to student confidence, critical thinking, and independent learning, which suggests increased educational benefits depending on how AI is used. Overall, AI tools are viewed as valuable not only for improving accuracy but also for supporting reflection, autonomy, and critical engagement in translation learning.

G. Reliability of the Research Instrument

In the assessment of the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's α coefficients were calculated for the items associated with each primary axis. As a widely accepted measure of internal consistency, Cronbach's α evaluates the extent to which items within a given scale are interrelated and collectively capture the intended latent construct. The resulting coefficients indicated satisfactory levels of internal consistency across all axes, which affirms the reliability and coherence of the instrument in measuring the targeted dimensions.

TABLE 6
CRONBACH'S α RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS FOR THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AXES

Axis No	Axis Title	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Axis 1	Overall attitudes toward AI in translation teaching	10	$\alpha = 0.83$
Axis 2	Challenges in Implementing AI in Translation Teaching	10	$\alpha = 0.78$
Axis 3	Perceived Effectiveness of AI Tools in Enhancing Students' Translation Skills	10	$\alpha = 0.91$
Overall Instrument		30	0.89

The reliability analysis of the research instrument, as indicated by Cronbach's α coefficients, demonstrated a high level of internal consistency across all three axes. In particular, the values for Axis 1 ($\alpha = 0.83$), Axis 2 ($\alpha = 0.78$), and Axis 3 ($\alpha = 0.91$) suggest good to excellent reliability, and the overall instrument is $\alpha = 0.89$. According to George and Mallery (2003), α values greater than 0.70 are generally considered acceptable, values greater than 0.80 are good, and values greater than 0.90 are excellent. Therefore, these results confirm that the instrument is not only reliable but also suitable for measuring attitudes, challenges, and perceptions regarding the use of AI in translation teaching.

IV. RESULTS

A. Results for Research Question 1

Implementation of AI tools in teaching translation within EFL programs at King Khalid University

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the items in the first section of the survey to investigate how AI tools are integrated into translation teaching within EFL programs at King Khalid University and identify related challenges.

These items focus on educators' perceptions of the benefits of AI in higher education. Responses were recorded via a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Table 7 presents the means and standard deviations for these items and summarizes the attitudes and experiences of participants with AI in translation instruction.

TABLE 7
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ATTITUDES TOWARD AI IN TRANSLATION TEACHING

Item Number	Axis Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Degree of Agreement
1	I trust AI tools to provide accurate translation assistance	4.71	0.57	1	Strongly Agree
2	AI technology enhances my teaching effectiveness	4.51	0.63	7	Strongly Agree
3	Using AI in the classroom increases student engagement	4.52	0.72	6	Strongly Agree
4	I am interested in learning more about AI tools for translation teaching	4.53	0.64	5	Strongly Agree
5	AI tools help reduce the instructors' workload in translation teaching	4.54	0.71	4	Strongly Agree
6	AI tools can motivate students to improve their translation skills	4.56	0.68	3	Strongly Agree
7	I believe AI tools can significantly support translation teaching	4.57	0.73	2	Strongly Agree
8	I feel confident using AI tools to assist students in translation tasks	4.43	0.72	9	Strongly Agree
9	AI tools complement traditional teaching methods effectively	4.36	0.85	10	Strongly Agree
10	The integration of AI in translation teaching aligns with modern educational trends	4.48	0.10	8	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean		4.52	0.0872	Strongly Agree	

Table 7 shows strong positive attitudes toward the use of AI tools in translation teaching, with mean scores between 4.36 and 4.71 on a 5-point scale. Educators expressed high levels of trust in the accuracy of AI ($M = 4.71$) and believed that it supported teaching and motivated students ($M = 4.57$ and 4.56). The relatively lower but still positive scores on items related to traditional methods ($M = 4.36$) and confidence in the use of AI ($M = 4.43$) suggest some need for more training and support. The consensus that AI aligns with modern educational trends was especially strong ($M = 4.48$). Overall, educators recognize the benefits of AI but highlight the importance of continuous professional development for effective integration.

B. Results for Research Question 2

Perceptions and attitudes of faculty toward the use of AI technologies in EFL translation education

Descriptive statistics were computed to examine faculty perceptions and attitudes regarding the use of AI technologies in EFL translation education.

Table 8 presents the means and standard deviations for the survey items measuring these perceptions and attitudes. The participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

TABLE 8
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FACULTY AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARD AI TECHNOLOGIES IN EFL TRANSLATION EDUCATION

Item Number	Axis Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Degree of Agreement
1	There is insufficient institutional support for incorporating AI in teaching	4.40	0.73	9	Strongly Agree
2	The time required to learn and implement AI tools is a barrier	4.39	0.76	10	Strongly Agree
3	Students sometimes rely too heavily on AI tools, reducing their learning effort	4.49	0.77	6	Strongly Agree
4	Lack of sufficient training limits my ability to use AI tools effectively	4.51	0.67	5	Strongly Agree
5	AI tools are not always compatible with the curriculum requirements	4.47	0.80	7	Strongly Agree
6	There is a lack of clear guidelines on how to use AI tools in translation teaching	4.46	0.65	8	Strongly Agree
7	Limited access to AI resources and technology hinders their use in class	4.54	0.74	4	Strongly Agree
8	I find it difficult to select appropriate AI tools for translation teaching	4.81	0.78	1	Strongly Agree
9	I am concerned about the ethical implications of using AI in language teaching	4.57	0.71	2	Strongly Agree
10	Technical problems frequently disrupt the use of AI tools	4.55	0.79	3	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean		4.52	0.74	-	Strongly Agree

Table 8 reveals strong consensus among faculty on the challenges of integrating AI in EFL translation education. Key issues included difficulty in selecting suitable AI tools, ethical concerns, technical problems, lack of training and institutional support, unclear guidelines, curriculum misalignment, student overreliance, and limited resource access. These gaps highlight the urgent need for comprehensive institutional strategies to provide training, clearer policies, better infrastructure, and ethical safeguards for effective AI use.

C. Results for Research Question 3

Role of AI-driven learning systems in supporting the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of Saudi EFL learners

Descriptive statistics were calculated to explore the perceptions of participants on how AI-driven learning systems support the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of Saudi EFL learners. These systems are increasingly acknowledged for their potential benefits; however, their effectiveness depends significantly on the degree to which they are adapted to the local context. Table 9 presents the means and standard deviations for the survey items related to this topic. The participants responded via a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates “strongly disagree” and 5 indicates “strongly agree”.

TABLE 9
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE ROLE OF AI-DRIVEN LEARNING SYSTEMS IN SUPPORTING THE DIVERSE CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC

Item Number	Axis Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Degree of Agreement
1	AI tools improve students' vocabulary and grammar in the target language	4.20	0.70	7	Strong Agreement
2	AI assists students in understanding cultural nuances in translation	4.10	0.71	9	Strong Agreement
3	The use of AI in translation teaching leads to better overall student performance	4.47	0.75	3	Strong Agreement
4	Using AI encourages students to learn from their translation mistakes	4.11	0.60	8	Strong Agreement
5	AI tools can effectively supplement teacher feedback in translation	4.42	0.79	4	Strong Agreement
6	AI tools help students produce more accurate translations	4.39	0.38	5	Strong Agreement
7	AI tools provide useful immediate feedback to students during translation tasks	4.51	0.77	2	Very Strong Agreement
8	AI tools help students develop critical thinking skills related to translation	4.12	0.65	6	Strong Agreement
9	Students show greater confidence in their translation abilities when using AI tools	4.57	0.71	1	Very Strong Agreement
10	AI tools foster independent learning among EFL students	4.10	0.76	10	Strong Agreement
Overall Mean		4.36	0.71	-	Strong Agreement

Saudi EFL learners strongly agree ($M = 4.36$) that AI-driven systems improve translation skills, confidence, and

feedback. The students felt more confident ($M = 4.57$) and perceived better performance ($M = 4.47$). AI is viewed as effective in providing immediate feedback ($M = 4.51$), but slightly lower scores of approximately 4.10 suggest that it is less effective in fostering independent learning and addressing cultural nuances. These findings highlight the need for further development of AI tools to better support learner autonomy and cultural understanding while maintaining their positive impact on language learning outcomes.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer compelling and multifaceted evidence of the strong and growing acceptance of AI technologies in EFL translation teaching at King Khalid University. Faculty members and students alike reported high levels of agreement regarding the perceived usefulness of AI tools in enhancing educational quality, particularly in improving translation accuracy, increasing student engagement, and improving pedagogical efficiency. Notably, the highest-rated item, such as faculty trust in the accuracy of AI-assisted translation ($M = 4.71$), reflects a widespread belief in the reliability and technological maturity of contemporary AI systems. This finding aligns with the work of Kumar et al. (2023), who highlight the rapid advancements in neural MT (NMT) and transformer-based models that enable context-aware, fluent, and highly accurate translations. Furthermore, these findings support the role of using AI as a reliable instructional aid.

The participants also emphasized the role of AI in supporting instructional practices and motivating students to engage more deeply and autonomously with translation tasks. These findings support the findings of Li and Zhao (2022) that AI can personalize instruction, accommodate individual learner needs, and foster autonomous learning when meaningfully integrated into classroom environments. Moreover, the data indicate that AI tools not only enhance the teaching capabilities of educators but also improve the self-efficacy and confidence of students in translation, which supports the findings of Kukulska-Hulme (2020) that AI-enhanced learning environments can reduce learner anxiety and improve outcomes. This dual function, which facilitates teacher effectiveness and motivates student engagement, suggests that AI holds transformative potential for EFL translation pedagogy.

However, despite these benefits, the study also reveals a complex array of pedagogical, institutional, and ethical challenges that must be addressed to ensure the effective and sustainable integration of AI technologies. Key barriers include difficulty in selecting appropriate tools for translation teaching ($M = 4.81$), limited professional training opportunities ($M = 4.51$), insufficient institutional support ($M = 4.40$), and frequent technical disruptions ($M = 4.55$). These challenges echo concerns raised by Luckin et al. (2016), who argue that technological innovation must be underpinned by solid pedagogical frameworks, continuous teacher development, and supportive institutional policies. The data suggest that while enthusiasm for AI is high, the current educational ecosystem may not yet be fully prepared to support its nuanced demands. These findings underscore the need for strategic planning and clear implementation guidelines.

Ethical considerations also emerged as a prominent concern, with high levels of apprehension ($M = 4.57$) about data privacy, algorithmic bias, intellectual property rights, and the integrity of academic work. The participants were worried that overreliance on AI tools might undermine intrinsic motivation, reduce critical thinking, and weaken the cognitive processes essential for language learning. These concerns are consistent with the recommendation of Lin and Wang (2020) that AI should be a scaffold rather than a substitute for active cognitive engagement. In the Saudi EFL context, in which translation is critical for academic, religious, and professional communication, this risk is particularly significant. Effective translation requires more than linguistic accuracy; it demands deep cultural insight and interpretive judgment, areas in which current AI technologies remain limited.

Further insights emerged in response to Research Question 3, which explored the capacity of AI to address the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of Saudi learners. Although the participants generally agreed that AI tools support vocabulary acquisition, grammar development, and overall student performance ($M = 4.36$), they expressed reservations about the ability of AI to foster independent learning ($M = 4.10$), address cultural nuances ($M = 4.10$), and promote reflective learning from translation errors ($M = 4.11$). These findings indicate that while AI is effective for automating certain instructional tasks, its capacity to support deep learning processes, such as metacognition, intercultural competence, and critical reflection, remains constrained. This finding supports critiques by Yuan and Gao (2023), who call for the development of more culturally responsive and pedagogically sophisticated AI systems.

Importantly, while AI is widely viewed as a transformative force in global education, its local implementation must be carefully contextualized within the unique educational, cultural, and linguistic landscape of Saudi Arabia. The adoption of AI in EFL translation education aligns with the national objectives outlined in Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasize digital transformation and educational modernization. However, realizing these ambitions requires that AI initiatives align with local values, address the specific needs of learners, and ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to integrate these tools effectively. Despite strong enthusiasm, many educators report feeling underprepared to use AI without more robust institutional support. This trend highlights the urgent need for targeted professional development programs that address technical proficiency and pedagogical integration.

Additionally, the success of AI adoption in this context will depend on sustained investment in technological infrastructure, the creation of clear institutional policies, and the development of culturally adaptive AI applications. These tools must extend beyond linguistic translation to support interpretive, intercultural, and critical thinking skills.

Ultimately, while AI technologies offer tremendous promise for revolutionizing EFL translation instruction, their ethical and effective implementation requires a balanced approach—one that combines technological innovation with pedagogical integrity, cultural sensitivity, and systemic support.

If these foundational concerns are unaddressed, then AI integration may exacerbate existing educational inequities rather than alleviate them. This study contributes to a growing body of scholarship advocating for a critically informed, contextually grounded, and human-centered approach to AI in language education—one that empowers educators and learners while preserving the complexity and richness of effective translation and teaching practices.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study offers comprehensive insights into the integration of AI technologies into EFL translation education at King Khalid University. The results reveal predominantly positive attitudes among faculty and students regarding the use of AI tools, which highlights the potential of this tool to increase translation accuracy, student engagement, and teaching effectiveness. The participants expressed strong trust in the reliability of AI-assisted translation, which is consistent with the findings of Kumar et al. (2023), who documented improvements in NMT models. Moreover, the motivational and engagement benefits align with the findings of Li and Zhao (2022), who investigated the ability of AI to personalize learning and foster autonomy. However, significant challenges, including technical difficulties, insufficient institutional support, and a lack of adequate training, constrain the effective adoption of AI in language education (Luckin et al., 2016; Pérez & Salazar, 2021). Ethical concerns about the overreliance of students on AI and its potential impact on learner autonomy also emerged as notable issues, which supports the recommendation of Lin and Wang (2020) about critical engagement with AI in education. Additionally, the limited capacity of current AI tools to address cultural nuances and promote metacognitive skills aligns with critiques by Lin and Wang (2020). This aspect emphasizes the need for culturally adaptive and pedagogically intelligent AI systems. Overall, the findings underscore that while AI offers promising enhancements to EFL translation instruction, its sustainable integration requires a balanced approach that incorporates technological innovation alongside pedagogical, ethical, and institutional considerations.

A. Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve AI integration in EFL translation education:

1. Professional development: Institutions should provide continuous and targeted professional development programs that address technical proficiency, pedagogical applications, and ethical considerations in AI use (Luckin et al., 2016; Pérez & Salazar, 2021).
2. Institutional support and infrastructure: Universities must invest in technological infrastructure and develop clear, strategic policies and guidelines to support the effective and responsible integration of AI tools in teaching (Pérez & Salazar, 2021).
3. Curriculum alignment: AI applications should be aligned with curricular goals to ensure that they support linguistic competence and intercultural understanding. This aspect reinforces the complex demands of translation education.
4. Ethical frameworks: Clear institutional policies on data privacy, intellectual property, and responsible AI usage should be established to guide educators and students in ethical practices.
5. Development of culturally responsive AI: Collaboration among educators, AI developers, and cultural experts is critical for creating AI systems that address the linguistic and cultural diversity of Saudi EFL learners and promote higher-order thinking skills (Lin & Wang, 2020).

B. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study provide avenues for future research. First, the study's focus on King Khalid University limits the generalizability of the findings; future research should encompass multiple institutions across Saudi Arabia and other regions for broader insights. Second, the reliance on quantitative survey data limits the depth of understanding regarding user experiences with AI tools. Qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could enrich the comprehension of pedagogical and affective factors influencing AI adoption (Li & Zhao, 2022). Third, given the rapid evolution of AI technologies, longitudinal studies are necessary to track changing perceptions, technological improvements, and implementation strategies over time (Kumar et al., 2023). Fourth, the study did not differentiate between specific AI tools or platforms; future work should evaluate individual applications to determine their comparative effectiveness in translation education (Luckin et al., 2016). Finally, empirical studies measuring the direct impact of AI tools on student translation quality and language proficiency are needed to validate perceptions and inform pedagogical decisions (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020).

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Socio-Political Criticism in Indonesian Stand-Up Comedy Discourse

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Abstract—Political issues are intimately connected to society, allowing anyone to provide an evaluation on them. Nonetheless, socio-political critique is a challenging endeavor. The public should exercise caution in this regard owing to possible legal ramifications. Consequently, humor may be employed to express comparatively secure socio-political critique. Comedians often engage in socio-political commentary, either as a joke or as a serious point. This study aims to elucidate the various forms of socio-political critique and the frameworks of premise construction in the socio-political commentary found in Indonesian stand-up comedy (SUCI) discourse. This research aims to analyze the socio-political critique of the SUCI discourse. The data for this study comprises the talk from the SUCI special show. The data source is the transcription of the SUCI special show recording, which was acquired through the use of the unstructured dialogue technique and examined using a critical discourse analysis framework. The findings of this study reveal that socio-political criticism encompasses social critiques directed at political figures, events, behaviors, policies, and terminology within the realm of politics. The foundations of social criticism are elucidated through the methods of omission, amalgamation, and fabrication. The nature of socio-political criticism does not specifically influence the technique of uncovering premises. Nevertheless, all premises are disclosed primarily by omission. The premeditated preparation of the SUCI material, as opposed to its spontaneous creation on stage, accounts for the prevalence of the deletion approach utilized. Researchers advocate for additional investigation into the quality of argumentation in socio-political criticism within the SUCI discourse.

Index Terms—humor discourse, Indonesian stand-up comedy, premises, socio-political criticism

I. INTRODUCTION

Political topics are compelling subjects for discussion due to their proximity to the populace, allowing for widespread expression of opinions. Nonetheless, socio-political critique is a challenging endeavor. The public should exercise caution on this matter due to the possibility of legal complications. Consequently, humor is frequently employed as a vehicle for socio-political critique. One example is Indonesian stand-up comedy (Isnawan, 2024). Comedians often incorporate socio-political critique into their stand-up routines, either as punchlines or foundational concepts. This study aims to elucidate the various forms of socio-political critique and the frameworks of premise construction in socio-political commentary within the context of Indonesian stand-up comedy.

Humor remains a television program that is still appreciated in Indonesia today. Historically, Indonesians were exposed to humor through television programs such as Warung Kopi Dono Kasino Indro (Warkop DKI), Srimulat, Ketoprak Humor, Ekstravaganza, and Opera van Java. Society derives enjoyment from comedic events, which simultaneously reflect and address social realities (Rahmanadji, 2007). A primary function of hilarious discourse is to act as a vehicle for expressing evaluation or critique. Social criticism frequently manifests in the stand-up comedy genre (Adekunle, 2022; Leonardo & Junaidi, 2020; Pratama et al., 2023; Saptaningsih & Sari, 2015). Comedians, the practitioners of stand-up comedy, articulate their concerns from their unique perspectives, encompassing both personal and societal issues. These concerns constitute societal criticism, encompassing a diverse array of themes, including economic challenges, familial dynamics, religion, education, and politics.

Many academics have already performed research on humor as a vehicle for social criticism. An Egyptian comedian named Salem effectively critiques the regime through humor (Tzoreff & Weisblatt, 2021). Keawsuwan and Ma (2025)

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also identified four thematic categories of social criticism within the Chinese satirical humor discourse titled *Rock and Roast*: (1) social injustice and gender bias, (2) satire targeting men, (3) critique of workplace phenomena, and (4) criticism of social behaviors and trends. This study demonstrates that language plays a crucial role in the formulation of incisive political satire.

Humorous speech reflects socio-political criticism in diverse forms, including memes, political cartoons, and stand-up comedy (Prendergast, 2019). Socio-political critique is also manifested in literary forms, including novels infused with comic undertones. India's poverty and suffering, along with its religious, social, and political problems, are depicted through humor and sarcasm. This societal antagonism is examined thoroughly for its social and political significance within the narrative (Chopra, 2010). Socio-political criticism may manifest through direct personal critiques of political figures, as shown by the criticism of Vladimir Putin (Dyner, 2022). Socio-political criticism is directed at governmental institutions, such as the police (Wieslander, 2021). Comedic discourses, by integrating criticism with humor, avoid the unavoidable censoring associated with serious critique and serve as intermediaries in socio-political communication (Falaki, 2022).

Indonesian stand-up comedy (SUCI) is a comedic form characterized by a single performer on stage, sometimes known as solo comedy. SUCI employs comedic content that includes a setup and a punchline (Papana, 2016; Pragiwaksono, 2012). Historically, individuals became familiar with slapstick humor that depended on stage design, makeup, and costumes; nevertheless, language emerged as a significant source of humor through SUCI. The comedian skillfully constructed the setting, addressing a specific subject using a narrative framework. At the midpoint or conclusion of the narrative, the comic presents an unexpected twist or punchline that causes laughter. The comedian presents their viewpoint on an issue, regardless of whether it is agreed with or disagreed with, endorsed or repudiated. SUCI continues to utilize components of hilarious discourse, including incongruity, deviation, and release, to formulate premises that consist of a setup and a punchline (Berger, 1998; Raskin, 1985).

Socio-political criticism pertains to bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is a logically structured hierarchical organization designed to coordinate individuals' efforts in executing administrative functions (Soekanto, 2002). Bureaucracy can obstruct governmental operations if it strays from its objectives. Bureaucracy is an organizational system that governs the administration and management of society, and it must adhere to established foundations and principles to function effectively and efficiently. In the context of politics, discussions about political figures, policies, events, and their terminology are crucial because they reflect the dynamics of power, decision-making, and their impact on society.

The fears articulated in SUCI are examined from an individual standpoint. Despite being presented personally, the concerns raised by the comedians reflect societal issues. Consequently, it is frequently asserted that SUCI collectively revels in adversity. Humor in SUCI functions to alleviate emotions (Attardo, 1994; Martin, 2007; Wijana, 2004). This study is focused on clarifying the varieties of socio-political critique and the frameworks of premise construction within Indonesian stand-up comedy discourse.

II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative methodology. The focus of the research is the socio-political analysis of SUCI discourse. The research data include the SUCI special show discourse, which includes socio-political critique. The data source is the transcription of the SUCI special show recording. Three titles from the SUCI discourse were chosen: "Ayah Ikhlas Volume 2 (AIVD) 'Volume 2 of Father's Sincerity'" by David Nurbianto, "Pahlawan Perlu Tanda Jasa (PPTJ) 'Heroes Require Medals'" by Abdurrahim Arsyad, and "2024: Dekat dengan Rakyat (DDDR) '2024: Accessibility to the Public'" by David Nurbianto. Data collection employs the non-participant observation method, wherein the researcher observes the data without engaging in the specific event (Sudaryanto, 2015). The study of data was performed utilizing a critical discourse analysis methodology (Van Dijk, 1993). The data will be examined via the lenses of text, social cognition, and social analysis. The analysis at the textual level will encompass macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. This comprehensive analysis is essential for discerning the sorts of socio-political criticism and the structure of premise construction within the SUCI discourse. The researcher undertook the process of condensing material that encompassed socio-political criticism, thereafter identifying the categories of such criticism by analyzing the text's theme (macrostructure), organization (superstructure), and diction (microstructure). Subsequently, the researchers identified the trends of premise development through deletion, generalization, or construction (Renkema & Schubert, 2018). Subsequently, the categories of social critique and patterns of premise creation were interconnected by analyzing the comedian's social cognition and social analysis throughout the delivery of the text.

III. RESEARCH RESULT

Socio-political humor is one of the most prevalent genres of comedy. Political subjects are undeniably captivating. Comedians frequently employ analogies to mock the socio-political aspects of bureaucracy in Indonesia. The socio-political critique of the SUCI discourse divides along political dimensions. Researchers identified five categories of socio-political criticism within the 29 discourses data from SUCI that encompassed social criticism: criticism directed at political actors (A) 12 instances, criticism of political events (B) 6 instances, criticism of politicians' behavior (C) 4 instances, criticism of political policies (D) 4 instances, and criticism about terminology in the political domain (E) 3

instances. Furthermore, the researchers discovered that the process of premise construction in socio-political criticism is mainly characterized by deletion. The premise formation pattern has three methods: deletion (1) with 22 data points, generalization (2) with 2 data points, and construction (3) with 5 data points.

TABLE 1
TYPES AND PATTERNS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CRITICISM IN SUCI DISCOURSE

No.	Data Credit	Categories of Socio-Political Critique					Patterns of Premise Formation			Source of Data
		A	B	C	D	E	1	2	3	
1	... Saya pikir-pikir beruntung juga ya Pak Jokowi tidak hidup di zaman itu ya... ... I told myself, "It is also a good thing Mr. Jokowi did not live during that time," ...	✓					✓			PPTJ-06
2	... Kita tidak mungkin kagum kalau yang mata genit itu Moeldoko.... ... It doesn't make us happy if the one with the flirty eyes is Moeldoko...	✓					✓			PPTJ-07
3	DPR kemarin ada wacana mau ganti gorden. ... Yesterday, there was talk in the DPR about replacing the curtains. ...	✓					✓			AIVD-15
4	... Pak Iwan Bule gitu ya. Lo ngomongin soal PSSI. Mr. Iwan Bule, right? I hear you talking about PSSI. ...	✓						✓		AIVD-20
5	... Baru mulai udah dibungkam Just starting and already silenced...		✓				✓			DDDR-01
6	... Otoriter bini gua nih. Soeharto die.... ... This is my bossy steed. He was Soeharto. ...	✓					✓			DDDR-02
7	... Sandang pangan papan backing-an.... ... Clothing, food, shelter, support ...			✓					✓	DDDR-03
8	... Santai enggak kena Bawaslu, santai. Yang bener aja luput. Do not worry, Bawaslu will not catch you. People miss the real thing ...		✓						✓	DDDR-04
9	... Jangan kata materi stand-up, konstitusi aja bisa diubah. Even legislation can be changed, so avoid setting up a stand-up comedy act. ...				✓		✓			DDDR-05
10	... Kita sudah tahu capresnya siapa, tiga orang itu, tapi belum tahu programnya apa. We already know that those three people are running for president, but we do not know what their plans are yet. ...	✓							✓	DDDR-06
11	... Hal yang lebih krusial, ingetin sejarah. Jangan lupa sejarah, Bro Sis. 98 ada apa hayo? Even more importantly, do not forget past. Bro Sis, do not forget the past. What did happen in 1998? ...		✓				✓			DDDR-07
12	... Rule of three kalah kalah, ah minta tolong Jokowi lah. Rule of three, lose-lose, ah, I need Jokowi's help. ...	✓							✓	DDDR-08
13	... Sekarang kita kritik keras labelnya apa, kadrun? Ditambahin angka enggak nolong. Apa itu kadrun 98? Now we are going to criticize what the label is, Kadrun, harshly? Adding numbers does not help. What is a 'kadrun 98'? ...			✓			✓			DDDR-10
14	... Bingung kan lu kenapa KPK ada alumninya?... ... Are you still not sure why the KPK has former members? ...		✓				✓			DDDR-11
15	... Waktu kampanye dulu dia pernah menjanjikan jutaan lapangan pekerjaan. Buat siapa? During the campaign, he once promised millions of jobs. Who is this for? ...	✓					✓			DDDR-13
16	... Parade alutsista itu mondar-mandir tuh mobil rudal, amfibi, tank tiba tiba nyelip satu. Gue baca ada namanya music military mobile, disingkat M3. ... There were missile carriers, amphibious vehicles, and tanks going back and forth in the military equipment show. Suddenly, one of the tanks got away. I read that there is something called M3, which stands for "Mobile Military Music."	✓					✓			DDDR-16
17	... Gue sebel banget sama pencitraan-pencitraane yang dilakukan sama ketumnya. Erick. Kantona. ... I am really annoyed by the image-building that their chairman is doing. Erick. Kantona.	✓					✓			DDDR-17
18	Kayak Argentina datang ke Indonesia. Gue ikut senang. Tapi enggak ikut nonton. ... Like Argentina coming to Indonesia, I am happy for you. However, I did not watch.		✓				✓			DDDR-18
19	Dan yang gua lebih sebel lagi tragedi Kanjuruhan. Enggak ada progress. Moreover, what I am even more upset about is the Kanjuruhan tragedy. There is no progress.		✓						✓	DDDR-19
20	... Setelah tragedi itu ada berita anggota DPR RI berkunjung ke sana. After the tragedy, there was news that members of the Indonesian House of Representatives visited there. ...	✓					✓			DDDR-20
21	Penegakan hukum kita tuh kenapa gue takut kayak gini kayak gini nih ngomong karena hukum kita tuh ya tahu sendiri bisa dibeli. Tebang pilih. ...					✓	✓			DDDR-21

	Why do I worry so much about our police? When I speak like this, it is because our law allows it to be bought. Logging with choices.									
22	... Kementerian Pendidikan, PPDB zonasi. Ada yang tahu itu? Beritanya banyak di komplain karena ternyata tidak cukup kursi, ... Ministry of Education, using the zoning method to let new students in. Does anyone know that? Many people are upset about the news because there were not enough places, ...				✓		✓			DDDR-22
23	... Berita-berita yang muncul bikin geregetan tahu. Ada berita anggaran stunting yang miliaran rupiah itu kepakenya buat jalan-jalan. The news that came out was so frustrating to know. There's news about the stunting budget of billions of rupiah being used for travel. ...					✓	✓			DDDR-23
24	... Beralih ke mobil listrik Cuma dia nyuruh doang. Enggak kasih solusi. Switching to an electric car was just something he told me to do. Does not offer a solution. ...				✓		✓			DDDR-24
25	Kebijakan PSN proyek strategis nasional juga sering bikin kita garuk-garuk pala gitu. ... National strategic project policies also often make us scratch our heads. ...				✓		✓			DDDR-25
26	Kebijakan bikin kita kesal. Statement juga sering banget bikin kita kesal. ... Policies make us angry. Statements also often make us angry. ...					✓	✓			DDDR-26
27	... Udah sih nggak usah dibahas politik identitas itu. Yeah, let us not talk about identity politics anymore. ...					✓	✓			DDDR-28
28	Terus lagi rame juga politik dinasti. Jadi, polemik juga tuh sampai ada kader partai yang kepleset tuh. ... And then dynastic politics is also becoming popular again. So, there was also a controversy to the point where a party member slipped. ...			✓			✓			DDDR-29
29	... Caleg artis, juga jangan cuma sekedar milih karena dia terkenal ya. Hati-hati. Celebrity candidates should not be voted for solely because they are famous. Be careful. ...	✓						✓		DDDR-30
Total		12	6	3	4	4	22	2	5	

Social critique of political entities is categorized as individual politicians and institutions. The research reveals eight points that specifically dismiss politicians as individuals and four that critique political institutions. Examine the subsequent data extract.

- (1) *Saya pikir-pikir beruntung juga ya Pak Jokowi tidak hidup di zaman itu ya. Tidak perlu susah-susah kumpulkan seluruh kepala desa dalam stadion. ... (PPTJ-06)*

I thot to myself, it is also lucky that Mr. Jokowi did not live in that era. He would not have had to go through the trouble of gathering all the village heads in a stadium. ... (PPTJ-06)

- (2) *Ini bukti autentik tuh gue beneran ragu loh untuk tajem gitu gue ragu. Pak Iwan Bule gitu ya. Lo ngomongin soal PSSI. Ketuanya Iwan Bule di-roasting sama Bintang. Direspons aja cuman diajak ngopi. (AIVD-20)*

This is authentic proof. I really hesitated to be so sharp. I hesitated. Mr. Iwan Bule, right? You are talking about PSSI. The chairman, Iwan Bule, got roasted by Bintang. Just respond if you are invited for coffee. (AIVD-20)

Data (1) and (2) directly reference the identities of political figures, specifically former Indonesian President Joko Widodo and the General Chairman of the Indonesian Football Association, Iwan Bule. The discourse structure commences with the identification of a political figure, followed by a critique of their activities. Data (1) explicitly references Jokowi and critiques his efforts in convening village heads, purportedly to bolster his aspiration for a third presidential term. Data (2) references Iwan Bule and condemns his decision to invite comedian Bintang Emon, who has satirized him in his comedic material, for coffee.

- (3) *DPR. Kemarin ada wacana mau ganti gorden. Miliaran rupiah. 40 sekian miliar. Kalau gak salah. Itu kalau dibagi per rumah tuh jatahnya 90 juta perumah. 90 juta per rumah. Per rumah 90 juta untuk gorden doang. ... (AIVD-15)*

DPR. Yesterday there was talk of replacing the curtains. Billions of rupiah. 40-something billion. If I'm not mistaken. That's if you divide it per house, it's 90 million per house. 90 million per house. 90 million per house just for curtains. (AIVD-15)

- (4) *Gue nulis materi awal tahun 2023. Sampai tengah tahun. Pada saat itu gue belum bisa bahas banyak soal politik. Kita sudah tahu capresnya siapa, tiga orang itu, tapi belum tahu programnya apa. (DDDR-06)*

I wrote the material at the beginning of 2023. Until the middle of the year. At that time, I was unable to discuss politics extensively. We already know who the presidential candidates are, those three individuals, but we do not yet know what their programs are. (DDDR-06)

Data (3) and (4) represent socio-political critiques of political entities, specifically governmental institutions. Data (3) indicates that the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat 'House of Representatives' is planning a budget of 40 billion for the official residence curtain replacement program, but data (4) explicitly refers to the presidential candidate who has yet to elucidate their work program. The discourse structure of social criticism in data (3) and (4) is largely analogous, consisting of a reference to a governmental aspect followed by a critique of the acts undertaken.

- (5) ... *Ngopi aja udah diingetin capres, tolol ya. maksud gue kapasitas beliau kan capres ingetin yang lebih gede. Hal yang lebih krusial, ingetin sejarah. Jangan lupa sejarah, Bro Sis. 98 ada apa hayo?* (DDDR-07)

... Even drinking coffee is being reminded by the presidential candidate: 'You are so stupid.' What I mean is, his capacity as a presidential candidate reminds us of something bigger. Something more crucial, it reminds us of history. Do not forget history, Brother or Sister. What happened in '98? (DDDR-07)

Data (5) serves as a socio-political analysis of the political events surrounding the 1998 Tragedy. The 1998 Tragedy was a widespread unrest and bloodshed that transpired in Indonesia. Reports indicate that one of the presidential contenders is implicated, prompting societal criticism that directly addresses political events and mocks particular individuals.

- (6) *Terus lagi rame juga politik dinasti. Jadi, polemik juga tuh sampai ada kader partai yang kepleset tuh. Ya, bilang dinasti mah di Jogja tuh katanya. Set seet, Banten kelewat. Jauh banget ke, Jawa Tengah.* (DDDR-29)

And then dynastic politics is also becoming popular again. So, there was also a controversy to the point where a party member slipped. Yes, they say there is a dynasty in Jogja. Set sail, Banten is past. It is quite a distance from Central Java. ... (DDDR-29)

Data (6) offers a socio-political critique of the terminology inside the political domain. The approach of exposing the discourse of social criticism involves citing political terminology accompanied by social critique. The dynastic politics mentioned pertain to the nomination of the president's relatives to governmental roles. This is prohibited in a democratic nation. The dynastic system is employed in monarchies. Dynastic politics is deemed inequitable in a democratic nation. Nonetheless, this methodology for appointing government officials persists, resulting in its classification as a collusive practice.

- (7) *Kementerian Pendidikan, PPDB zonasi. Ada yang tahu itu? Beritanya banyak dikomplain karena ternyata tidak cukup kursi, banyak orang yang enggak bisa sekolah gara-gara kebijakan ini. ...* (DDDR-22)

Ministry of Education, new student admissions based on zoning. Does anyone know that? The news is widely criticized because there are not enough seats, and many people are unable to attend school due to this policy. ... (DDDR-22)

- (8) *Kebijakan bikin kita kesal. Statement juga sering banget bikin kita kesal. Seringkan pejabat kita blunder sering banget kalau ngomong enteng banget rahang lu. Ya kan. Ibu Mega tuh sering bikin kesal tuh. Statement-nya tuh ya kan? Saya bingung nih ibu-ibu nih, kok senang banget menggoreng. Lah, namanya juga ibu-ibu. Kalau penari itu meronggeng gua kira udah, ada lagi, lah ibu ibu mah saya bingung banget, senang banget pengajian. Lah, namanya juga ibu-ibu kalau leasing pengajuan.* (DDDR-26)

Policies make us angry. Statements can also often annoy us. Our officials often make blunders, and you are always so quick to speak. Right? Mrs. Mega really gets on my nerves. Is the statement right? I am confused about these women. Why are they so happy to fry things? Well, they are mothers, after all. If the dancer is doing the ronggeng, I think it is done. There are more, but I am so confused about the mothers. They are so happy at the religious gathering. What do you expect from mothers when it comes to applying for a lease? (DDDR-26)

Data (7) shows social critique of political policies. The policy under consideration is a new student admission system based on zoning, whereby prospective students apply to schools located in their nearest residential zone. This imbalance is not mitigated by comprehensive program planning, resulting in numerous schools in residential areas being unable to enroll all potential pupils. Conversely, in certain regions, there exists an excess of schools, resulting in a deficiency of pupils. Data (8) serves as a societal critique of the conduct of politicians. The criticized conduct pertains to a mode of communication that frequently results in significant and embarrassing errors due to ignorance, carelessness, or negligence. The comedian's remark addressed a quotation from a speech by Megawati Soekarno Putri, the former president of Indonesia and head of a prominent political party, who asserted that mothers frequently attend religious events, resulting in diminished care for their children. This assertion is deemed a misstep as religious studies constitute a religious endeavor in Indonesia, rendering the tale unsuitable for a public official to present in a public forum.

IV. DISCUSSION

Critique of political figures constitutes the predominant form of social and political critique. Criticism aimed at politicians as individuals is more common than criticism of institutions. This technique highlights that the public tends to emphasize the political aspect of the individual more prominently. Comedians in social criticism frequently explicitly reference the names of the politicians they target. Subsequently, an evaluation of their acts was conducted, which was considered incongruent with the appropriate bureaucratic protocol.

Discourse analysis examines both the text's structure and its production process. Van Dijk (1994) Designates this area as social cognition, about the speaker's cognitive awareness in text formation. The comedian's cognitive acuity in crafting societal critique incorporates a narrative with diverse frameworks. The schema indicates that we employ cognitive frameworks to pick and process information from the world. Schemas delineate the manner in which an individual utilizes knowledge retained in memory and how they assimilate it with novel information. Role schemas are established in humorous cognition to evaluate the behaviors of politicians. Comedians consistently link a politician to

their function inside the bureaucratic framework in Indonesia. Comedians employ narrative structures within the SUCI text to convey social criticism chronologically as part of their storytelling. In data (7) and (8), the comedian articulates social criticism through a narrative that commences with an introduction to the subject matter, specifically the new student admission system in schools, followed by the experiences of the comedian's friend impacted by the policy, and subsequently the comedian's perspective on the policy (data 7). The comedian articulates criticism sequentially rather than abruptly; they initially present their concern regarding the frequent errors made by officials, subsequently provide examples, and conclude with their reaction to the situation, which reflects confusion over the officials' communication patterns (data 8).

The process of premise construction in socio-political critical discourse is unaffected by the nature of socio-political critique. Specific forms of social criticism are not constructed according to a distinct pattern of premise development. The research findings indicate that the predominant method of premise building in the SUCI socio-political critique discourse is achieved through the technique of deletion. The predominant deletion strategy is identified as the SUCI content is documented before its instant execution on stage. The process of organizing the content commences with articulating the concept, subsequently evolving it into a setup and punchline in accordance with the framework of stand-up comedy discourse. Once the material is prepared, comedians typically rehearse their open-mic performances on stage, often in cafes. Furthermore, comedians typically participate in comedy buddy sessions, when they swap punchlines and critique each other's performances. Kindly observe the subsequent data.

- (9) *Kayak Argentina datang ke Indonesia (1). Gue ikut senang. Tapi enggak ikut nonton (2). Karena tiketnya mahal. Tiketnya mahal (3). VIP aja 4.250.000, benar? (4) 4.250.000 tiket VP nonton Argentina UMR Jakarta 4.900.00 lu tambah 6 setengah punya karyawan lu (5). Satu. Sebulan gaji pecat. Segitu mahal harganya (6). Gue enggak sanggup beli dan itu seakan-akan berkat saya nih (7). Lah, kalau berkat saya mah gratisin, lha itu kan ada duitnya tiket nonton ya (8). Enggak berkat siapa, berkat yang bayar tiket tuh (9). Udah gitu ya 4.250.000 enggak make sense buat beberapa orang (10). 4.250.000 gue kasih tahu kalau lu bawa ke sepak bola tarkam, lu enggak jadi penonton (11). Lu jadi donator (12). Datang disambut komentator loh (13). Duduk sebelahnya (14). Berasa Bung Toel lu (15). Bahkan lu bisa request siapa pemain yang kartu merah (16). Nomor 3 enggak asik tuh. Emang nomor 3 enggak asik pak? Komentator aja sering dibilang MC (17). Kalau Nomor 2, nomor 2. Aduh nomor 2 mah jangan disenggol, Pak. Deket ama wasit (18). Strikernya anak yang punya lapangan. Aduh Pak, jangan, jangan diotak-atik (19). Kalau nomor satu wah udah magrib nih (20). Boleh minta tepuk tangannya, saya izin minum dulu (21). ... Iya 4.250.000 menurut gue kemahalan apalagi itu cuma nonton enggak dapat experience tambahan (22). Kalo konser tiket mahal, pasti ada experience tambahan nih enggak meet and greet apa ini (23). 4.250.000 nonton doang padahal ada undangan yang gratis itu pejabat-pejabat boleh masuk ruang ganti (24). Dongkol enggak lu (25). (DDDR-18)*

Like Argentina coming to Indonesia (1), I am happy for you. However, I did not go watch (2). Because the tickets are expensive. The tickets are expensive (3). VIP is 4,250,000. (4) 4,250,000 VP tickets to watch Argentina, UMR Jakarta is 4,900,000, plus 6.5% for your employees (5). One. Get paid for a month and get fired. Is it that expensive (6)? I cannot afford to buy it, and it feels like this is my blessing (7). Oh, if it were up to me, I would give it away for free, but that is because there is money for the movie tickets, right (8)? It is not because of anyone; it is because of the one who paid for the tickets (9). Moreover, to some people, 4,250,000 does not make sense (10). I am telling you, if you take 4,250,000 to a local football match, you will not be a spectator (11). You become a donor (12). They were greeted by the commentator (13). Sit next to him (14). You feel like Bung Toel (15). You can even request which player gets a red card (16). Number 3 is not incredible. Is number 3 not fun, sir? Even the commentator is often referred to as the MC (17). If it is number 2, it is number 2. Oh, do not touch number 2, sir. He is close to the referee (18). The striker is the child who owns the field. Oh, sir, please do not, do not mess with it (19). If it is number one, it is already Maghrib (20). Could I please have a round of applause? I will be excused for a drink first (21).

... Yes, 4,250,000 is too expensive in my opinion, especially since it is just for watching and does not offer any additional experience (22). If concert tickets are expensive, there must be some added value, such as a meet-and-greet or something similar (23). 4,250,000 views, despite free invitations for officials to enter the locker room (24). Aren't you annoyed? (25) (DDDR-18)

Data 9 is a conclusion derived through the elimination method. The fundamental assertions are propositions 1-3 (1) *Kayak Argentina datang ke Indonesia*. 'Such as Argentina visiting Indonesia.' (2) *Gue ikut senang. Tapi enggak ikut nonton*. 'I am happy for you. I did not watch, though.' (3) *Karena tiketnya mahal. Tiketnya mahal*. 'Because of the high cost of the tickets. The cost of the tickets is high.' The deleted propositions include explanations (4-5), comparative propositions (6-7), conditional propositions (8), explanations (9-10), conditional propositions (11-21), and explanations (22-25). The explanatory propositions are substantiated by evidence indicating that ticket costs reached 4,500,000, nearly comparable to the minimum wage in Jakarta (4-5), and are further characterized by the rationale that this price is exorbitant for specific individuals (9-10). The unreasonableness stems from the elevated ticket price, which excludes supplementary amenities, such as a meet-and-greet, alongside the critique of political figures who, despite not purchasing tickets, were granted complimentary entry to the dressing room (22-25). This formation pattern is employed

in the majority of social and political critique data. The omitted assertions may include discourse openers, explanations, comparisons, and assumptions. The predominant structure in data (9) consists of the principal proposition (premise), the explanatory proposition (reason), followed by comparison and hypothetical assertions, which are typically humorous. The theory of possible worlds is established through comparison and contrast in these two statements to elicit laughter. The spectators at the Argentina vs. Indonesia match are compared to a benefactor who can dictate the outcome of an inter-village football game (11-21).

The methodology of combination and construction in formulating social criticism premises has been identified as effective in consolidating several significant propositions into a singular premise. The merger pattern involves substituting the verbs of significant propositions with more indicative verbs. In contrast, the construction pattern allows for the generation of a comprehensive meaning from the information contained within the key premises. Examine the subsequent facts.

- (10) *Ini bukti autentik tuh gue beneran ragu loh untuk tajem gitu gue ragu (1). Pak Iwan Bule gitu ya (2). Lo ngomongin soal PSSI (3). Ketuanya Iwan Bule di-roasting sama Bintang (4). Direspons aja cuman diajak ngopi (5). Kita, mulut kita ampe berbusa (6). Kritik-kritik PSSI (7). Masih begitu-begitu aja (8). Ya Allah bikin apa? (9). Bikin spanduk, bikin baliho (10). Apa sih bola mah bikin bagus udah (11). Kita seneng gitu (12). Di sini banyak pecinta bola kan (13). Kita mah seneng. Kita kalo timnas kita jago juga (14). Lo mau apa? (15) Mau korupsi juga kaga kita waro (16). Iya kan (17). Orang timnas lagi jago (18). Happy kita (19). Ada mafia minyak, ada apa? (20) Timnas lolos piala dunia aja (21). Lo mau korupsi apa kek? (22) Monas lo pindahin, kita kagak ngeh (23). Itu kita mah gampang bikin (24). Bahagia orang Indonesia mah gampang (25). Bola (26). Lo benerin (27). Bola dimainkan-mainin (28). Pak Iwan Bule demen banget emang yang namanya naturalisasi (29). Apa mentang-mentang namanya ada bulenya? (30) (AIVD-20)*

This is authentic proof. I really hesitated; I hesitated to be so sharp (1). Mr. Iwan Bule, right? (2). You are talking about PSSI (3). The chairman, Iwan Bule, was roasted by Bintang (4). He just responded when I asked him to have coffee (5). Our mouths are foaming (6). Criticisms of PSSI (7). Still the same (8). Oh God, what are you doing? (9). Make banners, make billboards (10). What is the point of making the ball look good already (11)? We are happy like that (12). There are many football fans here, right? (13). We are happy. If our national team is also good, we will be (14). What do you want? (15) We do not care if they want to corrupt either (16). Right? (17). The national team players are doing well (18). We are happy (19). There is an oil mafia. What is going on? (20) The national team only qualified for the World Cup (21). What do you want to corrupt? (22) You moved Monas, we did not notice (23). It is easy for us to make (24). It is easy for Indonesians to be happy (25). Bola (26). You fix it (27). The ball is being played around (28). Mr. Iwan Bule is particularly fond of naturalization (29). Just because they have some foreign blood in them, does that mean they are better? (30) (AIVD-20)

- (11) *Gue juga ngerti sih ngomong politik tuh nggak cuma bisa apa ya? (1) Istilahnya punya bisa nguasain materi punya nyali (2). Kita juga harus punya teman dekat yang punya power gitu (3). Karena kebutuhan manusia makin ke sini tuh makin nambah tahu, dulu kita cuma butuh sandang pangan papan sekarang nambah satu (4). Sandang pangan papan backing-an (5). Nah, gue belum nemu sampai sekarang (6). Backing-an gue cuma Allah (7). Sama lu semua yang datang (8). Kalau gue dipanggil kan lu jadi saksi (9). Jadi tolong lah ya. People power lah (10). Segini aja yang di ruangan ini nih bantu saya lah kalau kenapa-napa ya? (11) (DDDR-03)*

I also understand that talking about politics is not just about what, you know? (1) The term means having the ability to master the material and having courage (2). We also need to have close friends who have power (3). Because human needs increase over time, we learn more and more. Previously, we only needed food, clothing, and shelter, but now there is one more (4). Clothing, food, and shelter are supported (5). Well, I have not found that yet (6). My only support is Allah (7). Thank you all for coming (8). If I am called, you will be a witness (9). So please. People power! (10) Is this all that's in this room? Please help me if anything happens, okay? (11) (DDDR-03)

Data (10) showed three significant propositions: (1) Comedian Bintang Emon received an invitation for coffee from Iwan Bule following his satirical remarks regarding the Indonesian football federation. (2) Common individuals who critique the Indonesian football federation are consistently disregarded. (3) The Indonesian populace would experience joy if the national squad achieves victory. The propositions contain the verbs *me-roasting* 'roastin', *mengkritik* 'criticizing', and *senang* 'enjoying'. The three verbs can be substituted with *caring deeply*, allowing the statements to be generalized as "Indonesian society cares deeply about national football".

From the eleven statements in the data, four significant propositions were identified. Comedians must possess the audacity to address political content. Comedians require robust friendships. Comedian David lacks substantial support. David anticipates the audience's support should any issues emerge subsequently. These four propositions can be synthesized into one primary proposition: "Comedian David exhibits less fear when talking about political content". Despite the absence of explicit references to fear, the terms "guts," "backing," and "help" imply that comic David feels anxiety over political discourse. This worry is justified, as humor is a collective construct shaped by the cultural and contextual knowledge of both the speaker and the audience. Moreover, humor is contingent upon timing; its

misapplication may engender misunderstandings that culminate in a formal notification. Comedians have faced lawsuits multiple times over the content of their humor.

Consequently, the premise creation pattern with the most significant number of deletions is used due to its higher organizational efficiency. Particularly because stand-up comedy requires preparation rather than mere spontaneous performance on stage, this pattern is the simplest to execute. Comedians select generalizations and build patterns to articulate premises that cannot be clearly expressed. Comedians require propositions to generalize and refine them for more fluid delivery.

V. CONCLUSION

Research has shown that socio-political criticism of Indonesian stand-up comedy discourse primarily focuses on political themes. The political actors, namely politicians and political institutions, received the most social criticism from comedians, who in this case represent the general public. The approach involves criticizing by referencing the politician's name, detailing their bureaucratic missteps, and thereafter expressing the comedian's perspective on the politician's conduct. Typically, the politicians under scrutiny are those whose controversies are already recognized and debated by the public, thereby eliciting collective laughter on the stand-up comedy stage. Another approach is a socio-political critique that avoids referencing specific politicians or political entities. Comedians critique roles and policies, reference specific political events, and articulate their worries over various political issues through the use of political terminology.

The various forms of socio-political criticism are not governed by a specific pattern in the presentation of premises. The deletion pattern was shown to be predominant in articulating premises within Indonesian stand-up comedy discourse. Indonesian stand-up comedy performances are not spontaneous; instead, they are carefully planned by the comedians. The comedians initially investigate contemporary political happenings, subsequently formulating the premises they will tackle. They articulate their perspectives on the issues presented in those premises and ultimately incorporate punchlines to render the material humorous, thereby provoking laughter from the audience, which is the primary objective of humor.

The researcher recommends additional investigation into the quality of argumentation within Indonesian stand-up comedy discourse that includes socio-political criticism. Social critique may be incorporated simply into the punchlines, articulated from the outset of the material, or some segments of the content may encompass elements of social criticism within the language of Indonesian stand-up comedy. This requires independent research to assess the strength of arguments in comedic conversations.

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The Metaphor of Traditional Chinese Medicine in TCM Classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*

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Abstract—Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is extensive and profound, characterized by well-developed and abstract theoretical framework. The first preserved medical canon in China, *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*, records the advancements in Chinese medicine. The knowledge system and theoretical foundations can be learned through the analysis of TCM classics. It can be found that the classic applies many metaphors to construct the semantics of the terminological system. Metaphor maps the source and target domains and is essential for human conceptualization, bridging the gap between the linguistic and medicinal realms. This qualitative study takes the metaphors in *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* as the research object and utilizes the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2008) and the Metaphor Identification Procedure by Group (2007) to determine conceptual metaphors. The results revealed that the metaphor of battling an army can be used to describe a patient's struggle with illness to simplify complex biological processes and inspire resilience, and human organs can be manifested as officials to emphasize specialization and coordination within the biological system. Additionally, the functions of metaphor in meaning construction and the translation strategies employed in metaphor translation are summarized. The ways of translating metaphors include reproducing the same image, replacing the metaphor with another image, converting it to the sense, and transferring it into a simile. This study identifies various metaphorical expressions related to TCM and summarizes effective translation strategies, offering new insights into TCM translation.

Index Terms—Traditional Chinese Medicine, conceptual metaphors, metaphor translation

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a science that explores disease diagnosis and prevention, as well as human physiological states and pathological conditions. Compared with Western medicine, the theoretical system of TCM has been formed and developed based on Chinese philosophical concepts involving essential qi theory, yin-yang theory, and five phase theory, which makes it difficult for readers to understand. TCM considers the human body as a unity. TCM doctors diagnose and determine the location and cause of the disease through inspection, listening, smelling, inquiry, and palpation, and then apply therapeutic principles, including routine and paradoxical treatment, and adopt therapeutic methods, including acupuncture, dietary therapy, and manipulation, to treat diseases based on syndrome differentiation. Consequently, patients can restore the balance of yin and yang within their bodies and promote overall health.

Metaphor is everywhere, as defined by cognitive linguistics, and is both a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon. Metaphors can help people understand abstract concepts. TCM has not been well understood and accepted by the international community because of its obscure language and unique thinking model. TCM classics that illustrate TCM theories contain various metaphorical expressions. *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* is a classic work of TCM. This study reveals the cognitive mode behind the language and theoretical construction of TCM from the perspective of metaphor, which sheds light on TCM and metaphor research.

In terms of metaphor translation, scholars now not only discuss the translatability of metaphor and the translation strategies of metaphor, but also conduct cognitive studies on conceptual metaphors and explore how metaphors can be

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translated on the level of linguistics and conceptualization. This study investigates the metaphor phenomenon in TCM treatise and summarizes the translation strategies of metaphors. Metaphor translation serves as a conduit connecting the distinctive cognitive patterns of TCM and ancient linguistic expressions with foreign languages. This would help readers comprehend and interpret the language of TCM and offer methods and solutions for further study and translation of other classic works of TCM, thus promoting the development of the translation of TCM literature into foreign languages as well as the cross-cultural dissemination of TCM.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a large number of published studies on TCM, and many researchers have explored TCM from many aspects, including the history and development direction of TCM, therapeutic effect and clinical cases of TCM, education methods of TCM, reception of TCM, and translation methods and strategies adopted in TCM texts (Fang, 2024; Jiang et al., 2024; Shi et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024; Shi & Song, 2024; Wu et al., 2023). However, many scholars describe TCM as a mysterious "Chinese wonder". TCM treatises dating back to the fifth century BC pose semantic comprehension challenges that must be tackled because their poetic and figurative language hinders readers' comprehension (Chen, 2023). Terminologies and concepts related to TCM cannot be understood by readers if they are not clearly defined, and serious issues can arise from terminological mistakes (Sun et al., 2024). Because these terms are related to diagnosis and treatment methods, ethical principles, and philosophical concepts, comprehending and applying these medicinal principles and methods is essential for people who want to improve their physical wellness and mental health. The increasing prevalence of TCM practices in healthcare, not only in Southeast Asian nations like China but also in Russia, post-Soviet states, and other nations, makes it more important than ever to utilize TCM terminology correctly (Nichols, 2021; Wang & Kuzmenko, 2023).

Metaphors are ubiquitous in language and serve as cognitive schemata to structure conceptual frameworks. Grounded in bodily experience and the perception of familiar entities, metaphors facilitate knowledge construction by mapping domains of concrete physical interactions (source domains) onto abstract conceptual territories (target domains). Readers would establish correspondences between the two and utilize their understanding of one entity to articulate another. Their conception of metaphor can be illustrated by the example "ARGUMENT IS WAR", in which a conception about argument can be developed based on knowledge about war. The argument can be heated and confrontational as war, using combative language and clinching victory, and mappings from the source domain would aid in creating a deeper comprehension of the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphorical expressions are extensively and artistically employed in literary works. Metaphor is not only a rhetorical device, but also a reflection of our way of thinking and a tool by which we understand noble conceptions and frame our conception of the world. Khadidja and Margaret (2013) found that metaphors can be seen as a means of conveying abstract and complex scientific notions and stress the epistemological function of terminological metaphors that are essential for common readers to understand scientific phenomena and processes, which can promote popular science communication. Ritchie and Zhao (2020) found that metaphors are frequently used in poems, from which readers learn about the cultural conventions of symbolism, allegory, and the poet's situation. Metaphors are believed to play an important role in public education and knowledge transfer in the context of globalization (Montgomery, 2000). Metaphors function as a language tool for acquiring TCM theory (Hartzell, 2005). The metaphorical expression "Over the diaphragm there are parents" exemplifies the mapping process, employing "parents" as the source domain to represent the heart and lungs, which constitute the target domain. The source and target domains were identified. These metaphors perform the function of conceptualizing physiological activities and pathological changes in the human body and their interrelationships. That is, to make abstract thinking more concrete. This will help readers understand the complex TCM theories.

Despite its wide application, the discourse on TCM remains underexplored. Nature metaphors are frequently seen in TCM texts, and the properties of things in the natural world have been mapped onto the target domain (Lai & Jia, 2020; Song & Jia, 2021). The metaphor of an official position is applied to link the duties and social status of an officer with the functions and locations of organs (Ni et al., 2024). War metaphors can be used to vividly narrate the human body's fight against disease (Huang, 2023). Container metaphor mapping organs as the target domain illustrates the functions of viscera in a metaphorical way (Zhu & Jia, 2022). Metaphor research and cognitive science offer a new perspective on theoretical research on TCM. Researchers should attach importance to the language research of TCM (Liu & Jia, 2022). Most scholars only propose one or two conceptual metaphors in their studies, and these studies are not comprehensive; only some adopt a critical approach, investigating the literal and contextual meanings of metaphors in TCM literature, the cultural connotations and ideological perceptions hidden behind the metaphors, and their role in meaning construction. To address this research gap, the present study identifies the metaphorical and non-metaphorical use of words, classifies conceptual metaphors, and illustrates how they are formulated in the ST and their influence on theoretical construction.

Given the widespread use of English and the vast population of Chinese speakers, it is crucial to compare the two languages to enhance the accuracy of metaphor translation and enable communication between these two populations (Yu & Shao, 2023). Many studies have explored the translation of metaphors in various texts. Shehab and Nazzal (2022) stressed the educative role of metaphors in business texts, which facilitate readers' understanding of business situations,

and summarized strategies for translating metaphors: translating the ST metaphor into its equivalent in the TT and transferring an English non-metaphor into an Arabic metaphor. Kruger (1991) emphasized the effect of metaphors on characterization and explored the ways of translating metaphorical expressions in narrative fiction, including substitution, paraphrase, and deletion. However, few researchers have conducted in-depth research on metaphors in TCM texts from a translation perspective, although effective knowledge transmission can be promoted through translation. Li (2024) investigated the translation strategies of metaphors in TCM texts and mentioned that literal and transliteration translation strategies can be used to preserve the cultural elements and aesthetic features of literary works. In addition, Qiu and Wang (2024) found that the untranslatability of TCM metaphors is mainly manifested by cultural differences and the uniqueness of TCM metaphors, explored the translation strategy under the guidance of knowledge translation theory, and stated that explanatory notes should be added to the translation to fully convey the cultural symbolism behind them. These studies describe the translation methods and strategies used in translation works, but the purposes and effects of using translation strategies are underexplored.

Critical studies on the translation of metaphor in TCM literature that address the reconstruction of linguistic-cultural codes in the target language and illustrate the process of cultural meaning absorption and transformation between texts are largely lacking in the literature. To fill this research gap, the present study categorizes the translation strategies of metaphors in *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* based on Newmark's (1981) taxonomy and discusses how cultural images are reconstructed in metaphor translation, which helps readers understand TCM conceptions and thoughts. The abundance of metaphors found in TCM texts stimulates researchers' curiosity about how well they are translated in medical translation and how they help spread knowledge of TCM. The processing effort and contextual effects were analyzed to provide useful recommendations for translation practice.

The present study analyzes metaphors translated into another language and investigates the discursive practice of metaphors in medical discourse. This study investigates the use and translation of metaphors in different contexts, helping readers gain a deeper understanding of the abstract concepts and theories of TCM. Based on the aforementioned information, three research objectives need to be achieved in this study: (1) to identify metaphorical expressions and their translations in the English translation of *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*; (2) to classify metaphors and determine types of conceptual metaphors; and (3) to summarize translation strategies used in the translations of metaphors.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Material

The materials used for this study consist of the classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* in Chinese and its English translation by Li Zhaoguo, published on the 1st of April, 2005. *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* is the earliest existing medical literature in China. It is not only a precious medical work but also a philosophical treatise embodying the Chinese philosophy of life, which encompasses astronomy, calendrics, geography, and other realms. This masterpiece elaborates on the fundamental theories of TCM and expounds on the physiology and pathology of the human body and the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases, establishing the unique theoretical system of TCM, which has had a profound impact on future generations.

The classic comprises two different parts: Spiritual Pivot and Plain Conversation. Spiritual Pivot systematically elaborates on the visceral system, disease etiology, and pathological mechanisms, with particular emphasis on meridian-acupoint theory, acupuncture instruments, and needling techniques. Plain Conversation constructs a theoretical framework and introduces diagnostic methods and therapeutic principles. The analysis of TCM texts facilitates the comprehension of TCM's fundamental theories and knowledge hierarchy.

The English version rendered by Li Zhaoguo was selected as the research object. Professor Li is a distinguished translator and scholar specializing in TCM with dual academic expertise in English linguistics and literature. His rendition of *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*, a three-volume bilingual edition containing classical Chinese text, modern Chinese interpretation, and English translation published by Xi'an World Publishing Corporation in 2005, exemplifies scholarly rigor. Notably selected for inclusion in the Library of Chinese Classics project by the National Press and Publication Administration in 2007, this work employs multiple translation strategies, offering critical insights into medical research and intercultural communication studies.

B. Method

This qualitative study adopted a descriptive approach to metaphor analysis. The metaphors analyzed were extracted from the classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* and Li's English version. The researchers observed various metaphorical expressions in this work. The Metaphor Identification Procedure developed by Group (2007) was first adopted to identify the metaphors of TCM and distinguish between metaphorical and non-metaphorical word usage. The following steps were taken to determine whether the terms and phrases are metaphorical expressions:

- 1) Read the book and know the main content of the text.
- 2) Determine what the content means in the language context in relation to other words that precede and follow the lexical unit.
- 3) Determine whether the content has other meanings in other language contexts.

4) Determine whether the contextual meaning differs from its fundamental meaning. If the contextual meaning and its fundamental meaning are not the same, the lexical item is a metaphor.

Metaphors can be identified using this method. The researcher also applied the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (2008) and presented the thematic distribution of metaphorical names in TCM texts. Different types of metaphors were manually identified in the Source Text (ST) and their renditions in the Target Text (TT). The researcher identified the translation strategies used to translate metaphors and categorized them according to Newmark's (1981) taxonomy.

IV. RESEARCH RESULT

A. The Conceptual Metaphors Adopted in Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine

In the present study, *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* and its English translation were analyzed. The analysis revealed that multiple conceptual metaphors are commonly used in the book, which can be divided into four groups: spatial metaphor, ontological metaphor, structural metaphor and relational metaphor. This study provides linguistic examples of these conceptual metaphors and discusses what translation strategies the translator applied to translate metaphors and how the translation enhances the influence of TCM.

(a). The Physiological Activity of Human Beings Is a Natural Phenomenon

Nature metaphor is one of the most commonly applied conceptual metaphors. Nature and humanity coexist in harmony, and people can grasp the laws of nature to better understand the world through observation. The language of nature, namely myriad things from the natural world involving the sun, moon, fire, and sea, and natural phenomena such as plant growth and animal crawling, can be used to describe abstract and complex human physiological and pathological conditions. Some linguistic expressions extracted from the ST and their corresponding words in the TT are listed below.

1) ST:

秋日下肤，蜚虫将去；冬日在骨，蜚虫周密。

qiu ri xia fu, zhe chong jiang qu; dong ri zai gu, zhe chong zhou mi.

'On autumn days, the pulse is slightly sunken under the skin, **like worms going into the hole**; In winter, and the pulse sinks to the bone, **like worms lying dormant in the hole.**'

TT:

In autumn, [the pulse is beating] beneath the skin just **like the insects going into hiding**; In winter, [the pulse] is near the bone just **like animals in hibernation**.

Natural metaphors can be used to describe the physiological activities of the human body. The pulse of a person changes with the seasons. The two terms describing animal behavior, "蜚虫将去" and "蜚虫周密", are employed to highlight the feature of pulse condition felt on examination by pulse diagnosis. Traditional Chinese physicians have constantly explored the relationship between the natural world and human activity and applied nature-related words and phrases to conceptualize complex medical phenomena, providing numerous metaphorical expressions for TCM.

The first example transfers metaphor into simile and applies the explicit comparison marker "like", clarifying the logical relationship and reducing ambiguity while maintaining rhetorical effectiveness. The literal meaning of "蜚虫周密" is "worms hibernating in the hole", which is literally translated as "animals in hibernation". The more general word "animal" is used as substitute for the specific term "insects" to avoid repetition.

(b). The Process of Treating Disease Is a War

In ancient times, powerful figures contended for dominance over the land. A time of constant conflict and destruction brings great disasters to society, and war is related to the life and death of people. Therefore, ancient people in China recognized the similarity between disease and an enemy, as well as between medical treatment and warfare, and used war-related terms to conceptualize diseases as enemies and treatments as combat strategies, highlighting the invasion mode of pathogenic factors and the process of fighting illness. This metaphor shapes both professional and public understanding of health and illness.

2) ST:

毒药攻邪，五谷为食，五果为助。

du yao gong xie, wu gong wei shi, wu guo wei zhu.

'Medicines can be used to **treat** diseases. The five kinds of grain can be eaten as food to nourish the body, and the five kinds of fruit can be consumed to supplement the diet.'

TT:

Duyao (drugs) [can be used] to **attack** Xie (Evil), the five kinds of grain [can be used] to nourish [the body], the five kinds of fruit [can be used] to assist [the five kinds of grain to nourish the body].

In the second example, "邪" refers to the devil and means pathogenic factor in this context, which is literally rendered as "evil", preserving the term's cultural identity and avoiding distortion. "攻" refers to the aggressive attack action taken by enemy forces in a war and means medical treatment in this context. This term is literally translated as

"attack", preserving the unique worldview and values of the culture. The process of fighting disease is metaphorically described as an armed conflict. Medicine and pathogen are portrayed as two sides of a battle. Medicinal herbs are compared to armed forces fighting against illness, which is the army of physical health. Such retention in the translation duplicates the promising therapeutic effect of Chinese medicines and their treatment course.

(c). *The Organ in the Body Is a Social Role in Society*

In Chinese society, every Chinese person forms close social bonds and family relationships with each other. Various types of social relationships and kinship networks have been developed. Metaphors about social relationships could be seen as an effective tool for comprehending the relationships and functions of organs and viscera based on readers' understanding of social relationships, including parent-child relationship and monarch-subject relationship, providing a vivid explanatory model for readers.

3) ST:

三阳为父..... 三阴为母.....

san yang wei fu... san yin wei mu...

'Three-yang meridian is like a **father** taking an important position in the family, and three-yin meridian is like a **mother** raising her children.'

TT:

Triple-Yang [is equivalent to the position of] **father**... Triple-Yin [is equivalent to the position of] **mother**.

In the third example, "三阳" and "三阴" refer to the three-yang meridian and three-yin meridian respectively. Three-yang meridian is a generic term for the three yang meridians of the hand and foot, which are important components of the conduit system. Three yin meridians is a generic term for three yin meridians of the hand and three yin meridians of the foot, together forming the meridian network. TCM theory holds that meridians and channels connect the intestines, viscera, extremities, and tissues. Qi and blood circulating in meridians nourish the human body. "父" and "母" literally mean father and mother, emphasizing the importance of the three-yang meridian and three-yin meridian in the human body. The translation transfers metaphor into simile, retaining artistic impact and bridging cultural gaps by clarifying comparative relationships.

(d). *The Organ in the Body Is a Container*

People regard themselves as entities independent of the external world, and their activities, including leaving the room, entering the classroom, and walking into the supermarket, are similar to entering and exiting various containers. In addition, the human body can be considered as a container with space and external boundaries, and the container metaphor can be used to narrate people's physiological activities, such as exhaling and excretion.

4) ST:

头者，精明之府，头倾视深，精神将夺矣。

tou zhe, jing ming zhi fu, tou qing shi shen, jing shen jiang duo yi.

'The head is **where** the spirit and intelligence **are located**. If the head is tilted to the side and the eye sockets are sunken, the spirit will be declined. This indicates that the patient is in a serious condition.'

TT:

The head is the **house** of Jingming. Drooped head and sunken eyes [are the signs] that Jingshen (Essence-Spirit) is on the verge of exhaustion.

In the fourth example, "府" refers to government offices where officials handled administrative affairs, the residences of high-ranking officials, or repositories for official papers or valuables in ancient times. This classic portrays bodily parts, involving head, kidney, and bladder, as containers with the functions of storage and accommodation. "精明" is transliterated as "Jingming" which refers to intelligence. The organs serve as the convergence point for matter and energy, and the head is regarded as a dwelling where the spirit and intelligence are located. "府" is directly translated as "house". The metaphor that remains in the TT maintains the cultural uniqueness of TCM and enables learners to explore the culture and knowledge system of TCM, deepening their understanding of its fundamental theory.

B. *The Translation Strategies Used in the Translation of Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine*

Metaphors and their translation strategies should be summarized through researchers' analyses of TCM texts, and these translation studies should be conducted under the guidance of linguistic and translation theories (Zhao & Kuang, 2023). Newmark (1981) proposed methods of translating metaphors, including replicating the same image in the target language (TL), substituting a standard TL image for the image in the source language (SL), transferring a metaphor into a simile, translating a metaphor by simile with sense, converting a metaphor to sense, deleting metaphor, and combining the same metaphor with sense. The translation strategies used for translating metaphors are summarized. Furthermore, the purposes and effects of employing various translation strategies and the language contexts in which these strategies are most effectively utilized are analyzed.

(a). *Reproducing the Same Image in the TL*

The more universal the sense, the more likely the figurative sense is to be transferred (Newmark, 1981). The metaphor would be retained in the TT if the sense of metaphor can be understood in the language context or the readers can easily make a connection between the source domain and the target domain without much effort, thus preserving cultural characteristics and the charm of language.

5) ST:

开阖不得，寒气从之，乃生大倮。

kai he bu de, han qi cong zhi, nai sheng da lou.

'When the interstices can not **open and close** normally, the human body will be infected by wind and contract hunchback.'

TT:

[When sweat pores] **open and close** abnormally, Hanqi (Cold-Qi) [will invade the body] through the sweat pores, making the body unable to straighten up.

6) ST:

故伤于风者，上先受之；伤于湿者，下先受之。

gu shang yu feng zhe, shang xian shou zhi; shang yu shi zhe, xia xian shou zhi.

'When the body is infected by wind, the upper part of the body will contract wind first; when the body is infected by dampness, the lower part of the body will contract dampness first.'

TT:

So when Wind **invades [the body]**, it attacks the upper [part of the body] first; when Dampness **invades [the body]**, it attacks the lower [part of the body] first.

In the fifth example, the two verbs "开" and "阖", which mean removing and closing the lid of a container, are used to describe the dilation and contraction of sweat pores in the context. Sweat pores are regarded as the lid of container through which pathogenic factors enter the human body. Container is familiar to readers, and container metaphor can remain in the translation. In the sixth example, the verb "伤" is translated as "invade" which means an armed force entering a region and causing damage. The translation preserves the cultural image, implying that the pathogenic factor acts harmfully on the body part in the context. The war metaphor is retained in the TT to show the process of disease spreading in the human body.

Retention of metaphorical expressions in the TT is to maintain the original flavor of the TCM culture. These metaphors are drawn from source domains closely related to personal life and social experiences. Readers can understand the metaphor translation based on their life experiences and find connections between the metaphor used and everyday practice.

(b). *Replacing the Image in the SL With a Standard TL Image*

This translation strategy is helpful when languages operate in different cultural and social contexts. Metaphorical expressions with distinctive cultural features, including metaphors mapping onto official positions in the source domain, are frequently found in this classic. The cultural image could be replaced by an equivalent, causing a similar reading effect on readers with different backgrounds.

7) ST:

心者，君主之官也，神明出焉。

xin zhe, jun zhu zhi guan ye, shen ming chu yan.

'The heart is functioned as **central ruler**, governing mental-spiritual functions.'

TT:

The heart is the organ [similar to] a **monarch** and is responsible for Shenming (mental activity or thinking).

8) ST:

膻中者，臣使之官，喜乐出焉。

tan zhong zhe, chen shi zhi guan, xi le chu yan.

'The chest center is functioned as **messenger**, transmitting joy and happiness.'

TT:

The pericardium is the organ [similar to] an **envoy** and is responsible for happiness and joy.

In the seventh example, "君主" refers to the Chinese emperor who was regarded as the son of heaven in ancient times and held supreme authority in imperial China and it is translated as "monarch" which refers to a king or queen reigning over a kingdom. In the eighth example, "臣使" refers to a messenger conveying imperial edicts and it is translated as "envoy" which refers to a minister plenipotentiary in a foreign government. The heart and pericardium are depicted as officers in the Chinese court in the ST. However, the names of ancient Chinese official positions do not have equivalent terms in English. The imperial bureaucratic system of ancient China shares common ground with the hierarchical structure in the Western political system. Thus, foreign readers with different social backgrounds can understand the meanings of the metaphors through reading their counterparts in translation.

These two examples adopt the official titles of foreign government positions instead of those of ancient Chinese government because the translator must consider the needs of readers who lack relevant background knowledge, and their formal equivalents cannot be found in the TT. Titles vary by country, and substitutes are used in the TT to make

the translation more accessible to readers. This approach enhances clarity in cross-cultural communication by ensuring that readers accurately understand figurative language containing cultural connotations.

(c). *Translation of Metaphor by Simile*

The similarity between the source and target domains is unclear, and readers may feel puzzled and have difficulty understanding the text if the metaphorical expression is translated directly. In this case, the metaphor must be transferred into a simile. This translation strategy can modify the shock of a metaphor, especially complex metaphor (Newmark, 1981). This could retain the image and indicate the logical connection and similar points between the source and target domains.

9) ST:

三阳为父..... 三阴为母.....

san yang wei fu..... san yin wei mu.....

'Three Yang roles as **father** and Three Yin roles as **mother**, regulating yang and yin energy and governing internal nourishment.'

TT:

Triple-Yang [is equivalent to the position of] **father**... Triple-Yin [is equivalent to the position of] **mother**...

10) ST:

六经为川，肠胃为海，九窍为水注之气。

jing wei chuan, chang wei wei hai, jiu qiao wei shui zhu zhi qi.

'The six meridians are like **streams**, circulating vital substances to nourish the organs. The intestines and the stomach are like the **seas**, storing the cereals and absorbing nutrients.'

TT:

The Six-Channels act as **mountains and valleys**, the intestines and the stomach act as **the seas**.

In the ninth example, the Triple-Yang and Triple-Yin meridians, which nourish other channels, are presented as parents raising children. The original image is preserved, and the phrase "be equivalent to the position of" is used to establish a clear connection between the source and target domains. In the tenth example, the Six-Channels are depicted as flowing rivers that continue endlessly, and the intestines and stomach are likened to seas that contain everything. The translation uses the phrase "act as" to illustrate the conceptual relationship between natural elements and organs, thereby clarifying their roles and physiological functions. This conceptual mapping signifies the importance of viscera and meridians within the human body.

When the source domain of a metaphor and its target domain share some similarities in function and role, the translator needs to translate the metaphor into a simile to clarify the target and source domains and their similarities to accurately convey the information. Overly literal translations may mystify TCM theory, making it unintelligible to readers. Translation of metaphor by simile prioritizes reader comprehension, clarity, accuracy, and cross-cultural accessibility. By explicitly marking comparative relationships, similes retain the structural beauty of the language while preventing the loss or distortion of TCM's unique concepts.

(d). *Translation of Metaphor by Simile Plus Sense*

This is a compromise procedure that combines the advantages of communicative and semantic translation, satisfying the needs of both common and professional readers (Newmark, 1981). If the metaphor is transferred into a simile and readers still cannot understand the symbolic meaning of the metaphor, the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor should be clarified, and the connotation of the metaphor the text omits needs to be further explained in the TT.

11) ST:

此四支八溪之朝夕也。

ci si zhi ba xi zhi zhao xi ye.

'The qi, blood, tendons and vessels are like **the tide** flowing into four limbs and eight joints, i.e., elbows, armpits, hips, knees, arms and legs.'

TT:

[The Qi, blood, sinews and vessels flow into and run along] the four limbs and the Baxi (eight joints) are like **morning and evening tides**.

12) ST:

目盲不可以视，耳闭不可以听，溃溃乎若坏都，汨汨乎不可止。

mu mang bu ke yi shi, er bi bu ke yi ting, kui kui hu ruo huai du, gu gu hu bu ke zhi.

'Dysfunction of human organs causes sensory impairment. Blindness renders the eyes incapable of vision, and blocked ears deprive one of hearing. The patient is seriously ill and the body condition cannot be controlled, which is like **the rushing water** breaching the embankment that cannot be stopped.'

TT:

...marked by blurred vision and loss of hearing. [This disease occurs suddenly] like **the overflow of a river** that is impossible to be brought under control.

In the eleventh example, "溪" refers to streams. "八溪" is transliterated as "Baxi" and refers to the eight joints in the context. Eight joints and four limbs are channels for qi and blood circulation that are portrayed as tides, continuous flow of liquid. The translation transfers the metaphor into simile and provides the sense of metaphor in the translation. In the twelfth example, "溃溃乎" can be used to describe rushing and surging water and "汨汨乎" is the onomatopoeia that can be used to modify the water with an unstoppable and rapid flow. This indicates that the patient is in a critical state and the illness has become life-threatening. A patient's rapidly deteriorating condition that cannot be halted is depicted as water that cannot be stopped.

Readers cannot grasp the entire meaning of the text through onomatopoeia translation, so the translator chooses to clarify the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor and provides its explanation in the TT. When the connection between the source and target domains and the complied meaning of metaphors need to be further clarified, the metaphor can be transferred into a simile, and its sense should be elucidated. In TCM text translations, converting metaphor into simile plus sense is a strategic choice that helps target readers navigate the cultural and conceptual complexity of TCM metaphors, ensuring that cultural connotations can be preserved and understood. This could facilitate cross-cultural communication and acceptance.

(e). *Conversion of Metaphor to Sense*

This is a common procedure that is preferred when the essence of an image is multidimensional and the term has a broad meaning, so readers have difficulty inferring the actual sense of the metaphor. The sense must be analyzed contextually and componentially (Newmark, 1981). Additionally, replacing the metaphor with another would lead to inaccuracy and this translation approach can only be valid for translating metaphors with unique cultural characteristics in the SL.

13) ST:

得守者生，失守者死。

de shou zhe sheng, shi shou zhe si.

'The five viscera **function normally**, which are like soldiers guarding a country. Hence, the patient's health can be restored. Otherwise, **dysfunction** of the five viscera causes the patient's death, which is like military defeat because of the soldiers failing to defend the city.'

TT:

Normal functions [of the viscera] ensure life while **dysfunctions** [of the viscera] cause death.

14) ST:

开鬼门，洁净府，精以时服。

kai gui men, jie jing fu, jing yi shi fu.

'Treatment methods, diaphoresis and diuresis, should be applied to cure edema, like opening **the ghost gates** and purifying **the pure mansion** to expel evil.'

TT:

[Besides,] [the therapeutic methods for] opening **Guimen (sweat pores)** and cleaning **the Jingfu (the bladder)** can be used [to eliminate the retention of fluid].

In the thirteenth example, the verb "守" means to protect the country and "失守" means failure in protecting the country and territorial loss in the source text. Biologically non-functional human is portrayed as the country losing its sovereign territory. Readers may have multiple answers in mind and infer that the patient may lose normal bladder function or may be mentally disordered and lose his or her mind. In the fourteenth example, "鬼门" literally means the gate of hell and "净府" literally means a cleansing house, which are unfamiliar to the readers. The image with mysterious color cannot be fully understood by the readers if the image is retained in the TT, so the sense of metaphor and its transliteration are provided in the TT.

Readers would feel confused and quite strange if the metaphorical expressions are maintained in the TT because it seems that there is very little correlation between the source domain and the target domain of these metaphors, and readers cannot immediately form associations between the two domains and interface two systems. The metaphors in these two translations are all converted to sense, and the connotative meanings of expressions are presented in the translation instead of their referential meanings. When the translator explains the implied meanings and connotations of culture-bound metaphors, the readability and understandability of translation could be enhanced.

(f). *Same Metaphor Combined With Sense*

The tenor could be retained in the TT, and the sense of the metaphor could be supplemented to maintain the cultural image and achieve the communicative effect. By adopting this approach, the translator not only transfers the same image but also hopes that the translation will be well understood by readers because the metaphor is obscure. The translation could be reader-friendly and instructive if further illustrations are provided (Newmark, 1981).

15) ST:

君一臣二，奇之制也；君二臣四，偶之制也。

jun yi chen er, ji zhi zhi ye, jun er chen si, ou zhi zhi ye.

'One **main drug** and two **adjuvant drugs** constitute an odd formulation and two **main drugs** and four **adjuvant drugs** constitute an even formulation.'

TT:

Odd [prescription is] composed of one **Monarch [drug]** and two **Minister [drugs]**; even [prescription is] composed of two **Monarch [drugs]** and four **Minister [drugs]**.

16) ST:

此六者，地气之所生也.....此五者，天气之所生也.....

ci liu zhe, di qi zhi suo sheng ye..... ci wu zhe, tian qi zhi suo sheng ye.....

'The six organs **are generated by** earth qi... and the five organs **are generated by** heaven qi...'

TT:

The brain, marrow, bones, vessels, gallbladder and uterus **are all produced** [under the influence of] Diqi (Earth-Qi) ... The stomach, the large intestine, the small intestine, the Sanjiao (triple energizer) and the bladder **are all produced** [under the influence of] Tianqi (Heaven-Qi) ...

In the fifteenth example, "君" and "臣" refer to the emperor and court official in ancient times and to the medicine in the context. Metaphor mapping onto official positions in the source domain helps readers differentiate the functions of different medicinal materials in the description. The sense of the metaphor "drug" is supplemented in the TT, and the metaphors "monarch" and "minister" are also retained and used as adjectives to modify the word "drug", indicating the different roles that different drugs play. Additionally, in this translation, the sense of the metaphor is supplemented, and the metaphorical expression mapping onto the medicine as the target domain is translated as "monarch" which is retained as an adjective in the TT to modify the term "drug", indicating the function and use of this drug.

In the sixteenth example, "生" means giving birth to a child and means the relationship in which each phase and its associated phenomena promote another sequential phase in the context. The metaphor is produced based on the Five Phase Theory of TCM, so readers need to grasp the cultural knowledge background and understand the cultural connotation and the actual meaning of the metaphor by supplementing the sense of the metaphor in the TT. This translation strategy helps readers with different cultural backgrounds comprehend its meaning.

V. CONCLUSION

The metaphors used in the TCM classic *Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine* are a great way of learning TCM abstract theory, evoking readers' understanding of themselves and the natural world in a particular way. TCM conceives the harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature as the operating rule of the universe and integrates Chinese philosophical thought into TCM theory. Given the nature of conceptual metaphors, the use of metaphorical expressions in TCM classics provides insights into how the theoretical framework of TCM knowledge can be constructed in text and how this cognitive mechanism shapes the worldviews of readers. The present study is important as it reveals the cognitive-linguistic mechanism and strategies that can be adopted in different situations for disseminating TCM culture. Future studies can focus on the effect of metaphor usage on spreading culture, translation methods, and strategies different translators employ for meeting different translation purposes and satisfying different needs of readers.

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Enhancing Teachers' Content and Language-Integrated Learning and Young Learners' Instruction Through an Inquiry Complexity Reading Strategy Based on the Common European Framework of Reference

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Abstract—This study examined the effect of an Inquiry Complexity Reading Strategy (ICRS)-based Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) on English teachers' content and language-integrated learning (CLIL) and young learners' (YLs) pedagogical literacy. It also explored teachers' perceptions of integrating CEFR into English language teaching. The participants were 72 junior high school teachers from 43 schools equipped with computer facilities, and 35 students from the selected schools, chosen using purposive sampling. A mixed-methods approach involving tests, questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations was employed to answer the research questions. The data validity and reliability were determined using statistical analysis and the triangulation method. Additionally, statistical and thematic analyses were conducted to find out the effect of the ICRS-based CEFR on the teachers' literacy and their perceptions. The findings show that the ICRS-based CEFR significantly enhanced the teachers' CLIL and YLs' pedagogical literacy and that the teachers mostly expressed positive attitudes towards CEFR use in the curriculum. The study also verified schools' readiness, supported by adequate infrastructure, motivated students, and competent teachers. In conclusion, integrating CEFR into the school curriculum through inquiry-based strategies could meaningfully enhance teachers' performance. However, schools should provide sustained institutional support and teacher training for implementing CEFR, particularly in hybrid learning contexts. Further research can explore the impact of teachers' literacy on student learning outcomes and curriculum development.

Index Terms—ICRS, CEFR, CLIL, YL, literacy

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, literacy has evolved into digital literacy, that is, an individual's ability to use technology to foster critical and creative thinking. This includes technology, critical analysis, networking, communication, and content evaluation skills (Uçar, 2023). Effective teachers integrate technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge into their instructional practice (Hughes & Scharber, 2010). Such integration is crucial for strengthening teachers' digital literacy and professional competence (Irwanto, 2021; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). It also improves students' engagement and English language learning in practical and real-world contexts (Pallathadka, 2020).

In this context, a lack of digital literacy, limited internet access, and insufficient technological devices have hindered effective teaching and learning processes in Indonesia (Mazlan et al., 2022). In middle and high schools, many teachers have not yet integrated multimedia based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into their instruction (Arifudin & Maryo, 2021). They are also often unaware that students' learning styles and strategies have evolved with technological advancements (Erni, 2021; Erni et al., 2023). Additionally, while many countries have successfully adopted other digital technologies (Mansor, 2025; Bui, 2022), the implementation of CAT (computer-aided technology) in classrooms has thus far not successfully increased students' CEFR level in Indonesia (Kharis et al., 2020). Therefore, educational reforms are necessary to align the CEFR with the national curriculum (Arifudin & Maryo, 2021). Incorporating it into educational reforms will promote teacher agency rather than impose predetermined objectives and methods (Savski & Prabjandee, 2022). This, in turn, will encourage educational institutions to provide teachers with

access to relevant resources and professional training, enhancing their digital literacy and helping them develop and utilize interactive media.

In Indonesia, schools have not yet implemented CEFR, particularly at the junior high school level, and only a few teachers use CEFR-based learning resources or instructional methods for assessment purposes. Although the government requires senior high school students to achieve the CEFR B1 level (Aditomo, 2024), due to limited literacy and insufficient experience, teachers have not incorporated the framework into their teaching practices and thus struggle to support their students in achieving the curriculum target. To help the junior high school students achieve the CEFR B1 level, the inquiry complexity reading strategy (ICRS) was implemented. The ICRS improves students' academic reading skills (Erni et al., 2023) and strengthens teachers' literacy in English language teaching (ELT) at the junior high school level. While CEFR has primarily served as an assessment tool, its potential as a basis for teaching instruction remains unexplored. This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- a) What is the extent of schools' readiness in integrating CEFR into the school curriculum in Indonesia?
- b) Does the ICRS-based CEFR significantly enhance teachers' content and language integrated learning (CLIL) literacy?
- c) Does the ICRS-based CEFR significantly enhance teachers' literacy related to young learners (YL)?
- d) What are teachers' perceptions of CEFR integration into ELT?

Note that in this study, the term literacy was used to refer specifically to teachers' literacy in delivering English instruction based on CEFR qualifications, that is, CLIL (Cambridge, 2022a, 2022b) and YL (Cambridge, 2010, 2022b) literacy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR)

The CEFR is a comprehensive tool that enables educators to plan their instruction, develop materials, and assess the students based on their needs and proficiency levels (North & Piccardo, 2016; Piccardo et al., 2011). This study applied the CEFR framework to enhance teachers' literacy in CLIL and YLs' instruction, which encompasses learning materials, teaching methods, assessment criteria, and contextualized tasks (Prajapati, 2022; Trim, 2011; Trim et al., 2024). In particular, four communicative modes of CEFR—reception, production, interaction, and mediation—were utilized in an integrated manner. Reception means processing and interpreting meaning; production focuses on fluency and accuracy in generating meaning across social, academic, and professional contexts; interaction highlights sociolinguistic competence; and mediation emphasizes the facilitation of communication between people, particularly if a linguistic or conceptual gap exists (Arslan & Özenici, 2017; Council of Europe, 2018).

In Indonesia, efforts to align CEFR with the school curriculum have faced numerous challenges, such as limited teacher competence and pedagogical beliefs, teachers' low self-confidence, and socio-cultural influences (Miqawati et al., 2023). Additionally, inadequate institutional support and lack of teacher training opportunities have further hindered its integration into classroom instruction (Uri & Abd Aziz, 2018). However, studies from countries such as Turkey and Iraq have demonstrated that CEFR enhances the language skills of EFL/ESL students (Hismanoglu, 2013; Naser & Ali, 2023) and can be employed for English language assessment (Foley, 2019). The CEFR equips learners with global communicative competence, enabling them to interact in diverse cultural contexts. Furthermore, its level descriptors provide a structured means for categorizing student proficiency and aligning teaching materials accordingly (Sonea, 2018). Therefore, teachers' literacy supported by CEFR qualifications can improve learners' abilities in terms of reception, production, interaction, and mediation.

B. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL is an approach that combines language and subject content and promotes 'learning to use language and using language to learn'. It requires that educators and practitioners carefully consider the pedagogical, theoretical, and practical aspects of language teaching (Cenoz et al., 2014). It also fosters linguistic competence as well as intercultural awareness and communication skills among students (British Council, n.d.). Furthermore, it supports students' development of the 4Cs—content, communication, cognition, and culture—which are essential for 21st-century learning (Hemmi & Banegas, 2021).

CLIL also enables teachers to design assessments, create technology-mediated environments, and be aware of their pedagogical philosophy (Tai et al., 2025), thus encouraging students to acquire content knowledge while developing their language skills. It has a positive impact on English students' academic self-concepts (Wunberg et al., 2024) and promotes language proficiency and self-confidence (Macaraeg et al., 2024). It enhances teachers' ability to plan, implement, and evaluate lessons while being sensitive to their students' learning needs and providing adequate support. It also covers content literacy and an understanding of the linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary features of different subjects. However, teachers must ensure that the language used in the classroom aligns with the content demands so that students engage in meaningful and accessible learning. Overall, effective CLIL lesson planning involves setting clear objectives that align with both language and content outcomes, along with appropriate assessment strategies (DeBoer & Leontjev, 2020).

C. Young Learners' (YLs') Pedagogy

YLS' instruction requires specialized pedagogical skills and an in-depth understanding of the learners' developmental characteristics. YLs are typically at an age where they are developing cognitively, linguistically, socially, emotionally, and physically, but the definition of the term varies globally. In Indonesia, it generally refers to children aged 6–12 in formal education. The CEFR places YLs aged 7–12 at the Starters, Movers, and Flyers levels (Cambridge, 2010). In ELT, learners aged 11–14 (junior secondary students) are also often included under this category (Ellis, 2014). In this study, the young learners were the junior high school students aged 11 to 14 years.

Since YLs tend to acquire language skills gradually, learn slowly, and forget quickly (Cambridge, 2010), teachers must possess strong pedagogical, content, and contextual literacy when teaching them. Research has suggested that YLs respond positively to activities such as reading, group discussions, playful tasks, written grammar exercises, vocabulary translation, and pronunciation exercises through digital media (Ahmetović & Dubravac, 2021; Alshehri, 2022; Ratminingsih et al., 2022). Consequently, teachers must be equipped with appropriate knowledge of YLs' learning and its implementation.

D. The Inquiry Complexity Reading Strategy (ICRS)

The ICRS is a learning model that employs principles of inquiry-based learning, social complexity, and connectivism (Erni et al., 2023) and is applied in reading and writing instruction. In this model, learners are encouraged to organize their learning process and engage in collaborative tasks under teacher guidance (Levy et al., 2013; Mahmoud & Galante, 2020). Such inquiry-based learning aims to enhance students' critical and creative thinking, communication skills, and capacity to interact and mediate meaning in complex learning environments (Larsen–Freeman, 2019; Pedaste et al., 2015). In the current study, the five stages of ICRS—orientation, conceptualization, investigation, conclusion, and social complexity—were incorporated into instructional activities to strengthen teachers' CLIL and YL literacy. These stages were used to demonstrate how ICRS-based CEFR resources and digital tools can support inquiry, conceptualization, investigation, synthesis, and application in a real-life context.

III. METHOD

A. Research Participants

The participants in this study were junior high school teachers from both public and private schools in Indonesia. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2013). The teachers were members of the English teacher association (Teachers' Centre), which conducted teacher centre activities and ensured proportional representation from each public and private junior high school. 72 teacher participants from 43 schools were selected through a purposive sampling method. The participants were chosen not only for their demographic representation but also because their schools were equipped with computer laboratories and stable internet connections, which were key requirements for implementing the CEFR. They were also selected based on their attendance during the training session.

Overall, the responses from 28 participants with 100% attendance during the 6 consecutive weeks of the instrument implementation were included in the t-test data analysis to examine the effect of implementing the ICRS-based CEFR in improving teachers' literacy. The responses from the participants with attendance below 100% (44 teachers) were excluded from the t-test analysis but included in the descriptive data analysis to determine their perceptions regarding CEFR integration into ELT. These participants, grouped by age (young, adult, and senior teachers) classification (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019), participated in the FGDs. Triangulation was employed to ensure data validity and reliability.

Finally, the number of participants was assumed to be representative of the population (Borg, 2014). The participants' ages ranged from 23 to 57 years and were accordingly categorized into three groups: young (<35 years, 27%), adult (35–50 years, 54%), and senior teachers (>50 years, 18%). In terms of education, 93% of the teachers held a bachelor's degree, while 7% held a master's degree. The participating students were 12–13 years old and in the 7th grade of the selected junior high schools. Such students in ELT are in lower secondary school, that is, they are 11–14 years old (Ellis, 2014), and their CEFR learning targets are at A1–A2 levels (Aditomo, 2024).

B. Research Instruments

This study used the following research instruments: English tests, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Specifically, CEFR-based tests were used to assess the readiness of teachers and students. The CLIL- and YL-specific tests helped measure the impact of the ICRS-based CEFR intervention, whereas questionnaires, interviews, and observations helped understand the school facilities and teachers' perceptions. Pilot testing was conducted to determine the instruments' validity and reliability using statistical procedures and the triangulation method (Creswell, 2013). The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests (Boniface, 2019; Quirk, 2019), while the qualitative data were examined through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). A five-point Likert scale was used (Alkharusi, 2022), as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
FIVE-POINT LIKERT SCALE

Interval	Midpoint	Interpretation
1–1.80	1.4	Very low level
1.81–2.61	2.21	Low level
2.62–3.42	3.02	Moderate level
3.43–4.23	3.83	High level
4.24–5.04	4.64	Very high level

C. Research Procedures

This study employed a mixed-methods approach and was carried out in four stages. First, a needs analysis was conducted before the ICRS-based CEFR treatment to evaluate school readiness in terms of teachers, students, and learning facilities. The data were collected through observations, interviews, and CEFR-based tests. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with the students, while focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with the teachers to obtain more comprehensive insights. Second, a CLIL literacy assessment was conducted to measure the impact of the implementation on teachers' CLIL literacy, via a CLIL pre-test and post-test. Third, a YL literacy assessment was conducted to evaluate its effect on teachers' YL literacy, via a YL pre-test and post-test. Finally, the teachers' perceptions regarding CEFR integration into the school curriculum were examined through questionnaires, observations, and FGDs.

The ICRS-based CEFR was implemented over 6 weeks, with weekly face-to-face sessions (4×60 minutes), asynchronous online activities (4×60 minutes), and synchronous online sessions (2×60 minutes). The treatment covered five topics: 1) school technological readiness, learning resources, and CEFR-based proficiency assessments; 2) teachers' perceptions of CEFR integration; 3) CLIL literacy; 4) YL literacy; and 5) program evaluation through synchronous online sessions (2×60 minutes) to assess teachers' satisfaction, program impact, and reflection.

During the treatment phase, the ICRS model was implemented in five structured stages: orientation, conceptualization, investigation, conclusion, and social complexity. Figure 1 illustrates the entire research procedure.

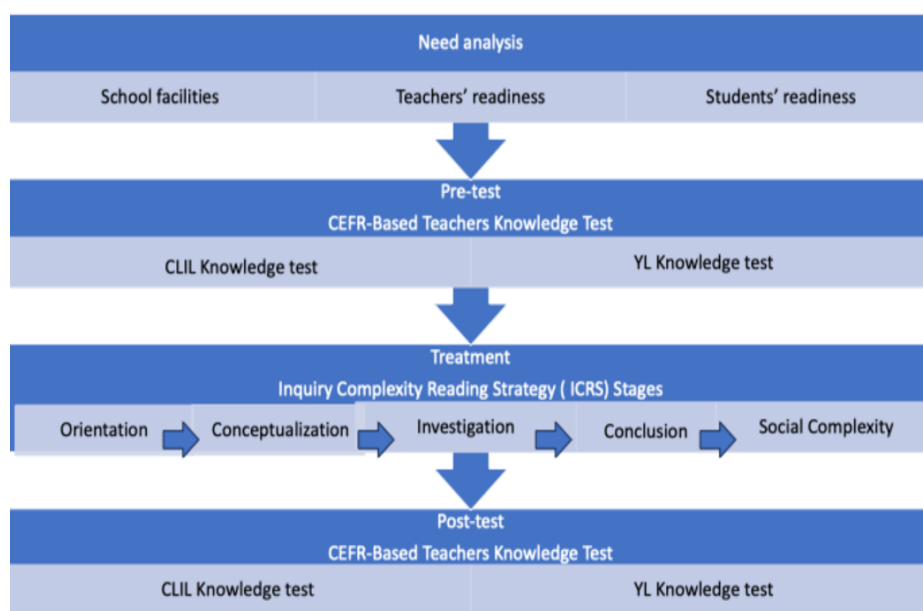


Figure 1. Research Procedure

IV. RESULTS

A. School Readiness to Integrate the CEFR Into the Curriculum

This study examined the selected schools' readiness for CEFR integration into ELT by considering teacher and student competencies, motivation, availability of learning resources, and technological infrastructure. The analysis results are given below.

(a). Students' Readiness

The students' CEFR test results (Figure 2) showed that 29 students (82.86%) achieved the Pre-A1 level, 6 (17.14%) achieved the A1 level, and none achieved the A2 level. The students demonstrated high motivation and readiness to learn. Even though their actual English proficiency remained low, they were capable of using multimedia tools.

During the interviews, the students reported that they found the CEFR platform to be ‘engaging, user-friendly, motivating, and supportive of both self-assessment and independent learning’. The researcher’s observations supported these findings, as the students actively used the CEFR materials.

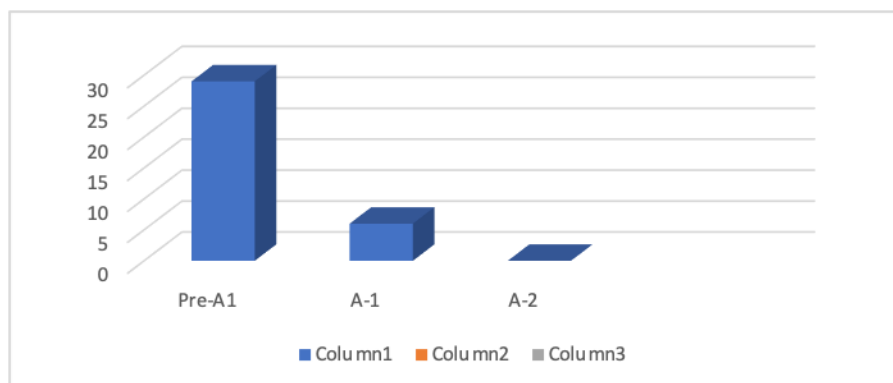


Figure 2. Students' CEFR Test Results

(b). Teacher Readiness

The teachers' CEFR proficiency test results (Figure 3) showed that 3 of them (10.71%) were at the A2 level, 15 (53.57%) at B1, 7 (25%) at B2, 3 (7.14%) at C1, and none at C2. Overall, 85.71 % of the teachers were at an independent user level but not yet proficient by CEFR standards.

Meanwhile, the interview data showed that the teachers perceived CEFR as ‘practical, motivating, and engaging’. However, researchers' observations revealed ongoing challenges, including a limited ability to operate computers, poor internet literacy, and a lack of experience using digital teaching tools.



Figure 3. Teachers' CEFR Test Results

(c). Learning Resources

The schools primarily relied on printed books and government-provided paper-based tests. However, despite the limited digital materials, the schools' infrastructure included computer labs and internet access, indicating a basic level of readiness for CEFR integration. Additionally, the learning sources analysis confirmed that the schools demonstrated foundational readiness to adopt CEFR-based instruction. It also showed that the teachers and students were motivated, infrastructure was available, and the CEFR tools were accessible and applicable, although capacity-building and professional development remained necessary.

B. Effect of the ICRS-Based CEFR on Teachers' CLIL Literacy

(a). Pilot Study of CLIL Literacy

The study instrument contained 30 items on the following 4 key indicators for teachers: 1) ability to plan, implement, and assess instruction; 2) awareness of students' learning needs; 3) application of support strategies; and 4) content literacy (Cambridge, 2022a). All the item values exceeded the significance level of 0.05, with a value of $r\text{-table} = 0.36$, confirming item validity. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded a value of 0.770, surpassing the minimum requirement of 0.60 and indicating the instrument's reliability for repeated use.

(b). Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of Teachers' CLIL Literacy

The teachers' CLIL literacy test scores were analyzed before and after the ICRS-based CEFR implementation. The results show a notable increase in the post-test scores for most participants, as presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
TEACHERS' CLIL PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES

CLIL Pre-test Scores				CLIL Post-test Scores			
35	54	29	22	67	81	52	43
44	36	24	47	77	68	57	71
31	47	37	45	60	75	61	69
40	27	30	37	67	57	57	60
58	35	43	52	82	60	76	75
36	32	47	28	61	61	65	54
33	41	45	29	65	65	71	52

The collected data were analyzed for normality testing. Based on the result of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, the significance value of the pre-test was 0.894, and that of the post-test was 0.752. Since both values were greater than 0.05, these results indicate that the data were normally distributed, as seen in Table 3.

TABLE 3
NORMALITY TEST

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
CLIL pre-test	.982	28	.894
CLIL post-test	.976	28	.752

Next, the descriptive statistics were analyzed. The mean pre-test score (38.536) was lower than the mean post-test score (65.500), indicating an improvement in teachers' CLIL literacy following the ICRS-based CEFR training. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the teachers' CLIL literacy scores on the pre-test and post-tests.

TABLE 4
TEACHERS' CLIL DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
CLIL pre-test	38.536	28	9.131	1.726
CLIL post-test	65.500	28	9.312	1.760

Further analysis was conducted to determine whether this improvement was statistically significant. The post-test scores increased by an average of 26.964 points, with a *t*-value of 34.682 and a *p*-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a statistically significant increase in teachers' CLIL literacy. Thus, the ICRS-based CEFR intervention had a substantially positive effect on the teachers' ability to teach using CLIL methodology. Table 5 presents the results of the *paired samples t-test* for the teachers' CLIL scores on the pre-test and post-tests.

TABLE 5
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST

PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST									
		Paired Differences							
		Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test CLIL Post-test CLIL	-26.964	4.114	.777	-28.560	-25.369	-34.682	27	.000

C. Effect of the ICRS-Based CEFR on Teachers' YL Literacy

(a). Pilot Study of the Young Learners' Literacy Instrument

As before, a pilot study was conducted to examine the validity and reliability of the instrument, which contained 30 items on the following 4 categories on teachers' YL literacy: 1) concepts of YLs' learning and development, 2) lesson planning and preparation, 3) teaching strategies for YLs, and 4) assessment of YLs' classroom work (Cambridge, 2022b). For $N = 28$, at a significance level of 0.05, the *r*-table value was 0.36. The *r*-counted value for the items exceeded 0.36, indicating that all 30 items were valid. Next, the reliability test was conducted with $N = 30$, which yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.923, which is well above the acceptable threshold of 0.60. The instrument was highly valid and reliable.

(b). Pre- and Post-Test Results of Teachers' YL Literacy

The YL knowledge test was used to collect the data before and after the treatment. Table 6 provides the teachers' YL literacy test scores.

TABLE 6
PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS OF TEACHERS' YL LITERACY

YL Literacy Pre-test Scores				YL Literacy Post-test Scores			
22	36	46	42	50	60	72	78
44	46	28	50	62	72	63	82
64	48	30	32	90	70	56	56
66	36	42	28	83	70	70	52
34	32	40	34	68	60	68	60
34	16	32	22	60	50	65	52
36	32	44	45	62	58	76	74

The collected data were analyzed for normality testing using the Shapiro-Wilk formulas. The pre-test and post-test significance values were 0.233 and 0.510, respectively. Both exceeded the threshold of 0.05, indicating that the data were normally distributed (Table 7).

TABLE 7
NORMALITY TESTING

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test YL	.953	28	.233
Post-test YL	.967	28	.510

Next, the descriptive statistics of the pre- and post-test data were analyzed. The mean pre-test score of the teachers' YL literacy (37.890) was lower than the mean post-test score (65.680). This increase reflects an improvement in teachers' YL literacy in ELT. Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics for the teachers' YL literacy scores on the pre-test and post-tests.

TABLE 8
TEACHERS' YL DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test YL	37.89	28	11.308	2.137
	Post-test YL	65.68	28	10.378	1.961

Following this, a *t*-test analysis was conducted to determine the significant effect of ICRS-based CEFR on teachers' YL literacy in ELT. The analysis found that the post-test scores increased by 27.79 points on average. The *t*-value of 34.714 with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) confirms a significant improvement in the teachers' YL literacy in ELT after implementation. Furthermore, the teachers' ability to deliver ELT to YLs at junior high schools was found to be in line with the relevant CEFR standard. Table 9 presents the results of the *paired samples t-test* for the teachers' YLs scores on the pre-test and post-tests.

TABLE 9
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST

		PAIRED SAMPLE T TEST							
		Paired Differences				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower				
Pair 1	Pre-test YL – Post-test YL	-27.786	4.787	.905	-29.642	-25.930	-30.714	227	.000

D. Teachers' Perceptions of Using CEFR in English Language Teaching

(a). Pilot Study of Teachers' Perception Instrument

As mentioned earlier, the teachers' perceptions of integrating the CEFR into ELT were assessed through questionnaires, FGDs, and observation. The questionnaires contained 30 items on 3 topics: familiarity with CEFR technology, awareness and willingness to use CEFR, and challenges and limitations to incorporating CEFR into ELT (Trim, 2011). A pilot study with $N = 44$, at a significance level of 0.05 and an *r*-table value of 0.31, found that the *r*-counted value for all items was higher than 0.31, indicating their validity. Meanwhile, the Cronbach's alpha of 0.747 illustrated the instrument's reliability. Thus, the questionnaires were valid and reliable and can be used repeatedly. The triangulation method was employed to ensure data validity and reliability.

(b). Teachers' Perceptions of Using CEFR in English Language Teaching

The quantitative data on teachers' perceptions were analysed to answer the following research question: What are teachers' perceptions of CEFR integration into ELT? The mean score for 'teachers' familiarity with CEFR technology' was 2.87 (moderate), 'teacher awareness and willingness to use CEFR' was 3.45 (high), and 'teachers' challenges and

limitations' was 2.87 (moderate). This indicates that the teachers were mostly aware of and agreed to integrate CEFR into their teaching.

The highest mean score (4.24) in terms of teachers' familiarity was for the item 'The CEFR training helped me understand its concept and framework' and the lowest (1.72) was for 'I have known about CEFR since my first year of teaching'. The highest mean score (4.10) regarding teachers' awareness and willingness to use the CEFR was for the item 'I am familiar with the CEFR framework' and the lowest (3.10) was for 'CEFR assessments are motivating for learners'. In terms of teachers' challenges and limitations, most agreed with the item 'My ability is a challenge in adopting CEFR' (mean score: 3.42), and fewer individuals raised concerns, such as 'My autonomy is reduced when using CEFR' (mean score: 2.62). Table 10 provides the results of the data analysis.

TABLE 10
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING CEFR

Teachers' Familiarities (TF)	Scores
I am familiar with the concept of CEFR.	2.59
I know about CEFR from the internet, books, and newspapers.	2.69
I know about CEFR from my colleagues or instructors.	3.28
I know the CEFR descriptors well.	2.59
I learnt about CEFR during my teaching.	2.72
I have known CEFR since my first time teaching at a school.	1.72
I understand CEFR during workshops.	3.03
CEFR serves as a medium, method, and learning source.	2.55
I understand how to use the CEFR framework during my workshop.	3.31
Training in CEFR helps me understand its concept and framework.	4.24
Average	2.87
Teachers' awareness and willingness	
I am familiar with the CEFR framework.	4.10
I will use the CEFR tool in my classroom.	3.62
I will learn more about the CEFR framework and its application.	3.21
I believe that using CEFR can increase students' motivation.	3.31
I am concerned about using CEFR in my class.	3.21
I am interested in participating in the next CEFR training.	3.72
The CEFR tool will improve students' engagement in learning.	3.48
I believe that the CEFR tool can be aligned with the curriculum.	3.27
The CEFR assessment is motivating learners.	3.10
Average	3.45
Teachers' Challenges and Limitations.	
I find CEFR adoption to be challenging.	3.42
Designing activities is time-consuming.	2.97
My autonomy is compromised when using the CEFR.	2.62
CEFR resulted in an extra workload for me as a teacher.	2.48
I'm not acquainted with the CEFR procedures.	2.66
CEFR is not suitable for my teaching.	2.48
I am discouraged when using CEFR in my classroom.	3.03
CEFR is inappropriate for my skill; I am doubtful.	2.72
CEFR descriptors are challenging to integrate into the classroom.	3.41
Low-proficiency students will be demotivated.	3.07
CEFR contributes less to the changes in English proficiency.	2.66
Average	2.87

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data from the FGDs revealed that most teachers found the CEFR to be engaging, motivating, flexible, interactive, and practical for classroom use, and they expressed a desire to integrate it into their teaching. However, the observation data analysis revealed that teachers also reported several challenges, such as a lack of confidence in using digital media, difficulty operating CEFR tools, unstable internet connections, concerns about time demands and workload, and perceptions of mismatch between CEFR levels and students' current abilities. Notably, despite these limitations, the teachers expressed a generally positive perception toward CEFR and a willingness to integrate it into their teaching, especially if ongoing training and institutional support are provided.

This section discusses the research findings in relation to the research questions.

V. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the research findings in relation to the following research questions: a) What is the extent of schools' readiness in integrating CEFR into the school curriculum in Indonesia? b) Does the ICRS-based CEFR significantly enhance teachers' content and language integrated learning (CLIL) literacy? c) Does the ICRS-based CEFR significantly enhance teachers' literacy related to young learners (YL)? d) What are teachers' perceptions of CEFR integration into ELT?

A. Schools' Readiness to Integrate CEFR Into the Curriculum

A needs analysis was conducted to assess the schools' readiness in terms of infrastructure, resources, and human capacity to integrate CEFR, prior to the intervention. The findings show that most of the schools were generally ready to implement CEFR-based instruction, provided computer labs and internet access, and motivated teachers and students. However, the absence of CEFR-specific resources and training caused a major barrier (Savski & Prabjandee, 2022). All the teachers had never used CEFR prior to the intervention, and students' proficiency levels were below CEFR standards, largely due to the mismatch between curriculum content and CEFR-aligned materials.

Notably, the CEFR test results placed most of the teachers at the B1 and B2 levels, qualifying them as independent users. This aligns with CEFR recommendations for teacher training, which state that educators from B1 level onwards can benefit from CEFR-based professional development. Teachers' readiness for CEFR integration has the potential to enhance curriculum delivery (Nurhaliza, 2020), and CEFR implementation could enhance teachers' language proficiency (Naser & Ali, 2023). Moreover, teachers' readiness for hybrid learning, combined with institutional support, can bridge the technological and pedagogical gap (Mansor, 2025). In contrast, the students' proficiency was still at the Pre-A1 level (basic CEFR users), indicating a need for significant pedagogical support (Piccardo et al., 2011).

B. Effect of ICRS-Based CEFR on Teachers' CLIL Literacy

CLIL encompasses teachers' awareness of and responsiveness to students' learning needs, the application of appropriate support strategies, and content mastery. CLIL facilitates the comprehension of both content and the target language (Gomez, 2021), thus ensuring learning in an integrated manner (Goris et al., 2019). However, CLIL should be adapted and expanded to motivate EFL teachers to explore and examine all the relevant issues in ELT (Hu et al., 2023). CEFR expects experienced teachers to integrate technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge effectively into their instructional practices (Hughes & Scharber, 2010). In this study, the ICRS-based CEFR instrument significantly enhanced teachers' CLIL literacy, with the mean score increasing from pre-test to post-test. Additionally, the paired sample t-test found a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores.

These findings suggest that integrating CEFR into inquiry-based instructional models can strengthen teacher capacity, particularly when digital literacy and critical thinking are prioritized (Uçar, 2023). It also has advantages for language learners across various proficiency levels by supporting their cognitive (effective) and emotional (affective) aspects of learning (Hu et al., 2023).

C. Effect of ICRS-Based CEFR on Teachers' YL Literacy

Teaching YLs requires understanding their unique cognitive and emotional needs and employing multiple strategies to address them (Luh et al., 2020). In this context, the ICRS instrument significantly enhanced the teachers' YL literacy. The mean score increased from the pre- to the post-test, and the paired sample t-test findings indicated a statistically significant difference between the two scores. These findings show that ICRS-based CEFR equips teachers with practical strategies to address the diverse needs of YLs, particularly in terms of classroom activities, scaffolding, and language exposure. Teachers with good YL pedagogical literacy can utilize these teaching methods and the most appropriate curriculum learning activities based on their elementary learners' preferences (Ahmetović & Dubravac, 2021).

According to York (2014), teachers' knowledge of students' individual skills positively impacts students' English achievement in the first grade. Additionally, teachers' alignment of digital tools with their YL instruction may foster students' critical thinking and socio-emotional development (Arifin et al., 2023), as YLs are still undergoing cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical development (Cambridge, 2022b, 2010). Furthermore, CEFR descriptors provide structure and consistency in teaching outcomes and assessment, which is appropriate for this age group.

D. Teachers' Perceptions of CEFR Integration Into English Language Teaching

In this study, teachers' perceptions of CEFR integration were generally positive, characterized by high levels of awareness and a willingness towards implementation. Although their familiarity and technological proficiency varied, the participants recognized that CEFR could enrich teaching methods, enhance assessment practices, and promote autonomous learning. The teachers agreed to develop teaching materials based on students' CEFR level and the topics available in the CEFR application. Considering these findings, CEFR integration into the schools' curriculum should be seriously considered (Alrababa'h et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, the teachers also had moderate concerns related to workload and digital readiness, but welcomed CEFR's alignment with the school curriculum when supported by practical training and accessible resources. Thus, professional development plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' beliefs, enhancing their competence, and improving student learning (Alruqi & Alharbi, 2022), which could help achieve the curriculum target of senior high school students at the B-CEFR level (Aditomo, 2024).

Overall, the findings show that it is necessary for schools to align CEFR with the national curriculum to ensure the successful implementation of the newly established educational framework introduced by the government (Aditomo, 2024). Online tool-based learning provides students with quick and wide access to instructional materials (Barisone et al., 2019). Particularly, as an internationally recognized framework, the CEFR reflects students' proficiency in English (Trim, 2011; Savski & Prabjandee, 2022). Within CEFR-guided instruction, teaching methods, learning activities, and assessments are applied in a structured manner to support students' interaction and mediation in complex learning

environments (Council of Europe, 2018; Nelson, 2011). Furthermore, the teachers demonstrated positive perceptions toward CEFR integration in ELT.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effect of an ICRS-based CEFR on English teachers' CLIL and YLs' pedagogical literacy. Through data collection and analysis, the research answered the following research questions: a) What is the extent of schools' readiness in integrating CEFR into the school curriculum in Indonesia? b) Does the ICRS-based CEFR significantly enhance teachers' content and language integrated learning (CLIL) literacy? c) Does the ICRS-based CEFR significantly enhance teachers' literacy related to young learners (YL)? d) What are teachers' perceptions of CEFR integration into ELT?

The study findings were as follows. First, most of the selected schools were ready to adopt CEFR into their curriculum and provide adequate technological infrastructure, motivate teachers and students, and ensure basic access to learning resources. Although the teachers faced certain limitations, particularly in terms of digital competence and instructional experience, they expressed strong willingness to implement CEFR-based approaches. Second, the ICRS significantly improved teachers' CLIL literacy, as they demonstrated measurable gains in planning, delivering, and assessing content and language-integrated instruction after the intervention. Third, the teachers' literacy in teaching YLs was significantly enhanced. They became more competent in understanding the developmental needs of YLs and applying CEFR-aligned teaching strategies in their classrooms. Finally, the teachers demonstrated positive perceptions toward CEFR integration in ELT. Despite facing technical and pedagogical challenges, they recognized it as a valuable framework that supports teaching effectiveness, learner motivation, and curriculum alignment.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made. Policymakers and curriculum designers must integrate CEFR systematically into national education standards, particularly for English instruction at the secondary level. Additionally, schools and teacher education programs should provide sustained professional development for teachers on CEFR-aligned instruction, focusing on CLIL and YL pedagogy. Further research can explore the impact of such instruments on student learning outcomes and curriculum development.

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Grammar Instruction in the Saudi EFL Context: Beliefs, Practices, and the Bridge to Professional Writing

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Abstract—Grammar instruction remains contentious in second language acquisition, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. Although explicit grammar instruction has been widely implemented in EFL classrooms, its effectiveness in real-world language use remains debatable. This study examines explicit grammar instruction in Saudi EFL classrooms to explore its perceived benefits and limitations. This qualitative study draws upon personal learning experiences as a source of knowledge. Specifically, three data collection methods were used to address the research questions: faculty interviews, alumni interviews, and curriculum analysis. The findings reveal a disconnect between classroom instruction and practical language application, as alumni reported minimal reliance on explicit grammar knowledge in workplace and non-academic settings. However, faculty members continued to emphasize its importance for developing linguistic accuracy. The findings underscore the need to re-evaluate the grammar teaching approaches in the EFL curricula to ensure better transferability beyond academic settings. This study thus provides insights for educators and policymakers regarding balancing grammar instruction with communicative competence in language learning.

Index Terms—L1, L2, EFL, grammar, learning transfer

I. INTRODUCTION

Grammar instruction's role in second language (L2) learning has long been subject to scholarly debate. While there is broad consensus regarding its importance, the question of how grammar should be taught and assessed remains contentious. This debate has been ongoing among second language acquisition scholars. Krashen (1982) argued that teaching grammar explicitly does not contribute to L2 acquisition but merely provides learners with limited knowledge in writing and editing practices. Some researchers believe that neglecting grammar teaching can lead to fossilization, classroom pidgins, and lower accuracy among learners (Skehan, 1998). Endorsing Skehan's argument, Schmidt (1990) asserted the importance of language form and structure.

The debate continues to evolve; while more recent foundational studies (Brown, 2001; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004) argue that teaching grammar to L2 students is necessary, later work such as Liviero (2014) suggests that explicit grammar instruction can compensate for specific limitations in EFL contexts. On the contrary, Bauducco (2017; as cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2019) asserted that traditional grammar instruction using a fixed set of rules governing language is not appropriate. Bauducco (2017) explained that grammar rule introduction, rather than increasing function in a language, can further complicate L2 development by making learners overthink accuracy, thereby hindering their written and spoken fluency. Braine (2014) and Cruz Corzo (2013) indicated that the appropriate teaching of grammar and its purpose remain debatable among L2 researchers.

Given this ongoing debate, considering the perspectives of EFL instructors and learners is imperative. This study explores participants' perspectives on grammar instruction within the EFL context. It explores the role of instructors and curriculum developers in teaching and assessing grammar alongside the strategies employed to impart this knowledge to students. Furthermore, it examines these strategies' efficacy from the perspectives of former students.

This study stems from my personal experience as an English learner and educator—from learning English in Saudi Arabia to studying and teaching in English-speaking contexts. I noticed a significant gap between L1 and L2 writing instruction during the transition—the manner in which grammar and writing were taught in Saudi Arabia differed significantly from that in English-speaking countries and from the expectations in my Ph.D. studies. While the former strongly emphasized grammar accuracy and correctness, the latter focused on meaning construction and persuasion strategies. Although rigid grammar-focused instruction was part of what equipped me for academic and professional writing demands, this field requires a combination of grammar correctness and idea development.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore teaching practices' evolution in Saudi Arabia and their alignment with students' needs. Specifically, the study examines how English is taught in Saudi Arabian universities and whether current practices and faculty perceptions align with students' writing practices in the workplace. Additionally, the sub-research questions are:

What is the understanding of native-speakerism and standard English in Saudi English classrooms, and what is their influence on grammar teaching and assessment?

Is there a correlation between grammar teaching and assessment and students' needs in other contexts?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of English grammar teaching stems from the manner in which English was originally taught. As Nassaji and Fotos (2011) stated, L2 English learning in the 1970s included grammar and descriptions of structures. Language teaching methods primarily included grammar translation, audio-lingual, and direct methods, relying heavily on grammar instruction and sentence structure. However, “while students learning a language through these approaches generally require good comprehension skills and fluency in using the L2 for communication, it was gradually noticed that many such learners did not acquire accurate use of L2 morphology and syntax as an automatic by-product” (Swain, 1998; as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2015, p. 7).

Given this study's scope and the ongoing debate in L2 scholarship, examining the history of grammar teaching in the Saudi context is essential. According to Sofi (2015), grammar is taught in Saudi Arabia through “teacher-centered classrooms by the grammar-translation method” (p. 79). Students memorize rules and words translated from English to Arabic (Sofi, 2015). Al-Seghayer (2011) and Grami (2010) said these “outdated pedagogical approaches” lead to low foreign language proficiency. Alshakhi (2019) affirmed Saudi teachers' focus on grammar and spelling, explaining that “instead of connecting themselves with their writing, students focus on the topical issues of writing, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. This is very apparent in Saudi EFL classrooms today” (p. 177).

To better understand Saudi instructors' focus on grammar, examining the perceptions and beliefs influencing assessment strategies and classroom practices is important. Borg (2009) defined teachers' beliefs as the thorough knowledge of their personal experiences and understanding of various approaches in classroom teaching influencing instructional choices. He said teachers' beliefs and classroom practice not only act as a filter through which teachers realize new information and experiences but also have long-term effects on their instructional practices. Therefore, Saudi researchers are increasingly examining instructors' beliefs and understanding of grammar instruction and assessment. Almuhammadi (2020) and AlAmir (2025) determined that Saudi instructors perceived grammar instruction as a foundational framework for English instruction. A survey and interviews of Saudi university instructors revealed that grammar is considered essential for the appropriate use of English in EFL. In line with these findings, Un Nisa (2025) concluded that greater emphasis should be placed on explicitly teaching grammar to Saudi English learners.

Similarly, Alghanmi and Shukri (2016), Abduh and Algouzi (2020), and Fathi et al. (2025) determined that teachers value grammar instruction in the EFL context, reflecting it in their classroom practices. Although the survey revealed that participant-instructors valued implicit grammar teaching, their classroom practices indicated that they adopted direct grammar instruction.

III. METHODOLOGY

This section highlights this study's design, participants, and methods.

A. Design

This qualitative study draws upon personal learning experiences as a source of knowledge and explores a novel topic within the Saudi context, aligning with the study's reflective and exploratory nature. Three data collection methods were used: faculty interviews, alumni interviews, and curriculum analysis. Course materials including syllabi, textbooks, and grading rubrics offered insights into classroom practices, presenting a stable data source with minimal risk of bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured faculty and alumni interviews were used for understanding how writing is taught, perceived, and applied beyond the classroom. Semi-structured interviews offered insights into participants' lived experiences and ensured consistency across responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Maxwell, 2013). The questions were mostly open-ended, allowing participants to reflect on their practices. Interviews were conducted in-person or via Zoom and recorded with participants' approval.

Using multiple sources facilitated triangulation¹, adding depth and credibility to the findings. This also aligns with Creswell and Poth's (2018) approach, drawing from various data types to strengthen qualitative interpretations. Maxwell (2013) emphasized the importance of collecting data from diverse sources to address potential bias and support validity. Collectively, these methods provide a broader picture of grammar instruction and its alignment with out-of-school contexts.

B. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a phenomenological theoretical framework that aims to explore individuals' lived experiences and the meanings assigned to these experiences (Larsen & Adu, 2021; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2023). Drawing on interpretivist epistemology, the study acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity and background as valid and valuable

¹ Triangulation—as described by Maxwell (2013)—involves “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods” (p. 128).

sources of insight (Maxwell, 2013). This perspective informs the study's design and methodology, emphasizing reflective inquiry and participants' perspectives on English writing instruction and grammar transfer across academic and professional settings.

C. Participants

Four faculty members from a Saudi university's English department were interviewed; a recruitment email was sent and appointments were scheduled with those who agreed to participate. The participants—two Saudi instructors and two native English speakers from international backgrounds holding degrees from institutions in the UK and Australia—represented diverse linguistic, educational, and disciplinary backgrounds, with specializations in applied linguistics, teaching English to speakers of other languages, and creative writing. For anonymity, they are referred to as Mr. Joseph, Mr. Muath, Mr. Mohammed, and Mr. Mustapha. Four alumni participants were also interviewed, recruited via email and WhatsApp. Eligible participants had graduated within the past five years and had worked in their field for at least a year. Nine alumni expressed interest, and four met the criteria—two radiology specialists, one human resources professional, and one medical student. The Zoom interviews were primarily conducted in Arabic, with occasional English, and were recorded and translated into English for analysis.

D. Data Preparation

Before the coding process, course materials including textbooks, grading rubrics, assignments, and transcripts of interviews with faculty and alumni were collected and compiled; they were first transcribed and translated as some were originally in Arabic. After “cleaning up” the transcripts by deleting repetitive words, fixing incorrect terms, and omitting identifying information about schools or participants (Geisler & Swarts, 2019), the data were segmented into t-units², clauses, noun phrases, and so on. Subsequently, the transcripts were imported into Delve³ software for initial coding.

E. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved two phases. Phase 1 focused on quantitative aspects such as code frequencies and distributions, while Phase 2 was based on overarching themes and research questions. The numerical findings were comprehensively explored to identify significance and underlying reasons. Supporting these interpretations, illustrative excerpts from the interviews and course materials were selected, analyzed, and interpreted in relation to the research questions.

IV. RESULTS

A. Faculty Interviews

The interviews with English instructors included the following questions: “What is your perception of native-speakerism and how does it affect your assessment of students? Do you consider native speakers' manner of writing ideal? Who are the native speakers in your mind?” and “In your opinion, what determines a good essay? What are your perceptions of students' ideas, voices, and grammar in an essay? Do you consider correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation important? Do you oppose the ideas presented in students' essays or only consider its overall structure?” The responses are discussed below.

(a). Mr. Joseph

Mr. Joseph is an English language instructor with bachelor's and master's degrees from international universities. He said students are not assessed based on native speakers' standards. However:

I expect certain things from my students—whether or not they are native speakers—[For example], subject–verb agreement. I don't expect them to know many phrasal verbs, but if they ask, I'll explain; if they use it in their writing and get it wrong, I'll correct it. Although I do not interfere, certain base language rules must be followed. (Mr. Joseph)

He asserted that he does not correct every grammatical error yet expects students to follow the grammar rules they learned. He added “when it comes to marking their work, I expect to see what I have taught in the assignment”. He concluded by saying “for me it's not from a native speaker's perspective that I mark their work, but purely from the English point of view that is in the book”.

Regarding what determines a good essay, Mr. Joseph replied “the writing style, grammar, fluency, smoothness of the argument, followed by the type of argument or ideas presented. Are they common things or extraordinary minds wagging? Did the person take time to delve deeper? I always tell my students, ‘don't be superficial, go deeper,’ and ‘don't be lazy, use your brain.’ For me, it's the combination of these two”. He elaborated, “don't tell me Saudi Arabia is a hot country. We already know that; explain, and provide some examples. Tell me why it is hot here but not in Syria or Jordan”.

Mr. Joseph said the one takeaway for students is “getting the fundamentals right.” He noted, “Many come to the university after about 12 years at school, right? They don't know that the first word in a sentence starts with a capital

² T-units are “the smallest group of words which can make a move in language.” See Geisler and Swarts (2019, p. 73).

³ Delve is a Qualitative Coding Software allowing users to manually categorize data segments into specific codes and themes. For more information, visit <https://delvetool.com>.

letter. That's a sin! If I can get them to remember that and that proper nouns are capitalized, I have achieved my goal". He added, "in English, there are certain rules to follow, and this is what I teach".

(b). *Mr. Muath*

Mr. Muath, an English-language instructor who completed higher education in North America, was asked about his perception of native-speakerism and whether it affects his grading style. He replied that he does not expect students' writing to be similar to native speakers; instead, he considers the ideas they express important. He accepts students' work as long as ideas are clearly conveyed in their writing. He reiterated that "students' identity is important, and I ensure they have a place in their writing where they can situate themselves freely". He encouraged students to express their beliefs and introduce their cultural identity into their writing.

Mr. Muath elucidated how his experience of studying abroad influenced his teaching: "Free writing and peer revision are new concepts, which I implement in class".

Therefore, he often encourages writing assignments in three drafts (rough, second, and final). After evaluating the rough drafts, he expects students to revise their second and final drafts, "which not many instructors do".

Regarding his assessment strategies, he said "when a student repeats a mistake in the rough or second, I deduct points". He also implements peer-review activities in class. Students are asked to review others' writing and provide feedback based on a list of questions provided by the instructor. However, he said students typically do not acknowledge peer feedback. "They request my feedback", because students are accustomed to "the instructor playing the main role in class". He said the absence of writing centers in Saudi universities also contributed to students not acknowledging peer feedback.

Mr. Muath focuses on certain types of errors while ignoring others, as "they can be corrected gradually." He emphasized the importance of "unity and coherence" and "flow of ideas", reflecting the view that effective writing does not concern mere grammatical accuracy but also communicating ideas clearly and logically. He stated, "occasionally, I overlook the mechanical errors if the argument or idea is strong". Conversely, he claimed that he focuses less on certain issues—"spelling and some grammar mistakes are fixed by computers nowadays". Nevertheless, "I won't accept an advanced level student misspelling simple words like 'textbook'". Mr. Muath also supports students drawing on their native language, such as using Arabic proverbs or Quranic verses, so long as it makes sense in context and there are no English equivalents.

(c). *Mr. Mohammed*

Mr. Mohammed is a writing instructor who teaches grammar to English and non-English majors at the university. He provided examples of Arabic scholars such as *Sibawayh* who are not native-Arabic speakers. He believes that, as long as an idea is communicated clearly, it is acceptable. "There are overall rules"; that "cannot be overlooked such as basic grammar and spellings, but regarding general format and writing style, everyone is an English language owner regardless of linguistic background".

Regarding assessment, Mr. Muhammed said "I tell my students that if I read their article without pausing, it means the essay is well-written".

Interviewer: What makes you read the article without pausing?

Mr. Mohammed: Creativity, cohesion, and sentence coherence and connection between ideas. I don't care much about grammar and spelling but emphasize the flow of ideas.

Interviewer: Does that mean students with no grammatical or spelling mistakes receive the same grades as those making errors?

Mr. Mohammed: No, I assign only 20% of total grade for these types of errors...I explain that during "peer review." I ask them to concentrate on concepts and meanings, instead of grammar and spelling.

Regarding voices and ideas, he indicated that he valued students' ideas and encouraged them to convey them clearly in their writing: "I tell my students that it is completely acceptable to share ideas and argue in favor of one over the other. The first assignment in my advanced class is a short article titled 'Who are you?' where students write about themselves, situate themselves, and remain confident of their achievements". He argued that the cultural context influences how writing is taught in Saudi. Mr. Mohammed commented "we always underestimate ourselves and students are always discouraged from expressing their ideas in their writing. This reflects our cultural values. We should overcome this, and writing is the best tool to do so".

(d). *Mr. Mustapha*

Mr. Mustapha is an English instructor whose dominant language is English; Arabic is his second language. He too received his degree from an international institution. Responding to the first question, he indicated that the standard English format is important to him and viewed native speakers' writing as a model. He added, "but I would back it up with data; I wouldn't say 'native English speakers' as such, but how proficient speakers would write".

Regarding assessment strategies, Mr. Mustapha said "we have a rubric to grade students' writing", adding, "it would be unfair for students to judge their writing based on my preference". Responding to whether he focused more on grammar or ideas when grading students' papers, he said "a little bit of both. There is no good writing without good thinking, and vice versa". While he believes that ideas and arguments in the paper are important, "the mechanics matter too".

B. Alumni Interviews

To further validate the data and assess whether instructors' teaching strategies align with students' experiences in the classroom, four alumni from the same school were interviewed about the feedback they received in college and how they correlated it with their writing at work. They were also asked about the assessment strategies their instructors used and whether they found them helpful. The following is a brief introduction to each participant along with selected quotes.

(a). *Mansour*

Mansour graduated with a bachelor of science in radiology; he works as an assistant radiologist at a local private hospital. Mansour was asked about the types of writing he learned in school and how they were assessed. He explained that prior to joining the workforce, he was expected to have at least two years of experience or complete the Saudi Career Development Program (SCDP) certificate, designed for newly-graduated Saudi medical students. It is a year-long program where students take additional courses focusing on their specialty. To obtain the certificate, a series of tasks must be completed to improve English communication skills, including the ability to write reports in English across medical fields. He said that initially, the SCDP trainer cited "major grammar issues" and failed to clear his test. He enrolled in courses to improve his grammar and written English skills and then retook the test.

Mansour explained that the program primarily focuses on discipline-specific knowledge and practical skills. For example, in the initial three months, students are assessed on their understanding of upper-body anatomy (e.g., chest, skull, shoulders) and learn how to properly take and evaluate X-rays. As the program progresses, they practice X-rays of other body parts, with a minimum passing score of 70%. While grammar is not explicitly included in the curriculum or grading criteria, Mansour noted that one instructor strongly emphasized grammar in report writing, viewing it as essential for professional communication.

(b). *Ahmed*

Ahmed is also a radiologist working in another private hospital. He graduated with a bachelor of science in radiology and has been working there for nearly two years. Ahmed said his program emphasized grammar. He believes that grammar is important and the essence of English language. "We were mainly taught grammar as a standalone subject, not as something we could use intuitively", Ahmed added.

When asked what he meant by "learning grammar out of context," Ahmed said "we typically learn grammar rules as equations. For example, if a singular noun comes before a simple present verb, we add an 's.' If it is a plural, we do not add it. We would think of every single grammar rule this way, and that would make us think multiple times before writing any sentence because our professor was particular about grammar rules".

(c). *Mohsen*

Mohsen is a human resource assistant at a petroleum company. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration and management. He facilitates communication between his employer and other businesses regarding billing-related concerns. He also assists with recruiting, hiring, and performance evaluation. Regarding the type of writing he does for work, Mohsen said he sends emails, writes letters, and reports.

Mohsen was asked about the association between his writing responsibilities at work and what he learned in college. Mohsen felt that his college English classes, which focused mainly on grammar, spelling, and reading comprehension, were not directly relevant to his work. In contrast, a summer course he took abroad was more practical, integrating grammar into broader lessons and providing opportunities to apply what he learned.

(d). *Saud*

Saud is a medical school graduate working as a researcher while pursuing postgraduate studies at a Western medical institution. He has worked in multiple hospitals and educational institutions in various positions—resident doctor, intern, and teaching assistant in a Saudi university medical program. He has academic and professional experience, both in Saudi Arabia and internationally, where he is pursuing graduate studies. He wants to obtain a Ph.D. and teach at the College of Medicine once he returns to Saudi Arabia.

Saud explained that his current job writing focuses on reports and emails, while his graduate program requires research papers. In college, grammar and basic English skills were emphasized in the preparatory year, with a required passing score of 80%. While Saud found this instruction somewhat effective, his prior experience studying English abroad gave him additional practice. As he advanced, grammar became less of a focus, with no grade deductions for errors. To avoid mistakes, he used tools like Grammarly and relied on his graduate program's writing center, which also offered support for international students—a resource he wished were available in Saudi Arabia.

C. *Course and Curriculum Analysis*

The selected university offers various English courses to prepare students for academic programs. Given that English is the primary medium of instruction in most academic programs at Saudi universities, students must complete several English courses in the "preparatory year," focusing on four core language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The program aims to enhance students' exposure to English and familiarize them with its use in academic settings, as it is not their native language.

Although the preparatory year program encompasses an array of English courses and skills, this study specifically focuses on how grammar is introduced and assessed in English courses. Given that grammar instruction is primarily delivered through writing courses, the study examined four relevant courses: “English Communication Skills,” “English Academic Writing I,” “English Academic Writing II,” and “English Academic Writing III.” This section briefly reviews each course, emphasizing the grading criteria and textbooks used.

(a). *English Communication Skills*

The class is divided into writing and speaking components. Students are expected to write an introductory paragraph and deliver a presentation. The course also emphasizes the importance of grammar and spelling; the course objectives state that students are expected to “1. proofread and edit own work to reduce grammatical errors,” “2. use knowledge of sentence structure to avoid sentence fragments, run-on sentences etc.,” and “3. utilize teachers’ feedback to correct grammatical and spelling errors.” The focus on mechanical aspects is also evident in class activities. For instance, for the peer review activity, students are asked to “edit their own and their peers’ writing to ensure there are no grammatical or structural errors” (Course syllabus, n.d.). Additionally, they are expected to proofread and edit an authentic piece of writing to identify grammatical errors (Course syllabus, n.d.).

Paragraph writing, which considers various grading criteria (including grammar and spelling), contributes to 40% of the total grade; students also complete quizzes, midterms, and finals. These tests comprise multiple-choice (where students select the right tense or verb in a sentence), cloze exercises (texts with omitted vocabulary or content information), fill-in-the-blank (sentences with a specific, predetermined word or structure missing) and error-identification (identifying structural or grammatical errors in paragraph or sentence). These quizzes and exams emphasize students’ comprehension of grammar rules and vocabulary learned in class. Students are expected to analyze texts with grammatical errors, spell correctly, and write grammatically correct sentences, as communicated in the grading rubric of the course.

The textbooks used include *Longman Academic Writing Series (3): Paragraphs to Essays* (Oshima & Hogue, 2013) and *First Steps in Academic Writing, Level 2* (Hogue, 2007). The first book emphasizes style, sentence structure, and mechanics. For instance, the first chapter, titled “Academic Paragraphs,” introduces students to page formatting for academic paragraphs, a simple sentence structure, subject–verb agreement, and letter capitalization; explicit instructions are provided. In the section labeled “mechanics,” students learn the “rules for using capital letters” (Oshima & Hogue, 2013, p. 10). This section provides a table of capitalization rules with examples. Similarly, in the three comma rules, students learn the use of comma after “the first sentence in a compound sentence” or between items in a three-or-more-item series (Oshima & Hogue, 2013, p. 44). It includes an example and a brief explanation (see Figure 1).

THREE COMMA RULES

Let’s review two comma rules that you have learned and learn one new one.

RULES	EXAMPLES
1. Put a comma after a time-order signal that comes before the subject at the beginning of a sentence. <i>Then, soon, and now</i> are usually not followed by a comma.	Yesterday, I did homework for three hours. Finally, I was too tired to think. At 8:00 in the evening, I fell asleep on the sofa. BUT Soon I started dreaming.
2. Put a comma after the first sentence in a compound sentence. Put the comma before the coordinating conjunction. (Don’t use a comma between two parts of a simple sentence.)	I was too tired to think, so I decided to take a short break. BUT I woke up and finished my homework.
3. Put a comma between the items in a series of three or more items. The items may be words, phrases, or clauses. (Don’t use a comma between only two items.)	I got up, took a shower, drank a cup of coffee, grabbed my books, and ran out the door. Red, white, and blue are the colors of the United States flag. BUT Red and gold are the school colors.

Figure 1. Three Comma Rules (Oshima & Hogue, 2013, p. 44)

Students are also introduced to grammatical aspects such as comma splices, fragmented sentences, and subject–verb agreement. Typically, the question concerns the presented topic. For instance, students learning about subject–verb agreement are asked, “How many subject–verb combinations are there in Sentence 2?” (Oshima & Hogue, 2013, p. 40). The textbook then explains how a subject should agree with the verb and offers practice sentences.

In the second book, students are introduced to “Grammar and Mechanics” and “Sentence Structure” in Unit 1. Part 2 (Grammar and Mechanics) elucidates subject–verb agreement, punctuation, and capitalization, while Part 3 (sentence structure) deals with sentence structure (simple, compound, complex), conjunctions (and, or, but), and issues such as comma splices and fragments. As in previous textbooks, grammar and mechanics are explicitly presented in this textbook.

(b). *English Academic Writing I*

This class introduces students to a multi-paragraph essay structure. Students learn how to write the body and concluding paragraphs and compose a full essay comprising three paragraphs (introduction, supporting points, and conclusion

paragraphs) at the end of the course. The curriculum of English Academic Writing I prioritizes grammatical accuracy, particularly grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. The objectives of writing assignments (two-body paragraph assignments and a full three-paragraph essay) include specific grading criteria emphasizing grammar. The assignment goals include “producing sentences with a minimal number of lower-level grammatical errors (e.g., articles, subject–verb agreement),” “producing various simple, compound, and complex sentences with minimal structural errors,” and “using capitalization and punctuation accurately” (Course syllabus, n.d.). Assuming that students have learned basic English grammar rules in a previous introductory class, they are expected to demonstrate knowledge of grammar rules, verb tenses, and various sentence structures, including simple, compound, and complex in this class. Compared with the previous course, expectations of grammar accuracy and correctness are greater in this course.

The textbooks used for this course are *Great Writing 3: From Great Paragraphs to Great Essays, Fifth Edition* (Folse et al., 2019) and *Fundamentals of English Grammar SB/App International Edition, 5th Edition* (Azar & Hagen, 2019). Although the former primarily focuses on writing, each unit includes only one or two grammar lessons, covering topics like “fragmented sentences,” “pronoun reference,” “subject–verb agreement,” and “the different types of clauses (noun, adjective, adverbial).” The second textbook covers grammar lessons and provides grammar activities. Similar to the textbooks used in the English Communication Skills course, grammar is explicitly presented to students in these textbooks.

(c). *English Academic Writing II*

In this course, students are expected to produce two full four-paragraph essays (450–500 words each)—opinion- and cause-and-effect essays—with reference to at least three scholarly sources to support their arguments. Unlike previous English courses, in English Academic Writing II, the quality of written production is expected to be higher. Rather than basic mechanical errors, the focus is on paragraph structure, academic English use, genre knowledge, and appropriate references. That is, students’ writing is assessed based on the grammatical structures used, academic language, lexical chunks, discourse markers, contextual devices appropriate to the genre, and specific citation and referencing style. The assessment of writing quality based on previously mentioned criteria accounts for 50% of the total grade.

In addition to writing assessments, students are required to complete quizzes and exams addressing genre, academic essay structure, referencing, and grammar. Similar to test formats in previous courses, students complete multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and error-identification questions to assess their understanding of the content covered in the class; however, the focus of the tests in this class include aspects such as genre awareness and citation.

The textbook used for this course is *Longman Academic Writing Series (4): Essays* (Oshima & Hogue, 2013). Although it places less emphasis on grammar, the textbook offers lessons on comma rules. In the lesson titled “Transition Phrase and Conjunctive Adverbs,” Oshima and Hogue (2013) explain the appropriate place of commas after dependent clauses. It also offers practice on how to correctly structure topic, supporting, and conclusion sentences and distinguish them from each other.

(d). *English Academic Writing III*

The final English class in the preparatory year program is English Academic Writing III, comprising advanced grammar and scientific writing. The former introduces students to advanced grammatical structures and different types of clauses. For instance, they learn about nouns, adjectives, and adverbial clauses and how to incorporate them appropriately into their writing. In the latter, students are introduced to scientific writing; they are expected to produce a five-paragraph scientific essay (750–1,000 words) as their final project. Students’ progress is assessed in this class via their final scientific essays and assignments, quizzes, and exams. The instructor assesses their writing based on their ability to “identify discourse markers; use transition signals effectively; demonstrate flexible grammar usage to convey ideas; revise and edit texts for vocabulary, word choice, and grammatical accuracy; use a range of reporting verbs; and construct multi-clause structures” (Coursebook, n.d.). Additionally, the instructor assesses students’ understanding of course content via quizzes and exams primarily focusing on grammar and organization.

As there are two components—grammar and writing—students are required to take *Understanding and Using English Grammar, 5th edition* (Azar & Hagen, 2016), for the grammar component, and *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students, 5th edition* (Bailey, 2017) for the writing component. Azar and Hagen (2016) focus on grammar lessons designed for L2 learners, with explicit grammar instruction and practice for learners. Figure 2 illustrates how future progressive tense usage is introduced.

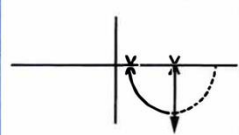
3-5 Future Progressive		
	(a) I will begin to study at seven. You will come at eight. I <i>will be studying</i> when you come.	The FUTURE PROGRESSIVE expresses an activity that <i>will be in progress at a time in the future</i> .
	(b) Don't call me at nine because I won't be home. I <i>am going to be studying</i> at the library.	The progressive form of <i>be going to</i> : <i>be going to + be + -ing</i> , as in (b)
	(c) I'll <i>be picking</i> Susie up early for a dentist appointment.	<i>Will + the progressive</i> can be used with an activity that is not in progress at a time in the future. It is common in spoken English when the speaker wants to sound more polite or softer. It is an alternative to: 1) the non-progressive form of <i>will</i> (<i>I'll pick Susie up early for a dentist appointment.</i>) OR 2) <i>be going to</i> (<i>I'm going to pick Susie up early for a dentist appointment.</i>)
	(d) We'll <i>be contacting</i> you shortly about your inquiry.	

Figure 2. Future Progressive Explanation (Azar & Hagen, 2016, p. 63)

Bailey (2017) provided various writing lessons beneficial for L2 students, including methods to structure an academic essay, analyze visuals, and cite references. The chapter titled “Language Issues” focuses on mechanical aspects, which “deal[s] with language issues that international students find most challenging when writing in English. For example, the appropriate use of definite articles, correct use of punctuation, and effective use of a suitable academic style can be problematic for any student” (Bailey, 2017). Each section contains a thorough explanation of language issues and techniques for avoiding them in their writing.

V. DISCUSSION

Drawing on interviews with Mr. Joseph, Mr. Muath, Mr. Mohammed, and Mr. Mustapha, this section discusses the relationships between instructors’ beliefs, institutional rubrics, and classroom practices regarding grammar instruction.

A. Faculty Interviews

(a). Perceptions of Native-Speakerism and Standard English

Faculty participants’ views on native-speakerism and standard English revealed varying degrees of awareness and endorsement. While all instructors verbally rejected grading based solely on native-speaker norms, their practices suggest otherwise. For instance, Mr. Joseph and Mr. Mustapha indicated that they follow institutional rubrics that reflect native-speaker standards, particularly regarding grammar. This adherence is reinforced by course textbooks and materials that prioritize standard English and include explicit grammar instruction in every unit. Interestingly, using standard English appeared to be influenced by participants’ linguistic backgrounds. Both the instructors said maintaining a standard form simplifies instruction and ensures consistency, reflecting the diglossic nature of Arabic, where standard Arabic (*fusha*) that is used in the Quran serves as a unifying written and formal spoken form, in contrast to the regionally-varied colloquial dialects (*amiyyah*) in everyday spoken language. This background likely influenced their positive stance toward English standardization.

However, Mr. Mohammed downplayed the significance of explicit grammar instruction, suggesting that English is a *lingua franca* and that all English learners can be considered “native speakers.” He acknowledged the necessity of familiarizing students with general grammar rules but argued that strict adherence to standard English grammar could alienate learners, suppressing their linguistic identities. This aligns with arguments warning against the rigid enforcement of standard English, which may discourage learners from utilizing their first language (L1) as a resource (Canagarajah, 2006; Cummins, 1991). While some believe L1 reliance could lead to negative language transfer (Karim & Nassaji, 2013), others—such as Mr. Mohammed—endorse its role in enhancing second language (L2) proficiency. Although this study’s participants did not express overt support for multilingual approaches, Mr. Mohammed hinted at a more inclusive understanding of English.

(b). Grammar Instruction and Assessment

Participants’ responses to grammar instruction revealed a subtle tension between stated beliefs and actual practices. While most of them claimed that grammar was not their primary focus, their teaching methods and grading policies suggest otherwise. Mr. Joseph and Mr. Mustapha explicitly emphasized the importance of grammar, aligning their grading with what was taught in class; for example, if subject–verb agreement was the lesson focus, related errors would be penalized. Their approach closely mirrored the institution’s rubrics, underscoring grammatical accuracy. Conversely, Mr. Muath and Mr. Mohammed adopted a more meaning-oriented approach, focusing on idea construction and coherence over grammatical correctness. However, the grading rubrics and textbooks they used emphasized grammatical correctness and other mechanical aspects. Both said that although they value content more, ignoring grammar completely could risk

being seen as incompetent by colleagues who assume that students have already mastered those skills. This affirms Al-Seghayer's (2011) argument that many Saudi instructors fail to amend their curricula because of curriculum constraints and institutional expectations.

This discrepancy between belief and practice has been supported by previous research; Alghanmi and Shukri (2016) and Abduh and Algouzi (2020) determined that Saudi instructors often claim to de-emphasize grammar but nevertheless implement grammar-focused practices amid institutional constraints. The embedded nature of grammar instruction in textbooks and rubrics is critical for maintaining this focus.

B. Alumni Interviews

The alumni interviews offered important insights into the teaching and application of grammar in professional contexts. The findings emphasize the varying levels of grammar instruction, its perceived relevance, and different impacts based on job type and academic background.

(a). Perception and Practice of Grammar

Mansour's experience underscores a critical issue in how grammar instruction is perceived and implemented in professional settings. While SCDP did not formally list grammar assessment as part of its grading rubric, the program instructor emphasized grammatical accuracy. Mansour's inability to pass the SCDP exam the first time due to "major grammar issues," despite the absence of explicit grading criteria for grammar, underscores the significance of correct grammar for professional competency, in line with Van Vooren et al. (2012), who argued that language instructors model their teaching based on their educational experiences. The instructor's educational experiences influenced Mansour's approach to teaching and assessing grammar, prioritizing grammatical precision over content and comprehension. This resonates with Alshakhi's (2019) case, where he was "told to focus more on the structure of writing and grammatical rules," affirming the scenario in Saudi EFL contexts.

Meanwhile, both Ahmed and Mohsen underscored the detrimental effects of presenting grammar instruction in isolation from real-world application. Ahmed's reflection on the abstract, rule-based nature of grammar instruction in his program revealed the negative impact of decontextualized grammar teaching. According to him, learning grammar as a set of rigid rules (e.g., "add an 's' for singular nouns") led to an overly analytical writing process, echoing Bauducco's (2017; as cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2019) critique that explicit grammar instruction lacks contextualization. As Celce-Murcia (2015) indicated, grammar should be integrated into meaningful communication, not taught as an isolated, mechanical skill. When grammar is taught abstractly, it risks overburdening students with mechanical concerns at the expense of fluency and authentic writing practices.

Mohsen's account of the grammar instruction he received highlights how the emphasis on isolated rules hindered his ability to apply grammar effectively in real-world settings. His comparison of the grammar instruction received in college and the more practical, contextualized approach in a summer language program abroad illustrates the advantages of learning grammar within meaningful contexts, as Shen (2012) recommends for non-English majors. This reinforces the importance of presenting grammar instruction within a relevant context, particularly for non-language majors.

(b). Workplace Relevance

Although grammar instruction in academic programs may seem disconnected from workplace demands, the experiences of Saud and Mansour emphasize its continued importance in certain professional settings. Mansour's SCDP experience revealed that despite grammar not being included in official grading criteria, it influenced his chances of obtaining certification. This highlights how workplace expectations regarding grammar may not always align with formal educational objectives but nevertheless impact professional advancement. This aligns with the perspectives of Mr. Muath and Mr. Mohammed, who argued that although direct grammar instruction may not benefit students, they feel compelled to use it because of institutional and employer expectations.

Saud's experience—both in Saudi Arabia and abroad—highlights the importance of grammatical accuracy in academic and professional settings, particularly in the medical field, suggesting that, when grammar is taught within a clear context and its purpose is made explicit, learners are more likely to benefit—unlike Ahmed and Mohsen, who introduced grammar as abstract knowledge. This supports Shen's (2012) argument that direct grammar instruction, especially for non-English majors, is often ineffective when taught without a context or purpose. Instead, grammar should be taught indirectly and embedded in contexts relevant to students' careers. Although grammar remains a crucial element of academic and professional communication, it should be taught in a purpose-driven manner.

(C). Curriculum Analysis

The importance of grammar instruction and assessment is clearly stated in the objectives and textbooks of the four courses. According to course assignment rubrics, 30–40% of writing assignment grades are often allocated to grammar. Additionally, class activities such as peer review and quizzes heavily focus on grammatical accuracy. The activity description shows that the emphasis is often on grammatical correctness, spelling, and sentence structure. In peer review activities, students are instructed to "edit" and "proofread" their peers' papers, yet the underlying ideas are not discussed. Similarly, quizzes and midterms are designed to assess students' grammatical knowledge.

Accordingly, these class activities aligned with the textbook lessons. Each textbook provides explicit grammar instruction to students, including details such as comma use or ‘be’ verbs. Formulas are also provided for structuring simple and compound sentences as well as nouns or adverbial clauses to ensure accuracy and correctness. This curriculum preview highlights comprehensive instruction and significant classroom time dedicated to teaching grammar, sentence structure, and other technical aspects, as indicated by Almuhammadi (2020) and Fathi et al. (2025). It also corroborates the previously discussed learning experience of Alshakhi (2019), who criticized the extensive focus on grammar and topical issues of writing, preventing the exploration of “the variety of topics and genres of essays...and exploration of the world through writing” (p. 177).

Accordingly, course developers’ emphasis on exposing L2 students to grammatical and mechanical features is understandable and supported by seminal scholars (Liviero, 2014; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Brown, 2000; Schmidt, 1990; Skehan, 1998). However, an overly detailed focus may hinder students from engaging with the critical aspects of writing such as idea development, rhetorical purpose, and audience awareness. As Alshakhi (2019) stated, “instead of connecting themselves with their writing, students focus on the topical issues of writing, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. This is very apparent in Saudi EFL classrooms today” (p. 77). Focusing on grammar and sentence structure not only leads students to overemphasize writing’s surface features, as is evident from Ahmed and Mohsen, at the expense of its fundamental goals: persuasion and communication. Overall, while grammar remains a key component of writing instruction, its decontextualized and prescriptive delivery in textbooks undermines students’ ability to develop meaningful, contextually-relevant writing skills beyond the classroom.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study explores the manner in which grammar is taught and assessed in Saudi universities from the perspectives of Saudi faculty and alumni. The triangulated findings based on faculty and alumni interviews and curriculum analysis collectively reveal a consistent emphasis on grammar instruction and assessment by instructors and course materials. Aligning with Alghanmi and Shukri (2016) and Abduh and Algouzi (2020), the findings reveal that, while some instructors expressed an interest in communicative competence and meaning-focused grammar teaching, their classroom practices reflected in the course rubrics, textbooks, and alumni reflections indicated otherwise. Faculty interviewees indicated that the focus on grammar can be attributed to institutional constraints and future job expectations that prioritize mechanical accuracy and rule-based instruction. Alumni interviewees indicated that the way they were taught grammar did not sufficiently benefit them in their current jobs.

The data suggest a disconnect between what is taught at school and what students need at work, leading to isolation not only from the English-language curriculum that alumni need at work but also from everyday English communication needs. To address this issue, purpose-driven grammar lessons could benefit students. Depending on their proficiency level and major, grammar lessons should be designed to suit their needs to enhance the link between what students learn in class and what they need in non-academic contexts; a combination of grammatical knowledge and practices is crucial. Similar to Mohsen, Ahmed, and Saud, who pointed out that grammar lessons were not useful because of the lack of a practical component, increasing in-class peer activities and providing out-of-class support—such as tutoring and writing center sessions—could prove beneficial. Saud’s case underscored the effectiveness of combining grammar instruction with regular visits to a writing center. However, as Mr. Muath mentioned, such centers are often lacking in Saudi universities, leaving students with limited opportunities to apply their grammatical knowledge, underscoring the need for writing centers at universities, particularly in EFL settings.

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Teachers' Needs for Collaborative Project-Based Learning Model Innovation in Strengthening Deep Learning for Senior High School Students in Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract—This study aims to identify teachers' needs regarding the innovation of a collaborative project-based learning model for enhancing deep learning among senior high school students in Central Java, Indonesia. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire based on six components of the learning model: syntax, social system, reaction principles, support systems, instructional impact, and accompanying impact. Data were collected from Javanese language teachers in senior high schools across Central Java. The results show that teachers expressed a high need for clarity in instructional steps, interaction strategies, and the effectiveness of achieving learning objectives in the components of syntax, social system, reaction principles, and instructional impact. However, there was significant variation in responses regarding support systems and accompanying impacts, highlighting challenges related to the availability of facilities, institutional support, and the internalization of values such as learning autonomy, motivation, and social skills. These findings suggest that Javanese language teachers require a learning model that not only focuses on instructional outcomes but also considers the need for adequate support resources and accompanying impacts to foster deep learning. The study emphasizes the importance of developing a collaborative, project-based learning design that incorporates local Javanese cultural values, improves teacher competence, and ensures sufficient facilities and infrastructure to support effective teaching.

Index Terms—teachers' needs, learning innovation, Javanese language, collaborative projects, deep learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning for senior high school students in the current digital era not only demands teachers' sensitivity to continuously adapt to technological revolutions but also necessitates the development of higher-order thinking skills, collaboration, and metacognitive abilities that underpin deep learning. In the context of Javanese language learning, this challenge becomes even more pressing as Javanese language teachers must cultivate contextual, interdisciplinary meanings that are relevant to students' cultural experiences. Consequently, there is a tangible need among teachers for an innovative Javanese language learning model that is authentic, collaborative, and project-oriented, so that curricular goals and the strengthening of 21st-century competencies can be achieved (Bal & Öztürk, 2025; Wu, 2024).

Empirical studies on Javanese language learning in Indonesia highlight issues related to teaching materials, curriculum alignment, and teachers' confidence in the Javanese language content, as well as its integration with Javanese culture. Some studies have found that Javanese language teachers report materials considered difficult for students, content that is not systematic or contextual, forcing teachers to create additional materials. Other studies show that teachers modify or independently create Javanese language teaching materials due to discrepancies with the prescribed curriculum textbooks. However, there is currently no theoretical model that links teachers' competence confidence with their readiness to adopt a Collaborative Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model as an outcome of deep learning in Javanese language teaching (Rahadini et al., 2022).

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Regarding Project-Based Learning (PjBL), recent reviews emphasize that the PjBL approach in language learning can enhance intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and academic achievement when designed with meaningful tasks and adequate teacher support (Boardman et al., 2024; Wu, 2024). On the other hand, deep learning as a learning objective requires strategies that encourage the integration of knowledge, critical reasoning, reflection, and transfer across contexts. Recent systematic reviews in the literacy domain suggest that approaches combining technology with deep pedagogy positively impact the quality of senior high school students' language skills. However, their effectiveness heavily depends on instructional design and the teacher's competence in orchestrating collaborative-reflective activities (Bal & Öztürk, 2025). These findings reinforce the urgency of teachers' need for concrete models and implementation guidelines, such as rubrics, project examples, and collaboration facilitation frameworks, to ensure that the desired learning outcomes are realized (Gao et al., 2024; Imran et al., 2024).

The discussion above reveals a practical gap between the idealism of a collaborative project-based innovation that fosters deep learning and the actual implementation in language classes, including Javanese language classes. The primary needs of teachers can be mapped into several areas: (1) a standardized but locally and culturally contextualized collaborative project-based learning model design; (2) formative-summative assessment tools to evaluate collaboration, metacognition, and the quality of language products; (3) ongoing professional development support and teacher learning communities to share projects, facilitation scenarios, and differentiation strategies; and (4) meaningful integration of technology to enrich student dialogue and foster reflection (Boardman et al., 2024; Gao et al., 2024; Potvin et al., 2021). Evidence that PjBL promotes self-regulation and collaborative participation in language classrooms underscores this urgency. Without systematic support for teachers, innovation risks being reduced to surface-level project activities, rather than fostering deep learning (Wu, 2024).

The needs of Javanese language teachers in this study refer to six components of the learning model, as proposed by Joyce et al. (2009). These six components include syntax, social system, reaction principles, support systems, instructional impact, and accompanying impact. Syntax refers to the sequence of instructional steps that systematically guide the learning process. The social system encompasses the roles, rules, and patterns of interaction between teachers and students during the learning process. Reaction principles involve the ways teachers respond, provide feedback, and direct students' learning behaviors. Support systems include the conditions, facilities, and resources needed to optimally implement the learning model. Instructional impact refers to the direct learning outcomes that align with the planned learning objectives, while accompanying impact refers to indirect outcomes that emerge during the learning process, such as attitudes, values, and social skills developed by students (Joyce et al., 2009). In this study, these six aspects serve as the primary reference for designing and evaluating the effectiveness of a learning model, ensuring that the learning process not only results in cognitive knowledge but also shapes students' personalities and social skills.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the need for a collaborative project-based Javanese language learning model to strengthen deep learning is seen as a prerequisite for achieving meaningful Javanese language learning objectives in senior high schools. This study is therefore both relevant and urgent in mapping these needs and formulating a feasible model design, supported by implementation tools, and aligned with the linguistic and cultural characteristics within the context of Javanese language learning for senior high school students in Indonesia. Consequently, this study aims to identify teachers' needs for a collaborative project-based Javanese language learning model to strengthen deep learning for senior high school students. The subsequent research findings will be used to develop an innovative, contextual, in-depth, and meaningful collaborative project-based Javanese language learning model to strengthen deep learning for senior high school students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teachers' Needs for Javanese Language Model Innovation

In the field of language education, teachers' needs for innovation encompass (a) the need for a clear pedagogical framework, (b) support for professional development and communities of practice, (c) contextualized resources or curriculum, and (d) assessment and supportive technologies aligned with deep learning objectives. The core practices framework asserts that effective innovation requires a set of core practices that can be learned, practiced, and modeled across contexts (Pupik et al., 2023). In project-based learning (PjBL), these core practices are directed toward four goals: disciplinary learning, authentic work, collaboration, and iteration (Grossman et al., 2021; Pupik et al., 2023). These findings indicate that teachers require operational practice guidelines, not just general principles, in order for innovations in language learning models to be sustainably implemented in the classroom.

Researches on PjBL in language education (including English Language Arts) demonstrates that teachers need support to scale innovations, deepen their implementation, sustain them, and take ownership of project curricula (Potvin et al., 2021). Studies in secondary classrooms highlight the need for classroom orchestration (scaffolding, time management, co-constructing rubrics, repeated feedback) to achieve higher-level literacy goals. Furthermore, effective PjBL requires teachers to manage student collaboration and the revision-product cycle to stimulate deep learning (iteration practices, reflection, concept transfer), meaning teachers need ready-to-use task tools, artifact examples, and collaboration protocols (Boardman et al., 2024).

Recent studies in project-based language learning indicate that self-regulated learning (SRL) is a key mechanism for deepening learning. Teachers need explicit strategies to foster students' planning, monitoring, and reflection in projects (Wu, 2024). The direct implication is that teachers require SRL support tools (reflection checkpoints, team contracts) integrated into language project designs. Innovations in language learning models require practice-based professional development so that teachers can rehearse core practices (facilitating text discussions, guiding genre-based writing, framing authentic projects) and receive structured feedback. These findings emphasize the need for on-the-job coaching, collaborative lesson study, and a repository of validated practice examples.

In Indonesia, the declining use of the Javanese language has led to curricular demands for Javanese language learning that goes beyond declarative knowledge and promotes authentic linguistic practices (family, community, cultural realms). Policy studies reveal a mismatch between constitutional mandates and the implementation of regulations, indicating that schools and teachers need micro-level policies and teaching materials that position regional languages as sources of knowledge, identity, and cultural capital (Suwarno, 2020). Recent studies on the decline of Javanese language use in recreational contexts further underscore the urgency of pedagogical approaches relevant to adolescent literacy practices (e.g., digital media, community projects). Study on critical Javanese language awareness, highlight the variation in practices and the need for explicitly designed tasks that foster critical awareness as well as contextual teaching materials; their findings are particularly relevant for the secondary level, which demands more complex literacy skills (Yulianto et al., 2023).

B. Project-Based Learning Approach

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is understood as an approach to learning where projects are central to instruction. Condliffe (2017) demonstrated that the potential of PjBL can drive deep learning, student engagement, and 21st-century skills; however, its implementation requires changes in teachers' roles, classroom management skills, and professional development support. Consequently, PjBL is closely related to deep learning in education. Previous literature defines deep learning as a concept widely used to address systems and implementations of learning that are deep, measurable, systematic, and meaningful (Biggs & Tang, 1999). The foundational argument for linking PjBL, deep learning, and collaborative learning is based on Vygotsky's theory about the role of social interaction, scaffolding, and more knowledgeable others in the construction of understanding, providing the theoretical foundation for collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978).

PjBL is viewed as a strategy that can foster deeper learning because it typically focuses on science, social studies, or foreign languages. However, there is still limited research that builds a theoretical framework that explicitly integrates PjBL principles with deep learning constructs (understanding, transfer, reflection) within the context of Javanese language learning (Biggs & Tang, 1999). Moreover, most studies assess the effects of PjBL on student outcomes but do not address teachers' needs. Yet, Javanese language teachers are the primary subjects who require attention, particularly regarding their needs. Thus, there is a need for a theoretical construct that outlines teachers' needs (pedagogical competencies, project design, TPACK/technology, institutional support, and ongoing PD) as prerequisites for the success of PjBL in fostering deep learning. For digital/online contexts, Zhao et al. (2024) showed that teacher TPACK support and peer support influence deep learning through mediators such as self-efficacy and academic emotions, which emphasizes the importance of integrating teacher support and technical readiness into the learning framework.

Many PjBL theories and models promoting deep learning have been developed and tested in developed countries or specific subjects; however, the adaptation of these concepts for teaching regional languages that involve cultural elements, dialectal variations, and local content has not been extensively theorized. Local empirical findings show issues with materials and their relevance to students' lives (Rahadini et al., 2022). In relation to this, PjBL requires assessments that represent higher-order thinking skills and transfer (deeper learning), yet there is a lack of consensus on how to measure deep learning in PjBL units. This becomes even more complicated when contextualized in regional language learning (language products, cultural performances, intertextual skills).

C. Deep Learning in Language Learning

Recent literature places deep language learning at the intersection of: (a) cognitively deep task designs (generative, problem-based, collaborative), (b) psychological (self-efficacy, self-regulation) and social (teacher-student interaction) factors, and (c) learning ecosystems (blended learning, authentic assessment, reflection). These findings support the development of a collaborative project-based language learning model that explicitly targets depth indicators (analysis, integration, creation, reflection), aligning with teachers' needs to reinforce deep learning in senior high schools.

In relation to task design and deep processing in lexical acquisition, Liao et al. (2023) compared various vocabulary task types within the depth-processing framework and discussed two classical models, the Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH) vs. the Technique Feature Analysis (TFA). Their findings affirm that tasks requiring higher semantic/relational analysis lead to better retention compared to tasks with shallow cognitive engagement (e.g., copying/marking), highlighting the importance of aligning task features with the goal of achieving "deeper" learning outcomes. For language curricula (including regional languages like Javanese), collaborative projects should integrate generative/transformational tasks (e.g., discourse reconstruction, meaning expansion, intertextual bridging) rather than merely surface-level exercises.

Meanwhile, regarding psychosocial factors and classroom ecology that predict deep learning, Sixia and Mustapha (2024) examined self-efficacy, engagement, and teacher-student interaction as significant predictors of deep learning in blended learning-based English courses at the senior high school level. The study demonstrated a positive coefficient between self-efficacy and teacher-student interaction in relation to deep learning, with engagement serving as a mediator between self-belief and deep learning behavior (Dong, 2025). The relevance of this study to the current research is that the collaborative project model needs to inject efficacy support (scaffolding, formative feedback, challenging goals) and activity designs that enhance sustained learning outcomes across phases (pre-class, in-class, post-class).

In line with this, Zhang (2025) developed and validated a deep learning model for reading English at the senior high school level, based on deep learning theory and multi-dimensional assessment. The research emphasized the integration of conceptual understanding, problem-solving, collaborative creativity, and reflection in task designs and authentic assessments. For Javanese language, this principle can be adapted through cross-text/genre projects (e.g., traditional songs, proverbs, local cultural discourse) with performance indicators based on evidence (artifacts, reflective journals, peer assessments to capture the quality of “depth”).

Koizumi and In’nami (2024) also explored the dimension of “depth” in lexical competence and its implications for instructional design. This study used Bayesian SEM to examine the breadth vs. depth of L2 vocabulary knowledge. The results showed that “size” (breadth) and “depth” are separate constructs but are closely correlated; both need to be measured and targeted in interventions. In the context of Javanese language learning, language project activities should target depth (collocation, polysemy, semantic networks, fluency of use) rather than merely expanding vocabulary. Assessment rubrics should include indicators of meaning relationships and flexibility of usage.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employs a descriptive survey approach. The descriptive survey approach aims to describe, explain, and map the characteristics of a phenomenon or a specific group factually and accurately (Singh, 2025; Sugiono, 2013). This approach was used to process survey data that describes teachers’ needs regarding the innovation of a collaborative project-based Javanese language learning model. In this study, the descriptive survey approach is supported by a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach involves document analysis. Document analysis was used to deepen the survey results and uncover nuances in teachers’ needs that were not captured in the survey. This approach is considered relevant to the study because it represents the initial phase of developing an innovative Javanese language learning model. The findings of this research will be used to map the teachers’ needs in the empirical context, which will serve as the basis for the design of future interventions in the development of research products (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

B. Sample and Data Collection

The subjects of this study are sixteen Javanese language teachers from several senior high schools (SMA) in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, which involves choosing respondents who are considered relevant to the research objectives, specifically teachers who actively teach Javanese language at the senior high school level and have direct experience in the teaching process. This technique was chosen to ensure that the data collected truly reflects the needs and perceptions of teachers regarding the innovation of the learning model (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire developed based on six components of the learning model namely: (1) syntax, (2) social system, (3) reaction principles, (4) support systems, (5) instructional impact, and (6) accompanying impact (Joyce et al., 2009). The development of the research questionnaire was guided by the principles of content validity and reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, document analysis was used to further explore the inhibiting factors, teachers’ experiences, and the types of support needed. The questionnaire consisted of structured items with answer choices designed to probe teachers’ perceptions, experiences, and needs related to the implementation of a collaborative project-based learning model for strengthening deep learning. The distribution of the questionnaire was done directly to the teachers after obtaining informed consent from the respondents. Participation in this study was voluntary. The collected data were then tabulated and analyzed descriptively to provide a comprehensive picture of the teachers’ needs for innovation in Javanese language learning for senior high school students.

C. Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics to map the categories of needs among Javanese language teachers. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which included initial coding, identification of themes related to needs, and interpretation within the framework of innovative collaborative learning model development. The data analysis procedure included several stages: preparation stage, which involved developing and validating the questionnaire; data collection stage, which involved distributing the questionnaire and conducting document analysis; data analysis stage, which consisted of analyzing survey results descriptively and performing qualitative thematic analysis; and interpretation stage, which involved developing a profile

of teachers' needs as the basis for the development of a collaborative project-based learning model innovation framework to support deep learning.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study focus on mapping the teachers' needs regarding the innovation of a learning model through the analysis of a questionnaire designed based on six key aspects of the learning model as proposed by Joyce et al. (2009), namely: syntax, social system, reaction principles, support systems, instructional impact, and accompanying impact. The research instrument contains a series of questions tailored to the characteristics of each aspect.

Specifically, the syntax, social system, reaction principles, and support systems components each consist of three questions that reflect teachers' needs in managing classroom interaction dynamics, pedagogical response strategies, and the readiness of supporting facilities and infrastructure. The instructional impact aspect consists of six questions that describe teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the learning model in achieving academic goals. The accompanying impact aspect includes four questions aimed at uncovering the indirect effects of learning, such as the enhancement of attitudes, social skills, and student motivation. Each aspect was presented with four response options (O1 to O4). Therefore, the presentation of the study's results aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the teachers' needs in each aspect and serve as the basis for formulating an innovation model that is relevant, contextual, and aligned with the demands of 21st-century learning. The summary of the respondents' answers is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF RESPONDENT ANSWERS

ASPECT	QN	O1	PERCENT	O2	PERCENT	O3	PERCENT	O4	PERCENT	NR
SYNTAX	1.	7	43.75	5	31.25	2	12.5	2	12.5	16
	2.	12	75	3	18.75	1	6.25	0	0	16
	3.	14	87.5	0	0	2	12.5	0	0	16
SOCIAL SYSTEM	1.	15	93.75	1	6.25	0	0	0	0	16
	2.	11	68.75	3	18.75	2	12.5	0	0	16
	3.	12	75	2	12.5	2	12.5	0	0	16
REACTION PRINCIPLES	1.	13	81.25	2	12.5	1	6.25	0	0	16
	2.	12	75	2	12.5	2	12.5	0	0	16
	3.	15	93.75	1	6.25	0	0	0	0	16
SUPPORT SYSTEMS	1.	8	50	3	18.75	5	31.25	0	0	16
	2.	14	87.5	1	6.25	1	6.25	0	0	16
	3.	9	56.25	1	6.25	1	6.25	5	31.25	16
INSTRUCTIONAL IMPACT	1.	13	81.25	1	6.25	2	12.5	0	0	16
	2.	16	100	0	0	0	0	0	16	
	3.	13	81.25	1	6.25	1	6.25	1	6.25	16
	4.	14	87.5	1	6.25	1	6.25	0	0	16
	5.	13	81.25	2	12.5	1	6.25	0	0	16
	6.	10	62.5	2	12.5	3	18.75	1	6.25	16
ACCOMPANYING IMPACT	1.	12	75	0	2	12.5	2	12.5	16	
	2.	13	81.25	1	6.25	0	0	2	12.5	16
	3.	12	75	1	6.25	2	12.5	1	6.25	16
	4.	11	68.75	3	18.75	1	6.25	1	6.25	16

A. Syntax

In the syntax component, the questionnaire focused on three aspects: (1) the technique of initiating learning, (2) active participation of students in reflecting, evaluating, and connecting their learning experiences with real-world contexts that support meaningful learning, and (3) reflection that involves active participation to allow students to understand the values of each learning experience and reinforce connections between learning content and real life.

Based on the data summary, it can be seen that for item 1, the majority of teachers (43.75%) chose O1, followed by O2 (31.25%). However, 12.5% chose O3 and O4. For item 2, most teachers overwhelmingly selected O1 (75%), while only 18.75% selected O2, with almost no one choosing O3 and O4. For item 3, the majority of respondents chose O1 (87.5%), with only 12.5% choosing O3. This suggests that the syntax aspect is positively perceived, with a tendency for teachers to choose O1 (>70% for items 2 and 3), indicating that teachers consider the steps and phases of the learning process to be clear and relevant, although there is still some variation in perspectives for item 1.

B. Social System

The social system component of the questionnaire addressed (1) the creation of a positive, respectful collaborative atmosphere, (2) reflecting Javanese cultural values such as *tepa slira*, *andhap asor*, *guyub rukun*, and *gotong royong* to strengthen social dynamics and deepen students' awareness of others' roles in the group, and (3) providing equitable roles, opportunities to express ideas, and evaluations among members. Based on the analysis, for item 1, nearly all respondents (93.75%) chose O1. For item 2, the majority (68.75%) selected O1, followed by O2 (18.75%) and O3 (12.5%). For item 3, most respondents selected O1 (75%), with the remaining choices spread across O2 and O3. The

analysis suggests that the social system in learning is highly appreciated by the teachers, with most respondents indicating that interaction, cooperation, and social roles in learning are functioning well. However, some teachers (around 12–18%) noted the need for improvement, particularly in items 5 and 6.

C. Reaction Principles

The reaction principles component focused on (1) teacher feedback to build students' awareness of the thinking process and collaboration to form collaborative character and reflective skills more deeply, (2) ensuring all students actively participate, and (3) the teacher's role in wisely responding to various situations to maintain deep, collaborative, and meaningful learning.

Based on the analysis, for item 1, 81.25% of respondents selected O1, while O2 and O3 were lower at 12.5% and 6.25%, respectively. For item 2, the majority (75%) selected O1, with 25% distributed between O2 and O3. For item 3, almost all respondents (93.75%) chose O1. The results suggest that the reaction principles (how teachers respond and facilitate students) are considered good, with the majority of teachers selecting O1. However, some teachers believe that more variety in reactions is necessary during the learning process.

D. Support Systems

The support systems component focused on (1) the availability of resources that support the creation of meaningful and contextual learning experiences, (2) the involvement of external parties (partners), and (3) the adequacy of facilities and infrastructure. For item 1, the responses were fairly distributed: O1 (50%), O2 (18.75%), and O3 (31.25%). For item 2, most respondents selected O1 (87.5%), with the remaining responses being O2 and O3. For item 3, a more balanced distribution was found, with O1 (56.25%) and O4 (31.25%) being the most selected options. Therefore, the support systems (facilities, resources, media, and learning environment) showed greater variation, with some teachers evaluating the support as insufficient (as seen in items 2 and 3). This indicates a clear need for improvement in facilities and technical support.

E. Instructional Impact

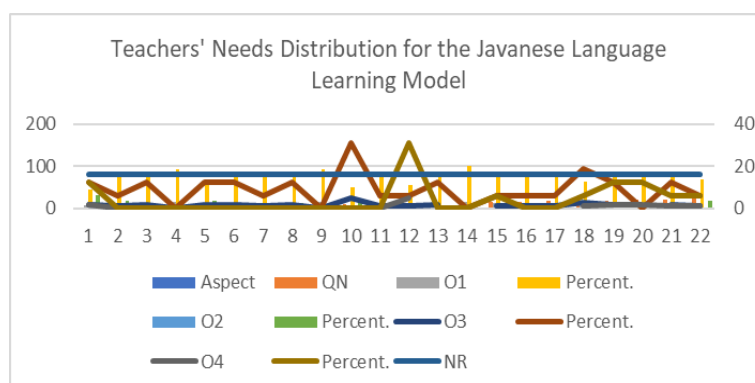
Instructional impact relates to (1) strengthening critical thinking skills, meaningful collaboration, and reflective awareness that promote exploration and deep reflection, (2) encouraging students to think critically and reflectively about the surrounding culture, (3) communication and presentation in conveying ideas, research results, and cultural narratives clearly and confidently, (4) communication skills that reflect the ability to convey cultural values meaningfully, (5) encouraging students to produce authentic learning products, and (6) students' reflection on the outcomes of their products.

Based on the analysis, items 1–5 show that the majority of respondents selected O1 (81.25–100%). Item 2 showed more variation, with O1 (62.5%), O2 (12.5%), O3 (18.75%), and O4 (6.25%). This indicates that the instructional impact is generally perceived very positively. However, item 6 shows more variation, suggesting that in some cases, the results were not as optimal.

F. Accompanying Impact

Accompanying impact relates to (1) the development of mutual support and responsibility in the collaborative process to produce group products, (2) internalization of love for local culture and social empathy towards the surrounding environment, (3) awareness of independent learning and reflection on personal learning progress, and (4) students' awareness of environmental issues and active involvement of the community in the learning process.

Most respondents chose O1 (75%), but some respondents selected O3 and O4 (12.5% each) for item 1. For item 2, the majority (81.25%) selected O1, with 12.5% choosing O4. For item 3, most respondents selected O1 (75%), with the rest spread across O2, O3, and O4. For item 4, 68.75% selected O1, with the remaining responses distributed across O2, O3, and O4. These results suggest that awareness of independent learning, reflection on learning progress, and awareness of environmental issues need more attention from Javanese language teachers. Based on all the analysis results of the six learning aspects, a distribution of Javanese language teachers' needs can be seen in the following chart.



Accompanying impact relates to (1) the development of mutual support and responsibility in the collaborative process to produce group products, (2) internalization of love for local culture and social empathy towards the surrounding environment, (3) awareness of independent learning and reflection on personal learning progress, and (4) students' awareness of environmental issues and active involvement of the community in the learning process.

The collaborative project-based language learning model is highly effective in enhancing students' collaboration skills and creativity at the secondary school level. Rohmaniyah and Asih (2024) found that PjBL creates an active learning environment that significantly improves collaborative skills and creativity among senior high school students. Student engagement, intrinsic motivation, and deep understanding of the material also increased, although challenges such as time and resource limitations and insufficient teacher training remain.

Apoko (2024) emphasized that PjBL-based training integrated with teaching can strengthen students' collaborative communication skills, which are a crucial foundation for successful teamwork in language classes. From a creativity perspective, PjBL provides space for students to design authentic products, experiment, and find alternative solutions. Yu (2024) also found that project-based learning had a significant impact on improving creative thinking skills because students were given the freedom to explore ideas in relevant contexts. This confirms the findings of Fitrah et al. (2025) which claimed that the integration of PjBL with the flipped classroom approach positively affects higher-order thinking skills, including critical and creative thinking.

Furthermore, Aliah et al. (2024) revealed that collaborative PjBL effectively enhances speaking skills in English language students at the secondary level. This approach showed significant effects with a large effect size ($d = 0.87$), and it also encouraged increased motivation, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills among students. Although focused on English, these findings are relevant and can be translated into the context of Javanese language learning as a regional language. The deep learning approach, which encompasses mindfulness, meaningfulness, and joyfulness in learning, serves as a key foundation for strengthening learning.

The mindfulness aspect in the deep learning approach has been shown to contribute to competence and language skills (Babanoğlu & Atalmış, 2025; Zeilhofer & Sasao, 2022), while the meaningfulness aspect through authentic tasks encourages deep processing, creativity, and language proficiency. Meanwhile, the joyfulness aspect, especially foreign language enjoyment, is positively correlated with motivation and learning outcomes in language learning at the secondary school level (Zhang et al., 2024). Conceptually, a "deep approach" to language learning indicates that self-regulation and good learning design can lead students from surface learning to deep learning.

Rohmaniyah and Asih's (2024) study also indicated that teachers confirmed a need for professional development and institutional support for the effective implementation of PjBL. Similar challenges were observed by Suwarni and Natsir (2024) in the context of English language learning, such as time management and students' readiness for collaborative work. Additionally, Adnyana (2024) who studied the application of deep learning through PjBL in speaking skills, found obstacles such as time, facilities, and students' preparedness, which are also relevant in the context of Javanese language learning.

Maas et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of social support for teachers' deep needs, such as a sense of community within the school team, which aligns with the social system and support aspects in the learning model. Solheim et al. (2018) and Farmer et al. (2018) explored the personal factors affecting teachers' motivational styles, closely related to reaction principles (pedagogical responses) and teachers' perceptions in managing classroom interactions and dynamics. Meanwhile, Sánchez and Reyes (2025) presented a systematic framework for strengthening the implementation of PjBL, addressing structural design, institutional support, and psychosocial aspects, including indirect effects (such as student motivation and social skills), aligning with accompanying impact.

The analysis of this study shows that collaborative PjBL holds significant potential to strengthen deep learning in Javanese language learning for senior high school students in Indonesia. Empirical findings from various studies support the effectiveness of PjBL in improving students' collaboration, creativity, motivation, and deep understanding. However, for successful implementation, including in this context, teacher training, support facilities, and authentic, contextual project designs that stimulate reflection and holistic student engagement are needed.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings regarding teachers' needs for the innovation of a collaborative project-based Javanese language learning model to strengthen deep learning at the senior high school level, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, the majority of respondents, who are Javanese language teachers, perceived the syntax, reaction principles, social system, and instructional impact aspects positively, with a very high tendency toward O1 choices (>80%). This indicates that teachers have a clear understanding of the steps in learning, response strategies, and the importance of social interaction that supports the creation of collaborative and meaningful learning. Second, although these aspects are already strong, the study also revealed the need for improvement in the support systems and accompanying impact aspects. Variations in responses for these aspects show that some teachers still face obstacles related to facilities, external partners, and the reinforcement of accompanying values such as learning autonomy, environmental awareness, and the internalization of local culture.

Third, the results of this study emphasize that an innovative Javanese language learning model based on collaborative projects is needed not only to ensure instructional success but also to optimize supporting and accompanying factors.

Thus, the development of an innovative model should focus on integrating clear syntax steps, strengthening social interaction, and providing adequate support systems to create deep learning experiences. Practically, these findings imply that Javanese language teachers at the senior high school level require support in the form of contextual, culturally-based collaborative learning designs, supported by infrastructure and conducive learning environments. This is expected to improve not only students' academic skills but also their social character, creativity, and awareness of local culture and social issues in their surroundings.

This study has several implications. First, Javanese language teachers can use these findings as a foundation for designing more collaborative, contextual project-based learning rooted in local culture. Teachers' readiness to facilitate social interaction, provide varied pedagogical responses, and foster values of mutual cooperation and self-reflection are key to successful learning. Second, by implementing this model, students will have the opportunity to develop collaboration, creativity, and learning independence. Furthermore, they can cultivate social awareness and a love for local culture through real projects that connect learning to daily life.

Third, this study reinforces the relevance of the six aspects of the learning model, syntax, social system, reaction principles, support systems, instructional impact, and accompanying impact, as a framework for designing learning innovations oriented toward deep learning. Findings about teachers' needs for support systems and accompanying impact show the need for more contextual theory development in project-based learning, particularly in culturally-based subjects. Fourth, policymakers at the regional level can use these findings as a basis for developing programs to improve the competencies of Javanese language teachers, particularly in the application of innovative project-based learning models that align with 21st-century learning demands.

In-depth studies should be conducted on the role of support systems and accompanying impact, as these aspects show significant variation in teachers' needs. In this regard, further research is urgently needed, utilizing a mixed-methods approach or research and development (R&D) methodology to design, implement, and evaluate a more comprehensive innovation learning model. This can lead to the development of experimental models to test the effectiveness of the collaborative project-based Javanese language learning model in enhancing students' deep learning across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

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Beyond the “China Doll”: A Systematic Literature Review on the Discursive Construction of Chinese Women in International News

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Abstract—Chinese women, as one of the world’s largest, most institutionally complex, and culturally engaged female groups, have a transnational representation that involves not only gender issues within China but also holds considerable relevance for global scholarship on gender, media power, and body politics. However, current research on the international representation, of Chinese women remains scattered and lacks systematic synthesis, making it necessary to conduct a comprehensive literature review on this subject. The review process follows eight methodological steps: identifying research questions, designing the review protocol, searching the literature, screening and evaluating studies, extracting and analyzing data, and finally synthesizing conclusions. The findings indicate that existing research on the representation of Chinese women in international news is mainly concentrated in English-speaking countries, especially the United States, with less attention paid to Europe, Africa, and South America. Comparative approaches are frequently employed in these studies. Furthermore, it is found that international news reports often link Chinese women to national narratives, mainly constructing themes such as “depersonalized and instrumentalized national female images” “modern, independent, and empowered new women” and the “heterogeneous others”. This review provides a comprehensive overview of existing scholarship, identifies gaps in the literature, and establishes a foundation for further inquiry into this topic.

Index Terms—Chinese women, media representation, news, systematic literature review

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the production and circulation of knowledge no longer depend solely on traditional authorities such as schools, governments, or religious institutions. Instead, knowledge is created, represented, and reconstructed on a broader social scale through media systems, linguistic practices, and cultural symbols (Castells, 2013; Fairclough, 2013; Berger & Luckmann, 2023). Lippmann (2017) described this condition as a “pseudo-environment”, in which people perceive the world not through direct experience but through mediated images and symbolic constructions. Similarly, Hall (1997) emphasized that reality never appears in a pure form; it is always organized and coded by discourses, classification systems, and cultural symbols.

Within this mechanism, the media occupy a pivotal role: they are not merely transmitters of knowledge but active producers of meaning. By deciding who is visible, how groups are described, and in what contexts they appear, the media continually “re-encode” social subjects (Billig, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 1980). Such processes shape public understanding, influence emotions and values (van Dijk, 2006; Silverstone, 2013), and condition perceptions of events and social groups (Happer & Philo, 2013). In the information age, the media have thus become a crucial channel through which individuals access the world. Their representations not only affect collective images and public attitudes but also carry the power to influence political agendas and policy decisions. Precisely for this reason, newspapers are often selected by linguists as key materials for discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). As van Dijk (1991) points out, analyzing newspaper reporting constitutes one of the primary tasks of media discourse research, since much of our knowledge and understanding of the world is derived from the daily reading of news.

With China's increasing involvement in the globalization process, international attention toward China continues to grow. As the largest single national female population in the world, Chinese women are also receiving more focus from international media. However, scholars have pointed out that international media, particularly Western media, often perpetuate stereotypes when reporting on Chinese women, and this biased perspective has caused some distress for Chinese women living abroad (Martin, 2022). Related empirical studies have also confirmed this issue (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018; Bauerlein & McWhirter, 2021).

Before attempting to change the media's stereotypical representations of Chinese women, it is essential to thoroughly understand and clarify this topic, as such understanding can facilitate more effective correction of these stereotypes. In recent years, growing attention to the international image of Chinese women has prompted some scholars to examine how they are represented in international media (Yang, 2014; Bie & Billings, 2015; Zhang, 2017; Ling & Berkowitz, 2018; Seo, 2021; Zhang & Caple, 2021; Yoong & Lee, 2023; Yu & Tian, 2023). However, existing research remains scattered and lacks systematic synthesis. More importantly, the field is still short of studies that synthesize the literature using systematic and transparent approaches. Traditional literature reviews still have shortcomings in terms of literature selection and transparency (Mohamed Shaffril et al., 2021), which also affects the systematic integration of knowledge and the further development of theoretical frameworks in this field.

Given these gaps in the literature, this study conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) of the representation of Chinese women in international news media. By reviewing research from the past decade, it aims to summarize the main representations, identify research gaps, and provide guidance for future studies in this field.

II. METHODOLOGY

As a scientific inquiry, a literature review must demonstrate its validity, reliability, and replicability (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The review protocol, especially for systematic reviews, is essential (Brereton et al., 2007; Okoli & Schabram, 2015), as it can significantly enhance the reliability, transparency, and reproducibility of the review by minimizing researcher bias in data selection and analysis, thereby improving the overall quality of the literature review (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). This systematic literature review is conducted based on the eight-step process proposed by Xiao and Watson (2019) and the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2010).

Xiao and Watson (2019) outlined an eight-step process for conducting a systematic literature review: (1) Formulating the research question; (2) Developing and validating the review protocol; (3) Searching the literature; (4) Screening and selecting studies; (5) Assessing quality; (6) Extracting data; (7) Analyzing and synthesizing data; and (8) Reporting the findings (p. 10), as illustrated in Figure 1.

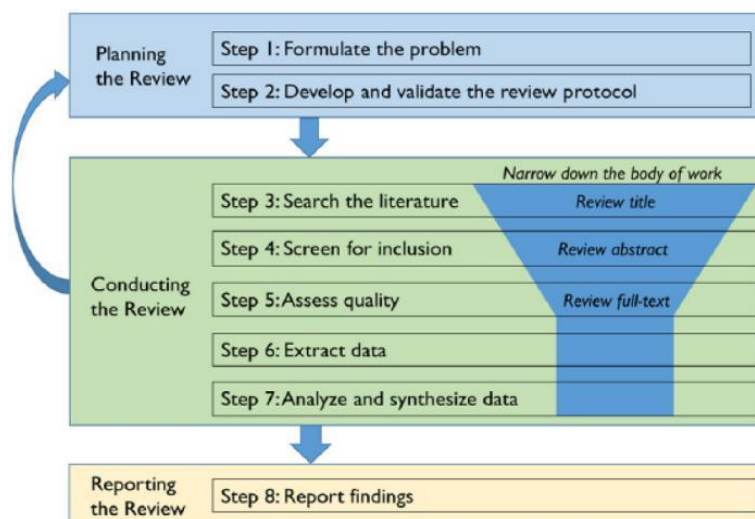


Figure 1. The Process of Systematic Literature Review (Xiao & Watson, 2019)

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is a widely used reporting guideline for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher et al., 2010). The PRISMA statement consists of a 27-item checklist and a four-phase flow diagram, which provide detailed guidance on literature collection and reporting from title and structured abstract to conclusions and funding sources (Lu et al., 2023). The flow diagram covers the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. PRISMA is particularly valuable for organizing and standardizing the review process, offering step-by-step guidance before, during, and after literature retrieval. This review integrates the eight-step process of Xiao and Watson (2019) with the PRISMA guidelines.

A. Formulation of Research Questions

A literature review should be guided by clear research questions (Xiao & Watson, 2019). The selection of literature, data extraction, and analysis are all oriented towards addressing these questions, which form the core of the review

(Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). The research questions for this review are derived from two sources: first, by drawing on relevant previous studies (such as Bullock & Jafri, 2000; Len-Rios et al., 2005; Macdonald, 2006); and second, by referencing the PICO framework (Richardson et al., 1995; Lockwood et al., 2015) commonly used in qualitative research, in which “P” stands for the population or problem, “I” for the phenomenon of interest, and “Co” for the context. Based on these considerations, three key elements were identified: Chinese women (population), their discursive Construction (phenomenon), and international news media (context). Accordingly, this review addresses two research questions:

(1). What is the current state of research on the representation (i.e., discursive construction) of Chinese women in international news?

(2). According to existing studies, how are Chinese women represented in international news discourse?

A descriptive coding and frequency analysis will be used to address the first question, while a qualitative approach will be applied to the second.

B. Development and Validation of the Review Protocol

After thorough discussion and preliminary searching by the research team, the review protocol for this study was finalized (see Table 1). In line with the recommendations on “research field maturity” proposed by Kraus et al. (2020), this review limits its search scope to literature published between 2014 and 2024 to better illustrate the development trajectory and latest findings in the field. Given the focus on the representation of Chinese women in international media, the scope includes not only English-language media, but also media from non-English-speaking countries such as French, Chinese sources, to enrich the research perspective. In addition, advances in machine translation technology (such as DeepL Translator, Microsoft Translator) and the availability of multilingual resources have made it possible to extract main content and insights from non-English articles. Similar approaches in previous studies (Xue et al., 2019) provide a useful precedent; therefore, no language restrictions were imposed in this review. Furthermore, to ensure academic rigor, only peer-reviewed academic papers were included.

TABLE 1
INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA FOR THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeline	2014.01-2024.12	Before 2014 or after 2024
Document type	Journal articles	Review articles, book chapters, books, dissertations, conference proceedings, etc.
Subject area	Social sciences; arts and humanities	Medical sciences, public health, environmental sciences, engineering, and other non-social science disciplines, etc.

C. Literature Search

(a). Database Selection

Guided by the review protocol, the research team conducted a literature search. Based on the evaluation of mainstream academic databases by Gusenbauer and Haddaway (2020) and with reference to similar literature reviews (Hashmi et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2025), this study selected Scopus and Web of Science as the primary search databases.

(b). Search Terms

Kitchenham and Charters (2007) noted that the basic search terms should be derived from the research questions. Therefore, the basic search terms for this study were identified as “Chinese women” “representation” and “news media”. Wanden-Berghe and Sanz-Valero (2012) emphasized that comprehensiveness is more important than precision during the search process. Therefore, to retrieve more comprehensive and inclusive results, this study enriched the basic keywords by using a thesaurus, reviewing keywords from previous studies, and consulting experts. Various search strategies, including the use of Boolean operators, were applied to construct the final search queries (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
SEARCH STRINGS USED IN THE SELECTED DATABASES

Database	String
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY= (“Chinese woman” OR “Chinese women” OR “Chinese female” OR “Chinese girl*” OR “Chinese lad*” OR “China woman” OR “China women” OR “China girl*” OR “China lad*”) AND (“represent*” OR “portray*” OR “discourse*” OR “coverage*” OR “framing” OR “image*” OR “stereotype*” OR “identit*” OR “narrative*” OR “news” OR “depiction*” OR “report*” OR “press” OR “newspaper*” OR “media”)
Web of Science*	TS= (((“Chinese” NEAR/3 woman) OR (“Chinese” NEAR/3 women) OR (“Chinese” NEAR/3 female) OR (“Chinese” NEAR/3 girl*) OR (“Chinese” NEAR/3 lad*) OR (“China” NEAR/3 woman) OR (“China” NEAR/3 women) OR (“China” NEAR/3 female) OR (“China” NEAR/3 girl*) OR (“China” NEAR/3 lad*)) AND (“represent*” OR “portray*” OR “discourse*” OR “coverage*” OR “framing” OR “image*” OR “stereotype*” OR “identit*” OR “narrative*” OR “news” OR “depiction*” OR “report*” OR “press” OR “newspaper*” OR “media”))

*Because Web of Science supports proximity operators, the NEAR/3 function was applied to broaden the search scope. Following Krallinger et al. (2017), NEAR/3 can increase recall while maintaining semantic relevance.

During the identification and screening stages, manual searches were also conducted in databases such as Taylor & Francis, Sage Journals, and the first 20 pages of Google Scholar to further expand the literature pool.

D. Screening for Inclusion

Using predefined search terms and restrictions, 529 records were retrieved from Scopus and 397 from Web of Science. Following title screening, 27 and 126 studies were retained, respectively. Searches in Taylor & Francis and Sage Journals, employing the same strategy, yielded 14,935 and 31,023 records, from which 34 and 19 studies were retained. A complementary search in Google Scholar with the keywords “Chinese women” “media” “representation” and “newspaper” (first 20 pages) identified 11 additional potentially relevant studies. In total, these searches produced 217 potentially relevant records. After removing 40 duplicates, 177 unique studies remained for further screening. Titles and abstracts were then reassessed against the inclusion criteria. At this stage, 163 articles were excluded for one or more of the following reasons: (1) focusing on topics other than the external representation of women, (2) addressing non-news media formats (e.g., television, film, advertising), or (3) examining representations in domestic (Chinese) rather than international news media. When abstracts lacked sufficient information to determine eligibility, the full text was consulted. Four of the 14 articles that underwent full-text assessment were excluded for not aligning with the review’s scope. The remaining ten articles proceeded to quality appraisal to evaluate their relevance to the representation of Chinese women in international news media.

E. Quality Assessment

Although quality assessment is not always essential for certain types of descriptive and commentary reviews (Xiao & Watson, 2019), it is crucial for fully understanding, comparing, and synthesizing research findings (Ludvigsen et al., 2016; as cited in Xiao & Watson, 2019). To ensure the scientific rigor of the included studies, the authors employed the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) developed by Hong et al. (2018) to assess the quality of the ten selected articles. The research team reviewed each article’s methodological design, study population, and analytical procedures, with particular attention to the consistency of sampling, research methods, and data analysis. Assessment was based on the five MMAT criteria, using “yes,” “no,” and “cannot tell” as response options. Only articles meeting at least three criteria were included. Any disagreements were resolved through discussion among the authors. Ultimately, all ten articles met the minimum methodological and analytical quality requirements, with seven fully meeting all criteria and three meeting four criteria. This process ensured the validity and reliability of the findings presented in this review.

In total, this systematic review included 10 articles identified through database searches for further analysis. To ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant studies, a snowballing approach was employed based on these 10 articles, conducting both backward and forward searches until data saturation was reached.

Additionally, the initially retrieved articles were imported into Google Scholar, where the first 10 pages of “related articles” were reviewed, yielding 21 potentially relevant studies.

Following full-text screening and quality assessment, 8 additional articles were included in the final analysis stage.

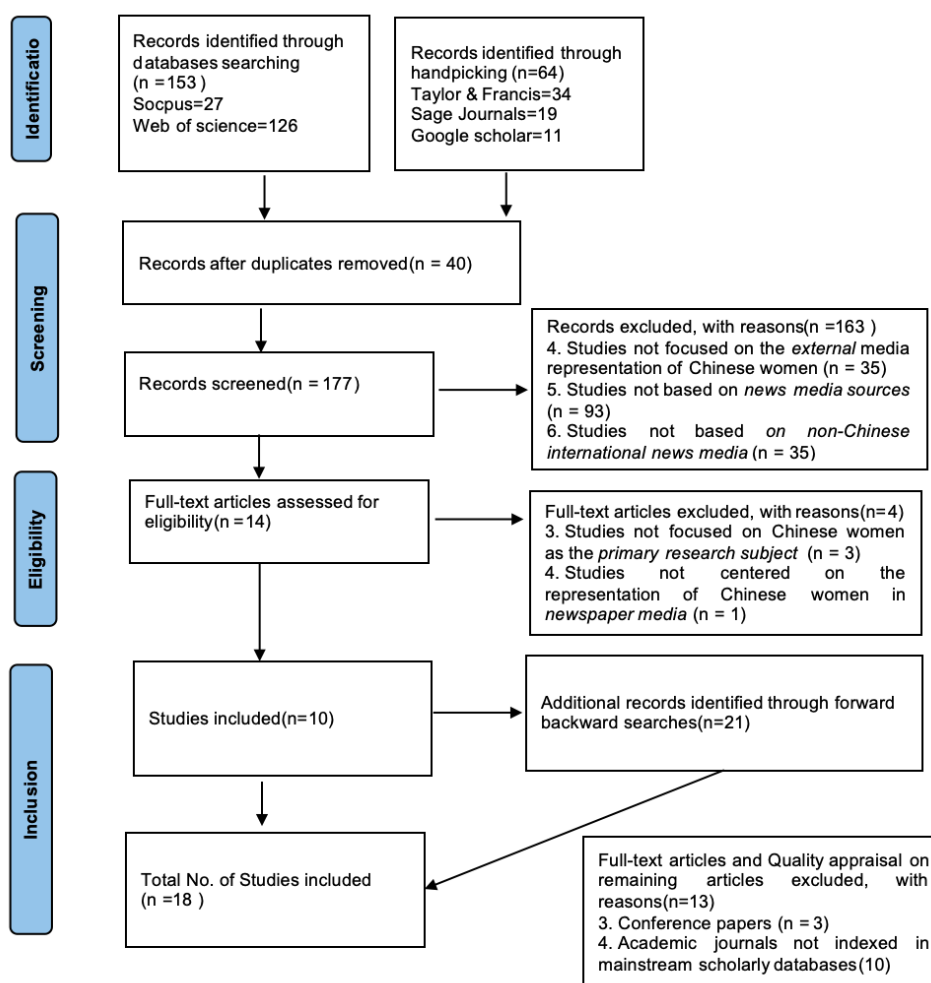


Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram for the Selection of Studies on the Representation of Chinese Women in International Newspaper Media

Ultimately, through database searches, manual searches, and secondary literature searches, a total of 18 articles entered the data analysis phase. All articles met the inclusion criteria and were almost entirely from well-known journals. The entire screening process is shown in Figure 2.

F. Data Extraction

This study employed an integrated approach, combining descriptive analysis and qualitative analysis to systematically outline the state of research and to examine in depth the representations of Chinese women in international news media.

In the descriptive analysis phase, each included article was coded along seven dimensions.

TABLE 3
CODING DIMENSIONS FOR DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Category	Sub-category	Details to Record
1. Publication Information	Publication Year	The year the study was published
	Journal Title	Name of the journal
	Journal Ranking	Ranking (e.g., SSCI Q1/Q2, based on Web of Science JCR categories)
2. Author Information	Disciplinary Field	Field of study (e.g., Media Studies, Linguistics, Sociology)
	National Affiliation	Determined by the country in which the first author's affiliated institution is located
3. Media & Country Focus	Media Outlets	Names of the selected newspapers
	Country	Country/region of the selected media
4. Research Subjects	Target Group/Individuals	Specific people or groups under study
5. Time Frame	Period Covered	Categorised as: < 1 month / 1–6 months / 6 months–2 years
		/ 2–5 years / > 5 years
6. Research Method	Methodological Approach	Classified as <i>Quantitative</i> / <i>Qualitative</i> / <i>Mixed Studies</i> (Kamhawi & Weaver, 2003)
7. Theoretical Framework	Applied Theories	Theories explicitly applied in the study (multiple theories should be coded separately)

To ensure consistency, the research team conducted coder training prior to formal analysis and resolved discrepancies through trial coding and discussion.

In the qualitative analysis phase, thematic synthesis was employed (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005; Flemming et al., 2019) to integrate data from diverse research designs. The procedure followed the steps proposed by Kiger and Varpio (2020).

TABLE 4
ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE OF THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

Step	Description
1. Familiarisation	Repeated, active reading of the full texts to develop a holistic understanding of the data.
2. Generating Initial Codes	Extracting fine-grained, relevant information related to the research questions.
3. Developing Themes	Identifying patterns, similarities, and relationships among codes to construct themes that reflect the dataset as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

To enhance reliability, the research team coded the data independently and reconciled differences through discussion.

This dual analytic framework enables both the quantitative mapping of research characteristics and the qualitative identification of representation patterns and related topics, thereby facilitating the detection of gaps in the literature and guiding future research directions.

G. Data Analysis and Synthesis

Following data extraction and coding, the review systematically synthesized the collected information. First, a descriptive analysis was conducted, summarizing the essential characteristics of the literature in tables and figures to visually present the current state of research. Subsequently, in line with the approach of Xiao and Watson (2019), descriptive contents were refined and elevated to analytical themes, forming an interconnected and logically coherent thematic framework.

H. Reporting Findings

On this basis, the review proceeded to the final stage of the systematic literature review, reporting the findings. This study followed the integrative review approach of Mohamed Shaffril et al. (2021), highlighting the main trends, key findings, and existing gaps in the current body of research, and providing brief recommendations for future research directions in light of the analysis.

III. RESULTS

A. Descriptive Findings: Overview of the Research State

(a). Publication Year, Journals, and Journal Rankings

Between 2014 and 2024, a total of 18 peer-reviewed journal articles examined the representation of Chinese women in international news media, averaging 1.8 publications per year and showing an overall upward trend. The years 2021, 2023, and 2024 were particularly productive, each with three publications. Although these articles were published in different journals, their disciplinary focus was relatively concentrated: seven appeared in communication and media studies journals (e.g., Chinese Journal of Communication; Journalism; Communication & Sport), seven in social and cultural studies journals (e.g., International Review for the Sociology of Sport; Asian Studies Review), and two in language and discourse analysis journals (Language & Communication; Discourse, Context & Media). With the exception of 2019 and 2022, each year featured at least one article in an SSCI Q1 or Q2 journal, indicating the sustained academic value of this research topic.

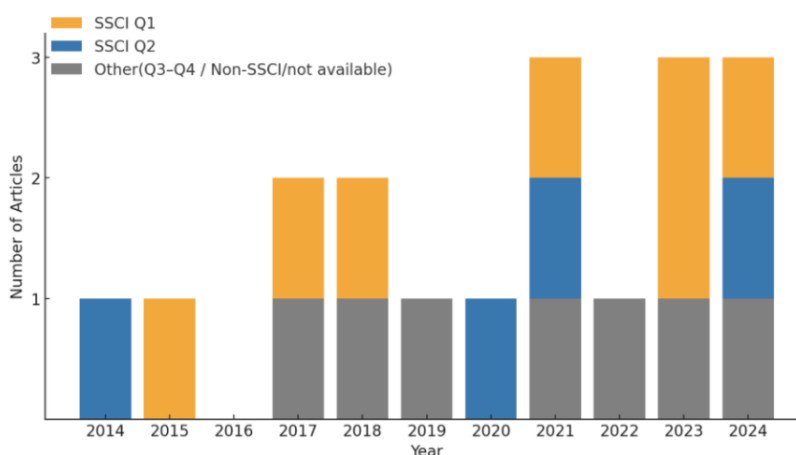


Figure 3. Number of Articles per Year and SSCI Q1/Q2 Proportion

(b). *Author Affiliation*

The authors in this study's dataset are affiliated with institutions in six countries. The largest proportion is from China (8 authors, 44.4%), followed by the United States (6 authors, 33.3%). Spain, South Korea, Australia, and Malaysia each have one author (5.6%). This distribution corresponds, to some extent, with the media selection and the focal countries discussed later in the study.

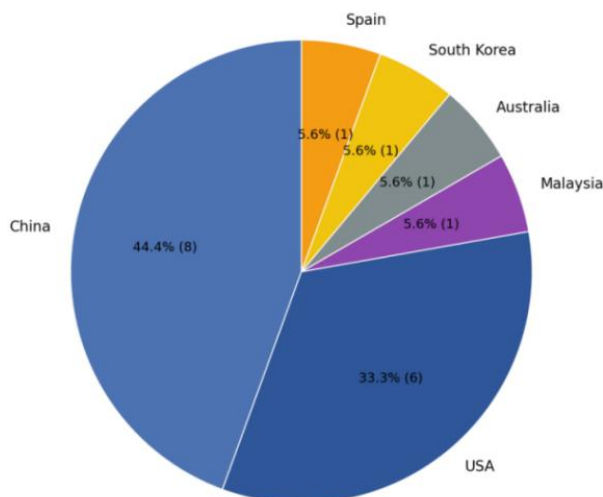


Figure 4. Distribution of Articles by Author Affiliation

(c). *Media and Country Focus*

Statistics indicate that, in studies examining the representation of Chinese women in international newspaper coverage, the three most frequently selected media outlets are The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Guardian. Among them, The New York Times holds a clear advantage, accounting for 11 out of 18 studies (61.1%), making it the most frequently cited media outlet. Correspondingly, the United States is the most frequently examined country, with 14 studies focusing on the representation of Chinese women in U.S. news media (77.8%), followed by the United Kingdom and Australia, each with four studies (22.2%). Overall, the research is concentrated primarily on traditional, developed, English-speaking countries, with limited attention to Asia (only two studies, 11.1%) and very few studies addressing representations in African, South American, or European media.

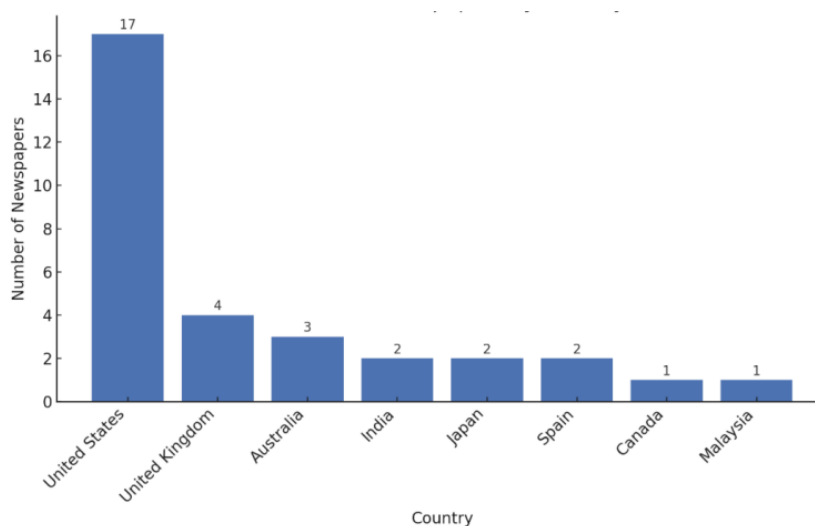


Figure 5. Country Distribution of Selected Media Outlets

(d). *Focus of Scholarly Attention*

Statistical results (Figure 6) indicate that China's First Lady, Peng Liyuan, is the most frequently examined individual ($n = 4$; e.g., Zhang, 2017; Wang, 2018). The next most studied figures are Chinese elite female athletes, such as Ye Shiwen (Bie & Billings, 2015; Vegas, 2017), Li Na (Zhao & Knijnik, 2021; Zhang & Caple, 2021), and Gu Ailing (Eileen Gu) (Zhao & Wang, 2024; Zhang & Shi, 2024). In addition, the representation of overseas Chinese women has gradually drawn scholarly attention (Cahill, 2020; Yoong & Lee, 2023; Xu & Wu, 2024). Overall, the literature reveals

a clear tendency toward individualization, with researchers focusing more on specific iconic figures than on collective representations.

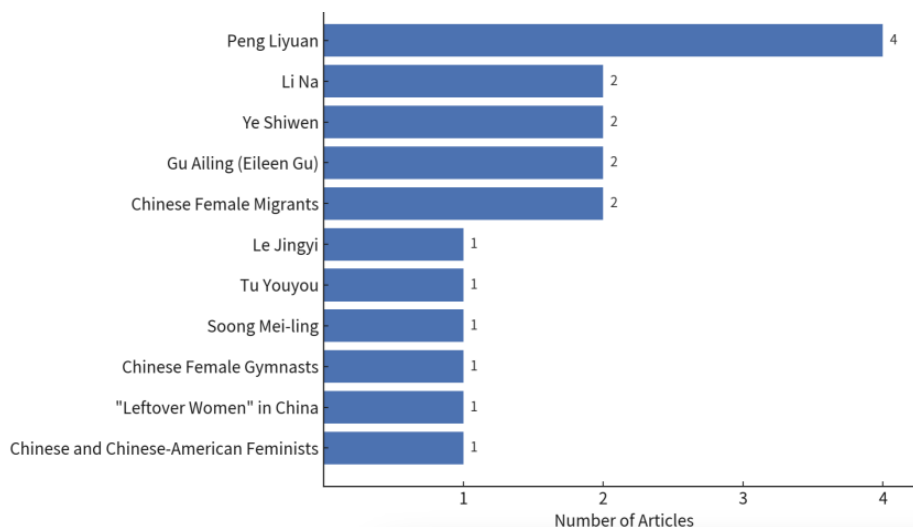


Figure 6. Focus of Scholarly Attention: Key Figures in Studies on the Representation of Chinese Women

(e). *Timeframe of Subject Selection*

Statistics indicate that the timeframes chosen by scholars for their studies are predominantly concentrated within the past two decades, with the longest span reaching 18 years (Zhou et al., 2022) and the shortest lasting less than one month (Yang, 2014; Bie & Billings, 2015; Zhao & Wang, 2024). Coding of the time ranges in the 18 reviewed articles shows that five studies (27.8%) covered periods of less than one month, three studies (16.7%) spanned one to six months, and one study each (5.6%) covered six months to two years and two to five years. The largest proportion, eight studies (44.4%), examined periods longer than five years. Overall, most research focuses on the representation of modern Chinese women in international news since 2000.

(f). *Research Methods*

Among the 18 studies that entered the data analysis stage, 11 employed qualitative methods (61.1%), three used quantitative methods (16.7%), and four adopted a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques (22.2%). In qualitative studies, discourse analysis ($n = 4$, 26.7%; e.g., Yoong & Lee, 2023; Yu & Tian, 2023), text analysis ($n = 3$, 20%; e.g., Ling & Berkowitz, 2018; Seo, 2021), and framing analysis ($n = 2$, 13.3%; e.g., Yang, 2014; Zhang & Shi, 2024) were the most common methods. Quantitative studies predominantly applied content analysis ($n = 3$, 75%; e.g., Bie & Billings, 2015; Wang, 2018), while mixed-methods research frequently integrated critical discourse analysis with corpus linguistics (e.g., Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Caple, 2021).

(g). *Research Theories*

The theoretical frameworks in this study fall into five categories: discourse analysis theories (e.g., CDA, DHA, Social Actor Theory), ideological theories (e.g., Ideology Theory, Interpellation, Neoliberal Subjectivity), media theories (e.g., Framing Theory, News Values Theory), gender theories (e.g., Gender Stereotypes, Transnational Feminism, Intersectionality), and state and society theories (e.g., Soft Power, Public Diplomacy, Cultural Memory). While over half of these appear only once in the reviewed literature, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013) (e.g., Yoong & Lee, 2023; Xu & Wu, 2024), Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) (e.g., Bie & Billings, 2015; Wang, 2018), and Soft Power Theory (Nye, 2008) (e.g., Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Shi, 2024) are the most frequently cited. These three core frameworks provide both the linguistic-structural basis for analyzing representations of Chinese women in French media and key tools for revealing their underlying ideological and geopolitical drivers.

B. *Qualitative Findings*

Thematic analysis was conducted on all included analytical articles, resulting in the themes presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5
OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS OF QUALITATIVE THEMATIC SCREENING

No.	Author/s & Year	Drawn themes
1	Yang (2014)	Body and appearance; Suspicion discourse; Instrument of the state; Metaphors of the nation and politics
2	Bie & Billings (2015)	Body and appearance; Suspicion discourse; Instrument of the state; Metaphors of the nation and politics
3	Zhang (2017)	Body and appearance; De-subjectification; Instrument of the state; Metaphors of the nation and politics
4	Vegas (2017)	Suspicion discourse; Instrument of the state; Metaphors of the nation and politics
5	Wang (2018)	Body and appearance; De-subjectification; Instrument of the state
6	Ling & Berkowitz (2018)	Body and appearance; Instrument of the state; De-subjectification; Metaphors of the nation and politics
7	Chao & Zhang (2019)	Body and appearance; Instrument of the state; De-subjectification; Gendered discourse
8	Cahill (2020)	Body and appearance; Resistance/Empowerment discourse; Metaphors of the nation and politics; Racialization and Othering
9	Seo (2021)	Body and appearance; Suspicion; Instrument of the state; Metaphors of the nation and politics
10	Zhao & Knijnik (2021)	Individualism; Independence/Autonomy; Exceptional achievement; Marketized individual; Cultural bridge
11	Zhang & Caple (2021)	Individualism; Resistance/Empowerment discourse; Independence/Autonomy; Exceptional achievement; De-nationalization
12	Zhou et al. (2022)	Gendered discourse; Suspicion discourse; Instrument of the state; Metaphors of the nation and politics; Exceptional achievement
13	Yoong & Lee (2023)	Sexual/Moralizing discourse; Objectifying discourse; Threatening/Criminalizing discourse; Racialization and othering
14	Yu & Tian (2023)	Individualism; Resistance/Empowerment discourse; Independence/Autonomy
15	Haygood & Scott (2023)	Body and appearance; Instrument of the state; Agency/Disempowerment Discourse; Metaphors of the nation and politics
16	Xu & Wu (2024)	Threatening/Criminalizing Discourse; victimization discourse; Labor exploitation discourse; Friendly exchange discourse; Racialization and othering; Gendered discourse
17	Zhao & Wang (2024)	Suspicion discourse; Racialization and othering; Metaphors of the nation and politics
18	Zhang & Shi (2024)	De-nationalization; Marketized individual; Suspicion discourse; Racialization and othering; Metaphors of the nation and politics

After synthesizing the themes from the included studies, three core themes were identified to answer Research Question 2 and to reveal the construction of Chinese women's representation in international news.

(a). *Instrumentalized and De-Subjectified Female Images Under National Narratives*

Whether depicting Chinese athletes or the First Lady, international media often represent Chinese women as extensions and symbols of national power, diminishing their individual subjectivity and highlighting their function in serving state interests. Such portrayals frequently focus on women's bodies, attire, silence, and subordinate roles to construct a "controllable national image" emphasizing a compliant, gentle, and voiceless representative identity.

For example, athletes such as Ye Shiwen and Le Jingyi are not only subjected to scrutiny over their performance and age but are also framed as "tools" produced by the Chinese system (Yang, 2014; Bie & Billings, 2015; Vegas, 2017; Seo, 2021). Their achievements are transformed into metaphors of state manipulation and fraud, reinforcing perceptions of China as rule-breaking and morally questionable. Peng Liyuan, in Western media coverage, is most often presented as a graceful and elegant "First Lady," with reporting centering on her clothing and demeanor, rarely addressing her education or political views. This framing underscores her role as an accessory in soft diplomacy and cultural exchange rather than as an independent political actor (Zhang, 2017; Wang, 2018; Ling & Berkowitz, 2018; Chao & Zhang, 2019). Similarly, coverage of scientist Tu Youyou tends to stress her collectivism and obedience to the state, downplaying the autonomy of her accomplishments (Zhou et al., 2022).

Overall, these representations politicize and nationalize the bodies and appearances of Chinese women, positioning them as carriers of national imagery rather than as social actors with autonomous voices and independent status.

(b). *The Image of the Modern, Independent, and Empowered "New Woman"*

In sharp contrast to the instrumentalized and de-subjectified images mentioned above are some Chinese women who embody self-agency, such as Li Na and the "leftover women". They strive to carve out a space for themselves in the national, market, and cross-cultural contexts, and are reported on as "individual strivers," "transnational figures," and "cultural representatives," demonstrating a stronger sense of self-awareness and agency. While media affirm their achievements, they often emphasize their independence from national systems and their breaking of traditional stereotypes. For instance, Li Na is portrayed as an independent woman resisting institutional constraints, committed to self-expression and self-management (Zhao & Knijnik, 2021; Zhang & Caple, 2021), whereas the "leftover women" group is depicted as modern urban women pursuing true love and gender equality (Yu & Tian, 2023). Taken together,

these representations constitute a Western-empowerment-oriented understanding of the “new Chinese woman.” However, such empowerment discourse, while affirming women’s independence, also implicitly reflects a tendency to interpret Eastern women through Western value standards.

(c). *The Representation of Chinese Women as “Heterogeneous Others”*

The third category focuses on Chinese women who are structurally oppressed and marginalized. They are often portrayed as “outsiders,” “threats,” or “non-typical” figures, labeled as challengers to morality and social order. In constructing such images, media discourses often intertwine gender, race, class, and national identity, producing an intersectional othering. For example, Malaysian English-language media portray Chinese female immigrants as “dangerous seductresses,” “family destroyers,” and “commodities for trade,” viewing them as outsiders threatening local men and family order (Yoong & Lee, 2023); in Japan, Chinese women are often depicted as criminals, victims, or exploited laborers, with a strong gendered and ethicized connotation (Xu & Wu, 2024). Even a mixed-race rising star like Eileen Gu has faced scrutiny over her identity choices and political stance, being labeled a “traitor” and “opportunist,” and placed within the narrative framework of ideological conflict between China and West (Zhao & Wang, 2024; Zhang & Shi, 2024). Overall, such representations of Chinese women as “heterogeneous other” reflect a self-construction rooted in exclusion and moral superiority.

The above categories reveal the diverse constructions of Chinese women’s representations in contemporary international discourse: they are either instrumentalized as national symbols, depicted as independent and empowered “new women” or othered as outsiders. The selection of figures and the variation in their representations reflect the expectations and ideological projections of international media and societies toward the roles of Chinese women.

IV. DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS, RESEARCH GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

A. *Predominance of Researchers With Asian Backgrounds*

Although the authors of the relevant literature are affiliated with institutions in multiple countries, further examination of their backgrounds reveals that most have close cultural ties to China or Asia—many bear names indicative of Asian heritage, are citizens of Asian countries, or are first- or second-generation immigrants raised in Western nations such as the United States. The predominance of scholars with Asian backgrounds in this field reflects on the one hand, their strong interest and motivation toward issues of cultural identity, collective memory, and cross-cultural exchange. On the other hand, it also indicates that research on this topic remains largely confined within the Asian scholarly community. In the future, it will be important to promote greater diversity among researchers, attracting more scholars from non-Asian backgrounds in order to broaden research perspectives and enhance the global influence of this field.

B. *Comparative Studies Dominate, With a High Degree of Concentration in Media and Figure Selection*

Existing research on the international media representation of Chinese women predominantly adopts a comparative design, focusing mainly on horizontal comparisons between Chinese and Western media, cross-national newspaper analyses, and contrasts between Chinese and foreign female public figures. In terms of media and figure selection, studies are heavily concentrated on mainstream U.S. newspapers (particularly *The New York Times*), as well as media from other English-speaking developed countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as their representative figures. American media, in particular, occupy a central position in the discourse of this field. In contrast, there is a noticeable lack of attention to media from Asia, Africa, South America, and other European countries, resulting in significant regional imbalance.

This highly comparative and concentrated research approach reflects scholars’ strong focus on Western standards and Western discourse power. It not only seeks to understand how Western societies perceive Chinese women but also attempts to respond to the opposing and interactive dynamics between Chinese and Western public opinion. However, this West-centric, Sino-Western comparative framework has led to a narrow research perspective, resulting in an insufficient overall understanding of the image of Chinese women in the global diverse media context. It has overlooked the unique interpretations and representations of the image of Chinese women in other regions of the world, particularly in the “Global South”. In the future, research urgently needs to break free from the “Western-centric” framework and expand into broader regional and cultural contexts to achieve a more diverse and enriched perspective.

C. *The Selection of Figures Studied Exhibits Individualization, Modernization, and Domestication Characteristics*

Current research on the international media representation of Chinese women demonstrates a clear trend toward individualization, modernization, and a domestic (China-based) focus in subject selection. First, studies often concentrate on highly visible and distinctive figures, particularly prominent women in politics and sports. This reflects Western media and academic preferences for “individual” and “iconic” figures, aligning with their narrative emphasis on personal experiences and notable achievements. Second, research subjects are predominantly drawn from the modern and contemporary periods, underscoring the topical relevance and contemporary resonance of the issue. Third, the focus frequently remains on women residing within China, indicating foreign media and audience interest in the lived experiences of women in Chinese society, and reaffirming the media’s role as a bridge in cross-cultural cognition,

for groups with little direct interaction, the media often serves as the primary source of understanding.

This pattern suggests that future research should strive for a more balanced selection of subjects across multiple dimensions, individual and collective, domestic and overseas, contemporary and historical, in order to enrich the overall and diversified understanding of Chinese women's representations, thereby advancing the comprehensive development of this field.

D. National Orientation Prevails Over Gender Perspective

Based on the systematic coding and categorization of keywords from 18 representative studies, this research identifies four core thematic areas in the study of the international image of Chinese women: (1) national image and international relations; (2) gender and women's image; (3) discourse analysis; and (4) news and media. Some keywords exhibit thematic overlap, reflecting the multidimensional nature of this issue.

The results show that the theme of "national image and international relations" dominates, with a significantly higher number of related keywords than those under the "gender and women" category. This indicates that the academic community currently views Chinese women primarily as carriers of national image, diplomatic symbols, and soft power, rather than focusing solely on their gender identity, gender relations, or social circumstances. Meanwhile, research on "Discourse Analysis" and "News and Media" also shows high activity, indicating that scholars not only examine what the media "says" and how it "says" it, but also explore "who is speaking" "through which channels" and "to whom", that is, the production, dissemination, and reception mechanisms of news.

Future research should expand its thematic dimensions and theoretical perspectives, incorporating multicultural contexts while balancing national and gender dimensions, to promote the diversification and globalization of research on the image of Chinese women.

V. CONCLUSION

This review represents the first comprehensive effort to systematically examine the discursive construction of Chinese women in international newspaper coverage. It maps the current state of research, identifies the dominant discursive patterns across different national and media contexts, and highlights the underlying cultural logics embedded within this discourse.

A major limitation of this review lies in the relatively small corpus of studies available, which narrows the scope for producing a fully integrated synthesis or a deeply layered interpretation of the discursive portrayal of Chinese women in global media. Yet this limitation is itself revealing it reflects the topic's underdeveloped status in global scholarship. In contrast to the substantial and theoretically rich work on groups such as Muslim women in international communication, studies on Chinese women remain limited in both scale and conceptual depth, underscoring the urgent need for more sustained and in-depth inquiry.

By establishing a baseline understanding of the media discourse about Chinese women in non-Chinese news media, this review provides a foundation for future large-scale, cross-cultural, and cross-platform research, particularly employing critical discourse analysis or corpus linguistics. Given the global significance of Chinese women as a demographic group, their international image warrants sustained and expanded scholarly attention.

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Women's Cultural Practices in Madurese Novels: A Feminist Narratology Analysis

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Abstract—This study examines how contemporary Madurese novels construct women's cultural subjectivities through narrative context, function, and technology in the following manner. Drawing on Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory and feminist narratology, the analysis focuses on six novels that depict women negotiating kinship obligations, ritual practices, and communal ethics within a patriarchal cultural framework. The results show that narrative contexts such as temporality, domestic and sacred spaces, and ritual cycles serve as cultural grammars through which women reinterpret inherited norms rather than merely obeying them. The narrative reveals that women's agency emerges through reflective endurance, silence, and moral discernment, enabling them to influence family and community dynamics without directly challenging tradition. Meanwhile, narrative technologies, including symbolism, focalisation, and temporal fragmentation, foreground feminine interiority and transform endurance into moral authorship. This study contributes to narrative theory by demonstrating how subjectivity in non-Western literary contexts is shaped by communal ethics and religious values. It also enriches feminist narratology by highlighting culturally grounded forms of agency that rely on resilience and moral strength. Overall, Madurese fiction illustrates that transformation arises not from the rejection of tradition but from its reinterpretation through narrative.

Index Terms—Narrative Subject Theory, feminist narratology, Madurese literature, gender representation, Indonesian fiction

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature functions not only as a mirror of cultural life but also as a narrative mechanism through which societies interpret themselves and preserve collective memory (Bruner, 1991; Ricœur, 1984). Within Indonesia's multilingual and multiethnic landscape, fiction plays a crucial role in articulating regional identities and negotiating the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity (Tamrin et al., 2024; Váña, 2020). Madurese literature, grounded in communal ethics, Islamic piety, and patriarchal lineage, offers a distinctive lens through which the intersections of gender, culture, and narrative representation can be understood (Hartanto & Roifah, 2020; Hermawati et al., 2024). Through literary texts, Madurese authors depict women as inheritors of tradition as well as active agents who navigate, reinterpret, and subtly challenge the cultural structures that shape their lives (Radhakrishnan, 2009; Sibanda, 2024).

Despite Indonesia's rich literary heritage, Madurese fiction remains underexplored in both national and international scholarship. Existing studies on Indonesian women's writing predominantly focus on Javanese, Balinese, or Minangkabau works, while research on Madurese literature tends to examine language, folklore, and sociolinguistic identity (Wardatin & Setiawan, 2022). The representation of women's cultural practices such as kinship, ritual, marriage, and domestic piety has received limited attention, especially from the perspective of narrative form. This gap raises critical questions about how Madurese novels construct, sustain, or transform gender ideology through storytelling and how these texts articulate the cultural scripts that shape women's identities. How do narrative structures contribute to the negotiation or reinforcement of patriarchal norms?

To address this analytical gap, this study integrates Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory with feminist narratology. Schachtner (2020) conceptualises the narrative subject as both a cultural product and a reflexive agent of self-interpretation. Her tripartite model narrative context, narrative function, and narrative technology provides a systematic framework for examining how stories situate individuals within cultural systems while simultaneously enabling internal critique. Meanwhile, feminist narratology, developed by scholars such as Lanser (2018) and Warhol (1989), emphasises that narrative choices voice, perspective, and temporality are ideologically charged and shaped by gendered power relations (Mejeur & Pellegrini, 2024). Combining these approaches allows for a deeper understanding of how Madurese fiction constructs gendered subjectivity through the interplay of cultural beliefs, narrative structure, and aesthetic strategy.

Accordingly, this study pursues two main objectives. First, it analyses how women's cultural practices are represented in contemporary Madurese novels, focusing on the temporal, spatial, and ritual dimensions that constitute their narrative context. Second, it examines how narrative functions and technologies such as focalisation, symbolism, and temporality shape, reinforce, or challenge patriarchal traditions. Through these aims, this study situates Madurese fiction within broader global discussions on narrative theory, feminist criticism, and postcolonial literary studies (Agboola et al., 2023; Nartey, 2021), demonstrating that regional literature can engage with universal questions of voice, agency, and identity.

The significance of this study is both theoretical and empirical. Theoretically, it extends Narrative Subject Theory into the Southeast Asian context by showing that narrative subjectivity is shaped by kinship, religion, and communal responsibility (Ricoeur, 1984; Schutz, 1997). It also contributes to feminist narratology by arguing that resistance in non-Western contexts often manifests through endurance, reinterpretation, and moral intelligence rather than overt rebellion (Jabeen, 2020; Mohanty, 2006). Empirically, this study positions contemporary Madurese fiction as a vital yet understudied archive of women's cultural memory, demonstrating its significance in Indonesia's evolving discourse on gender representation (Setini et al., 2020).

Thus, Madurese novels function not only as cultural mirrors but also as mediators that preserve ancestral wisdom while reimagining it through women's experiences. Through the combined lenses of narratology and feminism, this study affirms literature's role as a site of negotiation, where storytelling becomes both an act of remembrance and an instrument of transformation (Lanser, 2024).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Narratives have long been recognised as fundamental to both human cognition and cultural expression. Bruner (1991) argues that storytelling functions as a central mechanism through which individuals organise experience and construct shared cultural meaning. Ricoeur (1984) extends this perspective through his concept of narrative temporality, proposing that time becomes intelligible only when it is configured within narrative form. Schutz (1997) further emphasises the socio-cultural dimension of narrative by showing how individual experience acquires meaning through a collective horizon of understanding. Taken together, these foundational insights affirm narrative as both a literary mode and a cognitive-social process that enables societies to interpret themselves and sustain cultural identity (Váña, 2020).

Feminist theorists have advanced these ideas by demonstrating that narrative structures are shaped by gendered power dynamics. The emergence of feminist narratology marked a methodological shift from formalist models to ideological readings of narrative form. Lanser (2018) introduced the concept of *fictions of authority*, arguing that narrative voice, reliability, and the distribution of focalisation are never ideologically neutral but embedded within hierarchies of gender, class, and social authority. Similarly, Warhol (1989) highlights how narrative strategies such as address, irony, and focalisation operate as gendered discursive practices. These insights reveal that storytelling conventions can both reproduce and subvert patriarchal ideologies (Mejeur & Pellegrini, 2024; Nartey, 2021). Thus, feminist narratology offers critical tools for analysing how narrative forms participate in the politics of gendered representation.

Building on these developments, Schachtner's (2020) Narrative Subject Theory reconceptualises the narrative subject as both culturally produced and reflexively engaged in meaning-making. Her tripartite model consists of narrative context which situates subjects within temporal, spatial, and ritual settings narrative function, which explores how stories produce social meaning and identity, and narrative technology, which encompasses formal devices such as symbolism, perspective, and temporality through which ideology is encoded. This framework provides a systematic means of examining how cultural norms shape narrative form and how narrative practices enable individuals to negotiate these norms from within (Kurzynski, 2025). When integrated with feminist narratology, the model facilitates analyses that attend simultaneously to cultural structures, gendered power, and aesthetic strategies.

Recent scholarship underscores the importance of contextualising feminist narratology across diverse cultural settings. Studies of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian narratives demonstrate that gendered agency must be interpreted within culture-specific belief systems, moral frameworks, and ritual practices (Agboola et al., 2023; Jabeen, 2020; Wu et al., 2022). In African ecofeminist fiction, spirituality and ecological symbolism serve as vehicles for articulating female agency (Alharbi, 2022; Richter Reimer, 2023). In Middle Eastern narratives, religious symbolism frequently functions as moral critique (Abboud, 2025; Yahyapour & Karimi-Motahhar, 2021), while in South Asian literature, domestic spaces operate as political arenas in which women contest cultural expectations (Goswami, 2020; Iyer, 2021). These context-sensitive readings highlight the need for feminist narrative theory to attend closely to the cultural institutions within which gendered meaning is produced (Rodrigues, 2025; Thuy Hanh, 2024).

In Indonesia, gender-oriented literary criticism has expanded in recent years; however, it has largely emphasised sociological themes rather than narratological structures. Research on regional literatures particularly Javanese, Balinese, and Sasak often focuses on thematic issues such as women's subordination, moral resilience, and spirituality (Rauf et al., 2025; Setini et al., 2020; Tamrin et al., 2024). In contrast, scholarship on Madurese literature remains limited, tending to examine proverbs, oral narratives, and linguistic expressions as forms of cultural heritage (Masduki, 2022). While valuable, these studies seldom address the formal mechanisms through which narrative structures shape gender representation. Consequently, little is known about how Madurese fiction constructs women's subjectivities through narrative voice, temporality, symbolism, and focalisation within patriarchal cultural frameworks.

To address this gap, the present study positions itself at the intersection of feminist narratology and regional literary studies. By applying Schachtner's tripartite model to Madurese novels, this study moves beyond thematic description toward a formal analysis of how narratives serve as sites of cultural negotiation. The integration of narrative context (temporal, spatial, ritual), narrative function (identity formation and resistance), and narrative technology (symbolism, focalisation, temporal structure) provides a comprehensive basis for examining how local cultural ethics shape the representation of women (Lanser, 2018; Ricœur & Pellauer, 2013; Schachtner, 2020). This theoretical approach illuminates how Madurese fiction articulates culturally grounded forms of agency and contributes to broader conversations on gender and narrative in Southeast Asian literature.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design grounded in feminist narratology. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables the in-depth interpretation of meanings, symbols, and cultural values embedded in literary texts elements that cannot be captured through quantitative procedures (Creswell, 2009). Within this design, a feminist narrative orientation provides a critical lens for examining how gendered experiences are constructed, negotiated, and communicated through narrative forms (Lanser, 2024; Warhol, 1989). Madurese novels are therefore treated not merely as artistic artefacts but as cultural texts that reflect and reinterpret social ideologies.

The research corpus consisted of six contemporary Madurese novels selected through purposive sampling to reflect variation in authorship, narrative perspective, and cultural setting: *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]* (Ramadhany, 2019), *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]* (Masyari, 2023), *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]* (Joe Mawar, 2022), *Tanjung Kemarau [The Dry Cape]* (Julian, 2017), and *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]* (Julian, 2023). The selection criteria included: (1) publication within the last decade, (2) representation of women's cultural practices, and (3) thematic relevance to kinship, ritual, and local ethics. The corpus also ensured proportional representation of both male and female authors, enabling comparative insights into gendered authorship within Madurese literature.

Schachtner's (2020) Narrative Subject Theory served as the analytical framework. Rather than reiterating the theoretical foundations, this study operationalised the model through three analytical lenses: (1) narrative context, which identifies temporal, spatial, and ritual settings shaping women's experiences; (2) narrative function, which examines how characters' thoughts, actions, and relationships reflect cultural meanings and social expectations; and (3) narrative technology, which analyses focalisation, symbolism, temporal structure, and other narrative devices that encode gender ideology. The integration of feminist narratology further guided the identification of how these mechanisms reinforce or challenge patriarchal norms.

Data were collected through close reading and systematic annotation. Each novel was read multiple times to identify narrative segments depicting or implying women's cultural practices. Textual data were then coded deductively based on categories derived from Schachtner's model and inductively to allow new patterns to emerge (Schutz, 1997). Coding categories included domesticity, kinship obligations, ritual performance, moral reasoning, narrative perspective, symbolism, and expressions of endurance or resistance. The coding process was conducted manually by the researcher and reviewed by two colleagues specialising in Indonesian literature to enhance clarity and consistency.

Data analysis was conducted in three iterative stages. First, narrative excerpts related to women's cultural roles were identified and grouped. Second, these excerpts were categorised into thematic clusters, such as domestic space, ritual practices, spiritual reflection, and negotiation of authority. Third, each cluster was interpreted using the dimensions of narrative context, function, and technology, supported by feminist narratology, to determine how narrative form articulates gendered meaning (Ricœur, 1984; Ricœur & Pellauer, 2013). This multilayered process ensured that the analysis addressed both cultural and structural dynamics within the narratives.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study employed methodological triangulation, peer debriefing, and cultural validation. Triangulation was achieved by integrating narratology, feminist criticism, and ethnographic literature on Madurese culture. Peer debriefing involved consultation with two senior scholars in Indonesian literature, who reviewed the coding scheme and thematic interpretations. Cultural validation was conducted by cross-checking textual interpretations with established ethnographic studies on Madurese kinship, ritual, and gender norms. These strategies strengthened the credibility, dependability, and cultural accuracy of the findings.

IV. RESULT

A. Contextualizing Madurese Women's Narratives

The representation of women in contemporary Madurese novels consistently reflects the cultural intersections of kinship, Islamic devotion, and patriarchal lineage. Across the corpus, women are depicted as central figures who sustain familial and spiritual continuity while negotiating the moral constraints imposed upon them. The narratives show that cultural expectations shape women's experiences through ritual obligations, communal morality, and the spatial configurations of Madurese life.

In *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]* (Masyari, 2023) and *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]* (Ramadhany, 2019), everyday domestic rituals preparing offerings, maintaining ancestral houses, and observing family protocol become spaces where women reinterpret moral duty through emotional intelligence rather than passive obedience. Scenes

in which protagonists pause before family gatherings, reassess their responsibilities, or silently reject particular cultural demands illustrate how moral agency often emerges through reflective hesitation rather than confrontation.

Similarly, in *Tanjung Kemarau [The Dry Cape]* (Julian, 2017), the dry landscape becomes an extended metaphor for endurance, binding women's emotional labour to environmental scarcity. The protagonist's repeated returns to the family courtyard, despite personal suffering, demonstrate how women embody cultural continuity while simultaneously negotiating personal autonomy. Collectively, these patterns confirm that Madurese fiction constructs a gendered cosmology in which spirituality, social order, and endurance function as interrelated values that shape women's lives.

B. Narrative Function: Identity, Resistance, and Continuity

The findings indicate that narrative function in Madurese novels operates as a cultural mechanism through which women negotiate identity and power. Across the corpus, endurance appears not as passive submission but as a strategic form of moral resilience. In *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]* (Julian, 2023), for example, the protagonist's refusal to retaliate against injustice constitutes a deliberate ethical stance; her silence becomes a moral argument rather than a sign of powerlessness. Through reflective internal monologues and controlled emotional responses, women claim interpretive authority over their experiences.

In *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]* (Joe Mawar, 2022), the male narrative perspective unintentionally reveals the fragility of patriarchal norms. Women's loyalty, sacrifice, and spiritual labour narrated through a male lens form the moral foundation on which men depend. Several scenes show female characters quietly correcting male decisions, guiding ritual processes, and interpreting religious expectations. These narrative functions expose a structural paradox: although patriarchy assigns women secondary social roles, the narrative framework positions them as primary sources of moral knowledge.

The findings also show that silence frequently functions as a form of narrative control. Women withhold speech during ritual disputes, family conflicts, and moral dilemmas, creating interpretive gaps that prompt readers to recognise unspoken tensions. This silence acts as a counter-narrative an indirect form of resistance through which women maintain cultural harmony while subtly challenging dominant authority. Thus, ritual and kinship structures operate not only as constraints but also as interpretive systems that women navigate to assert moral and emotional agency.

C. Narrative Technology

Formal narrative strategies including symbolism, focalisation, and temporality are central to how Madurese fiction constructs women's subjectivities. In *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]*, floral imagery serves as a symbolic device that conveys cycles of suffering and renewal. The motif of the selir flower, described as both delicate and enduring, mirrors the protagonist's oscillation between cultural confinement and inner resilience.

Temporal fragmentation also features prominently across the corpus. In *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]*, shifts between ancestral memory and contemporary conflict highlight intergenerational patterns of endurance. These temporal movements illustrate how women interpret cultural obligations by continuously re-evaluating inherited memories.

The manipulation of narrative voice further reveals ideological tensions. In *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]*, the alternation between third-person narration and first-person reflection creates a dialogic structure that exposes the instability of patriarchal authority. This dual narrative position illuminates women's negotiation between cultural obedience and emerging self-recognition.

D. Cultural Semiotics and Gendered Space

Spatial and ritual settings in Madurese novels operate as cultural semiotic systems that encode gender expectations. Domestic spaces such as the *taneyan lanjeng* (extended family courtyard) function as both protective environments and sites of surveillance. Scenes in *Kembang Selir [The Concubine Flower]* depicting women moving between the kitchen and courtyard during ritual preparations show how space regulates gender roles while providing opportunities for introspection.

Sacred spaces mosques, prayer rooms, and gravesites serve as narrative thresholds through which women articulate spiritual agency. In *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]*, a woman's quiet recitation of prayers during a family dispute redirects the moral tone of the scene, revealing how spiritual authority can transcend social hierarchy.

Natural spaces, particularly the sea in *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]*, symbolise both exile and renewal. The protagonist's walks along the shoreline reflect her contemplation of loss and her reorientation toward moral clarity.

E. The Interplay of Context, Function, and Technology

The synthesis of narrative context, function, and technology reveals a coherent model of gendered subjectivity in Madurese fiction. Across the six novels analysed, women emerge not as passive inheritors of tradition but as interpreters of cultural meaning. Their agency is enacted through reflective endurance, moral critique, and subtle negotiation rather than overt rebellion.

Madurese fiction conceptualises transformation as an internal process that unfolds within the boundaries of tradition rather than in opposition to it. These findings highlight literature's role as a space in which cultural continuity and ethical innovation coexist.

V. DISCUSSION

A. *Reinterpreting Narrative Contexts*

The results demonstrate that narrative contexts particularly temporality, spatial structures, and ritual practices function not merely as settings but as cultural frameworks through which women negotiate meaning in Madurese fiction. This is consistent with Bruner's (1991) notion that narrative structures shape human meaning-making and cultural interpretation. Time in these novels unfolds cyclically, marked by ritual sequences and domestic rhythms that reinforce expectations of continuity in women's lives. Yet this temporal structure becomes a site of reinterpretation when protagonists pause, delay, or symbolically interrupt routine cultural practices, signalling internal negotiation rather than uncritical obedience. This aligns with Ricoeur's (1984) view that narrative temporality allows individuals to reconfigure inherited meanings through reflection.

Spatial contexts such as the *taneyan lanjheng* similarly reveal how women move within communal boundaries while reassessing their roles. These spatial movements resonate with Fu's (2022) argument that spatiality is relational and influences how individuals interpret cultural belonging. When characters shift between domestic and sacred spaces, narrative space operates as a symbolic threshold: women remain culturally embedded, yet these liminal spaces allow them to reinterpret and redefine their relationship to tradition. Thus, narrative context emerges as a dynamic arena through which women reinterpret the cultural logics that shape their identities.

B. *Narrative Function as Cultural Negotiation*

The narrative function of these novels shows that women's identities are constructed through moral deliberation and reflective engagement rather than overt resistance. Such subtle negotiation aligns with Mohanty's (2006) concept of culturally embedded feminist agency, where women resist through reinterpretation rather than rupture. While patriarchal principles inform the fictional worlds, the heroines negotiate these norms through endurance, selective silence, and layered moral reasoning strategies that resonate with Jabeen's (2020) findings on resilience as an ethical feminist response in non-Western contexts.

This dynamic is illustrated in *Tiang Garam [The Salt Pillar]*, where the protagonist's restraint becomes an ethical intervention that guides the narrative's moral direction. Rather than confronting patriarchal authority directly, she reframes cultural expectations through introspection and relational sensitivity. The narrative structure foregrounds women's interpretive labour, demonstrating that gendered agency emerges through weighing moral obligations, interpreting cultural teachings, and maintaining harmony while subtly redirecting power.

The findings also reveal that women's subject positions are shaped by the tension between communal morality and individual agency. Similar tensions are observed in Proudfoot and Kay's (2023) analysis of autonomy and communal expectations, which shows how women's ethical decisions often arise within culturally prescribed boundaries.

C. *Narrative Technology and the Feminist Aesthetic of Endurance*

Narrative technologies including symbolism, focalisation, and temporal layering play central roles in articulating a feminist aesthetic of endurance. Symbols such as salt, drought, or cyclical floral imagery embody cultural values of perseverance and moral clarity. This echoes Richter Reimer's (2023) observation that ecofeminist symbolism often encodes ethical resilience within cultural narratives. These symbols do not merely ornament the plot; they structure the reader's perception of women's emotional resilience and provide interpretive cues for understanding their struggles.

Focalisation deepens the representation of feminine interiority. The shifting narrative perspectives mirror Lanser's (2018, 2024) claim that narrative voice and focalisation are ideologically charged and shape interpretive authority. Temporal fragmentation, particularly in *Silsilah Duka [Genealogy of Sorrow]*, juxtaposes ancestral suffering with contemporary decision-making, revealing how women draw on intergenerational memory to navigate present dilemmas. Such temporal layering resonates with Kurzynski's (2025) discussion of multi-layered narrative experience as a cognitive and affective process.

Collectively, these narrative technologies transform endurance from a cultural requirement into an aesthetic mode through which women assert interpretive agency, demonstrating that narrative form itself operates as a medium of feminist expression.

D. *Moral Agency and the Philosophy of Cultural Feminism*

The results support the claim that Madurese women's agency is grounded in moral reasoning rather than antagonistic resistance. This culturally embedded agency aligns with Tang's (2024) reading of virtue ethics, where moral integrity emerges from relational and culturally informed ethical practices. Ethical concepts such as *sabar* (patience) and *ikhlas* (sincerity), which the protagonists reinterpret as guidance for navigating expectations, parallel broader discussions of moral endurance in Southeast Asian and Islamic ethical studies (Pamungkas et al., 2023).

In *Lelaki Suci [The Sacred Man]*, spiritual devotion becomes a lens through which female characters assess and influence men's moral failures. Their authority emerges through insight, care, and spiritual labour, functioning as epistemic resources for confronting injustice echoing Herissone and Kelly's (2025) model of hermeneutical agency as a differentiated form of interpretive power. This mode of agency reinforces a culturally specific feminist ethic, demonstrating that transformation in Madurese literature arises through moral intelligence and relational sensitivity.

Thus, Madurese novels articulate a philosophy of cultural feminism in which women enact change by reframing the ethical meanings of tradition rather than dismantling it.

E. Authorship, Dialogism, and Theoretical Implications

The interplay between male and female authors in Madurese fiction creates a dialogic field in which multiple ethical perspectives coexist. Such dialogism aligns with Bakhtinian perspectives on multi-voiced narrative and recent feminist narratology discussions (Mejeur & Pellegrini, 2024) that highlight the ideological stakes of narrative plurality. While male authors often portray women as stabilising moral forces, female authors extend this portrayal by foregrounding women's introspection and interpretive autonomy.

The findings also extend Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory by showing that narrative contexts in non-Western settings incorporate culturally specific dimensions such as ritual cycles, communal ethics, and religious devotion. This corresponds with Manning (2021) and Stumbitz and Jaga (2020), who emphasise the need to account for local epistemologies when analysing gendered subjectivity in global South contexts. Likewise, feminist narratology is broadened through the observation that agency in regional literature often emerges through endurance, care, and moral clarity rather than rupture or confrontation consistent with Mohanty (2006) and Sarwar (2023) on culturally rooted feminist ethics.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that Madurese novels transform narrative structure into moral and cultural inquiry. Women's stories reveal that agency is enacted through reflective engagement with tradition, affirming literature as a space where cultural continuity and ethical innovation unfold simultaneously.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined how contemporary Madurese novels articulate women's cultural subjectivities through the interaction of narrative context, narrative function, and narrative technology. The findings demonstrate that women's agency in these narratives emerges not through overt resistance but through reflective negotiation within the moral and ritual systems that structure Madurese life. Temporality, spatial arrangements, and ritual practices operate as cultural grammars that both constrain and enable women's interpretive agency, allowing them to redefine duty, endurance, and emotional integrity from within their traditions.

At the level of narrative function, the novels show that women exercise authority by navigating the tension between communal morality and personal authenticity. Through silence, moral discernment, and relational sensitivity, female characters reinterpret cultural teachings and influence the ethical direction of their families and communities. The analysis also highlights that narrative technologies such as symbolism, focalisation, and temporal fragmentation function as aesthetic strategies that foreground women's interiority and transform endurance into a form of moral authorship.

Theoretically, this study contributes to narrative scholarship by extending Schachtner's Narrative Subject Theory into the Indonesian cultural context, demonstrating that subjectivity in non-Western narratives is shaped by kinship, ritual, and communal ethics. It further enriches feminist narratology by showing that agency in regional literature often manifests through culturally embedded forms of resilience, reflection, and moral intelligence rather than through rupture or confrontation.

Empirically, this study positions Madurese fiction as a significant yet underexplored archive of women's cultural memory in Indonesia. These novels illustrate how storytelling becomes a space of negotiation in which tradition is preserved, examined, and subtly transformed. Through their reflective engagement with inherited values, the women portrayed in these narratives demonstrate that cultural change often unfolds within the rhythms of everyday life.

In summary, Madurese novels affirm the role of narrative as a form of cultural philosophy. By transforming lived experience into ethical reflection, they show that transformation does not necessarily arise from breaking tradition but from reinterpreting it. The voices of Madurese women in these works reveal that the most enduring forms of agency are often enacted quietly through thought, care, and moral clarity.

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Analyzing Najdi Oral Narrative: A Case Study of Alsharhan's "The GMC Girls" Using Labovian and Rhetorical Frameworks

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Abstract—This study examines a selected Saudi Arabian narrative, specifically the Najdi oral narrative (The GMC Girls), narrated by Al-Sharahan, a Saudi well-known narrator. The aim is to uncover the hierarchical structure of oral narratives by analyzing their rhetorical components and Labov's narrative framework. It also explores Saudi cultural practices and representations embedded within such narratives. The communicative elements of the rhetorical structure include prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, pause phrasing, syntactic constituency, parallelism, repetition, and quotation marks. The interaction of these elements throughout the narrative is essential for forming lines, intonational groups, sections, and subsections. Labov's narrative structure, on the other hand, includes abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. Though this study focuses on a single narrative, it fills a gap in the study of Saudi oral narratives and contributes to the existing literature. It also highlights how Saudi cultural behaviors and customs influence these narratives, particularly in topics such as traditions and social etiquette. The analysis found that this narrative aligns with Labov's model, with all components present. The narrator employs metaphorical features, such as similes, onomatopoeia, and evaluative devices, to depict events and help listeners visualize them. The study also offers insights for translators, teachers, and future research. This study has implications for understanding the cultural representations embedded in narratives.

Index Terms—Najdi narratives, Saudi culture, Labov's Narrative Structure Model, rhetorical strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of narrative has received considerable attention from researchers across various disciplines, resulting in numerous definitions. Sarbin (1990) proposed that narrative is an organizing principle for all human action; hence, the way we comprehend the world and make moral decisions is directed by narrative structures. The element of events involving human action is emphasized, as Berger (2001) describes narrative as a recount of events or experiences involving people, animals, extraterrestrials, and other entities. In addition to the emphasis on narrative as a foundational structure influencing human behavior and cognition, academicians have also focused on the narrative's function in constructing and conveying meaningful, time-ordered stories. Gill (2016) defines narrative as the ability to produce a fictional or factual account of meaningful, chronologically sequenced occurrences and experiences. Ewick and Silbey (1995) described narrative as "a sequence of statements connected by both temporal and moral ordering". According to Labov (1972), narrative is "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred". Narrative, as represented through diverse scholarly perspectives, is viewed as a foundational construct that shapes human cognition, communication, and the interpretation of lived experiences.

The study of oral narratives serves as an essential tool for understanding a society's cultural and social structures. Oral narratives, especially in their traditional forms, preserve a community's language, social practices, and cultural heritage (Hymes, 1996). In Saudi Arabia, oral narratives serve as a vital resource for exploring social dynamics by examining the connections between language, culture, and identity (Lowry, 2020). Narratives are stories that sequence events over time and organize accounts of these events in ways that offer interpretations of the storytellers' experiences (McKibben & Breheny, 2023). Social scientists have acknowledged that narratives consist of experiences and events from within the storyteller's social world, which influences how social identities are portrayed (Bamberg, 2009). Therefore, by combining these two considerations—events and their relation to social structure—this study identifies the hierarchical and rhetorical structure of the Najdi oral narrative to explore the social identities embedded in it. To achieve these, the study aims to answer these three questions:

A. Research Questions

- 1- What is the hierarchical Labovian structure of the selected oral narrative?
- 2- What is the rhetorical structure of the narrative?
- 3- What cultural practices and representations are embedded within this narrative?

B. Brief Review of Research on Arabic Narrative Structures

Oral and written narratives have been identified as crucial domains of research. Research has shown that narratives have been examined from various perspectives, ranging from detailed studies of their internal structure to their use as a tool for sociocultural research (Stapleton & Wilson, 2017; González, 2009). Arabic narratives have also been extensively researched, covering a range of aspects from syntactic structures to sociocultural contexts (Abu Lughod, 1986; Taha, 2001; Holes, 2004; Van de Wege, 2013; Alenizi, 2020). Dating back to the 1980s, Abu-Lughod examined Bedouin poetry and oral narratives to provide insights into the narrative structures within Bedouin oral tradition. Abu Lughod (1986) emphasized the role of narratives in reflecting and constructing social identities and cultural values. Herzog (2012) uses a cultural and structural analysis framework to examine Arabic oral narratives, focusing on the cultural values and social norms embedded within narrative structures. Holes (2004) explores various aspects of narrative structure across different varieties of Arabic, employing a functional and descriptive approach and discussing the role of language in constructing identity in the Arabian Gulf region. It uses sociolinguistic and narrative analysis frameworks to examine how narrative elements function within these varieties. Van De Wege (2013) examines the rhetorical devices of repetition and parallelism in Arabic oral literature to investigate the structure and effectiveness of narratives. Concerning Najdi Arabic, while Alenizi (2020) provided valuable insights into the internal structure of Najdi oral narratives, his analysis did not engage with their sociocultural functions. The present study builds on this work by examining a corpus of oral narratives from a single Saudi narrator, integrating both structural and sociocultural perspectives to highlight how narrative practices simultaneously organize experience and construct cultural meanings. These studies demonstrate that Arabic narratives are a well-researched area with significant contributions to understanding their syntactic, rhetorical, and sociocultural aspects.

While significant research on Arabic narratives has explored a wide range of perspectives, a notable gap remains in the specific study of Saudi Najdi oral folktales. This gap is significant because these narratives provide profound insights into Saudi society's cultural practices, social norms, and historical developments. The explicit emphasis on Najdi oral narratives, particularly in terms of their hierarchical structure and the interaction of rhetorical components such as prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, pause phrasing, syntactic constituency, parallelism, repetition, and quotation marks, remains underexplored. The study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of a selected Saudi Najdi oral narrative, examining its hierarchical structure and alignment with Labov's Narrative Structure. Additionally, it aims to explore how these narratives reflect cultural practices and representations, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of Saudi cultural behaviors and traditions as they are manifested in oral storytelling. The outcomes of the study will not only enrich the documentation of Saudi oral narratives but also offer valuable insights into the use of narrative features for clearly depicting events and cultural values.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Theoretical Frameworks in the Analysis of Saudi Narratives

In studying narratives, researchers have employed various theoretical frameworks to uncover their deeper meanings and cultural implications. One prominent approach is Labov's narrative structure, which emphasizes the sequential organization of events and the linguistic strategies used to build narratives (Labov, 1972). Labov's narrative structure has been particularly instrumental in depicting the way Saudi storytellers structure their narratives to convey cultural values and social norms. In addition, rhetorical analysis (Woodbury, 1985) has been applied to examine the persuasive and stylistic elements embedded within Saudi oral narratives, focusing on the speakers' use of language to shape perceptions and reinforce cultural ideologies. Key contributors to the rhetorical analysis include Johnstone (2005), who highlights the role of rhetorical strategies in narrative, and Tannen (2007), who focuses on conversational narratives and the significance of repetition, parallelism, and other rhetorical devices. Discourse analysis is another prevalent framework for exploring the functions of language within broader social contexts. Discourse analysis of narratives reveals how identity and community cohesion are constructed (Holes, 2004).

Therefore, the current research study employs a dual framework approach, utilizing Labov's Narrative Structure Components and rhetorical structure components to analyze Saudi oral narratives, specifically the Najdi Narrative. Labov's framework provides a systematic methodology for examining narrative elements, including orientation, complicating actions, evaluation, resolution, and coda. At the same time, rhetorical analysis offers insights into the rhetorical strategies employed within Najdi narratives. This combined framework facilitates a comprehensive analysis of how these narratives' structure events, convey meaning, and reinforce cultural norms, thereby contributing to a significant understanding of Najdi oral traditions and their societal implications.

B. Sample and Coding

The current research employs a qualitative case study approach, focusing on a single narrative from a single narrator, because this method offers conceptual insights and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and helps identify key elements, processes, and relationships rather than making broad generalizations (Crowe et al., 2011). The narrator, Muhammad Ali Al-Sharhan, was chosen for this study for several reasons: he is a Saudi storyteller who speaks the colloquial dialect of Saudi Arabic, specifically the Najdi dialect, known for pronouncing /dz/ instead of /q/ and /ts/ instead of /k/, he is one of the most popular narrators in the Arabian Peninsula, with a program broadcast across audio and video media in Gulf countries, he is recognized for his engaging and captivating storytelling style and holds cultural prominence.

through participation in various literary gatherings in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Kuwait, as well as the Voice of the Arabs in Libya and Algeria (Wikipedia, 2010).

The narrative, "The GMC Girls," was specifically chosen because it has the potential for cultural representations, as it primarily focuses on a man who retired from ARAMCO (Arabian American Oil Company). This man was known for his love of cars and had limited knowledge of English vocabulary. The narrator narrates what happened to that man one day after retirement when he stopped by a vehicle to check it while girls were inside. The moral of the story is that curiosity can sometimes put someone in trouble. This narrative was taken from a 10-minute episode of a televised program. The program's background often features a tent in the desert and a camel, reflecting the story's historical setting. Typically, the program lasts about 20 minutes and centers around themes of traditions and bravery during that period. Although Alsharhan has published three books containing around 200 narratives, the researcher selected the televised version for analysis, as it is an oral form that engages the audience and allows for examination of pauses and other oral components. Regarding ethical considerations, all data used in the study were publicly available, and no personal user information was accessed or reported, which adheres to ethical guidelines for research on digital communication (National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, 2019).

To analyze this narrative, it was first transcribed and then translated into English. The narrative structure is organized into a hierarchy of lines, which are numbered with Arabic numerals (1). Sections are indicated by uppercase Roman numerals (I.), subsections by lowercase Roman numerals (i.), and scenes are labeled with uppercase letters (A.). A rising intonation is marked by a slash (/), a falling intonation by a backslash (\), and a level intonation by the tilde (~), following the standard coding system used in Alenizi (2020). Labov's structural elements are also positioned to the left of the lines: an abstract with an uppercase letter (A), the orientation with an uppercase letter (O), the complicated action with an uppercase letter (C), the resolution with an uppercase letter (R), the evaluation with an uppercase letter (E), and the coda with a combination of these letters (CO). Regarding the cultural interpretations, they were validated by the researcher's interpretative role as a native speaker of the Najdi dialect. Such reflexivity can act as a strategy to enhance rigour (Darawsheh, 2014).

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Labov's Narrative Structure for Studying Najdi Narrative

Labov's narrative structure framework provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing Najdi narratives, particularly its systematic approach to examining narrative components. Labov's model has been used to study various cultural narratives, highlighting both universal patterns and distinct cultural differences (Norrick, 2005). His work mainly focused on individual experiential narratives within the Native American oral tradition. He collected data by recording subjects who shared personal stories of danger or embarrassment. For analyzing Saudi Najdi narratives, Labov's narrative structure is vital for understanding how storytellers organize their tales and for highlighting culturally significant practices. According to De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012), the evaluation component in Labov's model often uncovers cultural beliefs and moral lessons embedded in narratives, which will be an essential factor when examining Najdi oral stories.

Labov's model of Narrative Structure is based on six elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. These components provide a theoretical framework for examining the narrative elements and interpreting their functions within a cultural context (Labov, 1972). As Johnstone (2016) points out, many narratives are partial or fragmented yet are still regarded as complete narratives because they present sequences of events with a clear beginning, middle, and end pattern. Moreover, the components of a narrative are interconnected and rarely exist in isolation; they often merge or overlap depending on the narrative structure.

(a). Abstract

According to Labov (1972), the abstract summarizes the essence of the story with one or more clauses situated at the beginning of the narrative. In this narrative, the narrator begins with the Islamic greeting "*Assalamu alaykum wa Rahmat Allah wa barakatu*" (peace and mercy of Allah be upon you), then welcomes the audience (TV viewers). He then presents several key clauses that summarize the story and the main character. This abstract begins at lines 1 to 7 and includes a greeting to the audience, followed by clauses that indicate the story is about a person who worked at Aramco, was fond of cars, knowledgeable about their details, spoke English, and what happened to him one day after his retirement. The abstract covered what was going to be in the story; however, it was meant to grab the listeners' attention to find out what happened to that man after his retirement. The last line of the abstract was in lines 22 and 23 and included *yom men alayam*, "one day," which is an equivalent of "once upon a time" in English. The use of the Islamic greeting reflects the narrator's influence of religion and the importance of using a greeting that is both acceptable and desirable to the audience. The rest depicts what Labov considered to be in the abstract.

A	1.	السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته Peace and mercy of Allah be upon you
A	2.	أهلاً وسهلاً بكم اعزائي المشاهدين Welcome Dear viewers
A	3.	في هذه الحلقة الجديدة من برنامج مجلس الراوي In a new episode of the program of the Council of the narrator

A	4.	في هذه الحلقة In this episode
A	5.	أتكلم عن أحد الشعراء I talk about a poet
A	6.	الذين يجيدون الوصف who is proficient in a description
A	7.	وخاصة في موضوع الحوار Especially dialogue
AO	22.	بعد ما تقاعد After he retired
AO	23.	يوم من الأيام One day

(b). Orientation

Orientation involves details about the time, place, characters, and their situation, along with providing essential background information that the audience needs to understand the story (Labov, 1972). In the narrative, the orientation is composed of several clauses that identify the time, place, or setting, characters, and situation. It occurred immediately after the abstract, as Labov states that it usually appears “in the course of the first several narrative clauses”. In this narrative, the clause that sets the time alaser “afternoon” was repeated three times, as in lines 25, 37, and 38. The clause that sets the place *fa ja end ahad almojamat atejaria* “he arrived at one of the commercial stores” was also repeated, as in lines 26 and 29. The repetition was apparent in this section as the narrator stimulates the audience to imagine the place and time and visualize the situation or setting.

The orientation was not limited to the beginning; there were also sections of orientation scattered throughout the narrative, where the narrator introduced the parking lot, the boy, the bag, and the girls.

O	24.	ذهب الى أحد خارج المدينة يعني He went outside the city
O	25.	طلع يوم مثل ما تقول العصر يتمشى I mean he out, around afternoon, walking
O	26.	فجا عند أحد المجمعات التجارية Then he arrived at one of the commercial stores

(c). Complication Actions

The complicating actions in narratives include a series of past-tense clauses that address the question: “What happened next?” This segment serves as the narrative cornerstone, heading up to the story’s climax by presenting a problem, turning point, or significant development. The complicating action consists of the main body of the narrative clauses, which comprise the main events of the narrative that sequentially lead to the climax and then resolve. In this narrative, the complicating actions were divided into different sections based on the theme, and some of these lines overlapped with the orientation section or lines. These sections were characterized by the past tense, as with the verb *rja* “went back”, the particles *yom* “when”, and *laken* “but”, as in line 44, where the main events started. They also included most of the descriptions, which were rich in adjectives and similes, from line 43 until line 181, where the climax is presented.

43.	لكن يوم جا بيبي يشغل سيارته يتمشى But when he was about to start his car to leave
181.	يوم جا عند الفزاة القدامية يم السواق When he reached the front window on the driver’s side
182.	حط يديه كذا بيبي يناظر القير هو تحت ولا فوق When he placed his hands on the window to see whether the gear was up or down
183.	يوم حط يده بيبي يناظر When he placed his hands to see
184.	ولا والله ان هاك البنات الثلاث He was surprised with the three girls inside the car

(d). Evaluation

In the evaluation section, the storyteller uses various techniques to establish and maintain the narrative, focusing on perspectives such as why the story was told and what the storyteller hopes to achieve. In this way, the storyteller expresses attitudes about the events unfolding in the narrative. The evaluation clauses, which Labov (1972) refers to as “free clauses,” state what is interesting or unusual about the story; they justify why the person is telling the story and why the listener should pay attention. Labov (1972) regarded evaluation as the most important element in a narrative, alongside the narrative events that involve the narrative clauses. In this narrative, the evaluation devices are spread throughout the story. Labov discusses various types of evaluations at some length. Here, I will identify only the type of evaluation that appears in the presented narrative: the “external evaluation,” in which the narrator pauses the story, addresses the audience, and explains the point or shares his opinion, as in the following lines from 229-231. Before concluding, the narrator turns

to the listeners and discusses the man, stating that he did not intend to engage in such behavior (flirting with the girls). Such behavior reflects the sensitivity of the topic in Saudi culture at that time, as it is a segregated community where such actions are unacceptable. Therefore, the narrator here justifies the man's behavior.

- E 229. وهو مهوب راعي هالأمور
And he is not that kind of person
- E 230. رجل أجودي لحية غانمة دين
He is a good, generous and conservative man
- E 231. بس انه يعرف السيارات الله الله
But he is an expert of cars, certainly

There are four additional evaluative sections, and these sections typically pause the action to assess the event before the narrator resumes the narration. These sections are also marked by evaluative devices distributed throughout the narrative. The first evaluative section appears in lines 60-63, where the narrator uses the adverb *khasatan* "especially", justifying the man's astonishment at the car. We notice here the tense shifts to the present tense as the narrator addresses the audience, as shown in the examples below. The second evaluative section is characterized by interrogative words such as *wesh* "what" and *laish* "why," as in lines 94 and 95, explaining that the man did not know who was in the car and why it was working. The third evaluative section begins with the phrase *Halheen ba3lmcom*, "now I am telling you", as in line 103, where the narrator answers the question he had posed in the second evaluative section. The fourth evaluative section, which appears in lines 196 - 202, includes the phrase *alhaqiqa* "in fact" and negative words such as *ma* "not" and *la* "no", clarifying that the man's behavior was good and that he did not intend to act this way. In sum, the evaluation section was mainly devoted to justifying behaviors considered rude at that time because of segregation, such as staring at girls.

- E 60. خاصة مثل السيارة الصالون الجسم
Especially a car such as GMC when you see it from the side
- E 61. يعجبك
You will like it
- E 62. يعجب صاحب الذوق
It attracts people with good taste
- E 63. ويعجب اللي له هواية ونظر في السيارات
And it attracts those who have good understanding of cars

(e). Resolution

Resolution is the final part of the story. It consists of independent clauses that show how the complicating actions were resolved to the audience (Labov, 1972). The resolution explains what happened next; it appears after the climax of the narrative and usually leads to the story's conclusion before the narrator finishes with the coda. In this narrative, the resolution section begins in lines 227 and 228 with the verb *Araf* "he knew," indicating the resolution. The man's knowledge of English reflects a higher level of education among those who worked at Aramco at that time than among others.

- R 227. لكن يوم شاف "هاو ار يو"
But when he saw "how are you?"
- R 228. عرف ان المسالة فيها نوع من المغازل
He understood it as a kind of flirting

(f). Coda

According to Labov (1972), the coda is an optional part of narratives that often includes clauses concluding the story and bringing the audience back to the present. It serves as a pragmatic device to transition out of storytelling mode, signaling the return to regular dialogue or the passing of the conversational floor. Since this narrative is not a traditional folk tale or fairy tale, it is expected not to have fixed formulas indicating the end, such as "in the end" or "happily ever after." The coda can offer a summary of what happened and connect the story to the setting where it is told. It can also repeat the most important event of the story, bringing the listener back to the present. In this narrative, the coda wraps up the sequence of complicating actions. It shows the effects of the events, especially in the final part, when he realizes what the girls have done, leaving the listener with the outcome of putting himself in such an embarrassing situation. All of this occurs in lines 232-235, where all the phrases start with particles *fa* "then" and *wa* "and", as in the examples below.

- CO 232. فركب السيارة
So he got into his car
- CO 233. وشغل
And he started it
- CO 234. وتركهم
And he left them
- CO 235. وراح
And he drove away

B. Rhetorical Strategies for Analyzing Narrative

Woodbury (1985) defined a rhetorical structure component as “any well-defined recurrent, hierarchical organization that is present in a stretch of discourse and distinct from other such organizations” (p. 178). Five independent communicative components have been identified in this narrative. Each of these features distinctly organizes the narrative. In this narrative, the lines were identified in this way because I found that intonation, pausing, and particles tended to align. The sections and subsections are generally characterized by themes: introduction, the participants (the man, the boy, the girls, and the girl), and the main events, including the car and the trip. There are also six sections and twenty-three subsections in the narrative.

By analyzing the rhetorical strategies used in the narratives, more profound insights into Najdi speakers’ portrayal of meaning, reinforcement of cultural norms, and construction of social identities will be identified (Johnstone, 2005; Tannen, 2007). The rhetorical structure of oral narratives includes various communicative elements that contribute to their overall coherence and impression. Key features such as prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, and pause phrasing are crucial in establishing narrative segments. Additionally, syntactic constituency, parallelism, repetition, and the use of quotation marks play important roles in shaping the listener’s experience and understanding of the narrative (Tannen, 2007).

(a). Prosodic and Particle Phrasing

Prosodic features such as intonation, stress, and rhythm are crucial in oral narratives because they help distinguish different narrative segments and convey the emotional tone of the story (Chafe, 1985). Particle phrasing involves using discourse markers and particles, which assist in structuring the narrative and keeping the listener engaged (Schiffrin, 1987). In Najdi narratives, prosodic features mainly emphasize culturally important moments and transitions within the story. In Arabic storytelling, intonation patterns indicate shifts between descriptive sections and key events, guiding the audience’s emotional and cognitive responses (Holes, 2004).

The unmarked case of line intonational contour in this narrative is the falling contour. The narrative features an intonation structure of the Raising Falling **R*F**. There is a rising boundary tone at the beginning of each sentence (phrase), a rising pitch accent on every phrase-stressed syllable, and a falling phrase tone at the end of each phrase. Another distinctive prosodic feature is the lengthening of vowels at the end of discourse markers such as *waa* “and” as in line 11, *faa* “so”, and *laa* “no”. The word *la* literally means “No,” but here it functions as “Moreover,” as seen in line 191.

O	11.	وَ طَوَالَ عَمَلُهُ فِي الشَّرْكَهْ \	And throughout his work in the company
C	201	لَا وَمَعَاهُمْ عَصِيرٌ فِي كُوبَاتٍ صَغَارٍ وَمَزَارَاتٍ	Moreover, they had juice in small glasses with straws

Therefore, most of these markers were pronounced with a higher pitch. Since intonation aligns with pauses and particles, it helps to define the lines more than the subsections and sections. It appears that leveling and falling are equivalent or identical. Also, a prosodically defined line corresponds to a noun phrase or a clause. There are some exceptions to the unmarked case in which the intonational line ends with a falling contour. For example, lines 108 and 109 end with rising contours. This indicates that the narrator has more or different information to deliver. It seems that he wants to highlight and emphasize specific details, as in lines 108 and 109, where the narrator stresses that this man is an expert on cars and their specific features. As observed, these sentences end with a lengthening of the vowel at the end, as in *almosaadat* and *flewarat*.

C	108.	تَحْتَ السَّيَّارَةِ يَطَّالِعُ الْمُسَاعِدَاتِ /	down the car looking at the axles
C	109.	و يَطَّالِعُ الْفَلْيُورَاتِ /	and looking at the flywheels
C	110.	و يَطَّالِعُ أَجْزَاءَ السَّيَّارَةِ الْخَلْفِيَّةِ الَّتِي تَحْتَ \	and looking at the parts of the car from the rear

Particle phrasing is a key component used to organize the narrative structure. The nine particles present in the narrative are: *wa* “and”, *fa* “so”, *ya3ni* “I mean”, *laken* and *bas* “but”, *mathalan* “like”, *yom* “when”, *hata* “even”, and *la* “no”. The most common particle is the discourse marker *wa* “and”, which occurs 108 times throughout the narrative. Often, these particles, although not always, are syntactically limited to preverbal positions and typically introduce clauses. Particles in the narrative help establish lines, subsections, and sections. They appeared 158 times, mainly at the beginning of lines—125 times—to determine lines, and only 5 times at the end of lines to mark the conclusion and start a new line with a clarification. The particle appearing at the end is *ya3ni* (I mean). The discourse marker *ya3ni* appeared six times in lines 20, 24, 51, 56, 140, and 179. Its function is always to introduce the idea of the next line, making the following line a clarification of the previous one, as seen in lines 20 and 21, which confirms the functions of *ya3ni* in Almossa (2023).

O	20.	وَصَارَ مَوْلِعٌ فِيهَا يَعْنِي \	and he became fond of it
O	21.	و هَوَايَتُهُ الشَّيْءُ هَذَا	I mean, this is his hobby

Almost every section and subsection is introduced by a particle. The particle “wa” (and) introduced five subsections, “fa” (so) introduced four subsections, the particle “laken” (but), and “yom” (when) introduced two subsections. There were also several examples where double particles function as one discourse marker, as in “w la” (and then), which was repeated seven times, as in line 43.

- C 43. ولا قد خف الموقف هذا من السيارات
and when he then noticed that the parking lot had become less crowded

TABLE 1
FREQUENCIES OF PARTICLES APPEARANCE IN THE NARRATIVE

Particles	Frequency of Appearance in the Narrative
wa (and) و	108
fa (so) ف	9
Ya3ni (I mean) يعني	6
“laken” (but) لكن	6
“bas” (but) بس	3
la (no) لا	3
mathal (as-like) مثل	6
“yom” (when) يوم	15
“hata” (even) حتى	2
Total	158

(b). Pause Phrasing and Syntactic Constituency

Pauses in oral narratives perform several functions. They provide the narrator with a moment to shape thoughts, create suspense, and even emphasize a point. The strategic use of pauses can significantly enhance the narrative’s effectiveness (Gee, 1986). Syntactic constituency refers to the arrangement of words and phrases within sentences to convey meaning and structure. The clarity and coherence of oral narratives contribute to achieving effective syntactic constituency in sentences (Suyan et al., 2017). The study of Arabic oral narratives shows how pauses and syntactic structures reflect traditional rhetorical patterns deeply rooted in Arabic literary and oral traditions.

Pauses can be presented by line breaks as in written prose (Tedlock, 1983). In this narrative, pauses were found after each line, which helped in determining lines. Thus, pauses were lined up with falling intonation. However, most of the pauses were very short, with some as brief as a breath. The length of the pauses varies from line to line, yet most are one second or shorter. Generally, pauses range from 0.1 to 0.3 seconds. What I noticed was that the pauses that were at the end of a section or subsection were longer than other pauses inside the sections and the subsection; they usually were either (0.2) or (0.3) as in lines 21, 43, 82, 104, 131, 159, 166, 204, 218, 223, 227, and 232. So that was like an indication of the end of the thought or the subsection, and that the narrator is moving to another subsection, as in the following example:

- C 81. هذي مقلط كامل يمشي \
- This is a complete mobile living room
- i. The back of the car**
- C 82. رجع وري للخلف \
- He went back

(c). Syntactic Constituency

In the narrative, each line corresponds to either a clause, a noun phrase (NP), or a verb phrase (VP). Some of these noun phrases are definite, while others are indefinite. The NP forms a separate line with an intonational contour as in the verb phrase. They were also indicators of lines, and the particles helped define the lines and subsections. For example, the verb phrases that started with the verb *rja* “went back” introduced about three subsections, as in lines 82 and 90, and the ones that started with *dzarb* “got closer” introduced two subsections, as in lines 104 and 178. Consequently, syntactic constituency corresponds with prosodic signals, pauses, and particles that define the lines, which helps maintain the narrative’s harmony.

- i. The side of the car**
- C 94. رجع مع الجنب الثاني يناظرها \
- turned back to the other side
- I. The girls**
- i. What they looked like**
- C 178. قرب قرب عند الموتر \
- got closer to the car

(d). Parallelism, Repetition, and Quotation Marks

Parallelism and repetition are common rhetorical devices in oral narratives used to reinforce key points and themes and influence the narrative’s rhythm and flow (Tannen, 2007). Repetition often serves as a mnemonic device, helping both the storyteller and the audience retain key elements of the story. Van De Wege (2013) finds that the role of repetition and parallelism in Arabic oral poetry and storytelling is to reinforce cultural values and collective memory. Quotation marks,

or the oral equivalent through changes in voice or prosody, are used to distinguish between different speakers or to highlight direct speech within the narrative (Bauman, 1986).

1. Parallelism and Repetition

Parallelism can be identified through the interaction of prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, pause phrasing, and syntactic repetition (Woodbury, 1985). In this narrative, the narrator uses numerous parallel lexical items and structures, creating coherence and rhythm within the story. This parallelism appears either at the beginning, as in lines 3-4, 61-62-63, 78-79-80-81, or at the end, as in lines 10-11, 29-31, 34-35-36, 41-42, 43-44, 47-50, 82-83, 215-216. It is especially evident in lines 78 to 81, where the lines start with the demonstrative *hathi* “this” as the narrator describes the GMC, a vehicle not common at that time. This repetition highlights the man's surprise at the car, reflecting the simplicity of life during that time. In lines 10 and 11, where repetition occurs at the end, the purpose here is to confirm the location or setting where the man worked. Additionally, the data showed the repetition of *MashaAllah*, which literally means “what god has willed it” but functions as “God bless you”. It appeared after compliments, as seen in lines 52, 138, 161, 173, and 194, when the narrator complimented the car, the boy, and the girls.

C	78.	هذي هي السيارة العجيبة صدق This is the really incredible car
C	79.	هذي هي السيارة تاخذ الشوي والواجد والعائلة الكبيرة والصغيرة This is a car that fits small and big families
C	80.	هذي مهيب سيارة This is not a car
C	81.	هذي مقلط كامل يمشي This a walking dining room (simile)
O	10.	لكنه عمل في الشركة But he worked in the company
O	11.	و طول عمله في الشركة And throughout his work in the company

2. Quotative Marks

Quotation marks are linguistic signs that indicate reported speech. In English, common verbs used for reported speech are “say” and “tell” because they refer to an utterance. Similarly, in Arabic, the verbs *ygal* “say” and *yxber* “tell” serve the same purpose. In this narrative, quotation marks are seen as a key part of the communication that structures the story, often used to show lines within the narrative. The Arabic quotation marks appearing in the story are three types: *gal* “He said,” *galt* “she said,” and *ygalon* “they say.” They appear seven times, with five indicating the start of lines, such as in lines 77, 92, 128, 172, and 210. Occasionally, a particle like *wa* “and” is used before the quotation marks to signal addition, as in *w galt* “and she said” in line 210.

R	210.	وقالت "يا بنت" لأختها الثانية And she said “you girl” for her other sister

(e). Use of Metaphorical Features

The use of metaphorical features such as similes, onomatopoeia, and evaluative devices is a hallmark of oral narratives. These features enhance the narrative’s vividness and appeal, enabling listeners to visualize the events and engage more deeply with the story. Metaphors and other figurative language elements play a crucial role in conveying cultural values and experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Al-Khatib's (2003) analysis of metaphors in Arabic proverbs and narratives expresses societal attitudes toward life, morality, and interpersonal relationships. In Najdi storytelling, metaphorical language is frequently employed to convey complex cultural concepts and emotions.

In this narrative, the narrator employs numerous similes, primarily when describing the car, its tires, the boy, and the girls. The first simile appears in lines 67 and 68, where he describes the tires. Then, in lines 78-81, he compares the car to the living room to show its size. The other similes are found in lines 173, 184, 189, 190, and 194. Such detailed descriptions and extensive use of metaphors reveal the lifestyle of that period, when large cars were uncommon, and reflect the interests of the people at that time, such as the leisure time retired individuals have to notice details. From the boy's description, we can imagine wealthy people of that time, as shown in lines 136-143. From the indirect description of the girls in lines 184-195, we can infer that the narrator, out of politeness, preferred to use metaphorical images rather than say ‘beautiful’ directly. The other metaphorical language that was used in the narrative is the onomatopoeia, where the narrator imitates the sound of the engine, as in line 75:

C	67.	حتى الكفرات جديدة بزرعها واقف Even the tires were new with good treads
C	68.	زرع الكفرات ابد كنه عودان شعيرية The treads looked like raw noodles
C	75.	عجيبissime شغل المكنه تTTTTTTTT / The engine sound was wonderful tttttt

IV. CONCLUSION

The study analyzed a specific oral Najdi Narrative to answer the research questions by uncovering the rhetorical and Labovian structure within a cultural and linguistic context. This study distinguishes itself by focusing primarily on televised colloquial oral narrated folktales, rather than on classical literature or on informative, friendly speech. The analysis confirmed that, as Alenzi (2020) and Qasim and Abdul-Muni (2022) have found, this Saudi narrative follows Labov's structure, with all components present. Additionally, the study revealed that the narrator employed metaphorical features, including similes, onomatopoeia, detailed descriptions, and evaluative devices, to illustrate the scene and convey the message effectively. These features help listeners visualize the events. The analysis also revealed that, although these narrative features often operate below conscious awareness, the narrator skillfully manipulated them. Therefore, we see how cultural norms influence narratives and how the media conveys ideologies through storytelling.

Similar to Bin Towairesh (2024), this study shows that studying narratives reveals individual and social identities within societies, emphasizing the importance of documenting folktales to preserve cultures and dialects, especially in Najd, where people now interact with individuals from around the world. Most people tend to speak the plain or white dialect, which makes translating such work more challenging. Furthermore, the analysis has implications for translators and teachers. For translators, understanding these cultural norms is crucial for conveying the text effectively. This work also explores the feasibility of translating such work and identifies the challenges translators may face, as well as the strategies they will employ. For teachers, teaching literary texts, such as narratives, will undoubtedly help students improve their reading and speaking skills. It will also keep them aware of their culture and heritage. Yousif et al. (2023) suggested including translated Arabic folktales in teaching materials, as they observed that this helps keep students motivated and engaged when they read and discuss their Arabic culture in English.

In conclusion, although this study is limited to a single televised episode from a male perspective, analyzing this narrative has yielded valuable implications for future studies. It contributes to the work of the Najdi dialect and culture; it also features many metaphorical images and cultural components that have yet to be studied. Additionally, studying narratives from other Saudi dialects, such as the Hijazi dialect, could produce different insights. The narrator in this study is male, so narratives from female narrators might offer a different perspective. Nowadays, with the rise of social media, narratives from younger generations are more prevalent, and understanding how they differ in their linguistic choices and the morals they convey can help us better comprehend how people represent themselves and their experiences to themselves and others. Therefore, to deepen our understanding of linguistic features, identities, and cultural norms in narratives, further research on comparative analysis across dialects, gendered perspectives, and digital narratives is suggested.

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Synergistic Efficacy of an Integrated Gamified and Multiple Intelligences-Based Model on Young EFL Learners' Proficiency and Confidence

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Abstract—Second language acquisition in early childhood is frequently impeded by significant affective barriers, including language anxiety and low self-confidence. This study investigates the efficacy of a pedagogical model that synergistically integrates gamification and Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) to mitigate these barriers and enhance learning outcomes in a kindergarten English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Employing a quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test non-equivalent control group design, 90 kindergarten students were assigned to either an experimental group (N=45) using the integrated model or a control group (N=45) receiving traditional instruction. Quantitative data from language proficiency and confidence observation sheets were analyzed alongside qualitative data from participatory observation, interviews, and artifact analysis. The results indicate a statistically significant advantage for the experimental group, which demonstrated a mean score gain of +11.5 points in language proficiency compared to +5.0 for the control group. More profoundly, the intervention had a transformative impact on learner confidence, with the experimental group showing a mean gain of +5.5 points versus a negligible +1.2 for the control group. Thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed three core mechanisms driving these outcomes: (1) the cultivation of a low-anxiety environment promoting fearless exploration, (2) personalized engagement through multiple intelligences, and (3) a pedagogical shift from passive reception to active learning and student agency. The synthesis of these findings suggests that the integrated model creates a holistic learning ecosystem that simultaneously nurtures the affective and cognitive dimensions of the child, thereby lowering the affective filter and accelerating language acquisition.

Index Terms—gamification, multiple intelligences, English language learning, confidence, language anxiety

I. INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of a second language in early childhood represents a critical developmental window, yet the process is often undermined by significant affective barriers that inhibit progress. Young learners frequently experience language anxiety, low self-confidence, and fluctuating motivation, factors which collectively form what Krashen (1985) conceptualized as the "Affective Filter". This theoretical construct posits that negative emotions create a metaphorical barrier, blocking the comprehensible input necessary for language acquisition, irrespective of instructional quality. Research by Li et al. (2025) specifically underscores the dynamic relationship between affective processes and intrinsic motivation in language acquisition, a mechanism directly targeted by gamification.

Traditional pedagogical paradigms in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, often characterized by rote memorization, teacher-centric instruction, and public error correction, can inadvertently heighten this filter. This creates a high-stakes environment where the fear of making mistakes stifles participation and communicative risk-taking. To address these pedagogical challenges, this study investigates an innovative model that synergistically integrates two powerful theoretical frameworks: gamification and Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI).

Gamification, defined as the application of game-design elements in non-game contexts, has demonstrated considerable potential for increasing motivation, engagement, and knowledge retention by fostering a low-pressure, intrinsically rewarding learning environment. Studies by Al-Obaydi et al. (2024) and Tanjung (2025) reinforce the empirical evidence that gamification is highly effective in boosting intrinsic motivation and overall language proficiency in EFL learners. By reframing failure as an integral, non-judgmental part of the learning process and providing immediate, constructive feedback, gamification directly mitigates the affective filter. Zimmerman (2025) further notes that Gamification-Assisted Language Learning (GALL) enhances positive language behavior and significantly decreases language learning anxiety.

Concurrently, Gardner's (1983) theory of Multiple Intelligences challenges the monolithic view of intelligence, proposing instead a constellation of distinct cognitive capacities. This framework critiques the "one-size-fits-all" educational model. Research by Safitri et al. (2021) advocates for the early detection and appropriate stimulation of MI in kindergarten, emphasizing the necessity of integrated learning activities. An MI-based curriculum provides multiple "entry points" to learning, enabling children to engage with material through their dominant intelligences, thereby rendering the process more relevant, enjoyable, and ultimately effective.

While both gamification and MI theory have been explored independently, a review of recent literature reveals critical gaps that this study aims to address. The primary novelty of this research lies in its synergistic integration of both frameworks into a single, cohesive pedagogical model and its use of a mixed-methods approach to empirically measure both cognitive (language proficiency) and affective (confidence) outcomes in a kindergarten EFL setting. Ariyani et al. (2024) highlight the need for a holistic approach that evaluates gamification from a broader perspective, including full school engagement dimensions, not merely motivation.

Murray et al. (2024) investigated non-digital gamification, reporting positive effects on reading fluency and attitudes. This focus on a single linguistic skill leaves a gap in understanding the impact of digital, multi-modal interventions, such as those utilizing Augmented Reality (AR) or AI-driven systems. For instance, Hassan and Khan (2025) found that AR enhanced motivation, reduced anxiety, and improved fluency in younger learners, suggesting the efficacy of advanced digital tools. However, their work did not incorporate the MI framework or quantitatively measure confidence as a distinct, primary variable.

A meta-analysis by Wang et al. (2022) demonstrated a moderately positive effect of game-based learning on English in kindergarten. While providing a broad statistical overview, this meta-analysis lacks the granular, qualitative data necessary to explain the underlying pedagogical mechanisms—the how and why an intervention succeeds. Furthermore, it does not specifically examine an integrated gamified/MI model. Other qualitative action research explored the stimulation of multiple intelligences, finding that integrated learning activities could enhance MI potential. This research focuses exclusively on the MI framework without the motivational affordances of gamification, and its outcomes center on the development of the intelligences themselves, rather than on language proficiency and confidence as the primary dependent variables. Similarly, a purely qualitative study on teacher perceptions of gamification for vocabulary development, reporting enhanced motivation, relies solely on teacher reports and lacks the robust quantitative pre-test/post-test design and student-centered qualitative data employed here. Lastly, a descriptive study identified a problem in English lesson plans, finding a predominance of activities targeting only logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences and thus a need for more diverse and motivating activities. This study expertly identifies the problem but does not empirically test an intervention. The potential of combining digital motivators with personalized learning is further supported by Chen and Wu (2025), who demonstrated that integrating gamification and AI creates a more dynamic and student-centered educational experience tailored to individual learning needs.

Thus, this study addresses these gaps by: (1) Integrating digital gamification and MI theory into a single, holistic intervention; (2) Employing a mixed-methods design that combines quantitative outcome data with rich qualitative process data; and (3) Placing strong, explicit emphasis on measuring the affective domain through the quantitative assessment of confidence, in addition to language proficiency. This research seeks to answer the central question: To what extent does this integrated model impact young learners' language proficiency and confidence compared to traditional teaching methods? By synthesizing quantitative performance data with qualitative observations of the learning process, this study aims to provide a holistic picture of the model's effectiveness and its underlying mechanisms.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Affective Barriers and Gamified Interventions in Second Language Acquisition*

The acquisition of a second language is a complex process profoundly influenced by the learner's affective state. A primary obstacle identified in the literature is the presence of affective barriers, including anxiety, low self-confidence, and fluctuating motivation, which can create a "mental block" that impedes language processing (Du, 2009). This concept is formally articulated in Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that negative emotional states raise a metaphorical filter, preventing comprehensible language input from being processed for acquisition. Conversely, a low-anxiety, high-confidence environment lowers this filter, facilitating learning (Krashen, 1985). Modern studies, such as Bhuiyan and Alomari (2025), continue to confirm the strong negative correlation between high affective filter levels and successful language performance. The primary objective of effective language pedagogy is thus to create conditions that consistently mitigate this affective filter.

In response, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has increasingly adopted gamification—the use of game design elements in non-game contexts—as a powerful strategy to enhance motivation and engagement (Deterding et al., 2011; Kapp, 2012). Recent empirical research highlights gamification's capacity to boost intrinsic motivation (Lin et al., 2024) and improve student engagement metrics across diverse language tasks (Qian et al., 2023). Mechanics such as points, badges, and leaderboards have shown promise in making language learning more interactive and appealing (Hwang et al., 2017).

More specifically, digital game-based learning (DGBL) has proven highly effective at creating the low-stress, low-stakes environments essential for language practice. Within a game, failure is reframed not as a personal shortcoming but as a natural part of the learning process, which has been shown to increase learners' willingness to communicate (Reinders & Wattana, 2015). Empirical studies confirm that DGBL environments can significantly reduce language anxiety, with some research indicating that high-anxiety learners often demonstrate greater progress in these settings compared to traditional instruction (Yang & Chen, 2024). This anxiety-reducing effect is linked to improved self-efficacy (Jia et al., 2025) and greater confidence in speaking tasks (Tzeng, 2024).

However, the effectiveness of gamification can be inconsistent. Poorly designed competitive elements can sometimes exacerbate anxiety, underscoring the need for a more nuanced, pedagogically grounded approach (Dehganazadeh & Dehganazadeh, 2020; Hanus & Fox, 2015). For instance, an overreliance on leaderboards can be detrimental, especially for lower-proficiency learners, leading to social comparison anxiety (Gao & Zhao, 2023). Therefore, effective design requires careful alignment with pedagogical goals to maximize positive affective outcomes and avoid unintended negative consequences (Zhou et al., 2024).

B. *Multiple Intelligences Theory*

A significant limitation of traditional language instruction and generic gamification is the reliance on a monolithic view of intelligence. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) offers a transformative pedagogical framework by challenging this notion. Gardner (1983) proposed that human intelligence is not a single, general capacity but rather a composite of several distinct modalities. The contemporary relevance of this approach in education is widely supported (Al-Zahrani, 2025). The eight most recognized intelligences are Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist (Armstrong, 2009). The theory posits that every individual possesses a unique profile of these intelligences, each with varying strengths, and that these capacities can be developed through practice. Research confirms the existence of these unique learning profiles and their direct influence on L2 learning styles (Prakoso & Syafryadin, 2024).

The pedagogical imperative of MI theory mandates a fundamental shift away from a "one-size-fits-all" educational model. In language teaching, this requires moving beyond the traditional overemphasis on Verbal-Linguistic and Logical-Mathematical activities (e.g., grammar drills, translation)—a practice recent studies criticize for limiting learner potential (Wang & Lee, 2023). Instead, an MI-informed instructional design intentionally incorporates a variety of activities that engage different cognitive abilities. For instance, a learner with strong Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence may internalize vocabulary more effectively through role-playing, while a learner with high Musical intelligence might better grasp sentence structures through rhythm or melody (Armstrong, 2009).

By providing multiple pathways for learning and assessment (Sari et al., 2022), educators can validate students' unique strengths, engage a wider spectrum of learners, and foster a more inclusive and effective educational environment. Studies confirm that MI-based curricula significantly enhance learner achievement and satisfaction compared to traditional methods (Ghasemi & Parsa, 2024).

C. *Synergizing Gamification and Multiple Intelligences for Meaningful Learning*

The true potential for mitigating affective barriers and building learner confidence lies in the deliberate synthesis of gamification's motivational architecture with the pedagogical inclusivity of MI theory. This synergy moves beyond simply tacking points and badges onto existing tasks; instead, it utilizes the MI framework as a blueprint for designing varied, personalized, and meaningful gamified experiences. The integration of MI and gamification has been empirically proven to enhance educational outcomes more significantly than either framework used in isolation (Susilo et al., 2024; Wu & Hsieh, 2025).

This approach involves consciously mapping specific game mechanics to different intelligences. For example, narrative-driven quests cater to Verbal-Linguistic intelligence, collaborative puzzles engage Interpersonal intelligence, and rhythm-based challenges appeal to Musical intelligence. This conscious alignment of game elements with cognitive strengths is essential for ensuring pedagogical effectiveness (Lin & Yu, 2023). By offering a portfolio of activities, a single platform provides students with the autonomy to engage with material through their areas of cognitive strength, thereby fostering a profound sense of competence and lowering the affective filter.

This integrated framework directly addresses the risk of superficial gamification, often termed "chocolate-covered broccoli," where extrinsic rewards are added to uninspired tasks (Kapp, 2012). By aligning game mechanics with learners' intrinsic cognitive profiles, the focus shifts from extrinsic rewards to intrinsic motivation. This cultivation of what scholars call "meaningful gamification" prioritizes the psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Nicholson, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The satisfaction of these fundamental psychological needs through well-designed systems is central to sustained engagement (García-Cabot et al., 2024). For example, engagement from a collaborative quest designed for Interpersonal learners derives from the social interaction itself, not merely the points awarded. This model ensures that gamification serves not as a superficial motivational layer but as an integral tool for deep, inclusive, and empowering language learning, maximizing both affective and cognitive benefits (Purnama & Setyawan, 2022).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test non-equivalent control group design. This design was primarily selected for its substantial ecological validity, permitting intervention assessment in real, non-manipulated kindergarten environments where random participant assignment is not possible.

A. Participants

Participants in this research were 90 kindergarten students from the same educational institution. The sample was split into the institution's two existing class groups: one designated as the Experimental Group (N=45) and the other serving as the Control Group (N=45). The educational literature acknowledges the use of these intact groups as a convenience sample that may sacrifice generalizability, a trade-off often necessary for pragmatic and ethical reasons.

B. Intervention

The intervention lasted 12 weeks. The mobile gaming application provided an innovative approach to English learning for the Experimental Group. The application promoted diverse engagement opportunities through numerous activities designed to be inclusive of a range of Multiple Intelligences (MI). For example, users could interact with vocabulary in a musical game, trace letters to engage the Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence, or complete word formation using spatial puzzles to address the Visual-Spatial intelligence. To maintain a low-stress environment, the application utilized game elements, such as points and animations, coupled with positive reinforcement for correct answers. Cheerful animations and praise provided feedback in a playful and non-threatening manner to effectively mitigate learning anxiety. The Control Group was taught using the traditional kindergarten approach, characterized by teacher-centered methods such as recitation, flashcard drills, and worksheets.

C. Instruments and Procedure

Data collection involved a mixed-methods approach, where the combination of qualitative and quantitative tools allowed for a more comprehensive account of the study's findings. To assess the change in the primary dependent variables, two observational checklists—the Language Proficiency Observation Sheet (a 35-point scale measuring vocabulary recognition, comprehension, and word production; see Appendix A, Instrument 1.A) and the Confidence Behavior Observation Sheet (a 16-point scale measuring the frequency of four behaviors associated with learning confidence: initiating speech, participation, positive body language, and error resilience; see Appendix A, Instrument 1.B)—were created and administered prior to pre-test and following post-test the intervention.

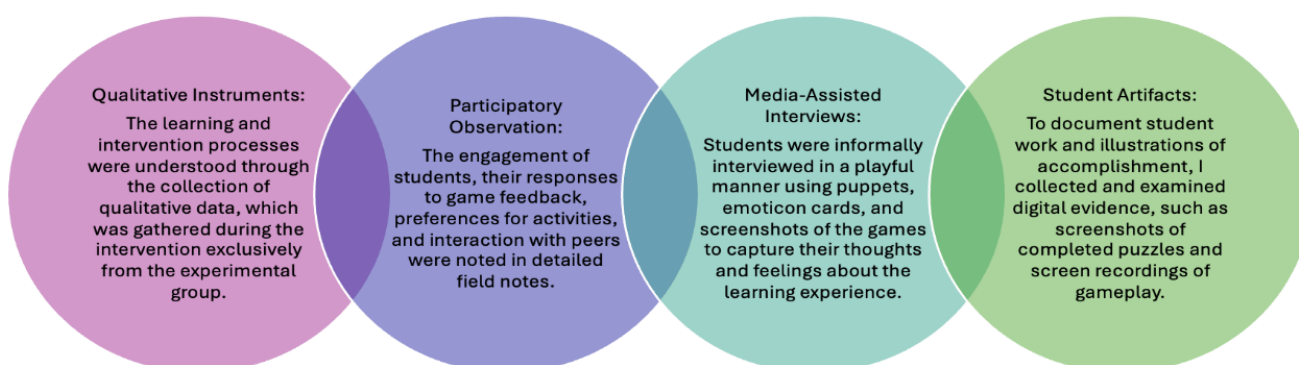


Figure 1. The Steps of Collecting Data

D. Data Analysis

To evaluate the quantitative data, analysis was performed using paired-samples *t*-tests on the pre-test and post-test scores for each group, and independent-samples *t*-tests on the score gains between the experimental and control groups. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was applied to the field notes, interview transcripts, and descriptions of the artifacts to identify patterns and themes that might explain the quantitative results.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the collected data revealed statistically significant and practically meaningful differences between the experimental and control groups, with the gamified, MI-based model demonstrating superior outcomes in both language proficiency and, most notably, learner confidence.

A. Quantitative Findings

1. Language Proficiency

The data indicate a dramatic divergence in learning trajectories between the two groups. While both groups began from a nearly identical baseline (mean score of ~12), the experimental group experienced a quantum leap in language mastery post-intervention.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES FOR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Group	Number of Students (N)	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score	Score Gain
Experimental (Game)	45	12.2	23.7	+11.5
Control (Traditional)	45	12.1	17.1	+5.0

The experimental group's mean score gain of +11.5 points was more than double the +5.0-point gain observed in the control group, indicating a powerful intervention effect on the rate of language acquisition.

2. Confidence

The most transformative impact of the intervention was observed in the affective domain. The game-based model demonstrated outstanding superiority in fostering confident learning behaviors.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES FOR CONFIDENCE BEHAVIOR

Group	Number of Students (N)	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score	Score Gain
Experimental (Game)	45	6.5	12.0	+5.5
Control (Traditional)	45	6.4	7.6	+1.2

The experimental group experienced what can be described as an explosion of confidence, with a score increase of +5.5 points, which is more than four times the minimal +1.2-point increase observed in the control group.

B. Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data from the experimental group revealed three central themes that elucidate the mechanisms behind the intervention's success.

1. Fearless Exploration

The primary foundation of the intervention's success was its ability to create a psychologically safe learning environment that systematically dismantled language anxiety. The game's non-judgmental feedback loop was central to this process, as captured in an observation of Student F: "Observation of Student F showed him attempting to match the picture of a 'fish' four times. Each time he was incorrect, the picture simply wiggled playfully and returned to its place without any negative sound or 'X' mark. On his fifth try, he succeeded, and the game character danced cheerfully. Student F laughed and clapped his hands. He showed no frustration, but rather a persistence driven by curiosity." This low-stakes environment, where mistakes are reframed as neutral and even amusing parts of the discovery process, stands in stark contrast to traditional settings where public error correction can induce shame. This finding is supported by teachers in other contexts who have noted that when they model mistake-making, students "realize that it really is okay... They feel more confident".

2. Personalized Engagement Through Multiple Intelligences

The intervention achieved exceptionally high levels of student engagement by offering a variety of activities that served as different "entry points" for each child, aligning with their dominant intelligences. "Children with Kinesthetic intelligence were highly enthusiastic about modules where they could trace letters on the screen with their finger.

Meanwhile, children with Musical intelligence were able to memorize the names of fruits much faster after singing a song about them from the game." This multi-modal approach allowed children to learn through their cognitive strengths, making the process feel relevant and intrinsically rewarding. This aligns with observations from other educators using gamification, with one teacher noting her students were "studying vocabulary much more than before" because the activities presented a motivating challenge.

3. Transformation from Passive Receivers to Active Learners

The constant interactivity of the game fundamentally shifted the students' role from that of a passive audience to active agents in their own learning. This shift is powerfully encapsulated in the spontaneous declaration of Student N after successfully solving a word puzzle: Pointing proudly at the screen, he exclaimed, "I made it! Not the teacher, me!" This statement signifies a profound growth of learning ownership and agency. This is consistent with the views of educators who find that gamification empowers students because "they feel like they are in control of their learning journeys and ability to succeed".

Implications and Theoretical Alignment

The findings of this study gain deeper significance when contextualized within foundational theories of language acquisition in young learners. For young children, language acquisition is a multifaceted and dynamic process that unfolds through continuous, meaningful interaction with proficient speakers (Gervain, 2020; Ratner, 2009). This natural process is often disrupted by conventional teaching methods that fail to cater to diverse learning paces, leading to unbalanced proficiency levels (Aravind et al., 2025). The success of the gamified model in this study can be understood as an alignment with more effective, innovative approaches that mirror natural acquisition. Research confirms that methods like storytelling, drama, and play-based activities positively impact vocabulary and grammar acquisition (Alelyani & Alharbi, 2025; Guneş, 2025; Strauss & Bipath, 2020). The intervention described here functions as a technologically enhanced form of play-based learning, providing the rich, interactive, and psychologically safe environment that is optimal for young language learners. A key aspect of this model is its sophisticated approach to developing linguistic intelligence, which Gardner (1983) defines as sensitivity to spoken and written language and the ability to use it to accomplish goals. Rather than relying solely on traditional linguistic methods—which primarily benefit learners who already possess strong linguistic intelligence—this intervention strategically uses other intelligences as gateways to language learning. For instance, a child with high musical intelligence learns vocabulary through song, and a child with strong bodily-kinesthetic intelligence learns letter formation through touch. This multi-modal strategy aligns with the core tenets of MI theory, which advocates for presenting material in numerous ways to engage different cognitive strengths. In doing so, the model does not just teach to a child's strengths; it uses those strengths to scaffold and build up weaker areas, effectively enhancing their overall linguistic competence.

Synthesis of Findings

When the quantitative and qualitative data are integrated, a coherent and powerful narrative emerges. The significant quantitative score increases are not anomalies but the logical outcomes of the observed qualitative processes. The intervention's success lies in its holistic approach, which recognizes the synergistic relationship between a child's emotional state (affect) and their ability to learn (cognition). These findings are strongly supported by and contribute to the broader literature on gamification and MI-based pedagogy in early education. The positive impact of gamification observed in this study is consistent with wider research. For example, a study on non-digital gamification in a kindergarten EFL class found that it not only reduced negative feelings toward English but also significantly increased voluntary at-home reading practice (Murray et al., 2024). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of game-based learning confirmed that gamification has a moderately positive effect on English learning across various educational levels, including kindergarten (Wang et al., 2022). This body of research corroborates our finding that a gamified approach can effectively boost both engagement and skill development. Similarly, the success of the MI-based framework aligns with existing studies. Research has shown that MI-supported project-based learning leads to more positive attitudes towards English lessons and higher achievement levels (Baş & Beyhan, 2010). The MI approach has also been found to enhance classroom engagement (Ghaznavi et al., 2021) and positively impact broader aspects of early childhood development, including creativity and social skills (Roesdiyanto, 2014). This supports our conclusion that catering to diverse intelligences creates a more effective and positive learning environment. Furthermore, the findings are echoed in research from journals focused on the practical application of language studies, such as *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. This body of work confirms that gamification is a pedagogical strategy that empowers and engages learners by creating a relaxed atmosphere (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). This aligns directly with our "Fearless Exploration" theme and the observed reduction in anxiety. Such research also highlights that gamified learning transforms students into active participants through problem-solving and instant feedback, supporting our "Active Learning" theme and the observed shift in student agency (Manzano-León et al., 2021). By leveraging play—a cornerstone of a child's social, emotional, and linguistic development—the intervention creates a powerful and holistic learning experience. However, this literature also cautions that the success of gamification is not automatic; it requires careful pedagogical design to balance game elements with learning objectives and to avoid an over-reliance on extrinsic rewards that could undermine intrinsic motivation.

The Virtuous Cycle

The explosion in confidence (+5.5 points) is directly explained by the Fearless Exploration theme. When children feel safe to fail, they become braver to try, which naturally builds their self-confidence and lowers their affective filter. The

leap in language proficiency (+11.5 points) is the combined product of the Personalized Engagement and Active Learning themes. When children learn through a path best suited for them (MI theory) and are actively involved in the discovery process, their retention and comprehension of learning material increase exponentially. This creates a virtuous cycle; the safe environment builds confidence, which encourages more active participation; this participation is channelled through effective, personalized activities, which leads to greater competence; this newfound competence, in turn, further boosts confidence, completing and reinforcing the cycle. The model did not merely teach English; it re-engineered the learning experience to be emotionally supportive and cognitively engaging.

The findings of this study gain deeper significance when contextualized within foundational theories of language.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study convincingly demonstrate that a gamified English learning model integrated with a Multiple Intelligences (MI) approach is a highly effective pedagogical strategy for kindergarten students in an EFL context. The model succeeds because it creates a holistic learning ecosystem that simultaneously nurtures the affective domain (by fostering psychological safety and building confidence) and the cognitive domain (by promoting personalized engagement and student agency), thereby not only accelerating the acquisition of language proficiency but also transforming young children into confident, resilient, and self-directed learners. Consequently, these findings carry significant implications for educational practice, suggesting that a departure from traditional, one-size-fits-all methods toward dynamic, learner-centered models yields profound benefits, offering educators an evidence-based rationale for integrating playful, multi-modal activities and providing curriculum designers a successful blueprint for developing theoretically grounded digital tools. However, the study is limited using a convenience sample, which restricts the generalizability of the findings, and the twelve-week duration of the intervention, which precludes conclusions about long-term retention. Therefore, future research should aim to replicate these findings with larger, more diverse samples, employ longitudinal designs to track sustained impact, and further investigate the specific game mechanics and MI-based activities most effective for different language skills.

APPENDIX A. QUANTITATIVE INSTRUMENTS (PRE-TEST & POST-TEST)

These instruments were used before pre-test and after post-test the intervention to numerically measure change.

Instrument 1.A: Language Proficiency Observation Sheet

No.	Skill Measured	Data Collection Procedure	Scoring & Marks
A	Vocabulary Recognition	Show 20 picture cards (e.g., cat, dog, ball). Say the object's name in English and ask the student to point to the correct picture.	1 point for each correct answer. Maximum Total Score: 20
B	Command Comprehension	Give 5 simple verbal commands clearly (e.g., "Clap your hands," "Stand up"). Observe if the student performs the correct action.	1 point for each correctly followed command. Maximum Total Score: 5
C	Word Production	Show 10 different picture cards from session A. Ask, "What is this?"	1 point for each word pronounced understandably. Maximum Total Score: 10
	Total Language Proficiency Score		/ 35

Instrument 1.B: Confidence Behavior Observation Sheet

Observation Context: During a standard English language activity (outside of game use for 15 minutes).

Rating Scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely (1-2 times), 3 = Sometimes (3-4 times), 4 = Often (5+ times).

No.	Observed Behavior	Operational Description	Score (1-4)
1	Speaking Initiative	The student attempts to say English words/phrases without being directly prompted by the teacher.	
2	Active Participation	The student voluntarily raises their hand, comes to the front, or joins in games/songs.	
3	Positive Body Language	The student displays eye contact, smiles, or an enthusiastic posture during the English activity.	
4	Resilience	The student tries again after a pronunciation or response error without becoming shy or withdrawn.	
	Total Confidence Score		/ 16

APPENDIX B. QUALITATIVE INSTRUMENTS (DURING THE INTERVENTION)

These instruments were used to capture the processes and experiences of students while using the game.

Instrument 2.A: Participatory Observation & Field Notes Guide

Observation Focus: Student interaction with the English language game.

Aspects to Note:

- **Initial Reaction:** Expression when first seeing the game (Curious, confused, excited?).
- **Engagement & Focus:** How long can the student focus? What distracts them?
- **Activity Preference (MI):** Which modules are preferred (Musical, Visual-Spatial, Kinesthetic, etc.)?
- **Response to Feedback:** How does the student react to "correct" or "incorrect" notifications?
- **Social Interaction:** Does the student interact with peers regarding the game?
- **Verbal & Non-Verbal Expressions:** Note any spontaneous words or facial expressions.

Instrument 2.B: Media-Assisted Brief Interview Guide

Media Used: Hand puppet, Emoticon cards (happy, sad, confused), Screenshots from the game.

Prompting Questions:

- (With puppet) "Hello, Dodo is curious, what was the most fun part of the game you just played?"
- (Showing screenshots) "Out of all of these, which game did you like the most? Why?"
- (Showing emoticon cards) "How did you feel when you were playing the game?"
- "Do you want to play this game again tomorrow?"

Instrument 2.C: Student Artifact Documentation Sheet

Artifact ID	Student Name	Date	Artifact Type	Contextual Description & Analysis
001	Student A	Oct 18, 2025	Screenshot	A picture of a house colored in the "Colors" module. Shows comprehension of the instruction "color the house red."
002	Student B	Oct 19, 2025	Short Video	Screen recording of successfully completing the "B-A-L-L" puzzle. Evidence of success in a spatial-linguistic task and prideful expression.

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On the Construction of Gender Discourse in Eileen Chang's Translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*

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Abstract—Western feminist translation theory has gained increasing attention, influenced by the “cultural turn” in translation studies and the feminist movement. However, due to differences in social, cultural and historical contexts, feminist translation strategies and practices in the West and in non-Western contexts, such as China, exhibit distinct characteristics. What requires further exploration is how these distinctions reflect the sociocultural realities of their respective contexts. This study adopts the product-oriented descriptive translation approach to examine the construction of gender discourse in Eileen Chang's Chinese translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Using House's (2015) translation quality assessment model, this research systematically examines, collects and analyses elements related to gender within the source text (ST) and target text (TT), focusing on their Field, Tenor and Mode. Through a comparative analysis of these linguistic dimensions, this study uncovers both the differences and similarities in the construction of gender discourse between the original work and its Chinese translation. Furthermore, by investigating these differences and similarities, the study explores the relationship between lexico-grammatical choices and the broader sociocultural context in shaping gender discourse. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how gender discourse is reconstructed in translation and how sociocultural factors influence the translator's linguistic and discursive decisions, thereby advancing discussions of feminist translation in non-Western contexts and global translation studies.

Index Terms—Chinese practice, feminist translation strategies, feminist translation theories, gender discourse, language manipulation

I. INTRODUCTION

Wittgenstein (1953, 2009) observes “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (p. 43), a view extended by Austin (1962), who shows that utterances are performative, not merely descriptive (p. 6). Building on this, Butler (1999, 2002) contends that “gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be” (p. 33), thus framing gender as a discursive construct. These insights laid the groundwork for the emergence of language and gender studies in the 1970s and 1980s (Coates, 2013), a field that remains vibrant in examining representations of gender across poetry, theatre, and narrative (Haraj & Yousif, 2025; Algaryouti et al., 2025; Qasas, 2025; Zarkan & Orabi, 2024). As Bucholtz (2003) emphasizes, the analysis of context, power, and agency is central to understanding how gender identities are produced through discourse.

Since feminist translation theory was introduced into China, it has generated sustained scholarly interest, though notable contrasts remain between Western and Chinese approaches. In the West, the focus has been on dismantling patriarchal discourse and reclaiming women's voices, with some radical feminists even creating new lexicons, grammatical structures, and imagery to challenge dominant norms (Von Flotow, 1997, pp. 14–17). By contrast, Chinese feminism is often described as “sharp but not aggressive” (Yu, 2015), emphasizing harmony between genders and a broader humanistic vision (Schaffer & Song, 2007, p. 20). The divergent connotations of Chinese terms for feminism, politicized during the May Fourth era yet increasingly depoliticized in contemporary usage, illustrate a plural and complex landscape that resists the international feminist notion of “difference within commonality” (Spakowski, 2011, p. 47). This divergence highlights distinct cultural understandings of gender and offers a crucial lens for exploring how gender discourse is constructed in translation. While feminist translation studies in China remain a relatively young branch of translation research, their current trajectory suggests a critical juncture with potential to contribute meaningfully to global debates (Yu, 2015, p. 190).

Therefore, although feminist translation has played a significant role in global translation studies, research on this topic in China remains relatively limited. This paper focuses on Eileen Chang's Chinese translation of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, a version that has maintained its popularity despite the existence of more than 300 Chinese translations (Gao, 2016, p. 69). Chang's translation stands out not only for its literary style, but also for the critical attention it has

received from scholars interested in feminist translation. However, most existing studies tend to focus on her use of feminist strategies (Zeng, 2019; Lv, 2022; Chen, 2023), while insufficient attention has been paid to how her translation reconstructs gender discourse. Therefore, the present study adopts House's (2015) model, where the classic Hallidayan contextual concepts of Field, Tenor and Mode are taken over and modified for the purpose of constructing a re-contextualization theory of translation (House, 2006). This framework offers a systematic approach to investigating how gender discourse is reshaped in translation through both linguistic choices and contextual reconfiguration.

The present study aims to:

1. To analyse how Eileen Chang reconstructs gender discourse through lexical choices in the Field dimension of her translation.
2. To examine how shifts in modality and the addition of paratextual elements in the Tenor dimension articulate Chang's feminist stance and reshape the interpersonal relationships depicted in the translation.
3. To evaluate how the use of consultative sentence patterns in the Mode dimension contributes to a transformation of the narrative into a more inclusive and dialogic discourse.
4. To determine whether Chang's translation is overt or covert from a feminist perspective, and what insights it offers into the localized adaptation of feminist translation strategies in non-Western contexts in comparison with Western practices.

Through this detailed analysis, the study not only seeks to uncover how gender discourse is reconstructed in Chang's translation but also to contribute to the broader understanding of feminist translation. By comparing these findings with Western feminist translation practices, the research will highlight the unique localization of feminist translation in the Chinese context and its implications for the shaping and transmission of gender discourse in non-Western countries.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Feminist Translation Theory

Feminine gender presence can be affected in translation due to social patriarchal factors, which can affect male translators and female translators (Moindjie & Salmah, 2024). Feminism is "a recognition of the historical and cultural subordination of women", and a resolve to do something about it (Goodman, 1999, p. x). In Western discourse, the progression of feminist thought is typically delineated into three waves (Rampton, 2008): First wave (late 19th–early 20th century) focused on political rights (e.g., suffrage). Second wave (1960s–1980s) expanded to issues like sexuality, reproductive rights, family, and minority rights; eco-feminism emerged in the 1970s, linking women's biology to environmental advocacy (Rampton, 2008). Third wave (1990s onward) embraces diversity and ambiguity in women's lives, challenging a universal definition of womanhood while addressing issues such as trafficking and violence (Snyder, 2008, p. 180). Meanwhile, Chinese feminist thought is typically divided into three stages: the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 21st century (Yu, 2015), reflecting a shift from an initial focus on theoretical research to a growing emphasis on empirical studies, with both approaches now prioritized by scholars (Sun et al., 2023).

Like many Western nations, China pursues gender equality, yet feminist translation theories differ due to distinct social foundations. In the West, mid-to-late 1960s feminist movements, amid protests in Europe and North America, spurred women's rights struggles in arts, music, philosophy, and medicine (Von Flotow, 1997). Conversely, China's unique historical and cultural evolution has limited theoretical discourse on gender, ideology, and development, favouring contextual analyses of their intersections (Zein-Elabdin, 1996). Leung (2003) contends that Chinese feminism regressed from the Mao to post-Mao era while fostering a unique individualism, evident in the contested, ambiguous, and fragmented women's sexual identities. Despite enduring patriarchy, Chinese women celebrate their rising social prominence and growing individualism. Tani Barlow notes that Maoism inverted the traditional "woman within, man outside" norm, envisioning a national woman engaged in state processes during social revolution and modernization, who would reform family practices as a state subject (Sarachild, 1975). By the 1970s and 1990s, U.S. and Chinese feminist discourses converged on gender, culture, and women's liberation (Van Houten, 2015).

When feminist translation theory was introduced in China, it underwent a unique process of localization shaped by the country's specific cultural and historical contexts. Western feminist translation theory is closely linked to Western feminist movements and emphasizes dismantling patriarchal discourse and reconstructing women's voices through translation (Castro & Ergun, 2018). In contrast, in China, feminist translation perspectives did not emerge directly from a liberation movement. Early efforts in the 2000s to introduce feminist translation theory gradually matured, and by the 2020s, research in this field had shifted primarily toward empirical studies with relatively fewer theoretical explorations (Sun et al., 2023).

B. Chinese Translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*

China has traditionally placed great importance on the translation and introduction of foreign literary works, recognizing their crucial role in fostering cross-cultural understanding. A typical example is Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, which received wide acclaim in the Soviet Union (Zha & Xie, 2007, p. 637). This novella was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954, and it was equally celebrated Western critics and readers, securing Hemingway's distinguished position in world literature. When first introduced into China, the work carried a particular aura, enhanced not only by Hemingway's legendary life and his tough-guy ethos but also by the

recommendation of the Chinese Ministry of Education (Gao, 2016). These factors contributed to the widespread attention it has continued to receive in China.

Since Eileen Chang first introduced her translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* to China, there are more than 500 existing Chinese translations. The author conducted a title search using the Online Public Access Catalogue of the National Library of China/National Digital Library of China, searching for *The Old Man and the Sea*. As of September 2024, the search revealed 505 distinct Chinese editions of the work, including reprints, retranslations, adaptations, rewrites, and revised translations. These editions were produced by 321 translators and institutions and published by 285 different publishers. The form of translation, it is mainly divided into two categories: children's literature and classic literature; while the completeness of the translation is mainly divided into two forms: compiled version and full translation. The main research perspectives are: translator's type (Gao & Shih, 2022), translating style (Ng, 2009), translation comparison (Zhong, 2021; He, 2024), translator's feminism (Zeng, 2019; Lv, 2022), and ecological ethics (Ma, 2015), etc.

Given the widespread and positive influence of *The Old Man and the Sea* in China, numerous scholars have explored its feminist aspects, particularly in relation to Eileen Chang's translation. These studies have primarily focused on the application of feminist translation strategies in Chang's work. For instance, Chen (2023) analyses the fusion and collision of feminist ideas and heroic epic elements by examining Chang's use of translation strategies. Lv (2022) explores how specific intervention strategies were applied in Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, highlighting the differences between her approach and traditional Western feminist translation theories. Zeng (2019) observes how Eileen Chang's feminist perspective was expressed through her unique literary style, revealing her feminist voice between the lines of the translated text. Additionally, Chen and Zhang (2016) examine the manifestation of translator subjectivity from the perspective of feminist translation in Chang's work.

Even though these studies contribute to a deeper understanding of how Chang's translation reflects feminist ideologies, they predominantly focus on translation strategies rather than a comprehensive analysis of gender discourse reconstruction. Irshad and Yasmin (2022), for example, in *Feminism and literary translation: A systematic review*, identify the need for future research to compare Eastern and Western translation perspectives. This study, therefore, aims to build on these existing insights by employing House's (2015) model to provide a more structured and detailed examination of how Chang reconstructs gender discourse at various textual levels, highlighting distinctive features shaped by Chinese cultural characteristics.

III. METHODS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study investigates Hemingway's English version of *The Old Man and the Sea* and its Eileen Chang's Chinese translation, analysing them in the form of qualitative analysis. This study adopts House's (2015) Translation Quality Assessment model to evaluate Eileen Chang's Chinese translation, focusing on key aspects such as Field, Tenor and Mode. Through this framework, the research aims to objectively analyse Chang's approach to reconstructing gender discourse, highlighting distinctive features shaped by Chinese cultural characteristics.

This study adopts House's (2015) revised Translation Quality Assessment model, which integrates Halliday's contextual variables, Field, Tenor and Mode, into a comprehensive framework. The model evaluates the degree of equivalence between source and target texts by analysing both linguistic features and contextual factors. As shown in the following figure: Field concerns subject matter and social action; Tenor involves participant relationships, author stance, and social roles; and Mode refers to medium and textual connectivity. The model also incorporates genre as a macro-level dimension linking text to cultural context. It enables systematic analysis of how translation choices reshape meaning and interpersonal relations, offering a robust tool for examining gender discourse reconstruction.

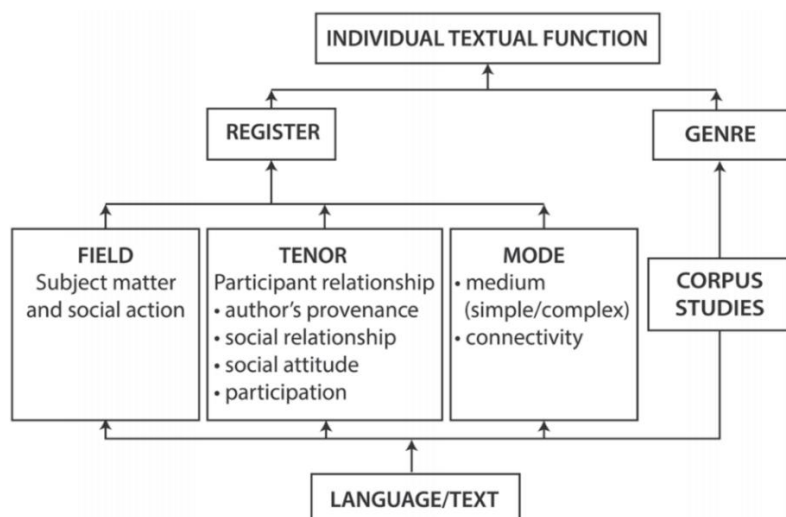


Figure 1. A Scheme for Analysing and Comparing Original and Translation Texts (House, 2015, p. 127)

This study employs qualitative analysis within House's (2015) translation quality assessment framework to examine gender discourse reconstruction in a parallel corpus comprising Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (ST) and Eileen Chang's Chinese translation (TT). The selection of this text is motivated not only by its Nobel laureate status but also by its rich gendered implications, making it an ideal subject for feminist translation analysis. Data collection is conducted mainly manually. That is because "the use of semantic and discourse tagging is also becoming more common, but it is still done mainly manually" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 78). Parallel texts are aligned and annotated for gender-related phenomena across three dimensions: (1) field (reduplication and translation of gendered lexical items), (2) tenor (translator-supplied paratext), and (3) mode (tag questions). Tenor data (modality) is processed using BFSU HanLP Chinese Tokenizer and POS Tagger 1.0 for word segmentation and part-of-speech tagging on Chinese text, and AntConc 4.3.1 for data statistics. These data are then processed through thematic and discourse analysis to identify translation strategies and assess their impact on the construction of gender discourse.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through the application of House's (2015) translation quality assessment model to analyse Eileen Chang's translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* from the perspective of gender discourse construction, the study draws the following key findings:

In the Field dimension, a comparison of Hemingway's original text and Eileen Chang's Chinese translation reveals deliberate lexical strategies that reshape the subject matter. First, Chang employs a total of 114 instances of reduplicated words (e.g., "轻轻地", "慢慢地"), a stark departure from Hemingway's minimalist and terse style. And these additions amplify emotional resonance. Second, while the English term "man" can denote either a male individual or humanity at large, Chang uses explicitly male-specific terms (e.g., "老头子", "男子汉") in only 26 instances, approximately 10% of occurrences, opting for neutral or omitted versions in the remaining 90%. This choice diminishes the original's male-centric focus and reframes "man" as a universal human spirit. Overall, through prolific reduplication and diversified renderings of "man", Chang successfully expands the novel's subject matter from a singular celebration of stoic masculinity to a richer narrative that embraces both human complexity and gender equality.

In the Tenor dimension, this study examines how Eileen Chang reconstructs interpersonal relationships through two strategies: modality adjustment and prefacing. First, regarding modality, Chang reduces modal verb frequency overall and shifts toward extremes, increasing high-value modals for necessity while decreasing low-value ones like possibility and permission. This intensifies obligations, compulsions, and prohibitions through authoritative language, showcasing stronger translational agency. Though lacking overt gender markers, it contrasts the original's restrained tone, adopting a more explicit, assertive, and self-aware expression that highlights the translator's discursive positioning. Second, via prefacing, a translator-supplied paratext (Genette, 1997), Chang articulates her interpretive stance, exemplifying feminist strategy by foregrounding her feminist orientation and reframing the protagonist's perseverance as a universal human trait, inviting broader, inclusive readings. Overall, her rebalanced modality and paratextual additions reshape the text's interpersonal tenor, reflecting feminist translation ethics that equalize power relations, foster dialogic reading, and assert translator agency in meaning-making.

In the Mode dimension, this study focuses on tag questions which enhance a text's interactivity and warmth. Hemingway's original employs only one instance: "Haven't we?", as a standalone sentence, not like a regular structure of tag questions (anchor+tag). In contrast, Eileen Chang uses ten tag questions in her translation, such as "可爱不可爱?" (Is it lovely or not?), "行不行?" (Will that work or not?), and "乐意不乐意?" (Are you willing or not?). These repetitive, echo-like structures enrich the dialogue's rhythm and create an ongoing space for affirmation and response, shifting character speech from unidirectional information delivery to egalitarian interaction. Through these consultative prompts, Chang effectively softens the original's authoritative tone, crafting an open, empathetic narrative atmosphere that highlights feminist values of inclusivity and engagement.

Overall, the analysis across the dimensions of Field, Tenor and Mode demonstrates that Eileen Chang's translation adopts a series of coordinated interventions: gender-sensitive lexical choices and additions, a restructured modality marked by reduced frequency but heightened authority, the addition of prefacing, and syntactic transformations such as tag questions, to reconstruct the novel's gender discourse. These strategies not only dilute the original male-centred narrative in Hemingway's text but also explicitly highlight Chang's feminist stance. This intentional and visible translation approach exemplifies the "overt translation" paradigm within feminist translation theory.

In order to stress the theme of man's struggle against nature and the persistence of individual will in *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway employs the "iceberg theory" and minimalist narrative techniques, using terse yet profoundly resonant language to depict the resilient and solitary tough man figure of the protagonist (Neloy & Islam, 2025; Rauf, 2023). In sharp contrast, Eileen Chang's translation exhibits a distinct feminist translational approach.

A. Field Comparison Between the Original Text and Eileen Chang's Translation

The dimension of field captures the topic, the content of the text or its subject matter, with differentiations of degrees of generality, specificity or 'granularity' in lexical items according to rubrics of specialized, general and popular (House, 2015, p. 64). In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago serves as the protagonist, with young Manolin as his companion, a rare giant marlin as his adversary, and the vast sea as the fishing setting. Hemingway structures the plot chronologically

over four days, featuring clear storylines, a prominent centre, concise and vivid narration, and focused, lifelike scenes, mainly the fisherman's daily life and offshore voyages. He creates a classic "tough guy" image, infused with strong masculinity and male-cantered gender roles.

At this level, Eileen Chang subtly introduces a feminine perspective through her translation by filling in the gaps in the gender discourse of the original. For instance, through lexical adjustments, she makes the characters' emotional expressions more nuanced and richer, softening the overly masculine depictions and increasing the complexity of the characters' inner worlds. This supplementing strategy helps break the original's singular gender narrative, offering a more diverse representation of gender in the translation.

TABLE 1
REDUPLICATION IN EILEEN CHANG'S TRANSLATION OF *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

Parts of Speech	Frequency	Category	Examples
verb	38	AA/AAB/AABB/ABAB/ABAC/ A 了 A/A 了— A/A — A/— A — A	擦擦/团团转/心心念念/研究研究/不慌不忙/望了望/ 歪了一歪/歪一歪/一动一动
adjective	20	AA/AABB/ABB/AA 的/ABAC 的 /ABB 的	寥寥/许许多多/血淋淋/甜甜的/不大不小的/呆木木 的
adverb	35	AA/AABB/ABAB/AA 地/AABB 地/ABB 地	徐徐/结结实实/一点一点/滚滚地/结结实实地/急急 地
numeral	21	AA/— A — A/— AA/— A 又— A/— A 接— A	样样/一次一次/一块块/一次又一次/一条接一条

Based on the table above, Eileen Chang used a total of 114 reduplicated words, which include adjectives, verbs, numerals and nouns. Among them, 38 were verbs, 20 were adjectives, 35 were adverbs, and 21 were numerals. Verbs had the highest number of reduplicated forms, followed by adverbs, while adjectives were used the least.

The old man carried the mast on his shoulder and the boy carried the wooden boat with the coiled, hard-braided brown lines, the gaff and the harpoon with its shaft.

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 4)

老人扛着桅杆，孩子拿着木箱，箱子里装着一卷卷编得硬硬的棕色钓丝，还有鱼钩，鱼叉，和鱼叉的柄。

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 9)

"I'll get another knife and have the spring ground."

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 74)

"我再去弄把小刀来，把那弹簧也磨磨快。"

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 78)

"You study it and tell me when I come back."

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 6)

"你研究研究它，等我回来的时候告诉我。"

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 10)

In the above examples, reduplication is employed for different effects. In the first instance, the reduplication functions as a quantifier, whereas the original text lacks one. Its addition enhances the vividness of the "brown lines" it modifies, making them more visually striking. In the second and third examples, reduplication is used in the dialogue between the old man and the boy, softening the tone and making it more cordial and childlike. This subtle linguistic choice adds tenderness to the otherwise tough image of the old man.

As studies advance, different theoretical approaches, ranging from structuralism and functionalism to generative and cognitive paradigms, have been adopted in the study of reduplication (Fang & Wang, 2024). At the field level, reduplication exerts a significant influence on the shaping of the subject matter. As illustrated by the examples above, the phenomenon of reduplication appears not only in the dialogue between the male protagonist and his young partner Manolin but also sporadically in other narrative descriptions. From a semantic perspective, reduplication does not alter the original meaning; however, stylistically, it diverges sharply from Hemingway's minimalist style and economy of language. It is precisely this difference that adds a touch of soft feminine colour to the originally tough male image.

TABLE 2
RENDERINGS OF “MAN” IN EILEEN CHANG’S CHINESE TRANSLATION OF *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

English	Form Type	Chinese	Frequency	Gender	Percentage (of total)
man	old man	老人	198	Neutral	77.04%
man	old man	老头子	24	Male	9.34%
man	old man	None	2	None	0.78%
man	a/the/no/more/any man	人	21	Neutral	8.17%
man	a/the/no/more/any man	男子汉	2	Male	0.78%
man	a/the/no/more/any man	None	8	None	3.11%
man	man-of-war	军舰	1	None	0.39%
man	man-of-war	大水母	1	None	0.39%
Total number			257		100%

According to the table above, the term “man” appears 257 times, with seven distinct translations. In terms of gender representation, the translations can be categorized as neutral, male-specific, and omitted. Neutral translations (老人/人) account for 219 instances, making up 85% of the total. Male-specific translations (老头子/男子汉) appear 26 times, comprising 10%. Omitted translations occur 12 times, representing 5%. This category includes compound words such as man-of-war, where the translation is unrelated to the meaning of “man”.

“You are already a man.”

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 3)

“你已经是个大人了。”

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 7)

He cannot know that it is only one man against him, nor that it is an old man.

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 26)

他当然不知道他的敌人只是一个人，而且是一个老头子。

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 30)

Now everything is cleared away that might make trouble and I have a big reserve of line; all that a man can ask.

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 28)

现在凡是可能引起麻烦的东西全都清除掉了，我又预备下了极长的钓丝；此外还要什么呢？

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 32)

But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures.

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 37)

但是我要给他看看人有多大能力，人能够忍受多少痛苦。

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 41)

In the above examples, there are two types of the word “man” in the original text, which bear distinct male connotations. One refers specifically to the protagonist in the narrative, while the other suggests a broader reference to all men. However, Eileen Chang omits some of the instances of “man” and translates most of them into “人” (person), which is gender-neutral in Chinese and encompasses both men and women. Especially in the final example, the narrative presents the male protagonist’s inner monologue during his struggle at sea: he wants the boy to demonstrate his own capability and endure pain, which most vividly showcases his tough, heroic spirit. However, Eileen Chang still translates the word “man” using neutral terminology.

As the above statistics reveal, when “man” can denote not only a male character but also entire humanity, Eileen Chang uses explicitly masculine terms in only about 26 instances (nearly 10%), while in the remaining approximately 90% of cases, she opts for neutral or omitted translations. Consequently, from the perspective of subject matter, the rugged masculine image that Hemingway constructs is elevated to a universal, human dimension, and expands the meaning of “man” to encompass all of humankind, thereby broadening the scope of the novel’s thematic concerns.

B. Tenor Comparison Between the Original Text and Eileen Chang’s Translation

According to House (2015), Tenor concerns the relationship between participants—the speaker/writer and audience—shaped by social power, distance, and emotional involvement, as well as the producer’s background and stance toward the content and task (p. 64). In this study, the classification of modal values in English follows Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) tripartite system of low, median and high value modal operators (p. 145). For the Chinese modal system, this study draws on Peng’s (2000) corresponding categorization of Chinese modal verbs (p. 123). Based on these frameworks, this study conducts a comparative analysis of modality in the Tenor dimension of both Hemingway’s original *The Old Man and the Sea* and Eileen Chang’s Chinese translation. The focus is on how Chang manipulates modal frequency and strength to reshape interpersonal relationships, power structures, and emotional tones in a way that reflects her interpretive stance.

TABLE 3
MODAL VERB DISTRIBUTION IN HEMINGWAY'S *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

Modal value	Modal verbs	Number	Proportion
High	must, could not, have to, need, had to, can't, must not, ought to, has to, mustn't, may not, might not	141	17.56%
Median	will, would, should, would not, was to, should not, shouldn't, is to, will not, won't	291	36.24%
Low	could, can, did not, do not, don't, might, have to, may, does not, didn't, need to, doesn't	371	46.20%
Total number		803	100%

TABLE 4
MODAL VERB DISTRIBUTION IN EILEEN CHANG'S CHINESE TRANSLATION OF *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

Modal value	Modal verbs	Number	Proportion
High	得, 该, 应该, 应当, 必须, 要, 须要, 不可, 不能, 不该	237	41.15%
Median	乐意, 愿意, 情愿, 想要, 要想, 希望, 高兴, 敢, 值得, 不乐意, 不愿意, 不想, 不肯	26	4.51%
Low	可能, 会, 可, 可以, 能, 能够, 好, 容易, 来得及, 不会, 不必, 不能够, 不容易, 来不及	313	54.34%
Total number		576	100%

From the above distribution of modal verbs, Eileen Chang's translation shows a significantly higher proportion of high value modals (41.15%) compared to Hemingway's original text (17.56%). The median value modals drop sharply from 36.24% in the source text to 4.51%, while low value modals increase moderately from 46.20% to 54.34%. To determine whether this divergence stems from systemic English-Chinese differences rather than translator intervention, this study examines translations by two male translators: Wu Lao's version (High: 35.61% / Median: 3.60% / Low: 60.80%) and Sun Zhili's version (High: 37.57% / Median: 3.36% / Low: 59.07%). Although all three translations exhibit reduced median value modals relative to the source text, Chang's usage of high value modals (41.15%) substantially exceeds that of her male counterparts (Wu: 35.61%; Sun: 37.57%). This suggests Chang intentionally intensified obligations, compulsions, and prohibitions through authoritative language, demonstrating stronger translational agency.

In Chang's translation, frequent high-value modal verbs create a more assertive and directive tone, diminishing the original's hesitation and internal struggle, particularly in the protagonist's moral or emotional ambiguities, and substituting a firmer, decisive voice. From an interpersonal language perspective, this emphasizes control and clarity, reflecting the translator's preference for a self-assured, less ambivalent stance. Though lacking overt gender markers, it contrasts with the original's restrained tone, adopting an explicit, assertive, and self-aware expression that highlights the translator's discursive positioning.

Beyond modality, the interpersonal dimension also refers to the relationship between the translator and the target readership. Translator-provided paratexts (Genette, 1997), particularly prefaces are regarded as key manifestations of the translator's voice and their "ontological narrative" (Somers & Gibson, 1993, p. 30). And Hermans (1996) further contends that translators possess a "second voice", a voice that, while often not present in the translation, becomes audible through paratexts.

Eileen Chang added a preface to her translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, establishing a direct dialogue with her readers and articulating both her interpretation of the original text and her feminist stance. While adding a preface is a common translation practice, as Von Flotow (1991, p. 76) points out, it has become almost routine for feminist translators to include prefaces as a way to reflect on their translation strategies and ideological positions. In her preface, Eileen Chang not only introduces the background and artistic features of the original work but also clearly states her unique reading of its message.

In her preface, she writes: "The old fisherman has shown amazing perseverance in his fight with the ocean—not superman, but a kind of demeanour, a kind of spirit that all human beings should have" (Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 3). Traditionally, the notion of "superman" tends to be associated with a male figure. However, as a female translator, Chang interprets the protagonist's perseverance not as a celebration of masculine heroism, but as a universal human spirit. Her feminist awareness leads her to shift the thematic focus from a stereotypical "tough guy" image to a more inclusive representation of human resilience. This reinterpretation reflects a distinct feminist perspective and broadens the scope of the novel's subject matter to encompass universal human.

C. Mode Comparison Between the Original Text and Eileen Chang's Translation

In House's (2015) model of translation quality assessment, Mode encompasses not only the channel of communication, whether spoken or written, ranging from "simple" formats like "written to be read" to "complex" ones like "written to be spoken as if not written", but also the degree of real or potential participation between writer and reader (p. 64). Within this framework, tag questions function as elliptical yes/no questions, reduced to an auxiliary verb plus a subject pronoun, that attach to declarative, imperative, or exclamative clauses to invite confirmation of an assertion (Huddleston & Pullum, 2005). Because their form and meaning derive almost entirely from the main clause they follow, tag questions typically invert its polarity and rely on its structure and semantics to supply their own (Achiri-Taboh, 2015). By softening statements into invitations for agreement, tag questions enhance the interactive potential of a text, making them a

particularly salient feature in analyses of translation Mode.

TABLE 5
TAG QUESTIONS IN HEMINGWAY'S ORIGINAL *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

English	Type	Chinese	Context	Frequency
Haven't we?	Tag question	是不是?	Conversation (the old man)	1

TABLE 6
TAG QUESTIONS IN EILEEN CHANG'S TRANSLATION OF *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

English	Type	Chinese	Context	Frequency
Are... enough?	yes/no question	够不够?	Conversation (boy)	1
Will...?	yes/no question	好不好?	Conversation (boy)	1
Aren't...lovely?	yes/no question	可爱不可爱?	Monologue (the old man)	1
How would...like to...?	WH-question	乐意不乐意?	Conversation (boy)	1
Can...?/May...?	yes/no question	行不行?	Conversation (boy)	3
Haven't...?/ Is...?/ Were...?	Tag question/ yes/no question	是不是?	Conversation (the old man)/ conversation (boy) / Monologue (the old man)	3

From the above two tables, a comparison reveals differences in the use of tag questions between the original text and Eileen Chang's Chinese translation. In terms of variety of forms, the translation employs three distinct question formats (yes/no question, WH-question and tag question) whereas the original text contains only one instance of a pure confirmatory tag question ("Haven't we?"). Moreover, Chang's version embeds tag questions primarily within dialogues (8 out of 10 occurrences between the boy and the old man) and occasionally within the old man's monologues (2 occurrences), enhancing reader engagement and co-participation, while Hemingway's original uses its single tag question in a conversation by the old man only once, maintaining a more controlled, authorial tone.

Just smell them. Aren't they lovely?

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 22)

你闻闻看。这沙汀鱼可爱不可爱?

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 26)

"May I take the cast net?"

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 5)

"我把网带回去，行不行?"

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 9)

"How would you like to see me bring one in that dressed out over a thousand pound?"

(Hemingway, 2011, p. 6)

"我明天要是钓到一个一千多磅重的，你乐意不乐意?"

(Hemingway, trans. Chang, 2020, p. 10)

In the three examples above, the tag questions occur within the dialogue between the boy and the old man, with both speakers alternating roles. The translator converted what were originally yes/no question or WH-questions into Chinese tag questions, "可爱不可爱?", "行不行?", "乐意不乐意?" a structure that is ubiquitous in daily Mandarin conversation and projects a relaxed, participatory tone. By embedding these repetitive, echo-like tag questions into ordinary exchanges, Chang not only intensifies the characters' emotional intimacy, each party continually checking the other's feelings and willingness, but also softens and negotiates their voices. This shift contrasts sharply with Hemingway's terse, assertive style and instead creates a gentle and caring atmosphere.

By replacing Hemingway's direct, function-driven interrogatives with "consultative" and "co-creative" tag questions (可爱不可爱? 行不行? 乐意不乐意?), Chang shifts the dialogue from simple information exchange to a more collaborative, co-constructive interaction. This adjustment softens the conversational register, inviting responsive feedback and mutual negotiation of meaning. In doing so, the text's pragmatic environment becomes less hierarchical and more dialogic, reflecting a mode of discourse that aligns with values of inclusivity and shared understanding.

V. CONCLUSION

This study employs House's (2015) translation quality assessment model to examine how gender discourse is restructured in Eileen Chang's Chinese translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* across the three dimensions of Field, Tenor, and Mode. The analysis revealed that Chang's translation involves a series of deliberate interventions at the lexical, modal, syntactic and paratext (Genette, 1997) levels. These include 114 instances of lexical reduplication, diversified translations of the word "man", reduced use of modality and intensified authoritative expressions, explicit feminist prefacing, and ten consultative tag questions. Collectively, these strategies transform Hemingway's original male-centred narrative into a more inclusive, emotionally resonant discourse. From the perspective of feminist translation, such interventions reflect a conscious overt translation strategy in which the translator's ideological position is clearly articulated.

Beyond its reconstruction of gender discourse, the study highlights distinctions between Chang's approach and that of

mainstream Western feminist translation theory. While Western feminist translators often rely on overt strategies such as supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and “hijacking” (Von Flotow, 1991, p. 74), Chang’s practice not only adopts similar explicit interventions, but also integrates implicit expression methods with the characteristics of Eastern culture. For example, in the Tenor dimension, she attenuates the male authoritative tone on the whole, making the language gentler and more approachable, while in the Mode dimension, she creates an empathetic and interactive narrative atmosphere through consultative sentence structures. This combination of explicit feminist intervention and implicit cultural adaptation forms a hybrid translation paradigm that not only charts a unique practical course for feminist translation in the Chinese context but also inspires new perspectives for feminist translators in non-Western cultures.

From a practical perspective, this study offers significant implications for translators engaging with texts that articulate gender awareness. It illustrates how strategic manipulation of lexis, grammatical structures, and discourse patterns can reconfigure the narrative voice while maintaining fidelity to the source text. More importantly, the findings contribute to the broader cross-cultural negotiation of feminist discourse, particularly in non-Western contexts where feminist movements have not historically emerged. In such settings, translation can function as a vital cultural mediator, facilitating the transmission, adaptation, and localization of feminist perspectives within diverse literary and socio-cultural traditions.

Inevitably, this study is constrained by its limited scope, focusing on a single translator and text and engaging only partially with House’s (2015) model, leaving out dimensions such as genre, function, and cultural filtering. To move forward, future research should explore broader corpora across translators, languages, and genres, and engage with reception studies to assess the impact of feminist strategies on readers. Against the backdrop of Chinese translation practices, which have long been governed by norms such as “faithfulness”, “expressiveness”, and “elegance” (Qin et al., 2023), where feminist translation remains relatively marginalized, analysing Chang’s translation highlights the potential of feminist approaches to intervene in gender discourse. This provides a foundation for rethinking its role in non-Western contexts and in global translation studies.

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Exploring Cultural Narratives in Contemporary Indonesian Poetry

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Abstract—The purpose of this study is to analyze cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry. This research employs a qualitative interpretative method, with textual analysis conducted through semiotic reading. The data sources consist of two poems: “Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola” and “Kalangan Ronggeng.” The data analyzed are excerpts from these poems that are presumed to contain cultural narratives. The analytical techniques applied include semiotic reading, heuristic reading, and retroactive or hermeneutic reading. The findings reveal that contemporary Indonesian poetry strongly actualizes cultural narratives. These narratives are articulated through diverse cultural aspects, reflecting variations rooted in local traditions, national identity, and global contexts. Contemporary Indonesian poetry thus presents Indonesian cultural narratives that are both complex and diverse. The cultural narratives are grounded in local traditions and expressed through distinctive and powerful symbolic representations imbued with aesthetic value. This indicates that Indonesian contemporary poets possess a strong cultural awareness and affirm that their existence remains closely connected to the surrounding cultural phenomena.

Index Terms—contemporary Indonesian poetry, cultural narratives, cultural text, literary text, semiotic reading

I. INTRODUCTION

The Reformasi of 1998 fostered a more open democratic climate in Indonesia, marked by press freedom, freedom of expression, and increased public participation in politics. This momentum reshaped the structure of power and the relationship between the state and its citizens (Aspinall, 2010). Reformasi opened the gates of democratization, transparency, and freedom of expression, conditions that had previously been suppressed during the New Order regime. At the same time, globalization gained momentum, accelerating the flow of information, human mobility, technology, and transnational cultural exchanges.

Globalization also stimulated the resurgence of cultural and religious identities as forms of resistance. This phenomenon was evident in the rise of religious movements, ethnic identities, and local cultural communities that became increasingly visible in the public sphere (Hefner, 2000). The interplay between Reformasi and globalization—characterized by democratization, transparency, freedom of expression, and the revival of ethnic and local cultural identities generated significant cultural transformations, particularly in Indonesian literature. This transformation was especially prominent in the realm of poetry, with the emergence of contemporary Indonesian poetry.

Contemporary poetry represents a form of literary expression that transcends the conventions of traditional-modernist Indonesian poetry. It is characterized by formal experimentation, stylistic hybridity, intertextuality, and responsiveness to socio-political dynamics, global culture, and local identity (Hatley, 2009).

In general, contemporary poetry is defined as poetry created in the present time. It typically takes a free form, unconstrained by the conventional structures of traditional poetry. Contemporary poetry seeks liberation from prescriptive rules, often employing everyday language, blurring formal structures, and tending toward social engagement and intertextuality. Its characteristics include the use of contextual metaphors and symbols, linguistic interplay between local and global registers, rejection of classical formal structures, and active engagement with socio-political issues. Such aesthetics not only introduce new forms but also create a space for responding to and reflecting on cultural identity with greater flexibility.

Indonesian contemporary poetry emerges within a cultural landscape marked by plural identities and contested meanings. Identity is no longer regarded as static or essential but rather as fluid, negotiated, and constructed through cultural representations. Contemporary Indonesian poets such as Afrizal Malna and W.S. Rendra exemplify this tendency, producing works that are not only artistic expressions but also cultural practices that interrogate and reshape cultural

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narratives.

Theoretically, this article departs from the understanding that identity is a social and cultural construction formed through discourse and representation (Hall, 1996; Bhabha, 1994). Thus, poetry is treated not merely as an autonomous literary work, but as a cultural text imbued with ideological and historical significance. The analysis presented in this article seeks to enrich Indonesian literary studies by demonstrating that poetry, through its aesthetic and symbolic power, can open a space for critical reflection on the meaning of being “Indonesian” in the contemporary era. As Yee (2023) explains, poetry as a cultural text often presents cultural dialogues, even offering intercultural exchanges between nations or geographically distant and diverse regions.

This study analyzes contemporary Indonesian poetry from the perspective that poetry functions as a cultural narrative. Research on cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry has not yet been carried out by other scholars. A study by Silalahi et al. (2022) examined the evolution of Indonesian poetry through a comparative analysis between classical and contemporary poetry. Their main focus was on continuity and innovation in themes, linguistic features, and cultural influences, as well as how poetry reflects Indonesian identity and its engagement with the global world. Winda Setia Sari (2019) investigated the poetry of Cathy Song and concluded that a person’s identity is not static and that the passage of time significantly shapes it. Her study also emphasized that poetic traditions are preserved and renewed through the “life cycle of the poet-as-poet.” Another study by Mudayat and Pamungkas (2024) explored the poem “*Bukit Semut*” by Seno Joko Suyono. Their findings revealed that “*Bukit Semut*” is not only a beautiful literary work but also an effective medium for instilling educational values. The poem enriches Indonesian literature while contributing significantly to the teaching of life values. In a different context, Butler-Kisber (2002) examined the process of creating poetry, offering suggestions on methodological steps to undertake such work. She argued that researchers interested in qualitative, data-based studies should be supported and suggested that it may be most beneficial to explore and generate various forms of “artistic renderings” as analytical approaches, which may or may not result in a final published product.

An analysis of poetry was also conducted by Siallagan and Alfina (2023), comparing the performance of SeqGAN and GPT-2 in automatically generating Indonesian *pantun*. This study introduced the first publicly available Indonesian *pantun* dataset, consisting of 7.8K *pantun*. The evaluation showed that GPT-2 outperformed SeqGAN in forming the structure and rhyme patterns of *pantun*. Similarly, Reilly (2013) analyzed poetry as a way to stimulate interest in learning, both individually and within organizations. Then, after several weeks, participants were given the results of their poetry analyses and asked to summarize their findings. These findings reflected their thoughts and feelings about using poetry as a learning tool. Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that research on cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry has not yet been conducted. Therefore, the topic of “*Cultural Narratives in Contemporary Indonesian Poetry*” is highly relevant and worth pursuing.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Cultural Narratives in Literature

Literature, and poetry in particular, constitutes a form of symbolic narrative that not only reflects social realities but also shapes perspectives on culture, history, and collective identity. Ricoeur (1984) emphasizes the importance of narrative in shaping *narrative identity*, an understanding of the self constructed through the stories we tell about our experiences and origins. Therefore, poetry is not merely a reflection of identity but also a medium for its construction. Within this framework and context, contemporary Indonesian poetry can be positioned as a cultural archive that preserves collective memory, local mythologies, historical traumas, and contemporary social dynamics.

Cultural narratives in literature represent the embodiment of a society’s values, beliefs, social practices, and collective memories, actualized through stories, symbols, metaphors, and other expressive forms or styles. Such narratives not only reflect cultural identity but also shape and redefine the understanding of culture itself within particular socio-political contexts. As emphasized by Lotman (1978), culture is a system of signs that constitutes a “semiosphere” where narratives operate, while literature serves as one of the primary carriers of those cultural signs. Said (1993) further argues that literary works not only express and reflect culture but also function as a battlefield for the articulation of contradictory or contested cultural meanings. This perspective underscores that literature is deeply infused with and saturated by cultural narratives.

B. Poetry as Cultural Text

Beyond being a literary text, poetry can also be viewed as a cultural text—namely, a product of social construction that contains ideological and symbolic meanings. In Williams’s (1977) perspective, literary works do not stand alone but are bound to the structures of experience and discourse within their society. Thus, the analysis of poetry is not merely an exploration of aesthetic meaning, but also a reading of the relations of power, representation, and the articulation of identity. Barthes (1977) states that every cultural text is a site where social meanings are negotiated and symbolically constructed. Therefore, in this context, poetry can be regarded as a cultural text, as it embodies the symbols, myths, ideologies, and collective narratives of the society that produces it.

Meanwhile, Geertz (1973) argues that culture is a system of meanings produced symbolically, and poetry functions as one of the media of symbolic articulation. This corresponds with the very nature of poetry as a literary genre rich with signs and symbols. As Preminger (1974) explains, poetry is indeed a literary work saturated with symbols and signs.

III. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative interpretative approach using the method of *close reading* or textual analysis of Indonesian contemporary poems that contain cultural themes. Qualitative research, as emphasized by Creswell (2015), seeks to interpret the meaning of phenomena within their social context, which in this case refers to the cultural narratives embedded in literary works. The primary sources of data are the poems “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*,” “*Celana*,” “*Mantera*,” and “*Kalangan Ronggeng*.” The data consist of selected excerpts from these poems that are presumed to contain cultural narratives.

Textual analysis is conducted through semiotic reading as proposed by Riffaterre (1978), which includes heuristic reading and retroactive or hermeneutic reading. Heuristic reading refers to the linear reading of a literary work, that is reading according to the linguistic structure as a system of first-level semiotic signs (reading based on language conventions). Meanwhile, retroactive or hermeneutic reading refers to rereading accompanied by interpretation. This type of reading is based on the system of second-level semiotic signs, namely reading according to literary conventions. Through hermeneutic reading, poems whose language is often connotative, symbolic, and saturated with signs, can be uncovered in terms of their deeper meanings. In this way, poetry can be understood not only through its linguistic meaning but also through its literary significance (Culler, 1981).

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

This study analyzes Indonesian contemporary poetry as a form of cultural narrative. The poems selected for analysis are “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” by Afrizal Malna and “*Kalangan Ronggeng*” by W.S. Rendra. Both poets are among the most prominent figures in contemporary Indonesian poetry. These two poems exemplify how poetry can embody powerful cultural narratives that reflect and articulate various dimensions of Indonesian society.

A. Cultural Narrative in the Poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*”

Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola

Holger, di Beerental Weg ini, apartemenmu, aku lihat wayang kulit Jawa, seperti jendela-jendela tertutup itu. Kau sembunyikan juga, Marx dan Budha dalam rak-rak buku. Di manakah manusia kalian temukan di antara kartu pos, donat, dan serakan tisu. Langit mencium sisa-sisa waktu, pada detak sepatumu, putih melulu, putih melulu.

Tapi kaos kakiku tak cukup menahan dingin, udara Hamburg bersama orang-orang sunyi dari bangsanya sendiri. Aku lihat boneka 10 negeri, seperti pasangan tua di Hannover, mereka tersenyum: Bisakah menata kota, dengan tomat dan tisu melulu. Mereka dibawa dari televisi yang lain, dari desa-desa kecil, belajar elektronika dan membuat wesel. Langit, tisu berlapis-lapis, putih melulu, putih melulu.

Tetapi seorang laki-laki adalah kisah lain, Holger, yang meletakkan dirinya dalam sepi lampu-lampu 5 watt. Dan membuat bisik-bisik dalam bahasa Jerman yang beku. Lalu dari apartemen ini, kita tahu, Holger, di luar orang berlalu, berlalu... meletakkan bangsanya, tanpa membanting ember: Kita hanya mengenang manusia, dari kota-kota, yang ditata dari kaleng-kaleng coca-cola.
(1993)

Anthropology from Coca-Cola Cans

Holger, here on Beerental Weg, your apartment, I see Javanese shadow puppets, like the shuttered windows. You hide, too, Marx and Buddha on your shelves. Where have you found humanity among postcards, doughnuts, and scattered tissues? The sky kisses the remnants of time on the rhythm of your shoes, all white, all white.

But my socks can't keep the cold away, the Hamburg air filled with people lonely from their own nations. I see dolls from ten countries, like an old couple in Hannover, they smile: Can one arrange a city with only tomatoes and tissues? They are brought from another television, from small villages, learning electronics, making remittances. The sky, tissue upon tissue, all white, all white.

Yet a man is another story, Holger, one who lays himself down in the solitude of 5-watt lamps, and whispers in frozen German. Then from this apartment, we know, Holger, outside, people pass, and pass... placing down their nations without slamming buckets: We only remember humanity, from cities built out of Coca-Cola cans.
(1993)

The poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” by Afrizal Malna, although written in everyday and familiar language, actualizes profound aspects of modern life that coexist with cultural dimensions.

The lyrical “I” (the poet) introduces the reader to a figure named Holger, located in Beerental Weg, Hamburg. He observes objects such as */postcards, doughnuts, and scattered tissues/* as symbols of modern life. At the same time, the poet presents symbols of traditional life through the line */I see shadow puppets (wayang kulit)/*. This juxtaposition

illustrates the complexity of life in which modern and traditional elements, as well as modern and traditional cultural forms, intermingle in distinctive ways.

The phrases “*Javanese shadow puppets*” and “*Marx and Buddha on the bookshelves*” serve as symbols of cultural and intellectual diversity embodied by Holger within society. Here, traditional culture (*wayang kulit*) interacts with modern thought (*Marx and Buddha*). Such encounters open broader horizons and forward-looking perspectives on global diversity and the heterogeneity of human values, represented through the figure of Holger.

The interaction between modern and traditional cultures that mutually support and shape human life is also reflected in the line */Can one arrange a city with only tomatoes and tissues? They are brought from another television, from small villages, learning electronics and making remittances./* In structuring a city, modern culture symbolized by */...tomatoes and tissues/* dominates urban life. Conversely, even communities in small villages are not detached from modern culture, as indicated by their efforts to */...learn electronics and make remittances./* The words “*electronics*” and “*remittances*” thus function as markers of modern culture. Although these people live */...in small villages,/* they remain inevitably connected to the modern world through technological learning and economic activities.

Cultural dislocation is also articulated in the line “*Wayang kulit in a German apartment,*” which actualizes a cultural narrative of alienation where native culture exists within a foreign space. *Wayang kulit*, *Marx*, and *Buddha* become alienated, displayed on the shelves of a German apartment. Within the context of Afrizal Malna’s poem, this depiction represents how Javanese culture and Eastern thought have been transformed into mere ornaments, rather than living experiences.

Cultural narratives concerning the loneliness and impersonality of cosmopolitanism are expressed through the symbolism of *European cities* (Hamburg, Hannover). These cities no longer represent spaces of community but rather landscapes of alienation. The lyrical subject feels a sense of coldness not merely because of the climate, but due to the loss of cultural and human connection. The cultural aspect of critique toward Western modernity is revealed in the line “*The city is arranged from Coca-Cola cans*”. This expresses a satirical cultural narrative, an irony toward the urban world constructed from products of mass consumption. Urban planning and identity are no longer grounded in social or cultural values but in patterns of consumption and global brands. Likewise, the poem articulates a cultural narrative in which the mastery of foreign languages does not ensure human communication. This is reflected in the line */And making whispers in frozen German/*. The line represents German as a symbol of modernity and intellectuality as “frozen,” incapable of offering warmth or intimacy in human interaction. Thus, language becomes a barrier rather than a bridge to communication.

The cultural aspect relating to “*Popular Anthropology*” also receives critical attention within the poem’s cultural narrative. Contemporary anthropology, as depicted here, observes only the surface and therefore fails to grasp the deeper essence of humanity. In this sense, anthropology does not delve into the meaning of human existence but recognizes humanity only through superficial symbols: *tissues, dolls, doughnuts, Coca-Cola*, and other similar objects.

Afrizal Malna’s poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” therefore presents a powerful cultural narrative. Although written in everyday language, it conveys profound cultural meanings that unfold through a hermeneutic reading.

B. Cultural Narrative in the Poem “*Kalangan Ronggeng*”

Kalangan Ronggeng
Bulang datang, datanglah ia!
dengan kunyit di wajahnya
dan ekor gaun
putih panjang
diseret atas kepala-kepala
dirahmati lupa.
Atas pejaman hari
yang rela
bergerak pinggul-pinggul bergerak
ronggeng palsu yang indah
para lelaki terlahir dari darah.
Wahai manis, semua orang di kalangan
tahu apa bahasa bulan!

Kabur bulan adalah muka-muka
adalah hidup mereka
menggelepar bayang-bayang
ikan-ikan ditanggung nasibnya.
Gamelan bertahta atas nestapa
kuda di pandang berpacuan
mengibas sepi merangkul diri,
angin tak diharapkan

*cari sarang dan tersia.
Ditolaknya sandaran nestapa
betapa gila ditolaknya!
Dan bila bertumbuk ke langit
terpantul kembali bumi.*

*Lalu si jagoan bersorak
pada harap adalah gila yang lupa.
Penyaplah, penyap,
nestapa yang hitam ditolaknya.
Balik pula.
Pula ditolaknya.
Dan selalu ditolaknya.*

*Wahai, Manis, semua orang di kalangan
tahu apa derita bulan.
(2016)*

*The Ronggeng Circle
When the moon arrives, she arrives
with turmeric upon her face,
and the white tail of her gown
dragged over the heads
blessed by forgetting.
Upon the eyelids of surrendering days,
hips begin to sway
false yet beautiful ronggengs,
where men are born from blood.
O Sweet One, everyone in the circle
knows the language of the moon!*

*The dimmed moon is their faces,
their trembling lives,
floundering like fish
netted by fate.
The gamelan reigns upon sorrow,
horses race across the field,
whipping solitude that embraces itself.
The wind, unwanted,
seeks a nest and finds none.
Sorrow's leaning post is refused
how madly it is refused!
And when it collides with the sky,
it bounces back to earth.*

*Then the braggarts cheer,
for hope is a madness that forgets.
Sweep it away, sweep
that black sorrow they reject.
Back again.
Again, rejected.
Always rejected.*

*O Sweet One, everyone in the circle
knows the suffering of the moon.
(2016)*

The poem “Kalangan Ronggeng” by W.S. Rendra is densely layered with cultural narratives. The poem is rooted in the *Javanese folk art tradition of ronggeng*. *Ronggeng* is not merely a dance but a symbol of the tension between sacredness and profanity, between folk entertainment and the social stigma attached to female dancers. The cultural

narrative is articulated through diction rich in symbolism, reinforcing the poem's cultural dimension. The choice of diction in the title "Kalangan Ronggeng" itself embodies culture. The word "Kalangan" refers to the arena of folk performance a social and cultural space where values, entertainment, and the struggles of people's lives intertwine. The opening line */The moon comes, she comes! with turmeric on her face/*, in a hermeneutic reading, depicts the ritualization of the *ronggeng*'s body as it is prepared for performance.

The word "Moon" (*bulan*) hermeneutically represents beauty, mystery, and suffering. In Javanese culture, the moon is often interpreted as a symbol of fate, distant beauty, and solitude. The line */the hips move, moving hips/ a false ronggeng that is beautiful/* illustrates the female body as a form of commodified entertainment. This line also serves as a metaphor for the people's fate being "performed." The diction "gamelan" symbolizes the harmony of the Javanese cosmos. However, this cosmic harmony exists in contradiction, as it is said to "reign over suffering." This actualizes the paradoxical dimension that the harmony of folk tradition is forced to stand upon social hardship. The line */the fish are netted by their fate/*, from a hermeneutic perspective, conveys the meaning that the people, like "fish," are resigned to being caught by fate or power.

The line */dragged above the heads/ blessed by oblivion/*, employs the word "head" as a symbol of human dignity, identity, and honor. The line */dragged above the heads/*, when read hermeneutically, carries a broader meaning representing the degradation of human worth by a higher or arbitrary power. In metaphorical terms, it can be interpreted as a form of *collective oppression*, depicting society whose heads (identities) are trampled or suppressed by structures of power be it the state, social systems, or ideology. The line */blessed by oblivion/* contains the word "blessed," which has a connotative sense of grace or divine favor, while "oblivion" evokes *loss of memory, denial, or the erasure of history*. In a broader interpretation, it also implies the forgetting of goodness, the loss of human dignity, and the neglect of divine grace even after being blessed. The juxtaposition between "oblivion" and "blessing" forms a sarcastic and satirical paradox, something sacred entwined with moral decay.

Meanwhile, the lines */horses viewed in their gallop/ flicking away solitude to embrace oneself/ winds uninvited/ seek nests but are abandoned/* contain powerful symbolism. The horse signifies vitality, strength, freedom, and unrestrained desire. The word "gallop" suggests dynamism, movement, competition, or a state of heightened energy that may also verge on chaos. Within the cultural narrative, the "horse" allegorically represents the *ronggeng* as a performer in folk art, an expression often deemed "wild," dynamic, and occasionally at odds with dominant social norms. The *ronggeng* as an artist is thus seen by society as "a horse in motion", captivating yet stigmatized. The line */flicking away solitude to embrace oneself/* conveys an attempt to resist loneliness or alienation; yet "embracing oneself" implicitly suggests acceptance of that solitude, a moment of introspection or contemplation in silence. These lines illustrate a cultural narrative of the *ronggeng* within the Javanese (and broader Nusantara) context as a liminal figure, one who occupies the center of attention while performing, yet remains marginalized socially. The *ronggeng* is accepted on stage but distanced in moral space, reflecting an existential ambivalence between alienation and self-acceptance.

The line */the wind uninvited/* uses "wind" as a symbol of an unseen force of change, disruption, and intrusion. The phrase *uninvited* indicates rejection or resistance toward an unwanted presence that nonetheless arrives. The line */seeks a nest and is abandoned/* employs *nest* as a symbol of home, safety, or community an accepting place of return. The word "abandoned" (*tersia*, meaning cast away or marginalized) expresses the failure to find protection or belonging. Together, these lines construct a cultural narrative portraying the fate of the *ronggeng* within the traditional cultural system, she seeks acceptance but is instead cast aside. As a traditional artist, the *ronggeng* faces a dilemma between her social function as an entertainer and her fragile social identity, which is vulnerable to marginalization.

The line */Then the champion cheers/* introduces the word "champion" (*jagoan*), which in Indonesian carries multiple connotations: hero, skilled fighter, or even a ruffian. The verb "cheers" (*bersorak*) may signify celebration or acclaim. Within Indonesia's cultural narrative, this figure symbolizes populist heroes, local leaders, or emblematic representations of bravery figures who can be revered yet also destructive. The cheering of the *jagoan* becomes a celebration of power, but it may also mark a hollow or temporary triumph filled with fleeting euphoria.

The line */in hope lies madness that forgets/* can be interpreted as portraying hope as "madness that forgets" a form of insanity that has lost awareness of itself. In this context, hope is being critiqued: it is not a rational aspiration but a kind of *madness*, a blind expectation of change or salvation. The phrase */madness that forgets/* signifies not only a state of insanity but also an oblivion to one's own madness, suggesting a *narcotic despair*, a cultural condition of unreflective hope.

The cultural narrative is further articulated through the line */Sweep away, sweep away/ the dark sorrow that is rejected/*. Hermeneutically, it may be read as a prayer, invocation, or command addressed to a purifying force to erase deep suffering. Within the cultural dimension, this line can be interpreted as: (1) a cry of resistance against historical suffering, (2) an appeal to spiritual or moral power to cleanse the world of evil, and (3) an attempt to restore harmony within the cosmic and social order. This idea continues in the lines */It turns back./ Rejected again./ Always rejected./* The repeated phrase "rejected" (*ditolaknya*) implies an active gesture a woman (*ronggeng*) who refuses submission. This reflects a *ronggeng* who does "not surrender" to social judgment or male desire but *instead possesses agency over her body and her choices*. In many traditional cultural representations, the *ronggeng* occupies an ambiguous position, as both a symbol of *pleasure and of moral anxiety*.

On another level, the repetition of “rejected” can also be interpreted as a critique of social *morality and patriarchy*, both of which continuously seek to control and subdue the *ronggeng* as a representation of the female body or as an art form deemed “wild.” Society wishes to *limit, regulate, or purify* the *ronggeng*. Yet the phrase “always rejected” asserts that the *ronggeng*’s body and expression remain free. The phrase “It turns back” (*Balik pula*) signifies a cyclical movement, a return akin to the motion in dance or ritual. The *ronggeng* moves in a rhythm of advance and retreat, of giving and refusing mirroring the cadence of traditional culture. The *ronggeng*, therefore, is not merely entertainment but also an integral part of social, agrarian, and spiritual ritual. Symbolically, the *ronggeng* can be read as an emblem of artistic freedom or individual liberation within a repressive society. The repetition of “rejected” reinforces the *ronggeng*’s identity as a figure of resistance against domestication, whether imposed by power, religion, or social norms.

The final stanza, consisting of two lines, reads */O Sweet One, everyone in the arena/ knows the moon’s sorrow./* The phrase “everyone knows” carries a tone of irony, it implies awareness without compassion. Society knows, yet remains indifferent; there exists a collective consciousness of suffering accompanied by collective neglect. The phrase “*the moon’s sorrow*” is a poetic and symbolically rich metaphor. In the cultural context of the Nusantara and indeed in many world traditions, the moon signifies femininity, beauty, and fidelity, but also solitude and silent suffering. This imagery suggests that the *ronggeng* as a woman and dancer, embodies physical beauty and graceful movement that remain faithful to the traditions of her community. Yet, beneath her captivating appearance lies profound inner suffering. Thus, within the context of the poem “*Kalangan Ronggeng*,” the expression “*the moon’s sorrow*” can be interpreted as *the woman’s sorrow*. It is the suffering that is both recognized and concealed, an awareness of pain that persists beneath the surface of beauty and ritual.

Based on the analysis of Afrizal Malna’s poem “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*” and W.S. Rendra’s “*Kalangan Ronggeng*”, it can be concluded that Indonesian contemporary poetry exhibits a profoundly strong cultural narrative. The cultural narratives articulated in these poems align with Schmidt (2020), who asserts that poetry possesses the capacity to narrate culture, social issues, cultural stereotypes, and contemporary cultural experiences. This finding is also consistent with Concannon-Gibney (2023), who emphasizes that poetry conveys cultural narratives of empathy and social awareness, thus fostering social competence.

Indonesian contemporary poetry frequently embodies cultural narratives of lonely and impersonal cosmopolitanism (Wati et al., 2022). The cultural narratives also take the form of poetic traditions that preserve social and traditional values—such as maternal sacrifice in raising children, which reflect the enduring influence of familial values in shaping personal character and social identity within Indonesian society (Wati, 2025).

Cultural narratives that *emphasize spirituality, collectivity, and conventional culture* are also evident, as shown in (Kanzunnudin, 2022) findings that spiritual culture in poetry reveals a deep emotional bond between mother and child, an attachment that reflects a collective belief within Indonesian society.

The theme of alienation and the impersonal nature of cosmopolitanism in Indonesian contemporary poetry resonates with the research of Matar (2024), who, in his study of Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal’s poetry, found that themes of alienation, sincerity in social bonds, and the collective nature of human experience are strongly expressed. Similarly, Aghasiyev (2024) discusses cultural narratives concerning the complexity of contemporary existence, the turbulence of postmodern life, spiritual uncertainty, and the existential dilemmas experienced by poets in a fragmented modern world.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that contemporary Indonesian poetry strongly actualizes cultural narratives. Cultural narratives are manifested across various cultural aspects with variations that are deeply embedded in the context of local, national, and global cultural traditions. This demonstrates that contemporary Indonesian poetry cannot detach itself from cultural narratives with dimensions of locality, nationality, and globality. The strength of cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry shows that Indonesian contemporary poets possess a profound awareness that their own existence is inseparable from the cultural phenomena surrounding them. Poets cannot distance themselves from the cultural frictions present in the environments where they live or reside.

Reading contemporary Indonesian poetry reveals the complexity and diversity of Indonesian cultural narratives. These cultural narratives are rooted in regional traditions, enriched with local wisdom, and narrated through distinctive and powerful symbols full of aesthetic value, as exemplified in WS Rendra’s poem “*Kalangan Ronggeng*”. Cultural narratives that intersect global and local cultures are rendered with profound symbolic depth in Afrizal Malna’s “*Antropologi dari Kaleng-Kaleng Coca-Cola*”. Thus, cultural narratives in contemporary Indonesian poetry reflect the complexity and diversity of Indonesian culture.

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Bridging the Gap: A Hybrid Model of AI and Oral Reading for Developing EFL Communication Skills and Motivation

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Abstract—The study examines the application of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to enhance oral reading (OR), oral communication skills, and motivation among university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Despite the growing use of AI in language learning, there is limited empirical research on the interaction between AI-based activities and conventional oral reading within an integrated pedagogical context. Drawing on cognitive, motivational, and schema theories, this research examines the relationships among AI interaction, oral reading, and motivation. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, using a stratified random sample of 335 students across various academic levels. Data were collected using a validated 21-item Likert-scale instrument assessing three constructs: Oral Reading, AI Interaction, and Motivation. Descriptive and structural analyses were conducted to examine EFL learners' perceptions and the relationships among these constructs. Findings suggest that OR was perceived as highly important for developing communication skills ($M = 4.11$) and fostering intrinsic motivation ($M = 4.26$). Conversely, AI tools were perceived as somewhat less effective overall ($M = 3.96$), especially in grammar development. These results highlight a tension between AI's strengths (e.g., engagement and pronunciation feedback) and its limitations in fostering deeper linguistic competence. The findings support a hybrid instructional model in which AI augments rather than substitutes for structured oral reading tasks, with practical implications for curriculum designers and educators integrating AI into EFL instruction.

Index Terms—Artificial Intelligence, communication skills development, motivation, oral reading, self-determination theory

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized and technology-driven world, English language proficiency has become a fundamental skill for academic, professional, and personal advancement (Yusuf et al., 2026). The rapid development of digital technologies continues to reshape language-learning environments, making effective communication in English a vital competency for learners across diverse contexts (Ahmed, 2025). Educational systems worldwide increasingly seek to integrate innovative tools to meet these growing demands and to prepare students for participation in interconnected societies.

Among approaches to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, both artificial intelligence (AI) tools and oral reading (OR) practices (e.g., reading printed texts aloud) have demonstrated distinct pedagogical benefits and certain limitations. On the one hand, recent advances in AI have introduced adaptive learning environments capable of personalizing instruction (Alfaleh et al., 2025; Yang & Rui, 2025), providing immediate feedback (Klimova et al., 2024),

and fostering learner engagement (Guan et al., 2025). AI-driven systems, including text-generating tools and conversational agents, have been reported to support vocabulary acquisition, speaking fluency, writing accuracy, and learner confidence (Grab, 2025; Wiboolyasarini et al., 2025). Several recent studies further suggest that AI-assisted environments may promote positive motivational outcomes such as increased enjoyment, self-efficacy, and reduced anxiety (Fu & Chen, 2025), partly due to their ability to adapt pace and task difficulty to individual learner needs (He, 2025; Mohamed et al., 2026).

AI-driven systems provide immediate feedback and adaptive interaction; however, they often struggle with deeper discourse-level competencies, pragmatic appropriateness, and complex grammatical explanation. Research indicates that AI-generated responses may lack contextual sensitivity, occasionally produce superficial feedback, or fail to scaffold higher-order language skills such as argumentation, cohesion, and sociolinguistic awareness (McCarthy & Yan, 2024; Klimova et al., 2024). Furthermore, AI tools tend to prioritize surface-level corrections (e.g., pronunciation, vocabulary substitution, syntactic adjustments) rather than fostering metalinguistic understanding or strategic competence, which are critical for advanced communicative proficiency (Wei, 2023; Zhai & Wibowo, 2023). These constraints suggest that, while AI can enhance engagement and provide scalable practice opportunities, it cannot yet replace the pedagogical judgment, contextual responsiveness, and interactive negotiation of meaning that human instructors facilitate. A balanced perspective, therefore, positions AI not as a comprehensive solution but as a supportive tool whose effectiveness depends on careful pedagogical design and integration within structured instructional frameworks.

On the other hand, reading, and OR in particular, remains a foundational instructional practice in language education. A substantial body of research has documented the role of OR in supporting fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, and communicative competence (Mart, 2012; Huang, 2010; Chang et al., 2020). Empirical studies in controlled settings have shown that structured OR interventions can significantly improve learners' confidence, vocabulary retention, and interactive communication skills (Torres-Díaz et al., 2020; Wang & Zheng, 2022). Alternatively, also facilitates meaningful engagement with texts and supports the development of discourse-level competencies.

While the benefits of AI tools and OR practices have been widely examined in separate strands of research, comparatively fewer studies have explored their combined or complementary use within a unified theoretical and empirical framework. Existing work has investigated AI-generated texts for reading practice (Shen et al., 2025) and AI-assisted comprehension activities (Wang & Feng, 2023), as well as AI-based interventions targeting reading engagement and self-regulated learning (Shafiee Rad, 2025). However, the interaction between AI-supported learning and structured OR practices, particularly in university-level EFL contexts, has received more limited empirical attention.

Rather than suggesting a complete absence of research, the present study builds on prior findings by examining how AI interaction and OR may function together within a framework informed by cognitive, motivational, and schema theories. Specifically, it investigates whether these approaches can be strategically integrated to enhance communication sub-skills and learner motivation.

This study, therefore, addresses an emerging line of inquiry: the potential pedagogical value of blending AI-supported interaction with traditional OR activities. By quantitatively assessing university EFL students' perceptions of both approaches and their motivational orientations, the research seeks to contribute empirical evidence to ongoing discussions about technology-enhanced language learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The integration of AI with OR methodologies represents a transformative shift in EFL education. Hybrid models that combine AI-driven feedback with traditional OR practices are increasingly recognized for their potential to enhance communication skills and learner motivation. Empirical research shows that AI tools significantly enhance speaking fluency, accuracy, confidence, and willingness to communicate by providing real-time feedback and interactive practice environments (Fathi et al., 2024; Li & Zhao, 2025). Likewise, OR strengthens pronunciation, fluency, and linguistic preparedness, enabling learners to transfer decoded input into communicative performance (Derakhshan & Park, 2026). A growing body of evidence also highlights *motivation* as a key mechanism linking both OR and AI interaction to improvements in oral communication (Wang & Wen, 2025).

However, while AI-supported language learning demonstrates substantial promise, it is important to acknowledge that current AI systems do not fully replicate the complexity of authentic human communication. Issues such as limited pragmatic sensitivity, sociocultural distinctions, potential inaccuracies in automated feedback, and the risk of cognitive overload underscore the need to integrate AI into pedagogically structured environments rather than treating it as a standalone solution.

This literature review synthesizes: (a) empirical studies on OR and AI interaction in EFL communication, (b) the direct relationships between OR and motivation and between AI and motivation, and (c) the integration of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Schema Theory, and Cognitive Load Theory into a unified conceptual framework supporting the proposed hybrid model.

A. Empirical Studies on OR in EFL Communication

Research consistently demonstrates that OR improves foundational elements of oral communication, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and oral performance quality. Studies show that reading aloud enhances learners' phonemic and

morphological awareness, which later facilitates spoken output (Derakhshan & Park, 2026; Du et al., 2025). OR-based activities also enhance confidence and self-efficacy, enabling learners to participate more actively in peer or task-based communication tasks (Derakhshan & Park, 2026; Dou & Sun, 2025). Comparative studies indicate that OR can outperform silent reading when the instructional goal is oral proficiency (Guo, 2026). OR is also recognized as a preparatory tool for academic and professional English communication (Yu, 2026).

At the linguistic level, repeated OR supports phonological internalization and prosodic development (Mart, 2012; Huang, 2010), while extensive reading contributes to vocabulary and grammatical development (Sapaeva & Xujaniyazova, 2019). Interactive formats such as Readers Theatre extend OR into collaborative communicative practice (Khanlou et al., 2022). Grizzle (2007) further highlights the reciprocal relationship between oral language and comprehension, emphasizing the confidence-building dimension of oral performance.

Rather than viewing linguistic gains and affective benefits as separate outcomes, current synthesis suggests that OR simultaneously strengthens phonological automatization, communicative readiness, and classroom engagement when implemented in scaffolded and socially interactive formats.

Nevertheless, most existing studies examine OR either in isolation or without integrating emerging digital tools. Limited research has investigated how OR functions within AI-supported environments or how it interacts with adaptive technologies to influence broader communicative outcomes. This gap justifies examining OR within a hybrid instructional framework.

B. Training English Communication Skills Through AI Interaction

AI-mediated interaction has become increasingly prevalent in language learning. Interactive AI systems such as chatbots and dialogue systems provide simulated conversational practice and immediate corrective feedback (Wang, 2025; Zhai & Wibowo, 2023). These systems promote oral fluency and interactional competence in low-risk environments. Specialized technologies such as ASR systems and VR platforms further target pronunciation and speech production skills (Dennis, 2024; Li, 2022). AI systems also create adaptive learning conditions by adjusting task difficulty and offering individualized feedback, thereby aligning with principles of personalized instruction.

Despite these advantages, AI-mediated interaction remains limited in its ability to replicate spontaneous, emotionally nuanced, and culturally embedded communication. Feedback may lack discourse-level depth, and speech recognition systems may produce inaccuracies. Overreliance on automated interaction may reduce opportunities for teacher-guided scaffolding and authentic peer negotiation of meaning. Additionally, if task sequencing is not carefully designed, adaptive systems may increase extraneous cognitive load rather than optimize learning conditions. Therefore, AI effectiveness depends significantly on its pedagogical integration with structured instructional practices such as OR.

Most prior studies focus on discrete skills or short-term outcomes. Little is known about holistic communicative competence when AI is systematically combined with traditional pedagogical strategies. This limitation motivates the present hybrid approach.

C. The Direct Correlation Between Oral Reading and Motivation

Motivation plays a decisive role in reading ability and engagement with OR activities. Studies of Chinese EFL learners indicate that extrinsic reading motivation significantly predicts strategy use and varies across grades (Li et al., 2024). In Saudi contexts, higher reading motivation predicts both reading strategies and comprehension outcomes (Kassem & Alqahtani, 2023).

Teacher behaviors and classroom climate also influence reading motivation. Derakhshan et al. (2025) demonstrate that teacher support positively correlates with motivation and emotional engagement. Further experimental evidence shows that motivational interventions enhance reading outcomes (Al-Qahtani & Alwaheebi, 2023). Beyond comprehension outcomes, motivation may mediate the relationship between OR engagement and communicative performance. When learners experience OR as competence-enhancing and socially supported, they are more likely to internalize learning goals and transfer rehearsal into spontaneous communication contexts. However, motivational orientations toward OR may vary across academic levels or prior learning experiences (Li et al., 2024; Kassem & Alqahtani, 2023). Recognizing such variability strengthens interpretive depth and supports examination of subgroup differences in hybrid instructional models.

D. AI Effect on Learning and Motivation

Language learning involves cognitive load management (Di Carlo, 2017; Ellis, 2005). AI systems, through real-time adaptation, align with the principles of Cognitive Load Theory. Research indicates that AI supports intrinsic and extrinsic motivation via personalized feedback and gamified engagement (Mohamed et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2024; Zhai et al., 2023). SDT-based research demonstrates that AI-powered learning enhances autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ding & Wang, 2025; Ellikkal & Rajamohan, 2024; Ivanytska et al., 2024; Wei, 2023).

However, motivational benefits are not uniform (Couvaneiro & Pedro, 2020). They may depend on learner familiarity with digital tools, quality of feedback design, and the balance between automation and human interaction (Tian & Zhou, 2020). Without structured guidance, AI-based tasks may overwhelm learners or reduce meaningful peer communication (Pham et al., 2020). These limitations reinforce the need for hybrid approaches in which AI enhances, rather than replaces, structured pedagogical strategies such as OR.

E. Hybrid Model Theoretical Framework

The proposed hybrid model integrates Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), Schema Theory (Derry, 1996), and Cognitive Load Theory (Wang et al., 2024; Wen, 2021) to build a grounded theoretical framework explaining the mutual effects of OR and AI interaction on EFL learners' motivation and the development of their communication skills. Instead of considering these perspectives separately, the proposed hybrid model combines them to explain the hypothesized relationships and structural pathways.

SDT explains motivational processes in terms of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. OR primarily supports competence and relatedness through scaffolded rehearsal and peer interaction, while AI interaction enhances autonomy through adaptive and individualized pathways. Schema Theory explains how OR activates linguistic schemas and how AI extends and adapts them. This theoretical lens supports the prediction that both OR and AI directly enhance communication skills. Cognitive principles, including Cognitive Load Theory, inform activity design. The model aims to optimize intrinsic load while minimizing extraneous load (Wang et al., 2024). AI serves as an interactive partner for real-time practice, facilitating metacognition without overwhelming the learner (Wen, 2021).

By combining these perspectives, the hybrid model presupposes that:

(1) OR and AI interaction function as complementary instructional modalities that promote both schema activation and schema construction;

(2) these modalities are designed to operate within learners' cognitive load limits while still providing substantial opportunities for meaningful practice; and

(3) Through these structured experiences, learners' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are supported, thereby enhancing motivation in accordance with SDT.

In turn, increased motivation is expected to foster sustained engagement with both OR and AI interaction, ultimately contributing to further development of communication skills.

Accordingly, the theories are mapped onto specific components of the study:

Hypotheses and structural paths: OR and AI interaction influence motivation, which in turn influences communication skills (SDT); OR and AI interaction also directly influence communication skills through cognitive and schema-based processes.

Measurement instruments: Motivation scales are based on SDT dimensions; instruments measuring perceptions of task design and cognitive demands are grounded in Cognitive Load Theory; and Schema Theory informs perceptions of comprehension and integration of new language.

Task and model design: The tasks involving OR and AI interaction are structured to activate prior knowledge, regulate cognitive load, and promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

This literature review provides a coherent theoretical and empirical foundation for the hybrid model by integrating SDT, Schema Theory, and cognitive perspectives within a unified framework. It explains how OR and AI are expected to interact cooperatively, both directly and through motivation, to enhance EFL learners' communication skills, thereby addressing gaps identified in previous studies and providing theoretical support for the study's hypotheses and structural modeling.

To address this emerging area, we proposed the following hypotheses (Figure 1):

H1: EFL students' interactions with AI have a positive effect on their motivation for communication in English.

H2: EFL students' engagement with OR activities has a positive effect on their motivation for communication in English.

H3: EFL students' interactions with AI have a positive effect on their engagement with OR activities.

H4: AI interactions mediate the relationship between students' engagement with OR activities and their motivation for communication in English.

Based on the above hypotheses, we developed a conceptual model describing the relationships among AI interaction, OR activities, and communication motivation (Figure 1).

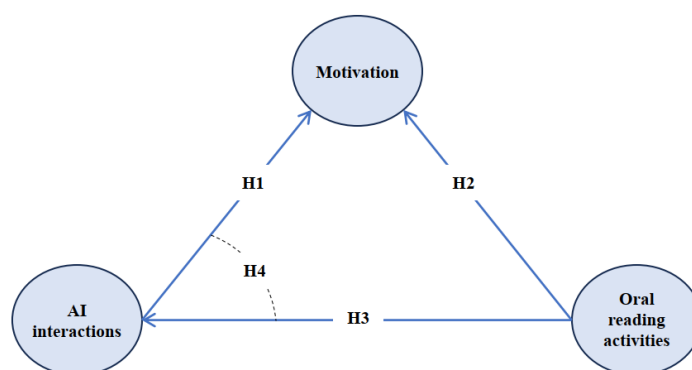


Figure 1. The Proposed Conceptual Model

While AI tools and OR are well documented in isolation, research lacks a synthesized approach that leverages their complementary strengths. AI studies emphasize personalized feedback (Fu & Chen, 2025; Yang & Rui, 2025) but also acknowledge limitations in fostering deeper grammatical competence and discourse-level development. Conversely, OR research confirms benefits for fluency and accuracy (Huang, 2010; Mart, 2012), but has largely overlooked integrating adaptive technologies to enhance learner motivation and provide individualized support.

To date, no prior study has quantitatively examined the structural interrelationships among AI interaction, OR engagement, and learner motivation within a unified theoretical model. This study addresses this gap by investigating a blended approach that systematically integrates AI-supported interaction with structured OR activities to enhance EFL communication skills and motivational outcomes.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to assess university EFL students' perceptions of OR activities, AI interactions, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the development of English communication skills. This design enabled the collection of data from a relatively large sample at a single point in time and facilitated the examination of the interrelationships among these three constructs.

A. Participants and Sampling

The sampling method used was stratified random sampling, in which the population of a public university in Algeria served as the sampling frame. Academic level was used to define the strata (from first year to master's level) to represent the diversity of the EFL student population in the sample. The sampling frame comprised students enrolled in general English courses during the 2024–2025 academic year. The original sample size was 350 students; the final sample consisted of 335 EFL students (151 males, 184 females) after incomplete or invalid responses were removed. The sample distribution by academic level was as follows: 85 first-year, 78 second-year, 72 third-year, 65 fourth-year, and 35 master's students.

Participation was voluntary, and the inclusion criteria required that participants be EFL students currently enrolled in a course and able to complete an online questionnaire. The psychometric analyses are considered robust, as the sample size was well above the commonly recommended minimum of 10 respondents per item for a 21-item instrument.

Although data were obtained from only one institution, stratified random sampling enhances internal validity and improves representativeness within the target population.

B. Instruments and Constructs

A self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data specific to the research: the English Communication Skills Perception Scale (ECSPS), which comprised 21 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate more positive perceptions. The scale was conceptually based on previous studies of OR, AI-assisted language learning, and motivational theories, including Self-Determination Theory and Cognitive Load Theory. It evaluated three constructs: OR activities, AI interaction, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The oral reading dimension was used to determine how students perceive the extent to which classroom oral reading activities enhance fluency, pronunciation, and oral communication confidence. The intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of motivation reflect the extent to which students demonstrate internal motivation (e.g., interest and enjoyment) and external motivation (e.g., grades and future career prospects). The definition of AI interaction was based on students' perceptions of the use and perceived usefulness of AI-based tools (such as conversational agents, grammar and writing assistants, and pronunciation or oral reading applications) as means of supporting English oral reading and communication skills.

In this paper, AI interaction refers to self-reported, perception-based engagement with AI tools rather than exposure to a controlled instructional intervention. Moodle and WhatsApp were not used as experimental platforms; they were only utilized to distribute the survey link.

C. Validation Procedures

There was a multi-step validation process for the ECSPS. To establish content validity, three applied linguistics professionals were consulted to assess the relevance and clarity of the item pool. The approved English version was translated into Arabic through a forward-and-back translation process to ensure semantic equivalence for Arabic-speaking EFL students.

Construct validity was assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation of responses from the entire sample ($N = 335$). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.916, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 4654.990$, $p < .001$), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate. The EFA revealed a three-factor solution related to OR, AI interaction, and motivation, which accounted for 63.99% of the total variance, and all items loaded on their respective factors at ≥ 0.40 . The scree plot (Figure 2) supported retaining three factors.

This model was further tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS v.26, which yielded acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 3.952$, CFI = 0.940, TLI = 0.914, GFI = 0.925, RMSEA = 0.094, SRMR = 0.059). All standardized factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from 0.56 to 0.88. Figure 3 presents the final CFA model.

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess reliability. The overall scale showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.928$), and the subscales demonstrated good reliability (oral reading $\alpha = 0.89$, AI interaction $\alpha = 0.91$, motivation $\alpha = 0.87$). All item-total correlations were positive and significant ($p < .01$).

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlations among the individual subscales and between each subscale and the total score. All correlations were statistically significant and of moderate to high magnitude, further illustrating that the instrument demonstrates strong internal consistency and coherence.

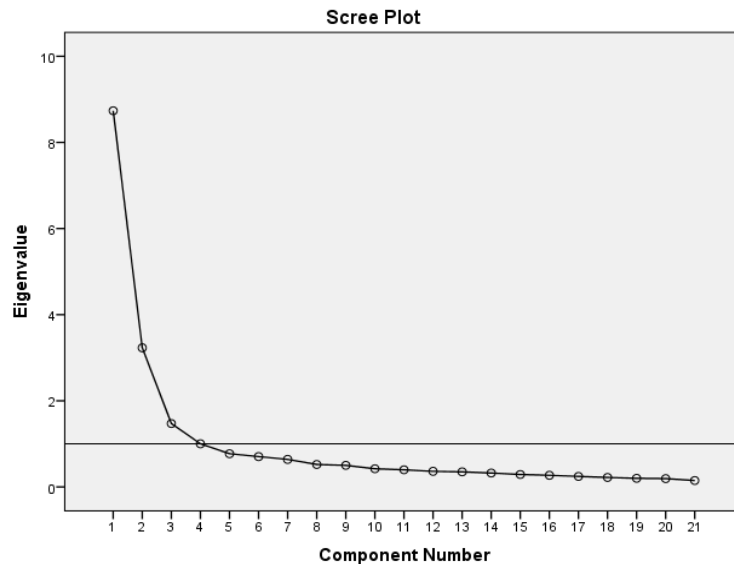


Figure 2. Scree Plot of the Factor Eigenvalues

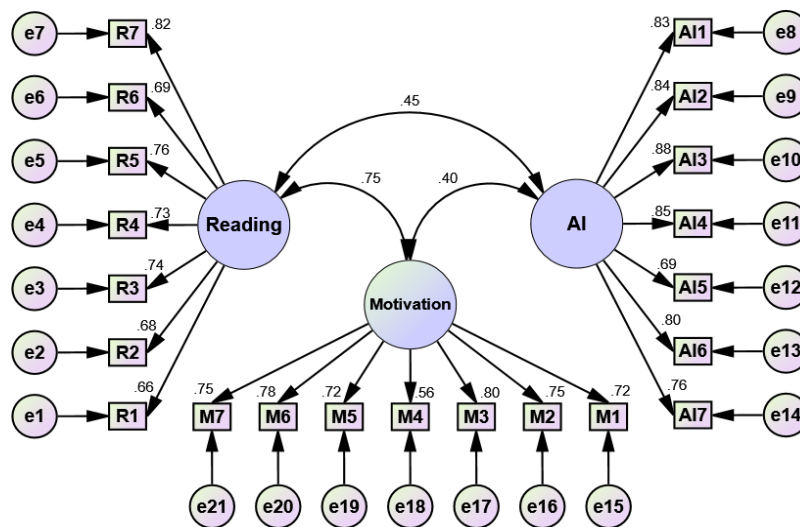


Figure 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

TABLE 1
THE CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN THE SCORES OF EACH DIMENSION (N = 335)

Correlations		Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
DIM			
1	Oral Reading	0.840	0.000
2	AI interaction	0.774	0.000
3	Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations	0.831	0.000

D. Procedures

The research ethics committee at Batna 2 University approved the study. The data collection period was from 17 January 2025 to 4 February 2025. The invitation message outlining the study's objective and emphasizing the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation was sent via Moodle and social media platforms, including WhatsApp, along with a link to the online questionnaire hosted on Google Forms.

When students opened the link, the first page that appeared was an informed consent form explaining the objectives of the study, the procedures ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any time. Only individuals who provided consent were allowed to continue. The ECSPS was then administered in a predetermined order and typically required approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. No personal identifying information was requested. Students were reminded that there were no correct or incorrect answers and were advised to respond honestly based on their perceptions of OR activities and AI tools.

E. Data Analysis

Pearson correlations were used to examine the relationships among the three constructs, particularly the relationship between motivation and students' perceptions of OR activities and AI interaction. These understandings aligned with the research objectives by identifying general trends in perceptions and the reasons why the three constructs relate to one another in the development of English communication skills. The Global model fit of PLS-SEM was estimated to be using SRMR and NFI (SRMR = 0.0X; NFI = 0.9X), along with motivation ($R^2 = 0.99$) and OR activities ($R^2 = 0.98$). These indices, along with the structural paths shown in Figure 4 (The Final Model), show that the structural model would fit well.

The responses were exported from Google Forms and analyzed using SPSS v.25. Cases with Substantial missing data or a clear pattern of inattentive responding were discarded. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were used to summarize students' perceptions of OR activities, AI interaction, and motivation.

To test the factor structure, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the three-factor model, followed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS v.26. Cronbach's alpha and item-total correlations were used to assess internal consistency. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the three constructs, particularly the relationship between motivation and students' perceptions of OR activities and AI interaction. These analyses aligned with the research objectives by identifying general trends in perceptions and clarifying the interrelationships among the three constructs in the development of English communication skills.

The global model fit of the PLS-SEM model was assessed using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and the normed fit index (NFI) (SRMR = 0.0X; NFI = 0.9X). In addition, the coefficients of determination (R^2) values were examined for motivation ($R^2 = 0.99$) and OR activities ($R^2 = 0.98$). These indices, together with the structural path coefficients presented in Figure 4 (Final Model), indicate that the structural model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit.

IV. RESULTS

A. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive findings indicate that students evaluated all three constructs positively (Table 2). The results demonstrate positive perceptions across all areas. Students perceived AI tools as helpful ($M = 3.90$ – 4.06) and considered OR adequate for skill development ($M = 3.83$ – 4.24), though their motivation to engage in OR was comparatively slightly lower. The highest mean scores were observed for motivation ($M = 3.92$ – 4.53), driven primarily by personal and career goals rather than external rewards.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS RESULTS OF AI INTERACTION, OR ACTIVITIES, AND MOTIVATION

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
AI1 Interacting with AI tools improves my English-speaking abilities	4.01	0.823
AI2 AI interactions provide valuable feedback on my English communication skills	3.92	0.889
AI3 I feel more engaged in learning English when using AI tools	3.93	0.924
AI4 AI interactions help me practice real-life English conversations effectively	3.92	0.887
AI5 I believe that using AI tools enhances my understanding of English grammar	3.90	0.875
AI6 I am motivated to improve my English skills through AI interactions	3.99	0.804
AI7 I enjoy using AI tools for English language practice	4.06	0.760
AI interaction	3.96	0.715
OR1 I find oral reading exercises helpful for improving my English communication skills	4.22	0.674
OR2 Engaging in oral reading practices increases my confidence in speaking English	4.24	0.716
OR3 I believe oral reading practices enhance my comprehension of English texts	4.13	0.744
OR4 I enjoy participating in oral reading activities during my English classes	3.99	0.896
OR5 Oral reading practices help me retain new vocabulary more effectively	4.16	0.734
OR6 I feel motivated to participate in oral reading practices	3.83	0.912
OR7 I believe oral reading exercises are beneficial for my overall language development	4.21	0.715
Oral reading activities	4.11	0.594
M1 I am intrinsically motivated to learn English for personal growth	4.39	0.737
M2 I set specific goals for improving my English communication skills	4.18	0.788
M3 I believe that mastering English will enhance my future career prospects	4.50	0.704
M4 I am motivated by external rewards (such as grades) to improve my English skills	3.92	1.032
M5 I enjoy participating in activities that promote English learning	4.12	0.816
M6 I often seek out additional resources to improve my English skills	4.22	0.782
M7 I feel that learning English is important for my personal and professional development	4.53	0.708
Motivation for communication	4.26	0.606

B. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model demonstrates satisfactory psychometric properties (Tables 3 and 4). Factor loadings for all items are strong and exceed the recommended thresholds, indicating that each construct is well represented by its indicators. Reliability indices (Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability) are all above 0.70, and AVE values exceed 0.50, confirming good internal consistency and convergent validity. The Fornell–Larcker criterion indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with those of other constructs, thereby supporting discriminant validity.

Collectively, these findings confirm that the measurement model is both reliable and valid. AI interaction, OR activities, and motivation are empirically distinct yet meaningfully related dimensions of students' perceptions of English communication development.

TABLE 3
FACTOR LOADINGS, RELIABILITY ESTIMATES, AND CONVERGENT VALIDITY STATISTICS

Construct	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach alpha	ρA	CR	AVE
AI interaction (AI)	[AI1 – AI7]	[0.736 – 0.821]	0.851	0.856	0.887	0.530
Oral reading activities (OR)	[OR1 – OR7]	[0.723 – 0.830]	0.886	0.887	0.911	0.594
Motivation for communication (M)	[M1 – M7]	[0.748 – 0.824]	0.867	0.872	0.898	0.558

ρA = Dijkstra–Henseler's rho; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

TABLE 4
CORRELATION METRICS: DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY - FORNELL-LARCKER CRITERION

Construct	AI	OR	M
AI interaction (AI)	0.840		
Oral reading activities (OR)	0.421	0.771	
Motivation for communication (M)	0.370	0.670	0.799

C. Structural Model Examination

The structural model analysis (Table 5 and Figure 4) indicates that all hypothesized paths are statistically significant. AI interaction is positively associated with motivation ($\beta = 0.464$, $t = 5.989$, $p < .001$), suggesting that students who view AI tools more favorably also report higher motivation to communicate in English. Oral reading activities are likewise positively associated with motivation ($\beta = 0.535$, $t = 6.931$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who perceive OR as a confidence- and skill-building activity are also more motivated.

The path from AI interaction to OR activities (H3) is exceptionally high ($\beta = 0.988$, $t = 46.849$, $p < .001$), indicating an almost perfect positive association between the two latent constructs. Substantively, this suggests that students who are enthusiastic about AI tools are also highly likely to value OR. However, a coefficient of this magnitude is theoretically unusual and should be interpreted with caution. It may reflect conceptual or measurement overlap between the constructs, limited variance, or an underlying general engagement factor that drives both AI-related and OR-related perceptions.

Such a near-unity coefficient may also indicate potential multicollinearity concerns or insufficient discriminant validity, despite earlier measurement checks. Given the cross-sectional, correlational design, the model does not establish causal direction; it is equally plausible that positive attitudes toward OR foster AI use, or that a third variable influences both constructs.

The indirect effect of OR on motivation through AI interaction (H4) is also statistically significant ($\beta = 0.458$, $t = 5.989$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who value OR tend to engage more with AI tools and, in turn, report higher motivation. However, this mediation effect should be interpreted as an indirect statistical association rather than evidence of temporal sequencing or causal ordering.

Overall, the model suggests that motivated learners tend to cluster positive perceptions of AI tools and OR together, reflecting a broader pattern of engagement-oriented attitudes. Nevertheless, the unusually strong AI–oral reading path necessitates cautious interpretation and should not be construed as evidence of a directional or causal relationship.

TABLE 5
ANALYSIS OF STANDARDIZED PATH COEFFICIENT

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficients (β)	T statistics	P-value ($P < 0.05$)	Decision
H1	AI → M	0.464	5.989	0.000**	Supported
H2	OR → M	0.535	6.931	0.000**	Supported
H3	AI → OR	0.988	46.849	0.000**	Supported
H4	OR → AI → M	0.458	5.989	0.000**	Supported

(**): $p < 0.001$

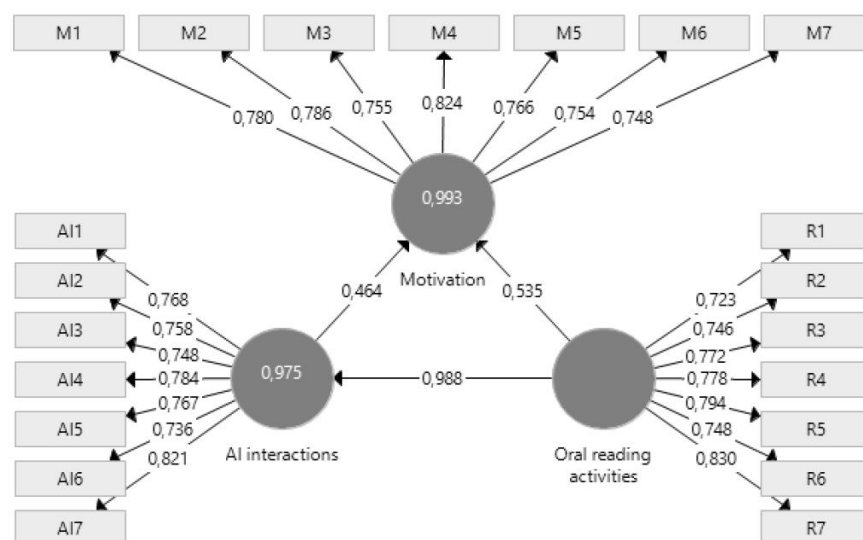


Figure 4. The Final Model

V. DISCUSSION

This paper examined the relationship between EFL students' perceptions of AI interaction and OR activities and their motivation for English communication. Altogether, the results indicate that the sample represents a generally motivated group of learners who value both technology-based tools and conventional instructional practices. Simultaneously, there are tensions in the data and critical methodological limitations that warrant careful, non-causal interpretation.

A. Self-Determination Theory and Motivational Profile

According to the descriptive findings, intrinsic and future-oriented reasons (e.g., personal development and professional opportunities) received higher ratings compared to purely extrinsic rewards, which is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Students also appear to have internalized the significance of English for their identities and future trajectories, rather than perceiving it primarily as a graded requirement. This motivational profile may help explain why they are receptive to both AI tools and OR activities: both can be interpreted as instructional practices that foster autonomy, competence, and meaningful improvement.

However, the trend observed in the AI-related items is less unequivocally positive. Scores on items related to enjoyment and motivation are slightly higher than those related to grammar development and real-world conversational practice. This suggests that students may perceive AI tools primarily as engaging and confidence-enhancing resources rather than as comprehensive tools for deeper linguistic or pragmatic development.

Rather than supporting a straightforward conclusion that AI is uniformly effective, the evidence points to a more complex interpretation in which AI is viewed as a low-stakes practice environment rather than a substitute for enriched communicative experience. This finding aligns with prior research highlighting AI's strengths in engagement and feedback, as well as its limitations in fostering deeper linguistic competence (Fu & Chen, 2025; Yang & Rui, 2025).

Likewise, OR scores are high in confidence, comprehension, and vocabulary, yet students' reported interest in participating is comparatively lower. This tension suggests that students recognize the importance of OR, yet may experience it as tedious, anxiety-inducing, or insufficiently engaging in its current classroom implementation. The practice appears to enhance competence, in line with SDT. However, it may not be sufficiently designed to support autonomy and relatedness, which could explain the lack of alignment between perceived usefulness and willingness to engage in the activity.

B. AI, Oral Reading, and Relations Between Them

There is a positive correlation between AI interaction and OR, and both are associated with motivation, as demonstrated in the structural model. Students with more positive perceptions of these practices are more motivated to communicate in English, as perceptions of usefulness and enjoyment of learning activities are associated with greater persistence and sustained engagement. This supports the premise that perceived usefulness and enjoyment of learning activities are linked to greater motivational persistence (Li et al., 2024).

The most notable finding is the extremely high path coefficient between AI interaction and OR ($\beta = 0.988$). Statistically, this indicates a near-perfect positive association between the two latent constructs. Substantively, this suggests that students who are enthusiastic about AI tools are almost always equally positive about OR, and the two constructs may reflect a broader disposition toward engagement in language learning. Nevertheless, a coefficient of this magnitude is theoretically uncommon and should be interpreted with caution.

This strong convergence may reflect how OR is currently implemented rather than an actual directional influence of AI on OR. As Mart (2012) and Huang (2010) established, OR builds foundational skills; however, the activity must also satisfy needs for autonomy and relatedness to sustain engagement, in line with SDT.

There are two significant limitations. First, the cross-sectional and correlational design does not permit strong causal inferences in the direction suggested by the model. It is equally plausible that positive beliefs about OR drive students to seek additional AI support, that a third variable (e.g., overall academic engagement or teacher support) influences both constructs, or that the relationship is reciprocal. Second, the magnitude of the coefficient suggests potential measurement or multicollinearity concerns, such as overlapping item content, limited variance, or a general positive attitude toward learning English that underlies both constructs. In this respect, H3 should be interpreted as evidence of a very strong statistical association rather than as proof that AI interaction directly produces changes in OR engagement.

Considering these points, the results indicate a clustering effect: highly motivated students are more likely to evaluate both AI tools and OR activities favorably, and these perceptions tend to co-occur rather than operate through distinct causal pathways.

The findings align with Self-Determination Theory, demonstrating that activities perceived as valuable and enjoyable foster motivation. AI tools appear to primarily support autonomy and low-stakes competence development, while OR contributes to confidence building and skill consolidation. However, the near-perfect AI–OR correlation suggests a complex and interrelated motivational system rather than a simple linear relationship.

Pedagogically, these findings support a blended instructional approach in which AI is used as preparatory or supplementary practice, while OR activities are redesigned to enhance autonomy, relatedness, and engagement. For developers, the results underscore the importance of AI tools that facilitate pragmatic, real-world communication and that can be meaningfully integrated with classroom practices such as oral reading.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research examined the association between EFL students' perceptions of AI interaction and OR activities and their motivation to communicate in English. The results show that, overall, students are well motivated; they consider OR a valuable contributor to their confidence and understanding, and they are open to using AI tools as instructional supports. Interaction with AI and OR are both positively associated with motivation, and the two constructs exhibit a very high level of correlation, indicating that motivated learners are likely to hold positive attitudes toward both technology-mediated and traditional practices.

The findings reveal important nuances and limitations. Students express some skepticism about AI's efficacy for grammar and honest conversational communication, and their motivation to engage in OR is lower than their belief in its benefits. Methodologically, reliance on self-reports, a cross-sectional design, and the extremely high AI–OR correlation mean the model reflects associative rather than causal relationships.

This study underscores that AI and OR are complementary, not opposing, elements of a blended learning ecology designed to support self-determined motivation. For practitioners and designers, better alignment between these tools, structured classroom activities, and learners' psychological needs can create more coherent and motivating learning environments. Future research should investigate longitudinal relationships, refine the operationalization of these constructs, and examine how different pedagogical implementations influence both motivation and measurable communication outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations affect the interpretation and generalizability of this study. First, the data are based on self-report questionnaires, which are subject to social desirability bias, inaccuracies in self-perception, and standard method variance. These methodological constraints may partly explain the high correlations observed between constructs, including the near-perfect association in the AI–oral reading path. Second, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot establish causal direction or temporal sequencing. Accordingly, all references to effects or influences should be interpreted as correlational rather than causal.

Third, the sample was drawn from a single university setting, thereby limiting external validity. Motivational profiles and attitudes toward AI and OR may vary depending on institutional context, proficiency level, or cultural background. Fourth, despite the measurement model's reasonably high reliability and validity indices, the near-perfect path coefficient suggests that the conceptual boundaries between AI interaction and OR may not be entirely distinct in practice. Future research should refine the operational definitions of these constructs, revise item sets, and incorporate additional measures (e.g., behavioral indicators or teacher ratings) to reduce potential collinearity and shared variance.

These limitations may be addressed in future studies through longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how motivation and communication performance evolve, the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide deeper insight into learners' experiences with AI–OR integration, and comparative investigations of instructional sequencing (e.g., AI-first vs. OR-first approaches) across different learner populations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Impact of Integrating Guided Reading Strategies Into Digital Reading Activities on Language Knowledge and Creativity

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Abstract—The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of integrating guided reading strategies into digital reading activities using a digital platform NOVELTOON on language knowledge and creativity. The measurement of language creativity in this study was creativity in producing short stories from guided reading activities. This study, which involved 250 students in semesters two through seven at an Indonesian institution, employed a quasi-experimental method. Several instruments were used in this study, including a language knowledge test, a short story writing creativity scale, and semi-structured interview questions to determine students' responses to the intervention. Data analysis used a t-test to investigate differences in language knowledge levels and an ANCOVA. The research findings indicate that integrating guided reading strategies into digital reading activities using the NOVELTOON digital platform significantly improved language knowledge and creativity compared to those receiving conventional methods. Improved language knowledge was evident in reading comprehension and summarizing reading outcomes. Language creativity was evident in the ability to write short stories and create a reading magazine. Creativity in both works was evident in all aspects of creativity fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration. Furthermore, several stages of guided reading strategies significantly contributed to language creativity: reflective reading or incubation, discussion or sharing, design, teaching, and individual portfolio. Therefore, the integration of guided reading strategies into digital reading activities using the NOVELTOON platform not only improves language knowledge but also enhances language creativity. The implication of this research is that guided reading strategies must be integrated with digital technology to optimize their role in enhancing language creativity and language competence.

Index Terms—guided reading strategies, digital reading, NOVELTOON digital platform, language creativity, language knowledge

I. INTRODUCTION

Creative thinking skills are a vital competency required by university students to complete their studies. To enhance students' creative thinking skills, curriculum design and language teaching are now beginning to utilize technology. Previous studies have shown that the use of technology in language learning can enhance creativity more optimally than conventional methods (Saritepeci & Yildiz Durak, 2024; Wallner, 2024). The benefits of using technology depend heavily on the instructional design used. This technology can play an optimal role or simply be an accessory in language learning. According to earlier studies, using digital storytelling can greatly improve one's capacity for creative thought (Agaoglu et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2025). However, other studies have revealed that the use of technology is not optimal because it distracts students (Patterson et al., 2025; Yang & Li, 2025). Based on these findings, teachers must be skilled at integrating technology into instructional design to optimize its use. Another study revealed that the use of digital literature platform technology does not have a significant impact on language creativity (Mohareb & Al Khraisha, 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). This is because students are only provided with knowledge without directly experiencing the platform and exploring it with appropriate teaching strategies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of technology must be in accordance with the characteristics of the instructional strategy or design, and students must experience it directly for its optimal role.

Reading ability has a strong correlation with creative thinking ability. Creativity can be enhanced through reading fiction because the process involves internal creative activities (Bayırlı & Börekçi, 2025; Souzandehfar & Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim, 2023). Reading fiction involves a number of steps, including developing sensitivity, critical and creative awareness, and the decoding process to extract detailed information and meaning (Dixon & Cox, 2025; Wallner, 2024). The ability of students to write literary works demonstrates their linguistic originality. Through this writing

activity, students can express their creativity gained from the process of reading fiction. Several previous studies confirm that reading literary works can contribute significantly to students' language creativity. Reading methods are currently undergoing a shift from using manual texts to using digital texts (Berube et al., 2024; Hill, 2024). This change presents a challenge for teachers to package it well to be able to optimally enhance language creativity rather than hinder it. Another study revealed that instruction in reading fiction that effectively enhances language creativity is converting the results of reading into other forms, such as magazines, concept maps, and writing fiction stories in other formats (Bayırlı & Börekçi, 2025; Cheong et al., 2025).

A reading strategy that accommodates the stages of reading fiction stories to enhance language creativity is a guided reading strategy. Guided reading strategies have components that contribute to language creativity, namely attention, memory, and dynamic interaction (Bodén et al., 2023; Haverkamp & Bråten, 2024). The stages of guided reading strategies encourage student interaction with several components such as texts, teachers, peers, and the technological environment. By using digital literature platforms to read a variety of fictional works, including novels, short stories, and folktales, children can enhance their language originality and reading comprehension. Previous studies have revealed that interventions involving reading fiction stories can improve creative vocabulary mastery in producing other literary works (Elias et al., 2025; Lowien & Thomas, 2025). Furthermore, other studies have also found that integrating guided reading strategies into reading activities can increase students' creativity in producing more complex aspects of fictional stories (Bayırlı & Börekçi, 2025; Cheong et al., 2025). The current study differs from previous studies, which mostly focused on conventional reading skills and one of them was language creativity. The originality or difference of the current study compared to previous studies is the integration of guided reading strategies in the NOVELTOON literary platform. Furthermore, the focus of the competencies investigated is more complex, namely language knowledge and language creativity. Language creativity is assessed through creativity in producing short stories and creating a reading magazine based on reading activities. Based on this explanation, several research questions are formulated, as follows:

- a) How does a guided reading strategy supported by a digital platform impact language proficiency?
- b) How does a guided reading strategy supported by a digital platform impact language creativity in short stories and reading magazines?
- c) How do students respond to the intervention of a guided reading strategy in digital reading activities supported by the NOVELTOON digital literature platform?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Reading Fiction Improves Language Creativity

Several methods exist to enhance students' language creativity. Developing student creativity is achieved through various strategies, including curriculum development, pedagogical design, creative teaching training, and reading literary works (Wallner, 2024; Zhang & Xu, 2024). Students can develop their linguistic creativity by reading fiction and being encouraged to translate what they read into different textual formats. Prior research backs this up, demonstrating a robust relationship between kids' levels of creativity and reading literacy activities (Dixon & Cox, 2025; Lyngfelt et al., 2023). Pupils who read frequently have greater creativity than those who read infrequently. Additional research supports the idea that fantasy elements in fiction foster linguistic innovation. The combination of interaction, text alteration, imagination, and fantastical elements in literature can foster language invention (Bayırlı & Börekçi, 2025; Cheong et al., 2025). A number of fictional literary works, including fables, fairy tales, short stories, and novels, have elements of fantasy. One of the best ways to help pupils develop their linguistic inventiveness is to have them read fiction.

A story that has elements of fantasy, nuanced characters, morality, and a unique storytelling technique is considered fiction (Berube et al., 2024; Wallner, 2024). This work of fiction has a conventional narrative form and includes a number of themes, including intricate plots, complex characters, heroes, adventures, and the quest for identity. Previous studies found that students who read fantasy fiction more intensively demonstrated better linguistic creativity than students who rarely read fiction (Bayırlı & Börekçi, 2025; Dixon & Cox, 2025). From these findings, it can be concluded that fictional stories containing fantasy train readers to think abstractly and generate alternative ideas, which significantly contributes to improving readers' linguistic creativity. Previous studies have mostly explored short fiction stories and have not explored long-form fiction like novels (Haverkamp & Bråten, 2024; Zhang & Xu, 2024). Exploring fictional novels and converting them into other forms can train readers' linguistic creativity. Therefore, in the current study, digital fictional novels will be explored using guided reading strategies and converted into other forms such as short stories and magazines to assess students' linguistic creativity.

B. Using Guided Reading Strategies to Develop Linguistic Creativity

In the language learning process, students must actively participate in constructing their own knowledge. Guided reading strategies were initially used to facilitate students' development of reading comprehension skills. However, this guided reading strategy is now beginning to be used in literary reading activities to develop learners' language creativity (Bodén et al., 2023; Nicholas & Paatsch, 2024). The implementation of this guided reading strategy does not depend on

the reading material provided but is determined by the learner's strategy for understanding the reading. Other studies confirm that there are several methods that can be used in this guided reading strategy, such as summarizing, creating concept maps, imagining, predicting, teaching each other, and converting reading material (Kumara et al., 2025; Mirasol, 2024). Several of these methods are considered effective in building new knowledge by connecting existing knowledge with new understanding. Students at the tertiary level already have concepts before reading, making it easier for them to utilize these concepts and connect them with their reading material to produce other literary works. This will encourage readers to think multi-perspectively and in a variety of ways in producing creative fiction (Kaygısız, 2025; Zhu et al., 2024).

The use of guided reading strategies can encourage students to improve their creative, varied, and constructive thinking skills. In this context, the teacher acts as a facilitator, encouraging attention, activating schemata, creating correlations, and drawing conclusions (Cheong et al., 2025; Shao et al., 2025). The fictional stories created by students from their reading activities are used to assess their nonverbal and verbal divergent thinking skills and linguistic creativity. Improving linguistic creativity can be achieved and aligns with guided reading strategies (Tüchler & Cain, 2025; Yessenbekova & Aldabergenova, 2025). This guided reading strategy trains students to construct meaning by summarizing, visualizing, converting, and simulating information. Guided reading strategies provide readers with opportunities to explore a variety of meanings and sensory experiences, which are believed to foster creative thinking skills (Chotcomwongse et al., 2025; Souzandehfar & Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim, 2023). Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of guided reading strategies in reading fictional stories can improve readers' linguistic knowledge and linguistic creativity.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design and Participants

This study employed a quasi-experimental methodology to examine the effects of incorporating guided reading strategies into digital reading activities supported by the NOVELTOON platform on students' language creativity and language knowledge. This study involved 250 university students aged 17-20 years. The students involved in this study were recruited from one of the universities in Indonesia and were studying in semesters 2-7. Participants were divided into two equal groups: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received a guided reading strategy intervention using the digital literature platform NOVELTOON, while the control group received a conventional reading intervention using printed text. All participants provided written consent after receiving an explanation of the intervention. The selection and recruitment of research participants complied with research ethics. The digital platform used for digital reading activities was the NOVELTOON digital platform, which provides various fictional stories such as novels, fairy tales, fables, and others. The type of writing used in this study was long fiction stories guided by guided reading strategies. During the evaluation stage, the results of reading the fictional stories were converted into short stories. The intervention was carried out for one semester, three times a week, with three hours per session. More detailed stages of the guided reading strategy intervention assisted by the NOVELTOON digital literature platform are presented in Table 1.

B. Guided Reading Strategy Design With Digital Platform Assistance

The intervention was thoughtfully designed by integrating the NOVELTOON digital platform into the guided reading strategy. Through the creation of a reading magazine and the writing of short tales, the intervention aimed to enhance the participants' creativity and linguistic proficiency. The intervention design consisted of several stages: preliminary reading, reflective reading, discussion, design, writing, and publication. The first stage was preliminary reading. In this stage, students were given the opportunity to read a long-form fiction story on the NOVELTOON platform provided. This reading activity guided them to generate creative ideas and note down any points deemed necessary for writing the short story. The second stage was reflective reading, which provided students with the opportunity to reflect on the results of the initial reading activity individually. At this stage, students were given the opportunity to summarize the results of their reading activities and reflect individually as material for discussion with their peers. The third stage was discussion or sharing to enrich creative ideas. In this stage, students discussed and shared with their group mates what they had read and key points that would be developed into a short story draft. During the discussion stage, students were able to ask each other questions and develop plans. The fourth stage is designing the short story's structural elements. At this stage, students design and outline the key structural elements of the short story in the form of concept maps or drawings, making it easier for them to develop their short story. This design can include several intrinsic elements of a short story, such as theme, plot, characters, sequels, character development, and so on. This design can be modified as needed during the writing stage. The fifth stage is writing the short story based on the design. At this stage, students write the short story individually, expressing their creative ideas in all aspects of the short story's structural elements. The sixth stage is publication. At this stage, students publish their writing to receive feedback from their classmates to improve the quality of the short story. By viewing and studying the short stories of their peers, they can enrich their creative ideas and receiving feedback can improve the quality of their own writing. All students follow each step of the guided reading process carefully and in a structured manner.

TABLE 1
STAGES OF THE GUIDED READING STRATEGY USING THE NOVELTOON DIGITAL PLATFORM

Number	Step	Penjelasan
1	Reading the introduction	Students read long-form fiction on the provided NOVELTOON platform. This reading activity is guided by creative ideas and notes that are deemed necessary for writing short stories.
2	Reading the reflection/incubation	Students are given the opportunity to summarize their reading and reflect individually as material for discussion with their peers.
3	Discussion/sharing	Students discuss and share with their group members what they have read and key points that will be developed into short story drafts. During the discussion stage, students can ask each other questions and develop plans.
4	Design	Students design and outline key aspects of short story development using concept maps or images to facilitate the development of their short stories.
5	Writing	Students write short stories individually, incorporating their creative ideas into all aspects of the short story's development.
6	Publication	Students publish their writings to receive feedback from their classmates to improve the quality of their short stories.

C. Research Instruments

This study used several instruments, including a language knowledge assessment instrument, a language creativity assessment instrument, and focus group interview questions. A detailed explanation of each instrument is provided below. Students' language knowledge was assessed using a reading comprehension and writing summary essay test. This test was adapted from a language knowledge test developed by Bodén et al. (2023). The test consisted of 70 items for reading comprehension and 30 items for writing summary essays. The questions were tailored to the students' cognitive and academic levels. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability directly on 30 students. The test results showed a correlation coefficient of 0.754 for both types of instruments. These test results indicate that the instruments met the validity and reliability criteria and are therefore suitable for use. To assess language creativity, product evaluations were conducted based on reading results from digital platforms. Students' creativity was assessed based on the short stories and tabloid magazines they wrote. The instrument for student creativity was a composition creativity scale adapted from Battistello et al. (2025). This language creativity assessment scale contains several indicators, including fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The fluency aspect is assessed from the coherence of the short story sections and the length of the short story. Flexibility is assessed from the plot, characters, story sequels and flexible points of view in the short story. The originality aspect is assessed from creative and unique story ideas and concepts. The elaboration aspect is assessed from the complexity of the intrinsic elements of the short story and the use of language. Two different kinds of rubrics were created after extensive development to evaluate the creativity of student-produced reading magazines and short stories. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to calculate validity, and the split-half method was used to assess reliability. The analysis results showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.84 for all questions. Furthermore, the split-half method was used to measure instrument reliability to investigate instrument consistency. The analysis results showed a degree of reliability of 0.82. The validity and reliability tests indicate that this instrument meets the criteria and is suitable for use.

TABLE 2
SHORT STORY WRITING CREATIVITY MEASUREMENT SCALE

Scores	1	2	3
Fluency	Short stories of less than 250 words	The word count is between 250 and 400.	The word count is more than 400 words.
	One or two intrinsic elements are missing.	The elements of the short story are nearly complete, with three or four components appearing.	Presents five or six complete short story elements.
Flexibility	There is no time setting in the story.	The setting of the story appears in the short story.	Contains more than two time shifts.
	The setting of the place during the sequence of events is missing.	The setting is clearly described.	Indicates more than two changes of location.
	There are no relationships between characters and they are incidental, with only the main character appearing.	Only the main characters appear, but there are only two or three character interactions.	Introduces additional characters in the plot and interconnects characters (four or more).
	The storyline is clear but without a climax.	A climax or plot twist appears in the short story.	A twisting storyline emerges.
Originality	There is no new character development.	The story introduces new characters.	Creates two or more new characters.
	There is a lack of creativity in any of the elements.	The story presents vivid imagination.	Shows creativity in all components.
		Conveys several new concepts.	Presents a new concept as a whole.
Elaboration	The expression does not contain new concepts.	The events presented are interrelated and have a common purpose.	Presents a series of events that are logically connected.
	The sequel to events is incidental and partial.	Contains one or two complex terms.	Contains complex words.
	It does not contain beautiful words.	Contains one or two rhetorical statements.	Uses at least three rhetorical statements.
	It does not contain rhetorical devices such as personification, metaphor, parallelism, etc.	Contains one or two complex sentences.	Contains three or more complex sentences.

TABLE 3
CREATIVITY MEASUREMENT SCALE FOR MAKING READING MAGAZINES

Scores	1	2	3
Fluency	Presents one or two concepts as a whole.	Presents three to four systematic concepts.	Presents five or more concepts systematically.
	The story is incoherent and has an unsystematic pattern.	Harmonious and balanced organization.	Presents a balanced and coherent design.
Flexibility	Presents the narrative from only one point of view.	Presents the story from two or three points of view.	Presents a narrative with four or more points of view.
	Only one sentence format is used to communicate the same information.	Uses multiple formats to convey the same information, such as text and visuals, but they are not consistent.	Uses a variety of text and image formats to present the same information.
Originality	The content of the reading magazine is not unique.	Text remains boring and ideas lack originality.	Presents a unique impression in the reading, characters, event planning, and character interactions.
	It presents only text; it does not include mind maps, tables, or creative modification elements.	Presents creative artistic components, but is still dominated by structural elements such as tables and graphs.	Presents a unique perspective, contrast, and vision development. Balanced artistic and structural components are used.
	The organization of the reading magazine remains difficult to read.	Presents beautiful work but lacks detail.	Presents detailed and beautifully illustrated illustrations.

Interviews were conducted to investigate students' responses to the intervention and to investigate the design of guided reading strategies supported by digital literature platforms that significantly contributed to students' language creativity. Interviews were conducted with student representatives from the experimental group. The interviews provided an opportunity for students to share their experiences during the intervention in a more comprehensive manner. The focus group interviews also provided an opportunity for open and collaborative discussions among students. A 15-item questionnaire was used to uncover the intervention's contributing features and the effects students experienced after participating in the intervention. Some examples of questions used in the study include, "What differences do you perceive between learning to write short stories using guided reading strategies and conventional reading?", "What obstacles did you encounter during the learning process?", "How did the intervention impact creative writing skills for short stories?", and "Was the intervention able to improve creative thinking skills in creative writing?"

C. Data Analysis

Several data analysis techniques were used in this investigation. This study's data analysis includes a one-way ANCOVA to assess the intervention's effect on students' skills in writing tabloids and reading fiction, as well as a t-test to assess the intervention's effect on language knowledge. Additionally, a normality test was conducted as a precondition for other analysis tests. To address every study issue, data analysis was centered on quantitative analysis.

IV. RESULTS

A. Level of Language Knowledge

Before the intervention, all participants took a pretest to determine their initial level of language knowledge and language creativity. The analysis showed that all students in both groups demonstrated equal abilities in both competencies. The results of the analysis of language knowledge competency for both groups are presented in Table 4. Based on the analysis, students' language knowledge competency in both groups showed no significant differences in the pretest phase, with an average score of 105.54 for the experimental group and 104.62 for the control group, with a t-value of -1.876. These findings indicate that the level of language knowledge in the pretest phase was similar. Improvements in language knowledge competency occurred after students received the guided reading strategy intervention using a digital platform. NOVELTOON. A significant increase occurred in the post-test phase in the experimental group, which showed a higher average score than the control group, with an average score of 132.47 for the experimental group and 108.12 for the control group ($t = -2.364$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.735$). From the analysis, it can be concluded that the integration of guided reading strategies assisted by the NOVELTOON digital literature platform significantly improved language knowledge compared to students who received conventional reading intervention with printed texts.

TABLE 4
SAMPLE T-TEST OF STUDENT LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE SCORES

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Pretest	Experiment	125	105.54	7.795	-1.876	.125	0.547
	Control	125	104.62	6.462			
Posttest	Experiment	125	132.47	8.546	-2.364*	.075*	0.735
	Control	125	108.12	6.573			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

B. Students' Language Creativity in Short Stories and Reading Magazines

The next analysis is the analysis of language creativity assessed through two competencies, namely competency in writing creative short stories and making reading magazines as a result of reading activities with guided reading strategies. The first language creativity analysis was conducted on creative short story writing produced by students uploaded to the online platform. The short stories were analyzed based on the developed creativity scale. The students' short stories were assessed by two assessors with the results of the reliability test meeting the criteria, with an overall consistency coefficient value of 0.973. The details of each aspect showed a consistent coefficient value of fluency of 0.863, flexibility of 0.980, originality of 0.945, and elaboration of 0.863. The basic assumption test of the overall statistical testing procedure was assessed first before the ANCOVA test was conducted. The reliability test was carried out by testing the assumption of homoscedasticity and normality using the Levene test and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Based on the results of the Levene test, the variance in both groups showed equal values and the data showed a stable distribution with a p value $> .05$. Furthermore, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the data were normally distributed with a value ($p > .05$). These test results ensure that the research parametric test is reliable and has met the criteria so that further tests can be carried out with a one-way ANCOVA test. The ANCOVA test was conducted to investigate differences in language creativity in the short stories produced by the two groups of participants. The results of the ANCOVA test of language creativity in the two groups are presented in Table 3. The results of the ANCOVA test analysis are presented in Table 5. By controlling the pretest value, the results of the analysis show that the value of language creativity in the short stories of the experimental group in the posttest phase showed a more significant increase than the control group with an average value of 38.46 for the experiment, while the control group was 29.56. with a value ($F = 9.635$, $p < .01$) and showed a size with a high effect category (η^2) of 0.112. Details of each aspect of linguistic creativity in short stories can be seen in Table 3. Therefore, it can be concluded that the linguistic creativity of the short stories in the experimental group, which received guided reading strategy intervention using the NOVELTOON digital platform, demonstrated significantly higher scores than the creativity of the control group, which received conventional reading intervention with printed text.

TABLE 5
RESULTS OF THE ANCOVA TEST OF CREATIVITY IN WRITING SHORT STORIES

Aspect	Group	N	Rata-rata	SD	Adjusted Mean	Adjusted SD	F	p	η^2
Total	Experiment	125	38.46	8.468	38.46	.846	9.635**	.012	.114
	Control	125	29.56	6.746	29.56	.734			
Fluency	Experiment	125	9.52	1.073	7.46	.163	.000	.974	.000
	Control	125	7.63	.926	6.35	.156			
Flexibility	Experiment	125	9.68	1.952	9.84	.425	9.563**	.006	.146
	Control	125	7.43	1.724	7.83	.394			
Originality	Experiment	125	9.56	1.963	8.45	.378	5.263	.093	.075
	Control	125	6.82	1.753	6.35	.356			
Elaboration	Experiment	125	9.68	1.852	8.36	.456	.874	.364	.018
	Control	125	7.46	1.632	7.42	.431			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Student creativity analysis was also assessed from other products to investigate more complex creativity by integrating verbal and nonverbal creativity. Student creativity was also assessed through the reading magazine product they created after the reading intervention activity. The reading magazine conversion product was chosen because this product combines images and language so it can assess student creativity more comprehensively. The assessment of creativity in making reading magazines was carried out by two assessors with an overall consistency coefficient of 0.975. In addition, each aspect of creativity showed a scale coefficient that met the criteria with details of fluency = 0.975 flexibility = 0.986, originality = 0.768, and elaboration = 0.982. From the results of the consistency coefficient analysis, it can be concluded that the consistency and reliability between assessors show very good criteria, so that further testing can be carried out with a one-way ANCOVA test. The results of the one-way ANCOVA test of creativity in making reading magazines are presented in Table 6. The results of the analysis show that the creativity in making reading magazines in the experimental group has a significantly higher average value with a value of 24.63 than the control group with a value of 19.56. Furthermore, the experimental group demonstrated a score ($F=9.356$, $p<.01$) and a strong effect size (η^2) of 0.186. Specifically, significant differences between the two groups were found in fluency ($F=8.957$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=0.163$), flexibility ($F=8.475$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=0.098$), and originality ($F=7.563$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=0.078$). From these findings, it can be concluded that the guided reading strategy intervention using the digital platform NOVELTOON was able to enhance more complex creativity in creating reading magazines better than the conventional reading intervention using print media.

TABLE 6
RESULTS OF THE ANCOVA TEST OF CREATIVITY IN MAKING READING TABLOIDS

Aspect	Group	N	Rata-rata	SD	Adjusted Mean	Adjusted SD	F	p	η^2
Total	Experiment	125	24.63	4.562	24.63	.483	9.356**	.007	.186
	Control	125	19.56	3.573	19.56	.547			
Fluency	Experiment	125	8.25	1.073	7.45	.194	8.957**	.007	.163
	Control	125	7.31	3.425	6.42	.193			
Flexibility	Experiment	125	6.24	1.054	7.43	.195	8.475*	.019	.098
	Control	125	5.36	.894	5.24	.184			
Originality	Experiment	125	7.42	1.632	8.45	.185	7.563*	.063	.078
	Control	125	6.63	1.073	6.36	.163			
Elaboration	Experiment	125	6.24	1.493	7.68	.193	6.854	.573	.018
	Control	125	5.36	1.074	6.54	.164			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

C. Student Responses to Guided Reading Strategies Assisted by the NOVELTOON Platform

The overall quantitative analysis results indicate that the digital platform-assisted guided reading strategy intervention effectively enhanced students' language creativity. Furthermore, to uncover student responses during the intervention and the features that significantly contributed to language creativity, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of the experimental group. The interview results were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the intervention features. The first feature of the guided reading strategy using the NOVELTOON digital platform was the reflective reading phase, or incubation phase. This phase provided students with the opportunity to reflect on their reading experiences on the digital platform. Students used this opportunity to think, formulate creative ideas, and select ideas to design. Furthermore, students were allowed to write down these ideas and express their imaginations before discussing them with their peers. Here are some quotes from students regarding the features of the reflective reading or incubation phase.

"The NOVELTOON digital literature platform facilitated my unlimited access to creative ideas, and the incubation period gave me time to carefully consider which ideas I would choose to develop into short stories."

"During the incubation period, we were also given an outline draft sheet that helped me design the framework for the intrinsic elements of the short story to be developed. This draft sheet also guided me in selecting creative ideas for each intrinsic element of the short story."

The next feature of the guided reading strategy intervention using the NOVELTOON digital platform is the discussion or sharing phase. This phase facilitated students' exchange of creative ideas to foster motivation and encourage the emergence of new, creative ideas from various perspectives. One student stated that the work published and shared through the provided platform received positive feedback, improving the quality of his work. Several excerpts from student interviews are presented below. "The discussion and sharing sessions gave me new ideas I hadn't thought of before. Before the discussion sessions, I felt unsure about my ideas, but after the discussion and sharing phase, by reviewing my friends' drafts, I discovered more creative alternative ideas to use as material for writing short stories".

"I gained a wide and interesting selection of ideas during this discussion phase. My perspective on fictional story ideas became broader, more diverse, and more interesting because I received so much feedback during this phase."

"I found the discussion phase to be very helpful when I was feeling confused about which creative ideas to develop. This phase provided me with guidance in making my choice."

The next intervention feature that significantly contributed to language creativity was the design phase. At this stage, students were given the opportunity to visualize all the components of a short story, as they learned from reading. Students were given the freedom to visualize their ideas, which could take the form of drawings, concept maps, etc., to facilitate their expression of abstract thoughts. This phase significantly contributed to imaginative creativity because it provided the freedom to express their ideas in greater detail and in writing. Here are some student quotes highlighting the design phase:

"The design phase helped me design the building blocks of the short story, thus providing me with guidance in writing. This phase gave me the opportunity to refine my short story draft and made writing easier."

"I felt the design phase gave me the opportunity to freely express my ideas in the form of drawings or whatever. This made my initially abstract ideas more realistic and encouraged me to make improvements during the design phase."

In addition to the intervention phase, interviews revealed that several student teachers identified teaching components that significantly assisted them in their reading activities and ultimately produced creative writing. These components were teacher scaffolding and individual portfolios. Here are some quotes that highlight the role of the instructor and individual portfolio components.

"The instructor's instructions in the guided reading strategy facilitated my design of short story components and guided me in determining creative ideas that would be developed into creative short story writing."

"The step-by-step explanations in the reading strategy instructions were very clear, helping me obtain all the important information needed to produce a good short story."

Another component that contributes to language creativity is each student's individual portfolio. This portfolio provides appreciation and motivation to students for each step they have taken. Furthermore, the portfolio also makes students more confident in writing creative and innovative short stories. Here are some quotes from student interviews that highlight the contribution of the individual portfolio:

"At first, I thought I couldn't complete this creative writing assignment, but after seeing my own portfolio during the instruction, I became more enthusiastic about completing the creative writing assignment."

Overall, students who received the guided reading strategy intervention using the NOVELTOON digital platform responded positively to several phases of the intervention. Each stage or phase of the guided reading strategy helped students achieve their learning targets. All stages of the guided reading strategy supported students from idea generation, idea selection, idea refinement, realization of ideas in creative writing, and writing revision. Therefore, it can be concluded that the combination of quantitative and qualitative data indicates that the guided reading strategy intervention using the NOVELTOON digital platform can improve students' language creativity, both in the form of creative writing for short stories and reading magazines.

V. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the impact of the guided reading strategy intervention using the NOVELTOON digital literature platform on language knowledge and creativity in short stories and reading magazines. Furthermore, this study also sought to identify the phases and features of the intervention that significantly contributed to language creativity. The first research finding indicated that language knowledge competence in the experimental showed greater improvement than in the control. The improvement in language knowledge, particularly in fictional storytelling, occurred because the guided reading strategy intervention facilitated students' discovery of new expressions from unlimited access to digital platform resources across various fictional genres. Additionally, the guided reading questions were divergent in nature, whereas the control group's comprehension-focused questions were the reason for this development in language knowledge and abilities. At the same time, divergent inquiries can stimulate creativity and information gathering. These results support the idea that reading fiction might improve one's creativity and linguistic

skills (Franceschelli & Musolesi, 2025; Hill, 2024). These results are supported by earlier research that demonstrates how the level of literary reading activities greatly enhances students' language proficiency by causing readers' language schemata to grow (Dixon & Cox, 2025; Zhu et al., 2024). Students' comprehension and linguistic skills from reading are also greatly impacted by the use of guided questions in reading strategies (Nshimbi et al., 2025; Shaona, 2025).

Additionally, research on language creativity shows that students' language creativity can be enhanced by guided reading practices supported by the NOVELTOON digital platform, both while reading periodicals and fictional short stories. Fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration are all examples of language creativity in fictional short stories. The increase in fluency is seen in the number of words used and the completeness of all short story components. Flexibility is seen in the use of flexible plots and settings and is not limited to a few in building the story. Originality is seen in the story ideas and intrinsic elements of the short story that are original, creative, and interesting. Elaboration is seen in the ability to explore every element of the story and events in the short story. The increase in all language creativity in all aspects and elements of the short story occurs because of the exploration of fictional stories in the NOVELTOON digital platform with stages of guided reading strategies from starting to search for ideas, selecting ideas, refining ideas, implementing writing, and publication. This finding is reinforced by previous research which proves that the ability to write creative fiction stories and the complexity of its components is determined by the imagination resulting from reading fiction stories (Kaygisiz, 2025; Lyngfelt et al., 2023). Reading activities with proper guidance can enrich knowledge and provide creative ideas for every element of the short stories they produce (Cheong et al., 2025; Lin & Chang, 2025).

Furthermore, creativity is not only found in the short stories they write, but also in the reading magazines they produce. Increased creativity in the reading magazines is evident in all aspects of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Overall creativity is evident in the combination of verbal and visual elements in the writing of the reading magazines. Furthermore, the organization of the reading magazines is very systematic. Students' creativity in placing images and complementing them with captions is very evident in the reading magazines. This increase in verbal and nonverbal creativity in the reading magazines is partly due to the design stages that train students to create story plans through visualizing ideas. These stages foster creativity in creating reading magazines. This finding supports the theory that learner creativity can be enhanced by instructional designs that encourage students to improve their verbal and nonverbal skills, including a combination of both components (Paz-Baruch et al., 2025; Souzandehfar & Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim, 2023). Additionally, increased creativity is indicated by a high degree of interpretation of significant features of different fictitious tale genres, such as intrinsic elements, the fictional story's core, and the reader's background. These findings are further supported by previous studies, which demonstrated that creating a reading magazine can be a comprehensive tool for assessing learners' verbal and non-verbal creativity (Agaoglu et al., 2025; Patterson et al., 2025). Increased creativity levels better assist students in transforming long-form fiction into short stories and reading magazines.

Qualitative analysis of interviews revealed several stages and features of a digital platform-assisted guided reading strategy that contribute to students' language creativity. These include reflective/incubation reading, which fosters thinking skills, creative idea generation, and the selection of ideas for development; discussion stages, which provide opportunities to enrich creative ideas; and design stages, which facilitate students' development of short story components. In addition to these stages, other features contributing to language creativity include instructors who guide students through the process of idea generation, idea selection, implementation, and revision. Furthermore, portfolios contribute to students' motivation and confidence in completing creative writing. These findings are reinforced by the theory that guided reading stages facilitate readers not only in acquiring information and language skills but also in transforming their reading findings into other works (Zhang & Xu, 2024; Zhou et al., 2025). Additionally, prior research has shown that guided reading techniques supported by GenAI technology can also help learners enhance their language proficiency and inventiveness, which supports this finding (Elias et al., 2025; Wei et al., 2025). Therefore, the effective integration of guided reading strategies into digital reading activities supported by the NOVELTOON platform not only improves language knowledge but also language creativity.

VI. CONCLUSION

The integration of guided reading strategies into digital reading activities, supported by the digital literature platform NOVELTOON, significantly improves language knowledge and creativity. One indicator of increased language knowledge is being able to understand reading and write a summary of the results of reading. Language creativity is evident in the ability to write short stories and create reading magazines. Creativity in both works is evident in all aspects of creativity: Improved fluency is evident in the number of words used and the completeness of all components of the short stories and reading magazines. Flexibility is evident in the flexible and unrestricted use of plot and setting in constructing stories and creating reading magazines. Originality is evident in the original, creative, and engaging story ideas and intrinsic elements of the short stories. Originality in creating reading magazines is evident in the creative selection of magazine ideas. Elaboration is evident in the ability to explore every story element and event in the short stories and reading magazines. Furthermore, several stages of guided reading strategies contribute significantly to language creativity: reading reflection or incubation, discussion or sharing, design, teaching, and individual portfolios. Thus, the integration of guided reading strategies in digital reading activities assisted by the NOVELTOON platform is

not only able to improve language knowledge competence, but also able to enhance language creativity. The implication of this study is that guided reading strategies must be integrated with digital technology to optimize their role in improving language creativity and language competence. Conventional teaching models will be better designed with the help of technology. In addition, the development of this creativity must be considered in language teaching, especially in creative writing learning. Despite the latest findings, this study has limitations, including the targeted competencies focused only on language knowledge and language creativity. Furthermore, there has been no investigation into personal factors of reading such as interest, attitude, and reading behavior. Creativity assessment is carried out only based on the final performance or output produced, there has been no exploration of the conversational process used by students during discussions in order to develop their creativity. From these limitations, the researcher recommends several suggestions for further studies, including the targeted competencies need to be expanded beyond language creativity and conversion of works can be in other genres of writing, investigation needs to be conducted on personal factors such as attitudes and interest in reading, analysis of conversations that arise during the intervention process is necessary. In addition, the use of technology in language learning needs to be done to optimize teaching design and it is necessary to accommodate language creativity competencies in curriculum designers and teachers in language and literature learning.

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Revisiting the Airborne Toxic Event: Eco-Critical Perspectives on Environmental Catastrophe in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*

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Abstract—Taken as a metaphor on environmental degradation and a sense of communal fear, this paper will analyze *White Noise* by Don DeLillo through the lenses of eco-criticism. This novel is based on the ecological disaster in a literary thrilling way; it covers the modern-day worries concerning the threats of industries, global warming and the uncertainty that is in the air. This paper analyses how DeLillo describes an ecological disaster and brings to the fore how literature predicts and assesses the cultural, psychological, and social responses to an ecological disaster. The research article refers to the concept of hyperobjects that Timothy Morton introduces in order to locate *White Noise* within the broad discourse of human beings and their natural environments. Similar to other modern ecological disasters, the Airborne Toxic Event cannot be explained and contained, and it is stressful to emphasize that it is unsophisticated to live in the Anthropocene. It is the time when human beings have terribly changed the ecology of the planet. It is a multidisciplinary method of literary criticism and environmental studies, and with a certain influence of cultural theory, it highlights the unity of ecological and existential problematics. The work supports the argument in the ongoing relevance of the novel to the history of environmental discussion by breaking down the way DeLillo dramatizes the contradiction between consumerism, media saturation, and environmental instability. The paper highlights the role of literary analysis in promoting conversations on sustainability, environmental awareness, and human – nature relations.

Index Terms—ecocriticism, Airborne Toxic Event, environmental catastrophe, hyperobjects, anthropocene

I. INTRODUCTION

Concerns regarding the weak connection that humans have had with nature have manifested themselves in the contemporary discussion through the rise of environmental disruptions and their effect on the human psyche. *White Noise* (1985) by Don DeLillo portrays these anxieties through the Airborne Toxic Event which disrupts the lives of the characters in the novel. Applying the eco-criticism, in particular, the concept of hyperobjects introduced by Timothy Morton, which are so vast and diffusive that they cannot be understood by humans, the analysis of how the environmental disaster was depicted in this work is conducted. This paper explores the prophetic nature of *White Noise* in its commentary on ecological instability, industrial risk and psychological cost of residing in a precarious world by putting it within the context of hyperobjects.

White Noise by Don DeLillo follows the experiences of Jack Gladney, professor of Hitler Studies at a small college who attempts to cope with the absurdity of contemporary existence. The set of the book in a suburban community focuses on the anxiety of death in Jack, due to the secret use of an experimental drug called Dylar by his wife Babette, aimed at suppressing the anxiety of death. Their lives are thrown off, and their sense of control and safety is revealed as impotent in an airborne toxic event, a chemical leak that forces their town to evacuate. Between this, the book discusses the omnipresent influence of media, technology and consumerism represented by the unending din of commercials, television and supermarket culture. The alienation of modern life posed to *White Noise* by its broken tale and dark comedy is one in

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which individuals struggle to seek meaning and identity in a world dominated by spectacle and terrorism.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Boldt (2011), the novels by Don DeLillo discuss the way the American identity of the postwar period is formed and perceived with the help of media publicity. According to the researcher, different types of media and the increased power of advertising industry has contributed a lot towards the creation of an identity that is not always realised. Facts are usually given in media to give the impression of hyperreality whereby the representations become more meaningful than the real things. DeLillo through the use of novels like *White Noise*, *Mao II*, and *Americana* demonstrates the presentation, popularisation, or distortion of facts, which results in a world where advertising determines perception and identity. This article also indicates that it is now more complicated to differentiate between reality and hyper reality, and therefore, it is difficult to prove facts in the postmodern world, unless there is some physical evidence or documentation that can be stored.

Kumar (2015) states that in his novels, Don DeLillo discusses the pressure of modern life, the danger of war, environmental pollution, how science and technology could intervene in human life. According to the argument of the researcher, DeLillo is worried about the noise that is too much in the modern society that people cannot actually hear their hearts. DeLillo in his works criticizes the cultural and psychological disturbances by this noise which affects the society and individuals individually. The thesis analyses in different ways people live their lives in modern life, which perverts their personal identity and how individuals struggle to take control over their nature only to realize that they are the ones controlled by nature. Also, the researcher emphasizes that DeLillo often depicts characters who are not able to find their identity in the society under pressure. Although his characters are most often American, the topics that he is addressing are universal, and each novel is devoted to another aspect of the modern life and how these forces are harming the human wellbeing.

According to Brown (2020), the book *White Noise* by Don DeLillo explores the process of people coping with the confusing and complicated nature of contemporary existence, especially in a postmodern cultural context. Conventional meanings, identities, and values are tentative and under constant fluidity in this world, and they are greatly influenced by media, advertising as well as consumerism. A constant change in the symbols and signs like brands and media messages makes it hard to find constant or universal truths. According to Brown, DeLillo offers the only constant and definite thing in human lives, death. Whereas the rest of it is flowing and can be redefined, death is absolute and unavoidable. The paper suggests that in *White Noise*, death is the so-called transcendental signified, the single point, which breaks the infinite uncertainty of postmodern existence.

Bhardwaj (2016) breaks down the concept of *White Noise* by Don DeLillo as a postmodern critique of the commercialised American society and the immense power of the modern technology. The article posits that technological changes and mechanisation have infiltrated the social life, which has added to existential emptiness. It dwells upon three main features of the novel that show the dual nature of the technology good and bad: television as a source of information and entertainment, toxic event in the air, and the Dylar episode, the outcomes of which are disastrous. Also, the article examines the broad effect of television on people and families including Jack and the effects of the television to the rest of the society. The paper also highlights the way DeLillo criticized the mindless reliance on scientific progress and technology. The researcher notes that although *White Noise* is widely noted as the technology, there are no allusions to computers and the internet because it was written prior to the introduction of the World Wide Web in 1990. Rather, the future of information technology is predetermined by technologies like television, radio, and international phone calls. The novel shows that communication has risen to global levels as in the case where Jack converses with his ex-wife in her ashram. The researcher also points out that technology is deeply integrated with everyday life as it easily blends with human activities.

According to Erden (2019), *White Noise* can be regarded as a pioneer of the material turn in literature because material forces dominate over human agency in influencing the events in the novel. According to the article, when trying to regulate material agency, frustration and catastrophe ensues. It also discusses the general intellectual transformation of the humanities in the linguistic turn into the material turn, citing Jane Bennett on how the linguistic turn ignored materiality. *White Noise* is pointed out as a novel that brings back the focus on non-human forces. The author also examines how the book depicts the environmental disasters as something humans cannot control. It condemns the protagonist, Jack Gladney, in his erroneous thinking that disasters affect only low-income people, which supports the theme that material forces do not depend on human intentions. Besides, the article claims that the White noises emphasize the active involvement of material agency in event formation, so that one should not think that mankind has the power over the material world. An example of such a false premise is the frustration of Jack Gladney. Lastly, the article makes a conclusion that material agency is unpredictable and something that cannot be controlled by human beings.

Research Objectives

- Examine the representation of environmental catastrophes in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* through the lens of eco-critical theory.
- Analyse the Airborne Toxic Event as a symbol of hyperobjects and its broader implications for ecological crises and human-nature interactions.

- Explore the novel's contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship on literature, environmental studies, and the cultural dimensions of the Anthropocene.

III. METHODOLOGY

The analysis in this paper is the interdisciplinary method and a qualitative method that involves the combination of literary analysis and eco-critical theory. The methodology includes:

- ❖ Textual and Theoretical Analysis - Have a close reading of *White Noise*, with references to themes, symbols, and narrative techniques with regard to environmental disaster and existential anxiety. Use the theory of hyperobjects applied to the Airborne Toxic Event and its ecological impacts in general by Timothy Morton.
- ❖ Contextual and Interdisciplinary Approach - Place the novel into its cultural and historical context, especially with the new discourse of the Anthropocene and ecological crisis of the 1980s. Combine environmental research, cultural theory and psychology to further analyze.
- ❖ Comparative and Contemporary Relevance - Demonstrate similarities between *White Noise* and modern environmental ecological stories to underscore the novel as a persistent part of the ecological discussions on ecological crisis and human understanding of ecological danger.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Eco-Critical Analysis: The Airborne Toxic Event

These qualities are reflected in the Airborne Toxic Event. Although it was originally seen as a localized disaster, its extended expanse and unpredictable expansion point to its hyperobject status. It is both there and not there, a concrete threat but an intangible power which cannot be accurately classified. The incident remains with the characters even after the visible impacts have disappeared, such as environmental crises remain unseen in the air, earth, and human body.

Ecocriticism emphasises this eco-consciousness, removing the ego-consciousness of man. The present environmental crisis is a byproduct of human culture. It is not caused by how the ecosystem functions, but by how our ethical system functions and how we behave with Mother Nature (Mishra, 2016, p. 168).

In addition, the Airborne Toxic Event highlights the lack of human control or conceptualisation of the ecological threats that a person experiences. Jack Gladney and other characters have problems with making sense of different scientific reports, and they are a symptom of the larger epistemological crisis that occurs as people face phenomena that can no longer be interpreted within a personal or cultural context.

"A dark black breathing thing of smoke.

Why do they call it a plume?"

"Air time is valuable. They can't go into long tortured descriptions. Have they said what kind of chemical is it?"

"It's called Nyodene Derivative or Nyodene D. It was in a movie we saw in school on toxic wastes." (DeLillo, 1999, p. 94)

The black billowing cloud is an indicator of environmental disaster and existential dread. It is unnaturally silent and almost purposeful in movement; it is orchestrated, emphasizing the themes of the vulnerability of humans mentioned in the novel, the collapse in technology, and the spooky silence before a disaster. By doing so, the occasion reflects real-life concerns of climate change, pollution, and technological remnants, which are admittedly an issue but not one that may be solved (or even understood) in the short term. Considering the Airborne Toxic Event as a hyperobject, *White Noise* is a prophetic critique of the contemporary environmental and existential problems. The novel by DeLillo predicts modern trends of ecological disaster, surveillance, and the human mind unable to handle the disaster occurring on levels that we cannot perceive directly. In this perspective, the novel does not just satirize the dependence of the modern society on media and scientific discourse, but also questions the extent of human agency in the presence of the overwhelming global forces.

B. Psychological and Societal Disruption

White Noise, other than being a literal disaster to the environment, its Airborne Toxic Event is an analogy of the mental and social turmoil caused by ecological catastrophes. The fact that all these people are scared, confused and apprehensive due to what has happened speaks of how feeble the human institutions are when subjected to major changes. The institutions of the government, science and media which are expected to bring stability do not give clear guidance and leave people to experience the reality which is growing more chaotic and unpredictable. The exposure of the collective trauma by the humanisation of the human being, Jack Gladney, who was exposed to the very toxic substance, Nyodene D is further humanised. The incident affects an entire population. Nevertheless, the crisis is made more intimate and closer to Jack due to his condition. This shows how such very big environmental hazards can be very personal. Similar to the communities that struggle with an ecological and health risk with long-term effects that are a result of industrial pollution, radiation, or climate change, it is unclear what happened to him and this diagnosis remains a kind of reminder of the irreversible nature of the event; he is in an uncertain future now.

The reaction of different characters to the incident displays the ecological threats that transform our world psychologically. The constant threat which is not apparent makes certain individuals, such as Jack, experience the growing

paranoia and existential fear. One of them is Babette, his wife and passes through the stages of denying and desperate attempts at finding coping methods. Even their children respond in different ways to who Heinrich is logical in his attitude and Steffie subconsciously absorbs media influenced concerns. These varied responses support the general theme of information overload in the novel and the boundaries of human knowledge that the novel highlights the hard work of handling events that cannot be explained through the usual framework.

Table 1 shows a chronological summary of how the Airborne Toxic Event affects both individuals and society, demonstrating that an ecological crisis extends beyond physical damage to influence emotional, institutional, and informational dimensions of human experience.

TABLE 1
INTERACTION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS, HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY, AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION IN **WHITE NOISE**

Stage/Element	Description	Consequences
Airborne Toxic Event	Industrial accident releasing a toxic cloud.	Triggers ecological damage and public panic.
Ecological Effects	Pollution and long-term environmental contamination.	Generates ecological anxiety and moral questioning.
Human Psychological Reactions	Emotional and cognitive responses such as fear, disorientation, and denial.	Exposes existential vulnerability and the erosion of human stability.
Media Portrayal	Sensationalized depiction of disaster through media channels.	Shapes collective memory and amplifies perceptions of crisis.
Feedback Loop	Continuous interaction between public response and media representation.	Reinforces awareness of environmental fragility and psychological unease.

Note. The table illustrates the interrelated dynamics of environmental catastrophe, human response, and media influence in Don DeLillo's **White Noise**, emphasizing how ecological and psychological disturbances feed into one another through mediated experience.

DeLillo emphasizes how conflicting and unreliable the information provided by the media and authorities is in the time of a crisis. Since various sources give conflicting information, it highlights the reliance of the society on technology where society loses its ability to provide clarity or control. The ambiguity portrays the themes of misinformation, fear and risk in the environment of the novel. On a larger scale than individual level, the Airborne Toxic Event illustrates larger scale dysfunction in the society. In addition to this, unethical consumption of the natural resources by the uncensored use of the technological advancement has resulted in mass destruction of the natural resources and the imbalance of the world (Mehta, 2024). Rather than bringing about real emergency preparedness or community resiliency, the response is confused by misinformation, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and excessive dependence on technology and media narratives. The official warnings change to panicked evacuation notices, as they mirror the real-world trends of crisis management, in which institutions tend to understate or under-respond to environmental disasters before they get out of control.

The incident highlights the growing challenge of the inability to separate the real and the mediated perception, between the real threats and the way they are portrayed in news stories, technical language, and in governmental words. Finally, it can be concluded that the Airborne Toxic Event in *White Noise* is a mini-epic of contemporary fears concerning the environmental breakdown, death, and the instability of social systems.

“What does the radio say?”

“At first, they said skin irritation and sweaty palms.”

“But now they say nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath.”

“This is human nausea we’re talking about.” (DeLillo, 1999, p. 94)

The description by DeLillo of the world being created by forces that are invisible, uncontrollable is an appeal to the modern-day anxieties of climate change, pandemics and industrial contamination like the toxic cloud that cannot be fully comprehended but always remains present.

C. Environmental Catastrophes and Consumerism

Don DeLillo in *White Noise* criticizes the aspect of consumer culture in promoting the environmental degradation, which engages the ecological crisis and the deep entanglement of capitalist consumption as a source of environmental crisis. Airborne Toxic Event is a metaphorical representation of the effects of uncontrolled industrialisation, waste generation, and negligence by corporations, as well as a literal disaster. The disaster-causing chemical, Nyodene D, is an industrial byproduct, which demonstrates that in the quest to make a profit, the potential results are not always visible but can be widespread environmental risks. This type of revelation can also be exposed in the *White Noise* by Don DeLillo when the narrator attempts to reveal nature and materials through various moments as an actual reserve (Mohammed et al., 2023).

DeLillo also speaks of commodifying disaster by the sensationalized media reporting on the incident. Instead of providing readers with information that can be acted upon, the media houses present the crisis as a spectacle, which can be consumed like any other form of entertainment. This also shows how society wants to capitalize on disasters to benefit both economically and culturally and turn suffering into contentment and packaging it into something that can be sold. The characters themselves are also unable to separate the real threats they are introduced to and the mediated perception of such threats, which depicts the influence of consumer culture on perceptions of risk, reality, and survival. This criticism is compatible with the eco-critical views that associate the capitalist consumption with the destruction of the environment.

The supermarket shelves have been rearranged. It happened one day without warning. There is agitation and panic in the aisles, dismay in the faces of older shoppers. They walk in a fragmented trance, stop and go, clusters of well-dressed figures frozen in the aisles, trying to figure out the pattern, discern the underlying logic, trying to remember where they'd seen the Cream of Wheat. (DeLillo, 1999, p. 277)

The supermarket goods are bright-colored, a symbol of distraction and false security and the outside toxic cloud is an uncontrollable threat to the environment. It shows the cynicism of the modern society towards real perils in favor of material safety presented by *White Noise*. The unlimited production and disposal processes of modern consumerism contribute to the environment destruction impacting the environment with pollution, the disappearance of resources, and climate changes. The idea that is propagated by *White Noise* is that not only the Airborne Toxic Event is a one-off event but rather the manifestation of a larger system, where profit is the chief focus, as opposed to the environment and people. The characters go back to their consumer-oriented lives after the crisis is over, with a sense of finding solace in the world of supermarkets and shopping malls in case material consumption can offer some sense of stability in what is becoming more and more of a world of existential uncertainty.

In the end, DeLillo introduces consumerism as an economic and psychological phenomenon, defining the manner in which the people think and react to the threat to the environment. Society is stuck in a loop of distraction, misinformation and passive consumption rather than dealing with the real causes of disasters. In this light, *White Noise* is a prophetic commentary upon the problems of the modern era, both the denial of climate change and the commodification of modern-day crises in the digital era.

D. Hyperobjects in the Context of the Anthropocene

A major background to the interpretation of *White Noise* is the Anthropocene, a hypothetical geological period in which there is enormous human intervention into the systems of the Earth. The process of human activity in this era has transformed the environment such that the natural and artificial boundaries have become more permeable. Pollution of industries, global warming and ecological meltdowns are not externalities but are now part of daily life.

The system was invisible, making it all the more impressive and disquieting to deal with. But we were in accord, at least for now. The networks, the circuits, the streams, the harmonies. I woke in the grip of a death sweat. (DeLillo, 1999, pp. 39–40)

The Airborne Toxic Event is one of the examples of the features of the Anthropocene. It is a creation of the industrial activity, showing how technological advancements usually have unanticipated effects on the environment. Instead of being an exception, the toxic cloud is a symptom of a world in the world where industrial waste, artificial chemicals, and the disturbance of the ecological order have become inevitable. This is in line with the main theme of the Anthropocene the human species has changed the Earth and has resulted in the creation of an environment that is deadly to survival. The characters in *White Noise* have trouble trying to digest the occurrence since it is a bigger systemic problem that reflects some of the real-life issues of pollution, climate change and how the ecosystems have been changed permanently.

In order to further contextualise this in the theory of Timothy Morton, the toxic cloud can be viewed as a hyperobject, a phenomenon that is immensely distributed in terms of both time and space, which cannot be understood, and cannot be localised. A systematic reflection of the interrelatedness of hyperobjects and the Anthropocene crises of climate change, industrial pollution, and techno-capitalism is shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2
CONCEPTUAL PROGRESSION FROM HYPEROBJECTS TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Stage	Conceptual Focus	Outcome / Theoretical Implication
Hyperobjects	Massive entities distributed across time and space; beyond human-scale perception.	Establish the framework for understanding global ecological phenomena.
Non-locality, Viscosity, Phasing	Core properties of hyperobjects that define their persistence and entanglement.	Reveal how ecological and technological systems interpenetrate human life.
Industrialization	Human-driven transformation of nature into capital and technology.	Intensifies ecological imbalance; material basis for the Anthropocene.
Media Saturation	Proliferation of information and spectacle that mediate ecological awareness.	Distorts perception of crisis and sustains consumerist detachment.
Environmental Catastrophe	Manifestation of ecological breakdown and planetary instability.	Marks the transition to the Anthropocene.
Anthropocene → Climate Crisis	Epochal shift characterized by human agency in geologic change.	Represents the culmination of hyperobject logic in planetary collapse.

Note. The table outlines the causal and conceptual chain linking Morton's hyperobject theory to the Anthropocene discourse, illustrating how material, cultural, and ecological systems intertwine to produce the current climate crisis.

Table 2 clarifies how hyperobjects like the toxic cloud replicate the broader environmental condition of the Anthropocene, revealing how unnoticed forces such as industrial waste and synthetic pollution operate on a vast, often unnoticed scale beyond ordinary perception.

E. Temporal and Spatial Scale

The second aspect of hyperobjects stated by Timothy Morton is that it breaks the established concepts of time and space. Hyperobjects such as climate change, nuclear radiation and microplastic pollution work on a scale beyond human perception, and span enormous temporal and spatial scales. The Airborne Toxic Event in *White Noise* can be viewed as a similar attempt, as it makes the audience and the protagonists directly face the scope of human understanding in the context of huge, slowly-moving environmental disasters.

In *White Noise*, technology facilitates convenience and fosters alienation from nature and human authenticity.

This section sets the stage by highlighting how technological progress reshaped societal norms while raising existential questions about the actual cost of progress. (Fatima et al., 2024)

Firstly, the toxic cloud may seem a small, localized tragedy, but its impact can be felt over an extended period of time. Even though Jack may not die immediately he is exposed to Nyodene D, the impacts on his health, and the environment will be long-lasting and may not be clearly realized until many years later. Slow violence is a sentence coined by Rob Nixon to describe the subtle and gradual devastation of the ecosystem. It replicates ecological disasters, such as global warming, deforestation and chemical pollution (Nixon, 2011). Similar to the old crises, Airborne Toxic Event is too apparent and too hidden at the same time, so people find it hard to comprehend all its consequences. It is momentary and persistent.

F. Interconnected Crises

The book shows the close connection between concerns of ecology and existential concerns. The Jack is already obsessed with the idea of death and the exposure to Nyodene D only makes it become a predominant theme in his life. This confounds his mortality and the larger environmental instability that defines the Anthropocene. The broader uncertainty of the world increasingly shaped by environmental threats is reflected in his inability to predict the long-term effects of the toxin.

According to DeLillo, ecological crises are profoundly psychological phenomena that alter people's perceptions of risk, time, and life. Environmental calamities such as oil spills, toxic smoke, hazardous chemical clouds, and the ubiquitous electrical and magnetic fields are common topics of conversation among the protagonists. (Bora, 2023)

Similar to the response to climatic change and industrial threats in real life, the main characters of *White Noise* attempt to deny the tragedy, disseminate fake news, and distract themselves regarding it. When human beings find comfort in shopping in times of crisis, they do not think about the real reasons of environmental degradation but rather they are devoured by the beats of the consumer society. In *White Noise*, the Airborne Toxic Event is portrayed as a foreshadowing of the concerns of the Anthropocene in the final chapter. It also forces the heroes and villains to confront the fact that the environment is not a thing that exists outside them but it is part and parcel of their identity.

G. Literary Narratives of Environmental Anxiety and Ecological Crisis

When it comes to how individuals respond to the issue of the environment, literature is a cultural thermometer that does serve two functions. Since romantic literature that glorifies the sublime of the 1700s to the dystopian novels of the modern era that predict the impending end of the world as we know it, literature has been a chronicle of the fluctuating relationship between man and nature. *White Noise* by Don DeLillo, as a cultural and psychological exploration of environmental fear, presumes the direction the modern world was heading toward ecological disaster. One worldwide issue is the ecological catastrophe. This has led to unprecedented interest in the environment because the crisis has already been of a catastrophic nature, the first manifestation of which is the destruction of the environmental state and damage to the ecosystem (Asenath & Santhanalakshmi, 2021).

The Airborne Toxic Event, though fictional, is a metaphor on environmental disasters, such as oil spills, industrial pollution and climate change calamities. The setting is a consumerist, suburban setting, and DeLillo needs to underline how environmental issues are now a possibility, and cannot be ignored. Physical conditions, as well as cultural perceptions, play a role in the ecological disaster accounts; his portrayal of confused government responses, media sensationalism, and general panic echo real reactions to disaster. Being a postmodern fiction, *White Noise* is also skeptical about the credibility of information in a time of media overload. As it is pointed out in the novel, when confronted with an ecological threat the difference between truth and misinformation is hard to draw. This question is still topical in the present-day discourse of climate denial, greenwashing in business, and politicisation of environmental science. Human beings cannot be properly nurtured without natural resources. They are forced to rely on the assistance of nature in order to live comfortably (Bhushan, 2021). By doing so, *White Noise* acts as a retrospective of past anxieties as well as the forerunner of the rising canon of climate fiction (cli-fi) that explicitly addresses the existential uncertainties of the Anthropocene.

H. Role of Storytelling in Environmental Awareness

Staging the effects of the Airborne Toxic Event, DeLillo asks the readers to approach issues related to the ecology both emotionally and intellectually. The novel does not give abstract statistics or scientific reports but makes the deaths of the environment personal by using the experience of Jack Gladney so that the reader is able to face the disorientation, fear and helplessness that are frequently associated with the ecological disaster. This goes hand in hand with eco-critical views that storytelling is a strong method of creating environmental awareness and empathy. Higher critics in eco-criticism believe that literature has a possibility of filling the gap between the scientific discourse and the populace, rendering the

problem of the environment more approachable and emotionally engaging. In a materialistic society, it enhances human capacity to get resources and wealth and make people exploit nature. It creates a social system that is unsustainable to the environment (Asenath & Santhanalakshmi, 2021).

Such stories as *White Noise* make the reader think of how their lives are connected with the global ecological systems and it is what makes people think that it is up to humanity as a whole how the future of the planet will be. The weapons used by DeLillo to draw the attention to the absurdity of the way humankind reacts to the environmental crisis are irony and dark humour. Trying to cope with the reality of the disaster and remaining in the consumer culture, the characters balance between apathy and dizziness. The sarcastic tone of the book makes a reader think about his/her impact on environmental destruction and doubt the values and lifestyles in the modern world.

I. Implications for Modern Environmental Discourse

To have a better understanding and reaction to the contemporary environmental problems, read the novel of DeLillo. According to *White Noise*, the significance of a holistic approach to environmental issues is explained through the Airborne Toxic Event, which is represented as both a hyperobject and a personal disaster. The scientific knowledge is not enough, the novel indicates that cultural discourses, psychological reactions, and media images are vital in the determination of the popular perception and policy making. The fight of Jack Gladney to understand his exposure to Nyodene D is an indicator of a larger social challenge of dealing with the sluggish mass-level threats to the environment.

Thus, in *White Noise*, a litany of real and possible environmental disasters testifies to a growing concern for the environment and accidents that might result from a callous attitude toward our surroundings. Daily, there is news of toxic spills, cancerous solvents from storage tanks, and radioactive water from power plants. (Bora, 2023)

Similar to how he is obsessed with the uncertainty of his condition, the contemporary societies are finding it hard to digest the long-term implications of climate change, loss of biodiversity and industrial pollution. The novel is a warning about the risks of complacency, misinformation and the illusion that consumerism is the way of feeling safe in a period of ecological instability.

To underscore the relevance of DeLillo's fictional disaster to real-world environmental events, Table 3 presents a comparative framework that links the Airborne Toxic Event with notable ecological catastrophes from modern history.

TABLE 3
COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK OF FICTIONAL AND REAL-WORLD ECOLOGICAL CRISES

Aspect	Airborne Toxic Event (<i>White Noise</i>)	Real-World Example	Shared Implications
Origin	Industrial accident releasing a toxic cloud	Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984), Chernobyl Disaster (1986)	Technological negligence, industrial risk, and environmental fragility
Public Reaction	Confusion, paranoia, and emotional disarray	Panic, mistrust, and social disorientation	Psychological trauma, dependency on mediated information
Institutional Response	Conflicting media narratives; delayed evacuation	Denial, poor crisis management, and politicization	Institutional fragility, policy failure, and erosion of public trust
Long-Term Impact	Lingering fear, existential anxiety, and health uncertainty	Chronic illness, mortality, and ecological contamination	Persistent health and environmental consequences
Media Role	Sensationalized and contradictory reporting	Misinformation, censorship, or underreporting	Manipulation of perception; mediation of fear and crisis

Note: The "Airborne Toxic Event" refers to a fictional chemical spill depicted in Don DeLillo's novel **White Noise**. The real-world examples serve as illustrative comparisons for academic analysis.

This comparative framework shows that *White Noise* functions not only as a novel of postmodern anxiety but also as a deeply prescient eco-critical text. It mirrors the real-world failures to recognize, respond to, and recover from environmental catastrophes, urging readers to reconsider the interplay between ecological fragility and institutional authority.

J. Toward an Eco-Critical Future

Using the eco-criticism in the *White Noise* emphasizes the significance of interdisciplinary approach in solving environmental problems. The ecological science, literature, and cultural theory should collaborate to have a better insight into the issues of the Anthropocene. The novel by DeLillo reveals that environmental crises are not scientific or political issues but rather very cultural and psychological.

The novel for the most part is about fear of death, fear of destruction of nature and life, fear of modern technology and its consequences which controls all aspects of contemporary human beings and becomes an alternative for all spiritual dimensions including religion, beliefs, meditation, poetry, arts, and nature. (Mohammed et al., 2023)

Scholars and activists can better get people talking about sustainability, resilience, and environmental justice if they look at how stories affect public awareness. A rapidly expanding area of study known as the environmental humanities, which includes literature, philosophy, history, and media studies, is vital in connecting scientific understanding with real-world human experience. Ultimately, *White Noise* is still essential for modern environmental discussions because it provides a prism to examine how people are changing their connection to the natural world, technology, and their mortality.

To better understand the cultural and emotional aspects of ecological crises and to develop more effective and compassionate answers to the problems of the Anthropocene, it is helpful to view literature as a mirror of environmental distress.

V. CONCLUSION

White Noise, as written by Don DeLillo is a traditional exploration of an ecological and existential crisis that makes a scathing evaluation of how modern society treats such tragedies. The narrative summarizes the anxieties of the Anthropocene, which was characterized by the irreversible damage that humans caused to the planet by presenting the Airborne Toxic Event through the prism of eco-criticism and hyperobjects. Besides the examination of the effects of such crises on human psychology, media discourses and social organizations, the works of DeLillo anticipate the present-day discussions concerning the world of industrial pollution, climate change, and environmental degradation. This discussion emphasizes the enduring significance of *White Noise* in the contemporary environmental rhetoric through an examination of the interrelationship of psychological and ecological disturbance.

The narrative presents the way in which environmental calamities have become normal in consumer culture, and the media and the people sensationalise them and go about consuming them without taking any action. The culture of denial, disinformation, the overdependence on institutions that may not be ready to deal with high-scale ecological issues, is one that is in a flux and swing between these issues and the process of dying is an element that Jack Gladney may be already experiencing and DeLillo is also warning and inciting action at the same time. The readers have to think about how our senses are narrow in understanding hyperobjects and struggle against the system that supports environmental harm. Moreover, it emphasizes that the Anthropocene cannot be addressed solely through the application of scientific approaches, so the cultural and psychological approach must be combined to understand its complexity. After all, there are too many uncertainties of the modern life, and *White Noise* is not merely a catastrophe story. By responding to the topics of the novel in an eco-critical perspective, one may gain an insight into the fears of the DeLillo era and the relevance of the novel to the uncertain environmental future. This way, *White Noise* makes us reconsider the relationship people have with nature, technology, and our mortality, and it makes us leave our complacent stance and start working hard to address the environmental issues of today.

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Negotiating Sociocultural Constraints Through Self-Efficacy: An Ethnographic Study of English as a Foreign Language Learners in Indonesian *Pesantren*

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Abstract—Although previous studies have examined self-efficacy in language learning, little is known about how it operates within sociocultural constraints, particularly in faith-based educational settings. This study explores how speaking self-efficacy shapes English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' negotiation of sociocultural constraints in Indonesian *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). Using an ethnographic approach, the research involved prolonged observation and in-depth interviews with EFL learners who had lived in *pesantren* for more than three years. The analysis identified five major sociocultural constraints: educational, time-management, environmental, personal-psychological, and policy-related, and five interrelated factors that facilitate constraint negotiation: mentorship and support systems, autonomous learning initiatives, technology and sociocultural adaptation, emotional regulation and self-belief, and the influence of cultural learning environments. Learners employed several negotiation strategies, such as prayer, peer support, English circles, self-reliance, and limited technology use to enhance their speaking self-efficacy. A conceptual model is proposed to illustrate the dynamic interplay between efficacy beliefs and sociocultural constraint negotiation in the *pesantren* context. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of learner agency and provide pedagogical implications for fostering autonomy and resilience in collectivist language learning environments.

Index Terms—self-efficacy, sociocultural constraint negotiation, EFL learners, *pesantren*

I. INTRODUCTION

Mastering speaking skills in a foreign language is rarely simple. Learners' success depends on how they manage challenges they face. Previous studies have identified vocabulary, grammar, intonation, and pronunciation as the main linguistic obstacles to speaking (Mao, 2022), while psychological and environmental aspects form invisible barriers that are harder to detect. Developing speaking proficiency in a second language is demanding (Jamshidnejad, 2020), especially for those studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Chen et al., 2024). Students face sociocultural constraints, including educational, temporal, personal, psychological, institutional (Mansouri et al., 2021), and environmental factors (Pérez & Lissen, 2022). Gender differences play a role: female learners often struggle with emotional restraints, whereas male students tend to be limited by a narrower linguistic repertoire (Ismail et al., 2018; Taqdir et al., 2025). Both linguistic and non-linguistic barriers shape how EFL learners develop speaking skills (Mao, 2022). The cultural dimension within learning contexts shapes how language is perceived and practised, while stereotypes and value systems in educational settings can reinforce or challenge learners' engagement with the target language (Taqdir, 2025).

Among non-linguistic influences, self-efficacy plays a decisive role in determining how learners approach and persist in overcoming language learning challenges. Self-efficacy affects how students interpret difficulties, set goals, and sustain motivation. Teachers should help learners build positive self-perceptions and realistic expectations of language learning (Genc et al., 2016). Research shows strong links between self-efficacy, learner autonomy, and academic performance (Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011), as well as between self-efficacy and sociocultural adaptation (Gajdzik, 2005). Studies on effective language learners highlight how personal initiative and strategic behaviour contribute to language growth (Griffiths, 2013). However, most studies have focused on learners in conventional homes and classrooms. Little is known about how students in restrictive or faith-based settings negotiate learning barriers (Rassaei, 2014). Although researchers have begun examining how learners manage constraints (Shakerkhoshroudi et al., 2020), the role of self-efficacy in negotiating sociocultural limitations remains underexplored (Domysheva & Kopylova, 2021). Digital culture has transformed how learners experience language and identity, requiring new forms of critical awareness in intercultural communication (Arafah et al., 2023). As social media evolves, it enables people to interact with anyone from any country (Arafah & Hasyim, 2023; Hasyim & Arafah, 2023). With many internet users in Indonesia, social media becomes an arena for social identity construction and language transformation (Hasjim et al., 2026).

In Indonesian *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding schools), students (*santri*) live under religious guidance from *kyai* (religious teachers). The curriculum includes classical Islamic texts, Arabic, law, and logic, alongside daily rituals and communal responsibilities. Historically, *pesantren* developed from Javanese *pondokan* and share similarities with *pondok* in Malaysia and *madrasas* in South Asia. These institutions emphasise discipline and collective living, nurturing obedience and religious devotion among students (Solichin, 2019; Silfiana, 2020). Whether modern or Salaf in orientation, *pesantren* shapes learners' independence and offers a sociocultural space for examining how self-efficacy supports English-speaking practice (Firdaus & Al Husaeni, 2023).

This study explores how speaking self-efficacy influences EFL learners' negotiation of sociocultural constraints in *pesantren*. It focuses on Indonesian learners who have lived in *pesantren* for over three years and passed through what Hartshorne et al. (2018) describe as a critical period for foreign language acquisition (CFLA). Their daily lives involve routines from religious obligations to academic and linguistic challenges that require self-regulation. The research centres on Salaf *pesantren*, which combine Islamic education with the Salafi *manhaj* (path) governing thought and behaviour (Wahid, 2015). Autonomy is essential for learners' adaptation and development (Benson, 2014). This study investigates how *santri*, who internalise religious values as part of their identity, use self-efficacy to navigate sociocultural constraints and strengthen English-speaking skill. Since English is international, English-speaking competence has become a need in this era (Kaharuddin et al., 2023).

Through an ethnographic lens, this study aims to shed light on the intersection of self-efficacy and sociocultural constraint negotiation among EFL learners in *pesantren* settings. These findings are expected to deepen our understanding of how self-efficacy operates as a mediating force in faith-based collectivist educational settings. Beyond theoretical insights, this study offers practical implications for fostering learner autonomy and motivation in contexts where language learning is strongly influenced by social, cultural, and institutional factors.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Sociocultural Constraint Negotiation for EFL Learner in Pesantren

Pesantren learners not majoring in English face linguistic and non-linguistic barriers in developing speaking skills. Linguistic barriers are prominent, including phonological, intonational, grammatical, and lexical difficulties (Kormos & Csizér, 2014). However, challenges extend to gender differences. Being a woman means following male-dominated culture (Asri et al., 2023). Female *pesantren* students face stronger institutional and personal constraints than males, including fear, shyness, and cultural norms restricting their interaction and confidence in speaking English. Social perceptions make it difficult for them to find speaking partners in *pesantren* environments. Some view English as eroding cultural heritage and traditional language (Takwa et al., 2024). Meanwhile, traditions and beliefs remain preserved within society, resistant to modernisation (Effendy et al., 2025). Cultural values are still actively incorporated during learning (Arafah et al., 2025).

Practical constraints complicate learning. Students have limited time for English due to demanding religious and academic schedules. Financial limitations may reduce motivation to continue studies. Their perception of English as difficult discourages engagement. Moreover, interpreting English can yield multiple meanings with metaphor or figurative language (Baa et al., 2023). The difference in cultural knowledge between first and second languages correlates strongly (Arnawa & Arafah, 2023). Prior language-learning experiences influence constraints; beginners struggle more than those with exposure. Studies show interactive and collaborative environments enhance EFL learners' oral proficiency and motivation, suggesting peer communication can reduce sociocultural barriers (Kaharuddin et al., 2025). The learning medium in restrictive contexts like *pesantren* shapes students' engagement. Research shows traditional or printed materials remain effective when adapted to context, learner needs, and pedagogical goals (Arafah et al., 2023). In *pesantren* settings with limited technology access, printed or contextually localised resources sustain learner autonomy. These findings align with calls for context-sensitive materials reflecting local culture and communicative goals.

Yasmin and Sohail (2018) found factors inhibiting spoken English performance: learners' lack of independent learning, limited English exposure, exam-oriented mindset, low motivation, overdependence on teachers, limited proficiency, and

ineffective resource use. Teacher-related factors, including limited confidence in students and traditional methods, contribute to these challenges. These findings align with sociocultural barriers to learner autonomy, including teacher bias, lack of autonomy awareness, and intolerance toward students' creativity (Yasmin et al., 2020). Teachers hold an important role in providing feedback (Suparti et al., 2025). Learning environments' effectiveness depends on how teachers deliver feedback, whether explicit or implicit, as this affects learners' confidence (Kuswanty et al., 2023). Verbal persuasion and constructive feedback are crucial tools for fostering motivation among EFL learners in religious and collectivist contexts.

Literary works introduce appealing English content into learning (Arafah et al., 2023). They increase learners' awareness of environment and interpretation of characters' language (Manugeren et al., 2023; Yudith et al., 2023). The cultural content in English textbooks is debated across sociocultural contexts. Ahmad (2015) notes linguists oppose textbooks with target-culture materials, arguing they conflict with local cultural values. These debates show sociocultural constraints extend beyond classroom practices to include ideological and policy dimensions. As technology evolves, AI-assisted learning systems support learner autonomy and individualized feedback, enhancing motivation and linguistic confidence (Kaharuddin et al., 2024). Mobile applications enable interactive language learning (Idhan et al., 2025). Although *pesantren* environments limit digital tools, AI-based pedagogy highlights adaptive feedback and reflective learning systems aligning with learners' needs. Using Chan's (2010) framework, four key constraints influence learner autonomy: (a) policy limitations, referring to language education guidelines; (b) institutional restrictions, such as rules, exams, or curricula; (c) language perceptions, referring to societal attitudes toward English; and (d) pedagogical approaches, determining acceptable methods and practices. Oxford (2015) conceptualized autonomous learners through a sociocultural lens, identifying them as cognitively apprenticed, mediated, strategic, invested, socio-politically free, and self-efficacious. This shows how *pesantren* learners negotiate institutional, cultural, and psychological constraints while developing English proficiency.

B. The Role of Efficacy in Sociocultural Constraint Negotiation

Self-efficacy reflects an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks. Bandura (1977) describes multiple dimensions of efficacy: task efficacy (confidence in executing actions), performance efficacy (belief in maintaining quality), coping efficacy (handling difficulties), collective efficacy (group's shared belief), and self-regulatory efficacy (control over emotions and motivation). Learners with strong self-efficacy are persistent and goal-orientated, interpreting obstacles as manageable challenges (Doran & Pomfret, 2019).

Bandura (1997) identified four sources of efficacy belief. First is enactive mastery experience, where successful performance strengthens confidence. Second is vicarious experience, where observing others' achievements enhances belief in success (Bandura, 1991). Third is verbal persuasion, including encouragement that reinforces persistence. Verbal persuasion and vicarious experience interact, as feedback from teachers and peers amplifies capability. Finally, affective and physiological states influence efficacy, with positive emotions strengthening it while anxiety may weaken it. In EFL learning in *pesantren*, these sources of efficacy are highly relevant. Learners deal with social pressures while achieving English proficiency. Their success depends on mastery experiences, encouragement, and emotional regulation. Parents' active support influences their process (Sunyoto et al., 2022). Positive feedback enhances persistence.

As Bandura (1997) emphasised, self-efficacy beliefs influence how individuals evaluate performance and approach challenges. *Pesantren* learners with high self-efficacy remain confident in reaching proficiency levels under restrictive conditions. They develop negotiation-efficacy skills to manage constraints and maintain motivation. Self-efficacy contributes to psychological hardiness, enabling learners to reinterpret difficulties as opportunities. This hardiness reflects students' ability to adapt and sustain autonomous learning despite constraints.

III. METHODS

Ethnography is one of the most used qualitative approaches in social research because it allows researchers to explore social interactions, cultural practises, and their meanings in context. This approach involves collecting data through prolonged field engagement, mainly through observations, interviews, and learning logs. As Fetterman (2010) explains, ethnographic writing emphasises detailed descriptions in narrative form, enabling readers to understand events from participants' perspectives. Similarly, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) note that ethnographic reports should include vivid accounts, quotations, and interpretive reflections to illuminate social and cultural dynamics.

In this study, ethnography examined how EFL learners in a *pesantren* environment negotiate sociocultural constraints while developing English-speaking proficiency. The researcher acted as an etic outsider, observing and analysing participants' behaviour without becoming part of the cultural group. This position allowed objective viewing of the phenomenon while maintaining sensitivity to participants' experiences and learning context. The ethnographic approach captured learners' interactions among themselves and with the researcher, providing insights into how sociocultural constraints manifest in learning situations.

A. The Participant and the Context

The participants consisted of ten EFL learners residing in a Salafi *pesantren* in Indonesia. They were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria: (a) English proficiency as determined by test results, (b) minimum three years of

pesantren residence, (c) provincial diversity for representation from various regions, (d) age range between 16-25 years, (e) balanced gender representation (five male and five female), and (f) evidence of autonomous learning behaviour.

All participants were pursuing undergraduate degrees at a private university in Indonesia. They came from different provinces and spoke different local languages, resulting in varied Indonesian accents, the main language used in university and *pesantren* settings.

The study aimed to understand how these students successfully learned English despite *pesantren* restrictions. As Salaf *pesantren* traditionally prohibit digital technology, students had no access to digital devices or online resources during the pandemic. Their learning opportunities were limited by religious and institutional obligations. Despite these constraints, the participants exhibited higher English proficiency than the *pesantren* average, as confirmed by their self-reported scores. Data were collected over two years from a Salafi *pesantren* in Indonesia.

B. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis followed a process of coding, categorizing, and theme construction. The raw data from recorded interviews, field observations, and learning logs were first coded using words or phrases that captured key meanings related to autonomous learning behaviour. This process involved multiple coding cycles to ensure analytical depth and reliability. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories to identify relationships and patterns in the dataset. Each category was interpreted to uncover themes that reflected how learners negotiated constraints and demonstrated self-efficacy in learning processes. The themes were synthesized into narrative explanations, supported by quotations, tables, and figures.

An example of this process is presented in Table 1, which shows how data from different sources were analyzed and categorized.

TABLE 1
THE EXAMPLE OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data Source	Research Question	Original Data	Subcategory Code	Category Code
Interview, and Learning logs	What language learning activities shape students' autonomous learning behavior based on the dimensions of the autonomous learning model?	I volunteer join the English course offered in <i>Pesantren</i>	Dimension of ALM-Orientation Individual Growth	School opportunities Creativity Personal development program
	What socio-cultural constraints do students face in autonomously learning English communicative skills in <i>pesantren</i> ?	We are not allowed to use any technology in <i>pesantren</i>	Socio cultural constraint-Policy Constraint Institutional Constraint	Rule Regulation
Observation	How do students develop autonomous learning behavior related to their oral communicative skills?	The students interacted each other and scoffed in a pleasant manner by using English language	Autonomous Learning behavior domain	Social domain of autonomous learning model-Interaction Collaboration communication
	What is the influence of students' self-efficacy on the negotiation of sociocultural constraints in developing speaking skills in <i>pesantren</i> ?	Some of the students tried to present many times in delivering their idea to get the best result of video taking after experiencing failure	Efficacy activated processed-Cognitive process Motivational process	Goal Capacity Plan Action

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Five main categories of sociocultural constraints emerged from the data: educational, time management, personal and psychological, policy, and environmental. These factors collectively influenced the learners' ability to develop English-speaking autonomy in the *pesantren* context, as discussed below. Self-efficacy played a vital role in how learners negotiated these constraints across all categories. However, it worked in conjunction with other internal factors such as perseverance, motivation, and endurance. The interplay of these elements reflects how students adapt to structural and cultural limitations while pursuing English-learning goals.

(a). Educational Constraints

Educational constraints were the most prominent challenges identified by the participants. These included limited opportunities for English learning, restricted participation in extracurricular programmes, and a lack of institutional support for English learning. These barriers hinder students' access to English-learning materials and programmes. Several participants mentioned the absence of a structured English learning system within the *pesantren* and the lack of access to resources such as books and English language programmes:

We need a lot of support from *pesantren*; they should be incorporated into the system. It can then support those who want to learn English as a second language. Even though it is a kind of force, I believe that they will gradually gain something from it. It should be incorporated into the learning system, for example, through daily conversations. We can create a special region for learning English as a second language. (S1, Edc1)

There is no library; every santri must possess their own dictionary. Now, in my *pesantren*, some students have it. (S6, Edc 2)

There is no access to the English language, such as books and programs designed for learning English, but they also do not forbid us from learning English. We can join any program as long as it is not far from the *pesantren*. (S5, Edc 3)

We had many restrictions; we could not join many things; we were forbidden from joining anything. I cannot join an English course. (S4, Edc4)

These excerpts illustrate how structural limitations within the *pesantren* learning system restrict students' exposure to English language learning. Although some students attempted to create informal learning spaces, institutional support remained minimal.

(b). Time Management Constraints

Time management emerged as a significant issue that affects student autonomy. Learners must balance their religious duties, academic obligations, and personal study time to succeed academically. The demanding schedule in *pesantren* limited their opportunities for consistent English practice, which, in turn, affected their confidence and motivation to learn English. As one participant explained:

In addition to learning English, we must study religious texts. We must manage our time effectively. I also kept a store and studied at the university. The period from morning to noon is referred to as Diniyah. After that, I kept the store, and I had to memorize the Quran in the *pesantren*. (S7, Tmc1)

We had a problem with time; we had so many activities in the *pesantren*. We feel very tired. (S8, Tmc2)

Interestingly, despite these challenges, some students acknowledged that the *pesantren*'s structured routine helped them improve their discipline and focus on their studies. However, balancing spiritual and academic responsibilities remains a central tension in their learning experience.

(c). Personal and Psychological Constraints

Students also faced strong emotional and psychological pressures that shaped their learning experiences. Feelings of stress and fatigue and an imbalance between religious and worldly knowledge often lead to decreased motivation. Several students described internal conflicts between their spiritual devotion and academic ambitions.

There are discrepancies between the knowledge of the world and the hereafter. It was a culture shock for me after moving to the village; we had different points of living, one of which is important for our lives. What kind of knowledge is important? Both types of knowledge are important. It was unbalanced. The problem we face with hardness is that every student feels that knowledge for the future is more important than anything else. I tried to shift the paradigm; we also need to know the international, like what is. We should not limit our knowledge; we also need to know other cultures and the English language as a language that can connect to the global world. I did not receive sufficient support from my supervisor. They told us that prayer or reading the Quran was the most important thing for them. In my opinion, as long as it is good, why do we have to make a difference between what we learn in the world or for the hereafter? Time management was problematic. They told us that we had broken the time for praying. I have stayed in the *pesantren* for a long time. What is interesting about *pesantren* is that the students are good at ngaji, shalawat, and memorization. They will not see our English skills, he said. (S4, Ps1)

At one time, I was very down; I had to memorize many nadhom, and I had to go to the next level in the *pesantren*.

I almost gave up; I needed to focus on the *kitab kuning*. I got nothing; both of the things were bad. (S3, PS2)

These statements highlight that psychological constraints are not only emotional but also ideological. Learners struggled to reconcile their personal aspirations for global communication with *pesantren*'s emphasis on spiritual learning. Self-efficacy is a key factor in sustaining persistence in the face of such pressure.

(d). Policy Constraints

Institutional policies also influence learner autonomy. Although kyai (leaders) generally supported English learning, bureaucratic layers and committees often created barriers to policy implementation. Miscommunication and conflicting priorities among *pesantren* authorities limit students' external learning opportunities.

However, the policy does not support us in this regard. My kyai actually supports us. However, its implementation is still pending. They considered many factors for implementing English into the system.

However, this problem is extremely complicated. There are many considerations and concerns regarding this issue. Every part or region is stuck in its original place; it is not easy to build a new environment in which we can learn English freely and use it in our daily conversations. Providing a place to learn English is not a problem for schools. However, the overload part is always at the beginning, with up to 40 people in the group. Day by day, only four students continue learning will last only 4 students. However, we still enjoy it because they truly want it to be so. However, I have faced this rule many times when I want to go outside. We did not receive any permission to conduct the class. There was a lot of miscommunication among the committee members. (S1, Pc1) We also need support from the committee and the leader with the policy because there are some problems. (S7, Pc2)

These remarks reflect the complexity of policy dynamics within *pesantren* institutions, where leadership endorsement does not always translate into practical support for programmes.

(e). *Environmental Constraints*

Environmental factors represent both physical and social barriers to English practice. Participants mentioned the lack of an English-speaking environment, unsupportive peers, and restrictions on technology use as challenges. While students expressed a strong desire for immersion, they were discouraged by the mockery or indifference of their peers to their efforts. As participants shared:

An English-speaking environment is required. If we are forced and encouraged to speak English in *pesantren*, I believe that our speaking skills will improve significantly. We can do this if there is pressure. Training is also important, especially because we need to train ourselves mentally to speak properly. If we made a mistake when talking to a foreigner and it was all right, there would be no problem if we talked to other people. There is nothing to worry about in this regard. (S1, Ec1)

I have to be brave because my environment uses Madurese and Javanese language; sometimes when I speak English, they laugh when I speak in English. The environment does not support me either. (S7, Ec2)

I want to speak more and more English right now, like before, facing the same environment. But it doesn't. It was not the same as before. (S6, Ec3)

The environment does not support me either. There are only a few students who like English, and this negatively affects me. No books or partners are available. (S5, Ec4)

Environmental factors means that the more we speak English, the faster we can. (S10, Ec5)

Thus, environmental constraints extended beyond material limitations to include sociocultural attitudes that discouraged English communication in the workplace. Despite these barriers, students who exhibited higher self-efficacy were more likely to persist by initiating small peer speaking groups and self-directed practice sessions.

TABLE 2
THE SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS ON SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS THE STUDENTS FACED IN LEARNING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL AUTONOMOUSLY IN *PESANTREN*

Main RQ	Theme	Categories	Data	Participants
What sociocultural constraint do the students face in learning English speaking skills autonomously in <i>pesantren</i> ?	Educational constraint	Learning system constraints	The students need a lot of support in term of learning system	S1
		Gender limitation	Restriction in joining some activities	S4, S5
		Limited resources	Limited resources, there is no access toward English language	S6
	Time management constraint	Learning focus	They need be able to manage time for learning focus in <i>pesantren</i>	S7, S8
	Personal/psychological constraint	Stress, pressure, learning balance	The different paradigm of learning focus being faced, the student almost gave up in learning English due to the duty of the task in <i>pesantren</i>	S3, S4
	Policy constraint		There is a gap in decision-making between the leader and the committee.	S1, S7
	Environmental constraint	Need analysis	The need of English environment	S1, S5, S6, S10
		Language barrier	The language used in <i>pesantren</i>	S7
			There is no partner when speaking English	S5

The findings reveal that sociocultural constraints in *pesantren* are multifaceted, shaped by educational structures, institutional norms, and personal beliefs. Despite these challenges, the learners demonstrated resilience and adaptability through self-efficacy, which enabled them to reinterpret their limitations as growth opportunities. The next section discusses how these findings relate to the existing theories of self-efficacy and sociocultural learning in EFL contexts.

B. *Discussion*

(a). *Exploring Speaking Self-Efficacy on the Sociocultural Constraints Negotiation in Pesantren Context*

Self-efficacy has long been recognised as one of the most influential predictors of learner performance and achievement in second or foreign language learning (Raoofi et al., 2012). In the *pesantren* context, speaking self-efficacy plays a

crucial role in how students negotiate sociocultural constraints while developing autonomous learning behaviours. The findings of this study reveal that five interrelated factors shape this process: (1) mentorship and support systems, (2) autonomous learning initiatives, (3) technology use and sociocultural adaptation, (4) emotional regulation and self-belief, and (5) the influence of the cultural learning environment. Together, these factors illustrate the dynamic interaction between sources of self-efficacy and the negotiation of sociocultural barriers.

1. Empowering Mentorship and Support System

Navigating sociocultural constraints on English learning within *pesantren* is challenging. While many students struggle, some manage to succeed, largely because of strong mentorship and supportive social systems. Mentorship from *kyai* and *ustadz* (teachers) provides not only guidance but also a model of perseverance and discipline that students can emulate in their lives. Once learners find a suitable mentor, they internalise this figure as a role model and begin to set personal learning goals.

This process aligns with the notion of vicarious experience, one of Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy. By observing the success of others, especially those with whom they identify, learners build confidence in their ability to achieve similar outcomes (Flammer, 2015). The participants in this study described how seeing their mentors communicate confidently in English inspired them to take risks and express their ideas more freely. Initially, they spoke imperfectly but gradually gained fluency and enjoyment through repeated practice.

Verbal persuasion also strengthens this process. Encouragement from mentors and peers' functions as a motivational trigger that sustains learners' persistence in the face of challenges (Won et al., 2017). Students began to perceive their mentors' prayers, advice, and reassurance as tangible support that reinforced their self-confidence. Ultimately, the combination of mentorship, modelling, and verbal persuasion led to higher self-efficacy, enabling students to persist in developing their speaking autonomy despite *pesantren*'s limitations.

2. Emerging Autonomous Learning Initiative

Learners' self-efficacy beliefs strongly influenced how they set goals, planned their learning strategies, and sustained their motivation (Flammer, 2015; Mary & Jebaseelan, 2014). In this study, the students demonstrated a growing awareness of the need to take ownership of their English-learning process. After recognising the institutional and environmental barriers in *pesantren*, they initiated autonomous learning practises, such as forming English circles and small peer groups where they practised speaking regularly.

These communities became emotional and cognitive anchors that nurtured the resilience of their members. Learners with higher self-efficacy remained more focused and persistent, interpreting obstacles as opportunities for growth rather than signs of failure. This corresponds to Bandura's (1997) concept of social persuasion, wherein mutual encouragement and shared commitment among peers enhance their motivation and perseverance. Participants in English circles reported that collective practice not only improved their speaking confidence but also helped them sustain consistent learning routines, illustrating how social support interacts with individual self-efficacy to build learner autonomy.

3. Utilising Technology and Sociocultural Adaptation

The role of technology in education is paradoxical; it can both empower and restrict learners (Chun et al., 2016; Luckin & Holmes, 2016; Warschauer & Meskill, 2013). In *salaf pesantren*, where digital devices are generally prohibited, students had limited access to online resources. Surprisingly, this restriction fostered a high degree of focus and creativity among students. Learners maximised the use of minimal tools, such as shared dictionaries, and developed affective strategies to compensate for the lack of digital access (Mostafavi & Vahdany, 2016).

These findings resonate with Oxford's (2015) sociocultural view of learner autonomy, which identifies self-efficacious learners as those capable of adapting to diverse social and material contexts in their learning. Students demonstrated sociocultural adaptation, a process of accepting limitations and transforming them into learning opportunities. This adaptive learning mirrors the principles of the Instructional Design for Online Learning (IDOL) model, which emphasises the context-sensitive integration of digital and non-digital materials to support learner autonomy and reflective engagement (Arafah et al., 2025). Although *pesantren* students operate in low-technology environments, their capacity to repurpose limited tools reflects the same learner-centred, adaptive mindset promoted by these models.

For instance, students who served as *abdi dalem* (assistants to the *kyai*) occasionally used mobile phones for administrative duties and leveraged this access to explore English learning applications, such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and language apps. In doing so, they exemplified self-regulated learning within restrictive environments, showing that sociocultural constraints can inspire autonomy rather than hinder it. Through limited yet purposeful digital engagement, *pesantren* learners demonstrated that even under constraints, self-efficacy enables the meaningful and ethical use of technology to sustain language learning during the pandemic.

4. Managing Emotional Support and Belief in Self

Another critical theme emerging from the findings was the learners' ability to manage their emotions and maintain a belief in their own capabilities. Emotional regulation is central to sustaining motivation and persistence. This aligns with Dewaele et al. (2019), who emphasised the role of emotional intelligence in second-language success. Learners with strong self-reliance are internally motivated rather than dependent on external validation.

This process mirrors the autonomous learner model proposed by Betts et al. (2021), which integrates the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical domains. In this framework, emotional resilience enables learners to confront challenges, reflect on their experiences, and sustain their learning trajectories. Students who could balance emotions, cognition, and social engagement demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy and continued learning, even when institutional or social support was limited. Thus, emotional management is not only a psychological process but also a sociocultural skill essential for success in constrained learning environments.

5. Taking Advantage of the Impact of Cultural Environment on Learning

Personal efficacy does not operate in isolation; it is shaped by and, in turn, shapes the environment. Learners' belief in their ability to influence their surroundings is a defining feature of strong self-efficacy (Flammer, 2015). In the *pesantren* context, students who initially lacked environmental support gradually transformed their surroundings into a learning space. Their determination to create an English-speaking environment demonstrated agentic behaviour, wherein efficacy beliefs drove environmental change.

Cultural expectations within *pesantren* traditionally prioritise religious education over secular subjects. However, some students sought to challenge this paradigm by advocating for an integrated perspective that valued both. Their actions reflect emerging intercultural awareness and a desire to position *pesantren* learners as globally competent individuals. This process mirrors the broader patterns of cultural negotiation found in the Indonesian context, where traditional and modern values intersect to create hybrid forms of learning and identity. For example, the Mowindahako ritual speeches of the Tolaki Mekongga ethnic group highlight how communication practises encode collective values such as respect, harmony, and perseverance – principles that also underpin *pesantren* learners' motivation and discipline (Takwa et al., 2025).

This shift illustrates how high self-efficacy can catalyse a broader cultural transformation that redefines *pesantren* education as compatible with global communication and English proficiency. The interplay between cultural rootedness and global aspirations demonstrates that efficacy development in *pesantren* is not only cognitive but also deeply sociocultural, grounded in the local traditions of moral discipline, cooperation, and resilience.

(b). Conceptual Model

The conceptual model developed in this study was adapted from Doran and Pomfret (2019) (Figure 1) and it integrates three interconnected segments: (1) types of sociocultural constraints, (2) the influence of self-efficacy on learners' perceptions of constraint negotiability, and (3) the negotiation strategies employed to overcome these barriers to participation.

The first segment identified five overlapping sociocultural constraints: educational, time management, environmental, personal, psychological, and policy-related. These constraints vary in nature but are often interdependent. For example, institutional rules (policy constraints) may reinforce educational and environmental obstacles.

The second segment illustrates that the perception of constraint negotiability depends on learners' self-efficacy levels. Those with high self-efficacy reinforced by the four efficacy sources (verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, emotional regulation, and sociocultural adaptation) develop stronger negotiation skills. Learners who initially entered with low self-efficacy tended to rely heavily on these sources to build their confidence in their abilities. Over time, experiences of success, mentorship, and collective learning enhanced their self-efficacy and their negotiation skills.

Finally, the third segment outlines the negotiation strategies found to be effective in this context: prayer, social and institutional support, encouragement, English circles, peer communities, selective use of technology, self-reliance, and persistence. Successful negotiations lead to decreased perceptions of restriction and increased confidence, whereas failed negotiations weaken self-efficacy and, in some cases, cause learners to disengage from the learning process.

The conceptual model underscores that self-efficacy functions as both a mediating and transformative mechanism in negotiating sociocultural constraints to physical activity. As learners' efficacy beliefs grow, they reinterpret limitations as manageable challenges, thereby sustaining their motivation and engagement in their autonomous learning journeys.

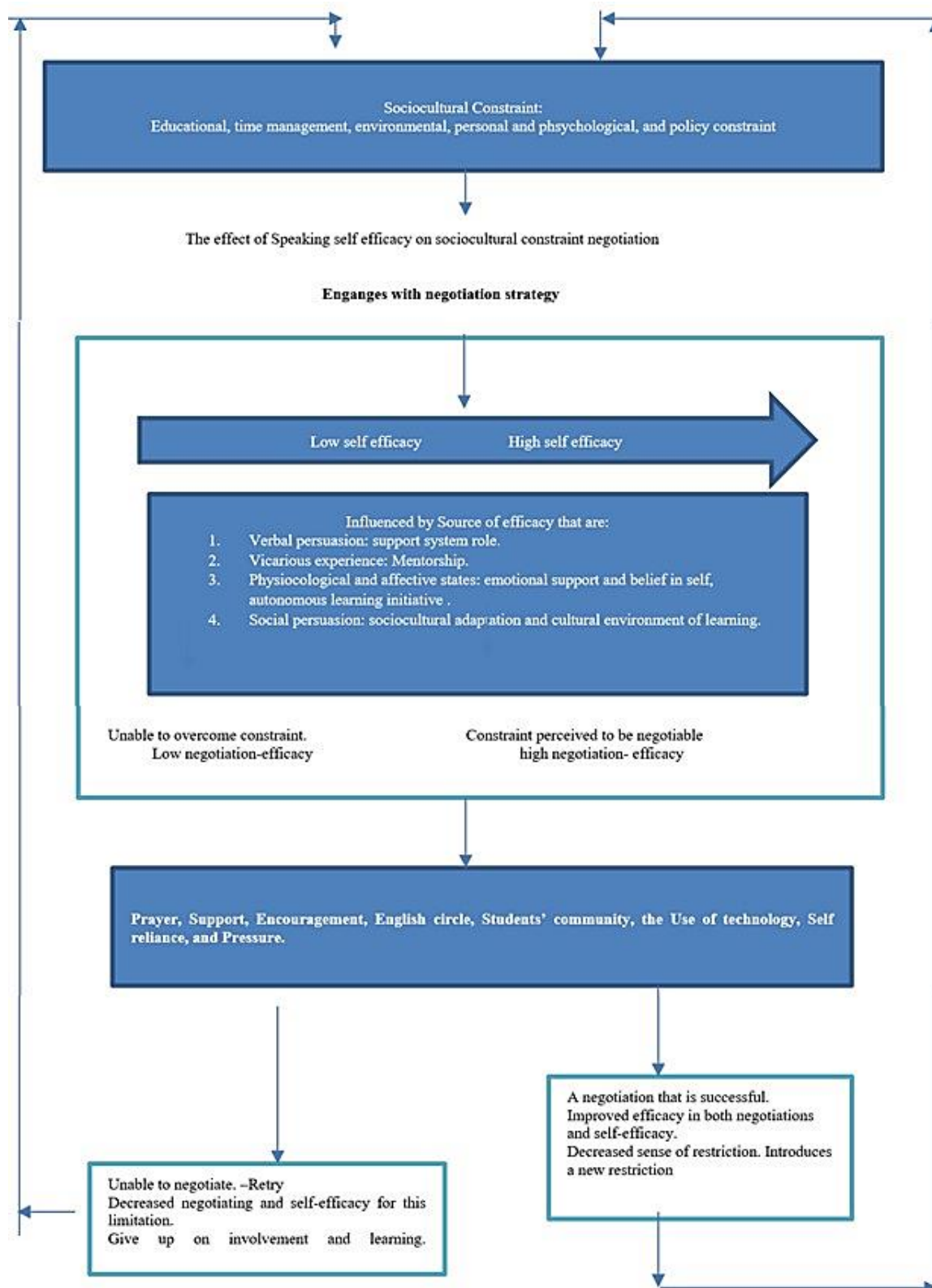


Figure 1. Conceptual Model: The Effect of Speaking Self-Efficacy on the Sociocultural Constraint Negotiation Process for EFL Learner in *Pesantren* Context

V. CONCLUSION

This study deepens understanding of how self-efficacy and related factors shaped the negotiation of sociocultural constraints among college students learning English in the *pesantren* context in Indonesia. While previous research (e.g., Doran & Pomfret, 2019) focused on identifying constraints before participation in learning activities, this study examines

how learners negotiated and adapted to these constraints throughout the learning process. Unlike earlier studies that concentrated on female learners (Doran & Pomfret, 2019; Fendt & Wilson, 2012; Wilson & Little, 2005), this study integrates a mixed-gender perspective, showing how male and female *pesantren* students develop resilience and autonomy.

The findings revealed five major categories of sociocultural constraints—educational, time management, environmental, personal, psychological, and policy-related—and their interaction with learners' self-efficacy beliefs during English-speaking development. Several negotiation factors emerged as crucial: mentorship and support systems, autonomous learning initiatives, technological and sociocultural adaptation, emotional regulation and self-belief, and cultural learning environments' influence on learning. These elements collectively determine whether learners perceive constraints as barriers or as manageable challenges. Through an ethnographic approach, this study captured students' lived experiences and how they transformed external limitations into opportunities for self-directed learning during the pandemic. The roles of *kyai*, peer networks, and cultural adaptation were essential in shaping individual and collective efficacy, highlighting the importance of context-sensitive strategies for learner autonomy. Despite addressing a research gap, this study acknowledges its context-specific findings.

Future research should explore various *pesantren* settings and conduct gender-focused analyses to uncover differences in learning agency and constraint negotiation. Further investigation into how persistence, motivation, and personality traits interact with self-efficacy may offer insights into sustaining autonomous language learning under socio-cultural limitations. This study emphasises that self-efficacy is not merely a psychological trait but a sociocultural capacity enabling learners to reinterpret challenges, mobilise support, and construct pathways toward language mastery within restrictive educational systems.

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D. H. Lawrence and W. S. Merwin as Ecopoets: A Comparative/Contrastive Study

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Abstract—This paper studies D. H. Lawrence and W. S. Merwin as ecopoets through examining selected poems from their poetry collections. It argues that despite the distance of time and space as well as individual viewpoints and general outlooks, Lawrence and Merwin share certain basic viewpoints on nature, the environment, and ecology. Employing ecocriticism and comparative/contrastive approaches, the paper aims at identifying some thematic similarities and differences between some of these two writers' representative ecopoems. The paper posits that the commonalities between Lawrence's and Merwin's ecopoems suggest the existence of an ecopoetic continuum running across their ecopoetry, beginning with the Romantic tradition of nature poetry, passing through Lawrence's modernist ecopoems and culminating in Merwin's postmodernist ecopoetry.

Index Terms—ecopoetry, ecology, Lawrence, Merwin, nature

I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This paper compares and contrasts some of the ecopoems of D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) and W. S. Merwin (1927-2019). Lawrence's ecopoetry marks his departure from the nineteenth-century Romantic nature poetry to the modernist period which spanned the first half of the twentieth century. Merwin's ecopoetry represents a movement from the modernist to the postmodernist period that characterized the second half of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first century. In contrast to American and British poets of the Romantic period, who tended toward writing nature poetry, Lawrence took up the environment as one of the main realms of his poetry. Similarly, following the Vietnam War and the rise of severe ecological issues, Merwin's poetry witnessed a large departure from traditional/classic poetry to postmodernist ecopoetry.

Ecopoetry is closely connected with nature poetry. Bryson (2005) offers a tentative definition of ecopoetry which intersects with nature poetry, but transcends it to a new "mode that, while adhering to certain conventions of traditional nature poetry, advances beyond that tradition and takes on distinctly contemporary problems and issues" (p. 2). Fisher-Wirth and Street (2013) argue that nature poetry existed long before the emergence of environmental poetry which began to burgeon with the rise of the environmental crisis in the 1960s as a new genre to reflect this concern. They add that in recent years, "the term 'ecopoetry' has come into use to designate poetry that in some way is shaped by and responds specifically to that crisis" (p. xxviii). Hence, ecopoetry refers to nature poetry that focuses on humans' interrelationship with the natural world in a way that implies integration, empathy for the natural world, ethical responsibility, and ecological engagement.

As a critical approach, ecocriticism investigates how literary works reflect and interact with environmental issues. Several theorists have put forward distinct views of ecocriticism. Rueckert (1978) proposes that ecocriticism should experiment with the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) succinctly define ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (p. xviii). They outline three main phases of ecocriticism which they metaphorically label "waves". The first wave studies "how nature is represented in literature"; the second wave is concerned with consciousness-raising by ushering in a broader perception of ecocriticism, including the exploration of urban spaces and heavily populated areas, environmental justice, and other related variables (p. xxiii). The third wave concentrates on the theoretical dimension by broadening ethnic and national borders beyond their geopolitical boundaries and by enabling ecocritics to place their studies in an international and comparative framework (p. xxiv).

In contrast, Buell (2005) conceives two main waves of ecocriticism. The first wave focused on "such genres as nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction", while the second one marks an "engagement with a broader range of landscapes and genres and a greater internal debate over environmental commitment that has taken the movement in a more sociocentric direction" (p. 138). Heise (2008) utilizes the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism to focus on the globalization of local ecological and cultural systems instead of thinking about environmental issues from local

perspectives. Similarly, Murphy (2009) calls for expanding the theoretical grounds that shaped ecocriticism in the early periods by moving beyond the nation-state and instead concentrating on studying literature in a comparative framework. Clark (2011) conceives ecocriticism as a study not only of nature writing but also ecofeminism, habitat loss, urbanization, environmental justice, climate change, and global environmental activism, etc. In this regard, it is crucial to mention that a number of studies have been conducted to evaluate nations' awareness of environmental issues such as the heating subject of climate change. To give an example, Abuhasirah and Salameh (2024b) launched a study on the role of the Jordanian media in enhancing the public awareness of climate change; the authors argue that the Jordanian media adopted persuasive methods to draw the Jordanian people's attention towards the environmental as well as societal impact of climate change on the country (p. 233). In another study that examines the role of the Jordanian media in addressing environmental issues, Abuhasirah and Salameh (2024a) indicate that climate change, water sources, and food security were the key topics to be approached in three main Jordanian digital newspapers (p. 4).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary source on Lawrence is *The Complete Poems* of D. H. Lawrence (1964; henceforward *Complete Poems*). Special reference is made to Lawrence's volume *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923) which represents his movement from the human world to the plant and animal worlds. Related empirical literature on Lawrence's ecopoetry is represented by some selected examples below.

Janik (1983) maintains that Lawrence was one of later modernist writers who proposed a posthumanist philosophy which adopted a new environmental consciousness that looked at the human species as "part of a larger living whole" (p. 359). Emphasizing the autobiographical nature of Lawrence's views, Ellis (2001) points out that several poems in Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* rely on details from his daily life. Rohman (2009) considers Lawrence as one of the forerunners of the subgenre of animal-poetry. Mlakic (2019) investigates Lawrence's treatment of nature and the environment, showing how in his engagement with these issues, he represents a forerunner to modern environmental awareness. Hastings-Gayle (2019) discusses Lawrence's poem "Fish", focusing on how it represents man-animal relationship. Becket (2022) asserts that "eco-consciousness in Lawrence describes his philosophy of the interconnectedness of human and more-than-human beings" (p. 120).

Primary sources on Merwin include his two-volume book *Collected Poems 1952-1993 and 1996-2011* (2013), in addition to some interviews. The two volumes contain almost all of Merwin's collections, covering a variety of subjects and presenting him as an advocate for the environment, a proponent of deep ecology, and a poet warning against the dire consequences of man's alienation from nature. Following are some selected empirical representative studies.

Rueckert (1978) highlights the importance of Merwin's poetry collection *The Lice* (1967; henceforward *Lice*) in formulating an ecological poetics and in promoting a much-needed ecological vision. Hix (1997) suggests that an underlying vision of human interconnectedness and affinity with nature permeates Merwin's verse. Bryson (2005) devotes a separate chapter (pp. 99-118) of his book to Merwin, examining, among other things, the split between human and nonhuman nature in Merwin's poetry. Powell (2009) argues that Merwin's writings, "beginning with *Rain in the Trees*, are characterized by a deepening concern for conservation and environmentalism" (pp. 1-2). Festa (2022) examines Merwin's later work, highlighting his commitment to environmental preservation. Langdell's (2022) edited book focuses on Merwin's poetry across the poet's entire oeuvre extending from 1952-1916. In her essay, Langdell (2022) sheds new light on Merwin's ecopoetry.

The closest related work to this study is an anthology of the works of several selected poets whose poems concentrate on whales and dolphins, edited by McIntyre (1975). The volume includes Lawrence's "Whales Weep Not" and Merwin's "For a Coming Extinction" as two poems concentrating on whales. Additionally, the editor queries the anthropocentric assumption that humans possess the highest intelligence on earth.

Despite the recognition of Lawrence and Merwin as pioneering ecopoets, there has not been any attempt to explore the interplay between their ecopoems. This paper attempts to highlight some points of resemblance and difference between these two poets, with a view to suggesting that their ecopoems form part of a continuous nature poetry tradition extending from Romanticism, through modernism, and culminating in postmodernism.

III. DISCUSSION

Pairing in a single essay Lawrence and Merwin as ecopoets whose poems are presumed to share some similar features may at first seem strange, as they come from different temporal, spatial, and philosophical backgrounds. Lawrence is a modernist while Merwin is a postmodernist. Lawrence's writing style is predominantly lyrical, sensuous, subjective, and autobiographical. Merwin's style is a blend of formal and free style, incorporating traditional and unpunctuated verse. In spite of these and other unmentioned differences, both poets seem to share various characteristics as illustrated below.

A. Transition From Nature Poetry to Ecopoetry

There is a general consensus that the classical pastoral tradition, which evolved through the Renaissance and reached its highest point in the 18th century, promoted the notion of nature's essential harmony that is still prevalent in

environmental discourse today. According to Garrard (2004), “Since the Romantic movement’s poetic responses to the Industrial Revolution, pastoral has decisively shaped our constructions of nature” (p. 33). A new type of nature poetry began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century heralded by Lawrence and other poets. Lawrence started writing poetry as a nature poet, with indications of the possible influence of Wordsworth, Thoreau, and Whitman (Vitoux, 2004). One of his representative early poems, “Green” begins with these words: “The dawn was apple-green/The sky was green wine held up in the sun./The moon was a golden petal between” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 216). Nature is here portrayed in an idealized manner where the sun, moon, and sky share a common unity whose fusion helps create a felicitous mood.

As of the 1920s, particularly in his collection *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, generally considered Lawrence’s finest poetry collection, Lawrence shifted his focus from romantic nature poetry to ecopoetry. For instance, “Bare Almond-Trees” depicts nature in ways that contrast sharply with its portrayal in Lawrence’s early nature poems. In the opening lines of the poem, the tree is compared to dark iron: “Wet almond-trees, in the rain./Like iron sticking grimly out of earth” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 300). The tree-iron simile suggests the pernicious impact of industrialization on green nature, highlighting the speaker’s dark and depressed mood. The poem as a whole reveals Lawrence developing new environmental ethics and a novel approach to nature.

Over his long career as a poet, Merwin developed both thematically and technically. His first poetry collection, *A Mask for Janus* (1952), reflects the period’s traditional attitude to nature and the poet’s formal style. Back in the 1950s, not many people were concerned about the interrelationship between man and nature. Rather, nature was seen as a place to be feared and conquered. A good example of Merwin’s early nature poetry is his poem “Leviathan” from *Green with Beasts* (1956). The Leviathan is described as a symbol of the infinite power of nature that cannot be overpowered by human beings: “He that curling serpent that in ocean is,/Sea-fright he is, and the shadow under the earth” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 99). In these lines, the power of nature, symbolized by the Leviathan, is firmly established.

Merwin’s collection *The Lice* (1967) marks a turning-point in his stature as ecopoet, marking a transition from traditional nature poetry to a new ecopoetry. Instead of the conventional attitude to nature, Merwin, with a fresh environmental awareness, starts to concentrate his poems on the dangers posed by humans to the natural environment. In “For a Coming Extinction”, Merwin writes, mourning the demise of whales: “Gray whale/Now that we are sending you to The End” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 304). The whale that was first demonized and feared has become a vulnerable creature to be pitied and revered. Instead of depicting the whale as a powerful animal of doom and destruction, Merwin views it and other animals as weak creatures threatened by rapacious humans.

The subsequent poetry volumes of the middle and later periods of Merwin’s career such as *The Rain in the Trees* (1988; henceforth *Rain in the Trees*) and *The Vixen* (1996; henceforward *Vixen*) celebrate nature and the wilderness from a primarily ecological perspective. In these works, Merwin is not merely an observer and admirer of nature but essentially a poet who strongly condemns the destruction of nature and the natural habitat of various animal and plant species, some of which are already or about to become extinct. In “To the Insects” from *Rain in the Trees*, nature is exalted for its age/antiquity and longevity while humans are denigrated for their pretense of a sense of superiority: “Elders we have been here so short a time/and we pretend that we have invented memory” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 651). Merwin presents nature from a postmodernist view, eschewing its romantic idealization and basing its proposed supremacy on facts and evidence.

B. Opposition to Industrialization

As an ecopoet, Lawrence was against reckless industrialization. His poem “In the Cities” from *Last Poems* (1932), offers a good example of his diagnosis of the environmental problems caused by irresponsible industrialization: “In the cities/there is no more any weather,/the weather in town is always benzine, or else petrol fumes,/lubricating oil, exhaust gas...” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 703). Lawrence believed that man’s focus on self-knowledge alienates him from connection with God. In “If You are a Man” from *More Pansies* (1932), Lawrence offers what looks like his own solution to these issues: “[We] will cease to care/about property and money and mechanical devices,/and open our consciousness to the deep, mysterious life/that we are now cut off from” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 666). The persona advocates a rejection of materialism and industrialism in favor of a direct communication with the primal and mysterious forces of nature.

Nearly half a century later, Merwin voiced similar concerns, addressing the consequences of industrial and technological expansion. Early in his career, Merwin wrote in an article titled “Ecology, or the Art of Survival”: “I go on the assumption ... that there is some link between a society’s threat to destroy itself with its own inventions, and that same society’s possibly ungovernable commitment to industrial expansion and population increase ... which threaten more and more wild life of the globe” (as cited in Powell, 2009, p. 1). Merwin’s new concern reverberates in many of his other ecopoems.

In “Chords” from *Rain in the Trees*, Merwin expresses his criticism of the irresponsible cutting off of trees, which he links to the direct influence of capitalism that has led to the destruction of the environment and the widespread abuse of the natural world: “While Keats wrote they were cutting down the sandalwood forests/while he listened to the nightingale they heard their own axes echoing through/the forests” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 664). Readers can recognize Merwin’s lamentation for what humans of the industrial age have done to the natural world, cutting down forests, and consequently disrupting the natural environmental balance and endangering the life of many species.

“End of a Day” from *Vixen* (1996) depicts the speaker reflecting on the transformation of a rural landscape and the loss of traditional ways of life due to the encroachment of industry: “Bayle has plans to demolish/so that trucks can go all the way down to where the lambs/with perhaps two weeks to live are waiting for him at the wire (*Collected Poems 1996-2011*, 2013, p. 17). On witnessing the environmental degradation and the disappearance of natural beauty, the speaker is greatly dismayed: “and we exchange a few questions/as though nothing were different but he has bulldozed the upland/pastures and the shepherds’ huts into piles of rubble (*Collected Poems 1996-2011*, 2013, p. 17).

In “It Is March” from *Lice* (1967), the speaker discloses his deep concern about the possibility of writing in a world that seems to be heading toward an inevitable disaster because of the uncontrolled process of industrialization: “But when you look forward/With your dirty knuckles and the wingless/Bird on your shoulder/What can you write (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 277). Frustrated with the malicious effects of industrialization, the speaker-poet finds himself in no position to express in writing the environmental chaos he is faced with. Nonetheless, he seems adamant to pursue the struggle: “Whatever I have to do has not yet begun” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 277), hinting that more challenges are yet to come.

C. Seeking a Restoration of a Lost Primeval World

Lawrence’s critique of modern industrial/technological civilization appears to have sparked his preference for a return to an instinctive living. Lawrence considered this primeval regression necessary for reinstating man’s relationship with his surroundings, particularly animals, the closest creatures to *Homo sapiens*. In several of his poems, Lawrence highlights the importance of primitivism in modern life so as to counterbalance the effects of reason that he believes characterize modern life. For instance, in “Humming-Bird” from *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, the speaker-poet travels back in time to the origin when the humming-bird was predominant. In this imagined world, the humming-birds are said to have been much different from what they are now. The birds are depicted as existing at an earlier time and at a higher level than the other forms of life: “I can imagine, in some otherworld/Primeval-dumb, far back/.... Humming-birds raced down the avenues” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 372). In the last part of the poem, Lawrence stresses the grandeur of the ancient humming-bird: “Probably he was a jabbing, terrifying monster./We look at him through the wrong end of the long telescope of Time,/Luckily for us” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 372). In this satirical gesture, the speaker states that it would have been horrifying for the modern man to know the truth about this primordial creature; but “luckily”, he does not.

“The Greeks are Coming” from *Last Poems*, provides another good example of Lawrence’s attempt to recapture the instinctive attitude of ancient man towards nature. The poem depicts the coming of some men embodying old Greek worldview of the relation between humans and nature: “It is Aegean ships, and men with archaic pointed-beards/coming out of the Eastern end” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 687). Lawrence is welcoming the return of ancient Olympian gods, considering them as a revelation of a more direct and vital connection to the universe.

Like Lawrence, Merwin shows keen interest in primeval living. In several of his interviews and poems, he explores the interdependent relationship between humans and the surrounding natural world, deploring the modern man’s loss of the ancient bond between man and the rest of the world. In an interview with Edward Hirsch, Merwin (1987) states that he wanted to learn about Indians because “the Indians represented to me a wider and more cohesive world than the one I saw around me that everyone took for granted”. Merwin’s fascination with native peoples influenced his thought and poetry, seeing them more connected to the natural world and drawing inspiration from their primal connection with the land and nature.

Merwin’s poem “Beginning” from *The Carrier of Ladders* (1970) depicts modern humans drifting away from their origins, putting the universal ecosystem and humans at great risk. A black crane is portrayed delivering a message to humans, warning them of the perils of the growing gap between them and the natural world and urging them to come forward with their civilization, after a long separation from their origins: “come out then/the light is not yet/divided/” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 393). The quote and the poem affirm Merwin’s strong desire for restoring those long-lost human-nature ties.

In an online article, Frazier (1997) aptly calls Merwin an eco-prophet, who, like Thoreau, strives for contact with a “lost, original world, [in which] humans exist in community with their surroundings”. This attempt is evidently pictured in “The Horizon of Rooms” from *Rain in the Trees*, which shows Merwin ruminating on ancient history and primeval life: “for a time beyond measure there were no rooms/and now many have forgotten the sky/the first room was made of stone and ice/and a fallen tree” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 669). Modern rooms have blocked out any sense of nature, although they have been in existence for only a small duration of time. In “The Clear Skies” from *Writing to an Unfinished Accompaniment* (1973), Merwin describes nature as making active overtures to humans to renew their old relationships: “because we have lost whoever/they are calling/we say that they are not calling/us (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 407). Swayed by their feelings of superiority, humans have regrettably convinced themselves that they no longer need to listen to the voices coming from such an early past calling for a restoration of their original connections to man.

D. Advocating for Species Equality

To counter the traditional concept of human species superiority, ecological philosophy has posited the concept of species equality, maintaining that all species deserve equal consideration. In their poetry, both Lawrence and Merwin

adopt this concept, advocating for a re-evaluation of the traditional human-animal hierarchy and calling for a more holistic and egalitarian view of the natural world. In "Fish" from *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, Lawrence depicts a sensitive and subtle polarity between humans and animals, going to the extreme of viewing animals as being superior to humans. The speaker describes the fish, showing due respect and condemning himself for causing its death. Urging humans to give up their claimed superiority, he states: "And my heart accused itself/Thinking: I am not the measure of creation./This is beyond me, this fish (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 339). His new position leads him to wonder whether humans and fish belong to different gods: "His God stands outside my God" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 339). Hence, each entity's relationship with God is unique.

Likewise, in the poem "Snake", Lawrence reiterates a similar human-animal relationship, presenting the speaker torn between hostility and reverence for the "kingly" creature and contrasting the majestic posture of the serpent with his shameful behavior: "I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act For he seemed to me again like a king" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 351). This idea is further stressed by the speaker's recognition of the snake as "a god" and as "one of the lords of life", thus emphasizing animal inherent dignity (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 351). Similarly, in his poem "Whales Weep Not!" Lawrence criticizes the cerebral rationality of modern men, compared with the intuitive thinking and the blissful life of the whales: "And they rock, and they rock, through the sensual ageless ages/on the depths of the seven seas,/and through the salt they reel with drunk delight" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 694). The gist of the two poems above is that all beings deserve to be treated with due respect, besides taking their basic interests into consideration.

In a manner that parallels Lawrence's previous condemnation of modern man's self-centered response to the non-human world, Merwin rejects, in several interviews and poems, this arrogant attitude of humans, calling for a different outlook that takes into consideration the unity of all creation. In an interview with Daniel Bourne, Merwin (1982) says: "If we say we are the only kind of life that's of any importance, we automatically destroy our own importance. Our importance is based on a feeling of responsibility and awareness of all life (as cited in Frazier, 2009). In this statement, Merwin is warning humans against the dangers of anthropocentrism and their disconnection from the natural world.

Merwin's belief in the inherent worth of all living beings is greatly reflected in his poetry. In "Shore Birds" from *The River Sound* (1999), Merwin implicitly addresses the issue of species equality, portraying birds as capable as humans of well-organized actions: "then they rose in their choir/on a single note each of them alone". Unfairly degraded by humans and vulnerable to their diverse forms of destructive interference ("glass curtains", "nets", "guns at first light", and "lime twigs") (*Collected Poems 1996-2011*, 2013, p. 385), the birds are liable to eventual demise along their migratory journey, despite their rights to intrinsic equality with humans. In "For a Coming Extinction", Merwin expresses a similar standpoint on the animal/human equality. Addressing the vanishing whale, the speaker bitterly informs him to convey a message to "that great god": "Tell him that we were made/On another day" (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 304). Satirizing humanity's claim to superiority, Merwin draws attention to the arrogant and destructive attitude that humans exhibit toward the "gray whale", rejecting the conventional dominance of man over the pristine nonhuman realm and affirming the need for an equitable coexistence between humans and animals.

E. Exploring Nature/Culture Duality

Generally, nature/culture duality refers to the relationship between nature and humans where the two sides exist in a mutually influencing and interdependent relationship. In his definition of "nature", Clark (2011) states that "'nature' names the non-human world, the non-artificial, considered as an object of human contemplation, exploitation, wonder or terror. In this sense culture and nature are opposed" (p. 7). Thus, "nature" includes everything that lies beyond human construction whereas "culture" refers to those things produced by human beings.

One of the main themes that run through the ecopoems of Lawrence is the rethinking of how nature and culture relate to each other, portraying a world where humans live either in harmony or in conflict with the natural environment. In the aforementioned poem "Snake", Lawrence appears to be using the word "education" as identical with "culture", which he contrasts with "nature". The speaker states that during his personal confrontation with the snake, his "education" (culture) prompted him to kill it because it is dangerous, even though he emotionally and intuitively (nature) feels at ease with his "guest": "The voice of my education said to me He must be killed,/.... And voices in me said, /If you were a man/You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off. (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 350). As the snake is culturally considered dangerous, the speaker feels threatened and urged to "kill" it although his natural instincts lead him to express special affinity with it.

Lawrence's poem "The Mosquito" further explores the fundamental duality of nature and culture, animal and human. In the deadly fight that follows, the mosquito has its nature-endowed tiny size to fly away almost unseen, while the narrator has his human-earned culture to defend himself. Ultimately, the narrator kills the mosquito, but only after it has left a big stain on his hand, indicating a victory of sorts: "Queer, what a big stain my sucked blood makes/Beside the infinitesimal faint smear of you!" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 332). Throughout the poem, Lawrence tries to effect a radical reconsideration of man-animal connection.

Likewise, "Cypresses" highlights man-nature duality. The poem deplores that humanity has lost its primal connection to nature. Through depicting a harmonious relationship between the surviving trees and the ancient Etruscans, Lawrence seeks to restore a similar harmonious co-existence with nature in the modern world: "But I invoke the spirits of the lost .../To bring their meaning back into life again./Which they have taken away/And wrapt inviolable in soft cypress-

trees" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 298). Lawrence's concern with primal duality is a testimony to an environmental consciousness that recognizes the interconnectedness between human actions and the environment. In his essay "Pan in America", Lawrence (2009) describes trees as ecologically linked with human life, influencing and influenced by each other, with both being essential to the life of the whole planet: "And what does life consist in, save a vivid relatedness between the man and the living universe that surrounds him (p. 162). Hence, the symbolic tree reflects Lawrence's animistic vision, where all living entities are animate and have agency.

In many of his poems, Merwin holds human culture responsible for the ongoing environmental degradation by failing to keep a dialectical relationship between humans and nonhumans. The poem "Rain at Nights" provides a good example of Merwin's exploration of nature/human duality. It begins with the speaker's despair over the destruction of the natural world by rapacious humans: "someone dead/thought of this mountain as money/and cut the trees" (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 635). Having expressed his sorrow over the loss of the trees, Merwin depicts the ongoing confrontation between sanctified nature and human greed: "but they cut the sacred 'ohias then/the sacred Koas then/the sandalwood and the halas (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 635). Nature is unjustly demolished by a human culture that condones the felling of trees for "money".

Although Merwin's early poems often depict human culture in sharp conflict with nature, his later poems tend to exhibit a pragmatic rapport between the two sides. In "Snake" from *Vixen*, Merwin depicts a "green snake lying in the sunlight watching me" (*Collected Poems 1996-2011*, 2013, p. 23). The serene natural setting underlines the equal agency of the animal and the human: "I opened the door and on the stone doorsill/where every so often through the years I had come/upon a snake lying out in the sunlight" (*Collected Poems 1996-2011*, 2013, p. 23). Though the snake has always been traditionally associated with evil in ancient and modern cultures, the speaker discloses no signs of either human or animal bad-neighbor behaviour.

Apparently paralleling Lawrence's previously mentioned essay "Pan in America", Merwin's contemplative poem "Trees" from *The Compass Flower* (1977) discloses a dualistic connection with trees: "I am looking at trees/they may be one of the things I will miss/most from the earth". Merwin personifies the trees, treating them as his close friends: "and though I seldom embrace the ones I see/and have never been able to speak with one/I listen to them tenderly" (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 510). These lines and the poem as a whole illustrate the poet's vision of a reciprocal peaceful relationship between humans and nature. Likewise, in "Ancestral Voices" from *Vixen*, Merwin explores the innate connection between nature and culture. In the last section of the poem, the speaker highlights the notion that the birds and their songs predated human existence: "these voices were lifted here long long before the first/of our kind had come to be able to listen" (*Collected Poems 1996-2011*, 2013, p. 40). By highlighting the primal existence of birds before humans, Merwin attempts to restore a long-lost balanced man-nature duality, a notion that recalls Lawrence's previously-mentioned poem "Humming-Bird", where he seeks a fair duality between man and nature, though in a different tone.

F. Engagement With Species Extinction Issue

In ecological philosophy, species extinction refers to the complete disappearance of a species from earth, significantly due to human activities such as depletion of natural resources, deforestation, wars, and pollution or to natural causes such as climate change, volcanic eruptions, changes in sea levels, and disease outbreak (Gittleman, 2025). Species extinction should also be distinguished from apocalyptic ending, a term frequently used in literature to indicate the end of civilization or the world.

Lawrence published his poetry in the early twentieth century at the time when the problem of animal or plant species extinction was not high on the agenda of then-current poets' major concerns. In Lawrence's ecopoems, species extinction is focused more on the hypothetical end of the human species than on animal extinction. Becket (2022) notes that "of all the poems in the collection [*Birds, Beasts and Flowers*], only one, 'Mountain Lion' unequivocally expresses a sense of loss at the willful destruction of an animal killed by trappers" (p. 183). Similarly, Pearson (2018) suggests that apart from "Mountain Lion" which "establishes Lawrence's place as prescient forerunner of this growing subgenre ["extinction poetry"] within nature poetry", Lawrence's "Snake", "hovers tantalizingly on the boundary of extinction poetry without crossing entirely into its territory" (p. 140). Pearson (2018) further argues that the poem "does not include a consideration of speciocide" (p. 140), a view with which the researcher concurs.

In "Mountain Lion", Lawrence describes how a puma has been subjected to cruel hunting practices at the hands of two "foolish" gunmen in the Mexican mountains: "It is a mountain lion, /A long, long slim cat, yellow like a lioness./Dead./He trapped her this morning" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 401). Although the mountain lion is not considered among the animals in imminent danger of becoming extinct, Lawrence's poem focuses on the brutal hunting of this animal, advocating the rights of animals to live and prosper. Throughout the poem, Lawrence appears to be counteracting the traditional assumption that "man is the measure of creation" and is consequently entitled to dispose of the life of animals as he wishes. Lawrence asserts that this species has the right to live more than those humans who pose a serious threat to wild nature and particularly to a species that is growing increasingly rare: "And I think in the world beyond, how easily we might spare a million or two of humans/And never miss them./Yet what a gap in the world, the missing white frost-face of that slim yellow mountain lion!" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 402). The loss of a mountain lion, Lawrence maintains, is greater than that of million humans, as it will create a significant void in the ecosystem.

Warning about a potential apocalypse, Lawrence declares in “The Death of Our Era”: “Our era is dying”, blaming it on “our bald-headed consciousness/the tocsin of this our civilisation” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 512). Nevertheless, he states in the closing lines of the poem: “And yet, as we die, why should not our vast mechanised day die with us,/so that when we are re-born, we can be born into a fresh world” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 512). Indeed, Lawrence is expecting the death and resurrection of humans before any communion with the pristine world he envisions could be re-established. In “To Let Go or to Hold On—?” he foresees that if humanity does not change its worldview, the world may end up without humans: “Is the time come for humans/now to begin to disappear./leaving it to the vast revolutions of creative chaos/to bring forth creatures that are an improvement on humans [?]” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 429). In “Nemesis”, Lawrence considers the dominance of man’s self-consciousness the main enemy of modern humanity: “If we do not rapidly open all the doors of consciousness/and freshen the putrid little space in which we are cribbed/the sky-blue walls of our unventilated heaven/will be bright red with blood” (*Complete Poems*, 1964, pp. 514-515). Nonetheless, he hopes for amelioration once men recognize animality. Rohman (2009) rightly clarifies that Lawrence “understands animality as spontaneity, the unknowable, the bodily, and the pure” (p. 101). In Lawrence’s resurrected universe, humanity will be redeemed by animal- or blood-consciousness. As his poems indicate, Lawrence believes that humanity may soon come to its end, but he looks forward to a new replacement, which he considers an “improvement” on the current species.

By contrast, Merwin wrote his works in the second half of the twentieth and the beginnings of the twenty-first centuries, the period in which species extinction problem came to the fore. Many of Merwin’s poems highlight the responsibility of humans for the extinction of some species. Speaking of Merwin’s constant contemplation of the deterioration and loss of species, Vernon (2024) notes that Merwin once said: “I keep thinking about the buffalo, about the Indians, and about the species that are being rendered extinct” (para. 30). In fact, Merwin’s previously mentioned poem “For a Coming Extinction”, in which he voices his warning about a looming threat facing some species, is a par excellence example of “extinction poetry”. Cynically promising the whale that it will have company among long-extinct species, the speaker proclaims: “Consider what you will find in the black garden/And its court/The sea crows the Great Auks the gorillas” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 305). Actually, the poem recalls Lawrence’s “Whales Weep Not”, both of which represent an ecological depiction of whales, though from different perspectives. While Lawrence focuses on the glamour of the whale, Merwin concentrates on the deplorable loss of such a unique sea creature.

Merwin’s “The Animals” from *Lice* reflects his pensive speculation on the demise of some wild animals. Apparently writing in the aftermath of a mass extinction of some animals, the speaker is plaintively wondering if these dead animals will ever come back and if they will ever meet him again: “Will any come back will one/Saying yes/Saying look carefully yes/We will meet again” (*Collected poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 267). Likewise, “The Wild Geese” from *Garden Time* (2016), reflects Merwin’s feelings of longing and sorrow over the disappearance of some animal species: “It was always for the animals that I grieved most/for the animals I had seen and for those/I had only heard of or dreamed about”. Merwin is here highlighting this deplorable species annihilation caused by aggressive human activities.

In his early collection *Lice*, Merwin warns about the threat of a possible apocalypse following the dreadful animal extinctions caused by greedy and arrogant humans. Reviewing this collection, Laurence Lieberman states: “If there is any book today that has perfectly captured the peculiar spiritual agony of our time, the agony of a generation which knows itself to be the last, and has transformed that agony into great art, it is W. S. Merwin’s *The Lice*” (as cited in Perloff, 2010, p. 9). These words assign an apocalyptic sensibility to Merwin’s work which many commentators have regarded as characteristic of his later works.

Merwin’s “When the War is Over” sarcastically depicts human beings’ intrinsic impulse to kill and destroy. The speaker pokes fun at humanity because of its keenness on destructive war and brutal massacres. In a subtle and bitter ironic twist, the poem mocks the idea that air and water quality will improve again: “When the war is over/We will be proud of course the air will be/Good for breathing at last” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 302). Using lines lacking punctuation to reinforce the intended meaning, the poet underlines the indeterminacy and infinite continuity of destruction the world over. The poem “The Asians Dying” also condemns the ravages of war for both man and the environment, foretelling the threat of an apocalyptic catastrophe. The opening lines give a sense of helplessness after darkness has prevailed, following the disappearance of forests and the massive deaths of so many people: “When the forests have been destroyed their darkness remains/....Nothing they will come to is real” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 301). These words point to a post-apocalyptic world shattered by an environmental catastrophe.

Similarly, “The Widow” portrays a “widowed” earth in the wake of the death of its inhabitants: “You grieve/Not that heaven does not exist but/That it exists without us” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 287). It is a dark world that has been ravished by an apocalyptic catastrophe whose darkness characterizes the landscape: “This is the waking landscape/Dream after dream after dream walking away through it/Invisible invisible invisible” (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 287). Overall, it can be said that Merwin’s view on species extinction is predominantly pessimistic, considering the potential for human-caused extinction. However, his work also contains a ray of hope, stemming from a deep belief in the enduring power of the fundamental connection between all living things.

G. Tackling Global Ecological Conservation Problems

Ecological conservation is primarily concerned with raising the awareness about the grave dangers that human actions may cause to the natural world. Ecopoetry often draws attention to the importance of a close connection to the

natural world as a means of averting any potential environmental catastrophe. Ecopoets who oppose man's dominion over nature, species extinction, and the prioritizing of one species over another can be viewed as dealing with ecological conservation (Buell et al., 2011, pp. 422-423).

Using a tree metaphor, Lawrence in "Humanity Needs Pruning" from *More Pansies*, calls for a severe "pruning" of humanity in order to save it from complete extinction: "The tree of humanity needs pruning, badly" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 677). Without demanding the extermination of the entire human race, the speaker's plea involves only a selective and regenerative pruning. In "Free Will" from the same collection, Lawrence exhorts humans to keep a close contact with nature to ensure their connection to the "tree of life" and, consequently, the survival of the planet: "The human will is free, ultimately, to choose one of two things: either to stay connected with the tree of life... or else to sever the connection" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 617). Similarly, in "Give us Gods" from *Pansies*, Lawrence delineates the dire consequences of a radical discontinuity between man and nature caused by industrialization: "Give us gods./We are so tired of men/and motor-power" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 436). Consequently, a return to a more primal connection with the natural world and the divine are required to safeguard the future of humanity.

Lawrence also warns about the dangers of overpopulation, which he considers a serious peril to the safety of the planet and its natural resources. In the poem "There are Too Many People" from *More Pansies*, he considers the increasing world population and the overuse of natural resources as detrimental to the preservation of human and nonhuman life: "There are too many people on earth/Insidid, unsalted, rabbity, endlessly hopping./They nibble the face of the earth to a desert" (*Complete Poems*, 1964, p. 606). For Lawrence, the increasing global population exacerbates the consequences of industrialism and resources depletion.

By the same token, Merwin's concern for the survival of the planet is unmistakable. Taking his inspiration from an indefatigable attempt to restore a rain forest on the Hawaiian island of Maui where he founded a pineapple plantation in the early 1980s, Merwin has written a good number of poems which reflect his interest in ecological conservation. In his pioneering article, Rueckert (1978) observes that he knows of no other book of poetry which is "so aware of the biosphere and what human beings have done to destroy it" as Merwin's book *The Lice* (p. 82). Merwin's ecopoems in this volume, such as the already-mentioned "For a Coming Extinction" and "The Animals", represent hallmarks of conservation poetry. Moreover, in "The Last One", Merwin demonstrates how people's felling of trees shows their vanity and disrespect for nature: "Well they cut everything because why not./Everything was theirs because they thought so" (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 271). Eventually, the speaker joins the birds and the various powers of nature that have lost their habitat in condemning the men who demolished the trees, describing them as, "they whom the birds despise" (p. 272).

In "Place" from *Rain in the Trees*, Merwin seems to be expressing the essence of his conservation vision: "On the last day of the earth/I would want to plant a tree" (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 663). In these opening lines, the speaker underlines the ethics of preserving and protecting the sustainability of nature and the need to act responsibly to ensure a healthy environment for all species. In the same way, "The River of Bees" from *Lice*, ends with the advice: "But we were not born to survive/Only to live". These concluding verses can be taken to mean that humans were not destined just to survive, but to live their life to the full, a clear indication that human life is contingent upon living within a well-preserved ecosystem. Likewise, in "Thanks" from *Rain in the Trees*, Merwin draws a vivid picture of degraded planetary ecosystems, causing species extinctions while humans are unable to perceive the destruction: "with the animals dying around us/taking our feelings we are saying thank you/ with the forests falling faster than the minutes/ of our lives we are saying thank you" (*Collected Poems 1952-1993*, 2013, p. 649). Taken together, these poems underline Merwin's deploring of human callousness about the way some people have abused the natural world and his calling to take some redemption actions for humans' survival and prosperity are interconnected with the preservation of the ecological systems.

IV. CONCLUSION

Lawrence's and Merwin's ecopoems share some common similarities and striking parallels despite their having certain differences. Initially influenced by English-American Romantic nature poetry, the two poets share their transition from nature poetry to ecopoetry; opposition to industrialization; seeking a restoration of a lost primeval world; advocating for species equality; exploring nature/culture duality; engagement with species extinction issue; and tackling global ecological conservation problems. On the other hand, they have some differences which can be summarized in these main points: Lawrence's relatively limited concern with species extinction compared to his apocalyptic vision of the human race, his poems' prevalent tones of anger and disappointment, his impassioned and extreme position on humanity's rejuvenation, and his individualized ecological protection stand contrast with Merwin's multifarious species extinction concerns, his poems' ambivalent tones developing from pessimism to optimism, his dispassionate and moderate stand on human improvement, and his objectified ecological conservation stance. On scrutinizing these points of resemblance and difference, it appears that there is an ecopoetic continuum running across Lawrence's and Merwin's ecopoetry, beginning with the Romantic tradition of nature poetry, passing through Lawrence's modernist ecopoems and culminating in Merwin's postmodernist ecopoetry.

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Sawadi Indonesia: Teaching Materials for Improving Everyday Indonesian Language Skills of Thai Bipa Learners

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Abstract—Language learning is an integral part of education worldwide. The Indonesian language is one of the national languages that needs the use of interactive multimedia in its implementation. The Indonesian language subject teaches aspects of language skills, just like other language subjects, which include four main areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This study investigates the effectiveness of utilizing *Sawadi Indonesia* to enhance the Indonesian language skills of BIPA learners at the beginner level, particularly in daily conversation. This research employs a development research model, also known as R&D (Research and Development). The results of this study indicate that the book is highly effective in enhancing the learning of the Indonesian language for beginner Thai students.

Index Terms—*Sawadi Indonesia*, teaching materials, BIPA, Thai learners, language skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian as a second language is gaining increasing attention on the global stage, especially in Southeast Asia. Along with the rising cooperation between Indonesia and ASEAN countries, including Thailand, the need to master the Indonesian language has become more urgent in education, tourism, culture, and economic and political cooperation. Through the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program, the Indonesian government has implemented various initiatives to support the systematic learning of the Indonesian language for foreign speakers, including those in Thailand.

The Indonesian language is increasingly in demand by the international community as Indonesia's bilateral relations with neighboring countries, especially in Southeast Asia, continue to develop. One country with a high interest in learning the Indonesian language is Thailand (Aufar & Muzaki, 2024). Thailand, as a country with a direct border with Indonesia, is strategically interested in mastering the Indonesian language. Thailand is a country with a high enthusiasm for learning the Indonesian language. This is evident from the growing interest of Thai citizens in learning Indonesian as a foreign language, as seen in the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) program (Kusmiatun, 2019). However, the reality on the ground shows that there are still significant challenges in implementing the BIPA learning program in Thailand, particularly related to the teaching materials used.

Beginners in BIPA (Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers), particularly those in Thailand, often lack a solid foundation in the Indonesian language. They face difficulties in understanding sentence structures, pronouncing phonemes that are not present in their native language, and comprehending the socio-cultural context that underlies language use. In this context, it is crucial to conduct a needs analysis to design effective teaching materials tailored to learners' needs. Needs analysis is the primary foundation for the development of teaching materials, because understanding the real needs of learners (target needs) and their learning process needs (learning needs) enables the educational content to be organized more effectively (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Thai BIPA learners have distinctive characteristics and learning needs. The significant differences in the language systems between Thai and Indonesian pose a challenge to Thai learners in mastering the Indonesian language (Muliastuti, 2017). Additionally, the differing socio-cultural contexts also influence the process of learning Indonesian for Thai speakers (Suyitno, 2018).

Indonesian language skills are essential for beginner learners every day, as they are the foundation for effective communication in everyday contexts in Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2020). However, the available teaching materials are

still general and do not fully consider the specific needs of Thai learners, especially at the beginner level (Andayani, 2021). This results in learners experiencing difficulties applying their acquired language knowledge to real communication contexts.

A needs analysis is vital in developing a language curriculum and creating effective teaching materials. Needs analysis collects and evaluates information to determine and validate curriculum objectives that meet students' learning needs divides needs analysis into two main categories: objective needs (what learners need to know to function effectively in the target situation) and subjective needs (the wants, hopes, and expectations of learners) (Nation & Macalister, 2020).

The importance of needs analysis as a procedure for gathering information about learners' needs, which serves as the basis for developing a curriculum that meets those needs (Richard, 2017). Needs analysis involves systematically collecting and analyzing all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate curriculum goals that address students' language learning needs (Brown, 2016).

Learning Indonesian for Thai speakers falls within the realm of second/foreign language learning. Linguistic, psychological, and social factors influence second/foreign language learning (Ellis, 2019). With the input hypothesis states that learners acquire a second language when they receive language input that can be understood (comprehensible input) (Krashen, 2018). Interaction and negotiation of meaning in second language learning are crucial to language acquisition (Long, 2017). Meanwhile, Selinker (2016) introduces the concept of interlanguage, emphasizing that second language learners develop a distinct language system that differs from their first and target languages.

The development of BIPA teaching materials necessitates a distinct approach that takes into account the characteristics of foreign learners. Effective language teaching materials must meet the principles of relevance, consistency, adequacy, and suitability for the learning context (Tomlinson, 2019). Foreign language teaching materials should consider aspects of the target culture as an essential component in learning (Grave, 2019). Muliastuti (2017) emphasizes the importance of a communicative approach in developing BIPA teaching materials, focusing on the use of language in authentic contexts (p. 97). BIPA teaching materials should be developed based on language proficiency levels while paying attention to appropriate difficulty gradations (Kusmiatun, 2019).

This research focuses on everyday language skills, encompassing four areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Brown (2016) explains that these four skills are interconnected and integrated in the natural use of language. Harmer (2021) emphasizes the importance of an integrative approach in teaching language skills, reflecting the use of language in real-life contexts. In foreign language learning, Oxford (2017) identifies language learning strategies that can help learners develop language skills, including cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies. Suyitno (2018) adds that at the beginner level, the focus of learning everyday Indonesian language skills should emphasize communicative and functional aspects (p. 25).

Previous research on BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing) learning in general has been widely conducted, but studies specifically analyzing the needs of Thai learners regarding teaching materials for daily Indonesian language skills at the beginner level are still limited. Defina's (2018) research reveals that a needs analysis for foreign learners is crucial to create effective learning. The lack of a comprehensive needs analysis has rendered the developed teaching materials suboptimal for Thai learners to master daily Indonesian language skills (Nugraheni, 2020).

Recent studies highlight the importance of real-life and context-based teaching materials in BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) instruction. For example, Nurichsania (2024) developed digital teaching materials for listening and speaking in BIPA that focus on everyday conversations. The researcher concluded that context-based teaching materials can enhance learners' understanding and oral communication skills, especially when supplemented with audiovisual media that resemble real-life conditions (Nurichsania, 2024). Similar findings were also presented by Maharany (2021), who analyzed the language teaching needs for BIPA learners from Thailand. She found that learners need thematic materials that contain simple text types and an emphasis on basic grammar and functional vocabulary related to everyday activities (Maharany, 2021).

Cultural aspects of teaching materials have also been an important focus of recent research. Prasetyo (2017) developed teaching materials infused with Javanese culture and found that integrating local cultural values into teaching materials can enhance foreign learners' pragmatic understanding and intercultural competence (Prasetyo, 2017). This is supported by research from Suharsono et al. (2022), which emphasizes the need for Indonesian agricultural cultural content in teaching materials to introduce real-life aspects of Indonesian society to foreign learners, including those from Thailand.

Innovations in teaching materials based on traditional games have also been explored by Istiqomah (2023), who developed A2-level BIPA textbooks incorporating traditional games for Thai speakers. The results of her research indicate that learners feel more enthusiastic about learning when the material presented is both interactive and enjoyable, while still maintaining its unique Indonesian cultural content (Istiqomah, 2023). Another study by Satwika (2023) demonstrates that teaching materials themed around tourism are not only relevant to the context of language use but also attract learners' interest, as they address the social realities encountered while traveling in Indonesia.

In language education, needs analysis is crucial for identifying what learners need and what they have already mastered (Richards, 2017). This needs analysis will provide information about the materials that must be prioritized,

appropriate teaching methods, and suitable evaluation strategies (Brown, 2016). Therefore, the teaching materials developed will be more relevant to the situations and conditions of learners in Thailand.

From various studies, it can be concluded that Thai learners need teaching materials that not only teach language structure but also introduce the use of language in the context of daily life and Indonesian culture. Therefore, developing teaching materials for Thai learners at the beginner level needs to consider a communicative, contextual, and intercultural approach to make the learning process more relevant, engaging, and meaningful. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the needs of Thai learners for teaching materials on everyday Indonesian language skills in beginner-level BIPA courses. The results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to the development of the BIPA program, particularly in preparing teaching materials for everyday Indonesian language skills for beginner-level Thai learners.

II. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. According to Creswell and Creswell (2020), a qualitative approach is suitable for exploring and understanding the meanings attributed to social or humanitarian issues by individuals or groups. Descriptive research aims to systematically and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of the studied objects (Sugiyono, 2019). This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for analyzing the needs of Thai learners regarding everyday Indonesian language teaching materials in beginner-level BIPA courses.

The subjects of this research are Thai learners enrolled in a beginner-level BIPA (Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers) course. The determination of research subjects was conducted using a purposive sampling technique. According to Patton (2018), purposive sampling is a sampling technique that is based on specific considerations related to the research objectives. The criteria for selecting subjects include: (1) the learners are from Thailand, (2) they are enrolled in a beginner-level BIPA course, and (3) they are willing to be research respondents. The total number of respondents involved is 12 Thai learners and 2 BIPA teachers with experience teaching Thai learners. The research location is the BIPA course institution, which conducts Indonesian language learning programs for Thai speakers, including the Enjoying Learning Indonesian Course and the Indonesian Introduction Course. The selection of location considers representation and accessibility (Flick, 2018).

The data collection techniques used in this study are questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data analysis in this research employs the interactive model from Miles et al. (2019) which includes three components: (1) Data Condensation, which is the process of selection, focusing attention, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of data that emerges from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials, (2) Data Display, where the condensed data is presented in the form of narrative texts, matrices, graphs, networks, and charts to facilitate the drawing of conclusions, (3) Conclusion Drawing/Verification, where conclusions are drawn from the beginning of the data collection but remain provisional until supported by valid and consistent evidence. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher used source, method, and theory triangulation techniques (Denzin, 2017). Source triangulation was done by comparing learner, educator, and document data. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing data from questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document analysis. Theory triangulation was performed by employing various theoretical perspectives to analyze the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Results

Based on data obtained through questionnaires and interviews, it is known that the majority of Thai learners in beginner-level BIPA courses (73.3%) are aged between 18 and 25 years and are students who have an interest in learning Indonesian for academic (43.3%), economic/business (33.3%), and cultural/tourism (23.4%) reasons.

Most learners (86.7%) have never studied Indonesian formally before and only know a few words and phrases in Indonesian from social media, movies, or Indonesian music. Regarding language background, all learners (100%) are proficient in Thai as their first language, and most (83.3%) are also proficient in English as a second language, with varying proficiency levels from basic to intermediate. These findings suggest that Thai learners have prior experience learning foreign languages, which can be a valuable asset in learning Indonesian.

The data analysis reveals that Thai learners encounter specific difficulties in several aspects of the Indonesian language. The main difficulties faced by the learners include: the pronunciation of certain consonant sounds that do not exist in the Thai phonological system (76.7%), understanding the sentence structure of Indonesian, which is different from Thai (83.3%), the use of affixes (90%), and mastery of Indonesian vocabulary (66.7%).

According to interviews with BIPA instructors, it was revealed that the typological differences in the languages pose a significant challenge for Thai learners. Thai is an isolating and tonal language, while Indonesian is an agglutinative and non-tonal language. These differences make Thai learners struggle to understand and produce the complex structures of the Indonesian language.

"Thai learners often get confused with the affixation system of the Indonesian language, which does not exist in their language. For example, distinguishing the use of me-, ber-, and ter- remains a significant challenge for them." (Teacher 2)

This finding aligns with Muliastuti's (2017) research, which suggests that the differences between the first language and the target language can be a source of difficulty in second/foreign language learning. Another study found that "affixation errors are the most dominant type of errors in the writings of Thai learners, with the largest errors in the form of clitics and prefixes, which are largely caused by ignorance of Indonesian grammar rules". This reinforces the finding that 90% of Thai learners in this study also experienced significant difficulties in affixation (Kalee et al., 2018).

In terms of pronunciation Thai learners experience difficulties in articulating certain sounds that are not present in the Thai phonological system, such as /g/, /v/, /ŋ/, and the diphthongs /au/ and /oi/, as well as the pronunciation of /r/ and /ɲ/ which are often simplified. This aligns with the 76.7% of participants in this study who struggled to pronounce certain consonants. Melinda et al. (2024) in their study in Southern Thailand reveal that "the dominant errors in Thai learners' writing include sentence structure, limited use of affixes, as well as spelling and capitalization errors, which are largely caused by the influence of the mother tongue and the process of direct translation". These findings support the results of this study, specifically regarding syntactic difficulties (83.3%) and weak vocabulary mastery (66.7%).

Additionally, Lasa et al. (2019) state that the main challenge in teaching Indonesian to foreign speakers (BIPA) in Thailand lies in the limited understanding of the Indonesian language's phonology and morphology, as well as the lack of culture- and technology-based teaching strategies. This aligns with the interview results in this study, which emphasize the need for contextual and interactive approaches. As a comparison from another context, Al-Rawafi and Syihabuddin (2019) indicate that even learners returning from abroad (IBHSs) face difficulties in mastering Indonesian morphosyntax, particularly in affixation, sentence structure, and the differences between formal and informal language varieties.

Data analysis from surveys and interviews shows that Thai learners need themes relevant to their daily communication needs. The five most needed themes by learners include: introductions and self-identity (93.3%), directions and transportation (86.7%), shopping and economic transactions (83.3%), culinary and food (80%), and emergency and health situations (76.7%). Maharany (2018) also emphasizes the importance of material needs, categorized by topic, text type, and grammar, especially in the context of BIPA learning in Thailand, which encompasses ten main topics (p. 36). In terms of language functions, Thai learners express the need to be able to use Indonesian for the following communicative functions: introducing oneself and others (96.7%), asking for and providing information (90%), expressing basic needs (86.7%), expressing simple feelings and opinions (76.7%), and negotiating in the context of simple transactions (73.3%).

The learning observation results indicate that the current teaching materials do not fully accommodate the thematic and functional needs. Some themes learners need, such as emergencies and health, have not been optimally integrated into the teaching materials. This finding aligns with the results of Dereh et al. (2021), who conducted a study on the development of reading comprehension teaching materials at the intermediate level in Thailand. Their study revealed that Thai students require reading materials and grammar structured according to learning objectives, accompanied by exercises and translations. This finding highlights the importance of comprehensive and functional teaching materials in supporting learners' communicative goals.

The results of the data analysis indicate that Thai learners have a preference for specific learning strategies in BIPA teaching materials. Most learners (80%) prefer learning that integrates visual and auditory aspects. They also show a preference for interactive learning activities (76.7%), task-based exercises (70%), and project-based learning (63.3%). This approach is explained by Nurlina and Israhayu (2020), who suggest that the development of BIPA learning materials for Thai students should include audiovisual elements and interactive media to enhance student interest and participation (p. 60).

Based on the interview, Thai learners expect teaching materials that are equipped with (1) audio-visual media to aid understanding (83.3%); (2) a bilingual glossary of Indonesian-Thai (90%); (3) explanations of grammar that contrast with Thai (86.7%); (4) contextual communicative exercises (80%); (5) self-evaluation to measure learning progress (73.3%). This line-up strongly aligns with the findings of Marsevani et al. (2023), who state that "BIPA teaching materials made with interactive audio-visual components enhance student participation and cultural relevance".

BIPA teachers also emphasize the importance of a communicative approach that takes into account the learning characteristics of Thai learners:

"Thai learners generally have a visual and kinesthetic learning style. They find it easier to understand material when it is presented with images, videos, and hands-on activities. Teaching materials that rely solely on text are less effective for them." (Teacher 1)

This finding aligns with Oxford's (2017) research highlighting the importance of considering learning strategies that suit learner characteristics in the development of language teaching materials. Through a systematic review that combining communicative approaches, technology-mediated learning, project-based learning, and direct interaction with native speakers is the most effective strategy for teaching Indonesian as a foreign language (Islahuddin et al., 2025).

Data analysis suggests that Thai learners benefit from understanding Indonesia's socio-cultural context to improve their communication skills. The socio-cultural aspects considered important to be integrated into teaching materials include: communication ethics in the Indonesian context (93.3%), knowledge about Indonesian social norms (86.7%), introduction to Indonesian popular culture (80%), and understanding of Indonesia's ethnic and cultural diversity (76.7%). This aligns with the findings of research by Ambarwati et al. (2023), which found that the needs of beginning Thai BIPA learners regarding Indonesian cultural content include norms of politeness, honorifics, and cultural customs, which significantly affect their communicative competence (p. 7).

The results of interviews with Thai learners reveal that they experience difficulties in understanding the cultural context behind the use of certain expressions in the Indonesian language.

"I often get confused about when to use 'Bapak/Ibu' and when it is enough to mention the name. In addition, some expressions in Bahasa Indonesia are difficult to understand without knowing the cultural context." (Learner 8)

BIPA teachers also emphasize the importance of the socio-cultural dimension in teaching materials. This is explained in the following quote.

"BIPA learning materials should not only teach language structure, but also introduce the socio-cultural context that underlies the use of that language. This is important so Thai learners can communicate appropriately and understandably in Indonesian." (Teacher 1)

This finding aligns with Grave's (2019) opinion, emphasizing the integration of cultural aspects into foreign language teaching materials. This finding is supported by Solikhah and Budiharso (2022), who state that the implementation of BIPA in practice includes embedding culture in the curriculum, learning experiences, and evaluations; yet 'soft diplomacy' and deep cultural nuances are still underrepresented (p. 190). BIPA reading materials, which incorporate cultural elements through extensive reading, not only expand vocabulary but also serve as a medium for promoting Indonesian culture and facilitating the formation of students' critical understanding of local cultural norms.

B. Discussion

This textbook is titled *Sawadi Indonesia: Belajar Bahasa Indonesia Itu Seru! Yuk, Mulai Sekarang!* or referred to as *Sawadi Indonesia*. The name "Sawadi" (สวัสดี) is derived from a standard greeting in Thai, which directly reflects the primary target readers of this book, namely Thai speakers. The full title also emphasizes the learning philosophy it promotes, which is a fun and proactive process of learning Indonesian ("Yuk, Mulai Sekarang!").

This *Sawadi Indonesia* book is specifically designed as a teaching material for Indonesian language skills for beginners, with a primary focus on learners from Thailand. Its purpose is to facilitate learners in using Indonesian in everyday situations through a communicative, thematic, contextual, and enjoyable approach. The *Sawadi Indonesia* book serves as an interactive learning medium that not only functions as a learning resource but also as an integrative tool to develop foreign learners' everyday communication skills within the context of Indonesian culture. Each learning unit is presented attractively through a combination of bilingual text (Indonesian–Thai), visual illustrations, phonetic explanations, context-based exercises, and Indonesian cultural notes that reinforce cross-cultural competence. Thus, this book has the characteristics of educational multimedia that emphasize interactivity, ease of access, and a humanistic approach in the second language learning process.

The structure of the *Sawadi Indonesia* book is divided into several main sections, namely 'Prapelajaran (Pre-Lesson)' (Preparation for Learning). This section serves as a foundation before entering the core chapters. It includes an introduction to the sound and writing system of the Indonesian language (alphabet letters, vowels, consonants, diphthongs, consonant clusters) as well as essential basic vocabulary such as numbers (cardinal & ordinal), calendar (days, months), seasons, colors, geometric shapes, body parts, physical descriptions and body/face/eye/nose/skin/hair shapes, as well as character traits or qualities and antonyms.

The first part, "pre-lesson" (การเตรียมพร้อมสู่บทเรียน), is an introductory section that contains the scope of the material, including: Alphabet Introduction: Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs. Sound Structure: Combinations of Vowel Letters and Combinations of Consonant Letters (two, three, or more). Essential Basic Vocabulary: Numbers and Numerals (cardinal & ordinal), Days, Months, Seasons, Colors, Shapes, Body Parts, Physical Description (Body Shape, Face, Eyes, Nose, Skin Color, Hair), Antonyms, and Traits (Character).

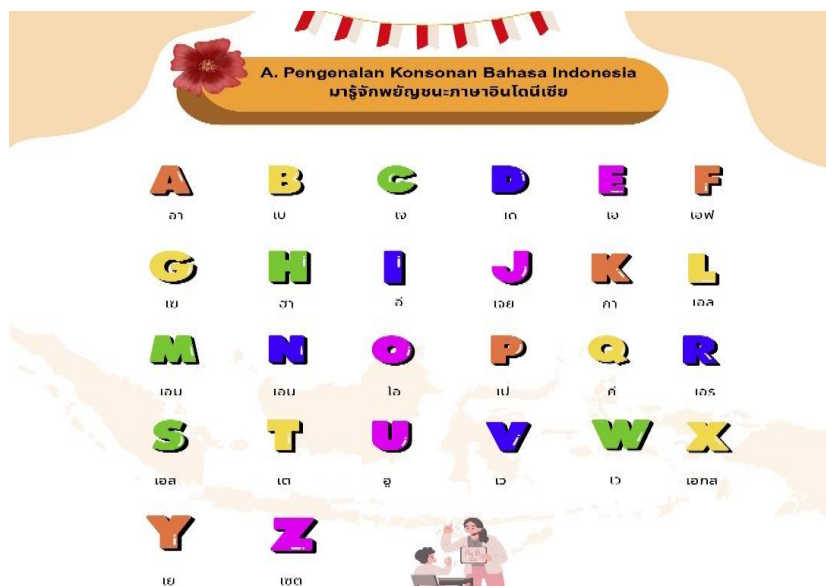


Figure 1. Introduction to Indonesian Consonants

Another example in the 'pre-lesson' section is the Color section, which contains a visual chart displaying 11 basic colors, such as Red, Light Blue, Dark Blue, Yellow, Green, Black, White, and others. The purpose is to teach basic vocabulary about colors.



Figure 2. Colors

The following section comprises 12 Main Chapters (Lessons). The core part of the book consists of 12 thematically arranged chapters, covering topics relevant to the everyday lives of learners. The chapters are: Chapter 1: Greeting, Chapter 2: Introducing Yourself, Chapter 3: Family, Chapter 4: Surrounding Objects, Chapter 5: Daily Activities, Chapter 6: Food, Chapter 7: Shopping, Chapter 8: Birthday, Chapter 9: Directions and Locations, Chapter 10: Occupations, Chapter 11: Holidays, Chapter 12: Transportation.

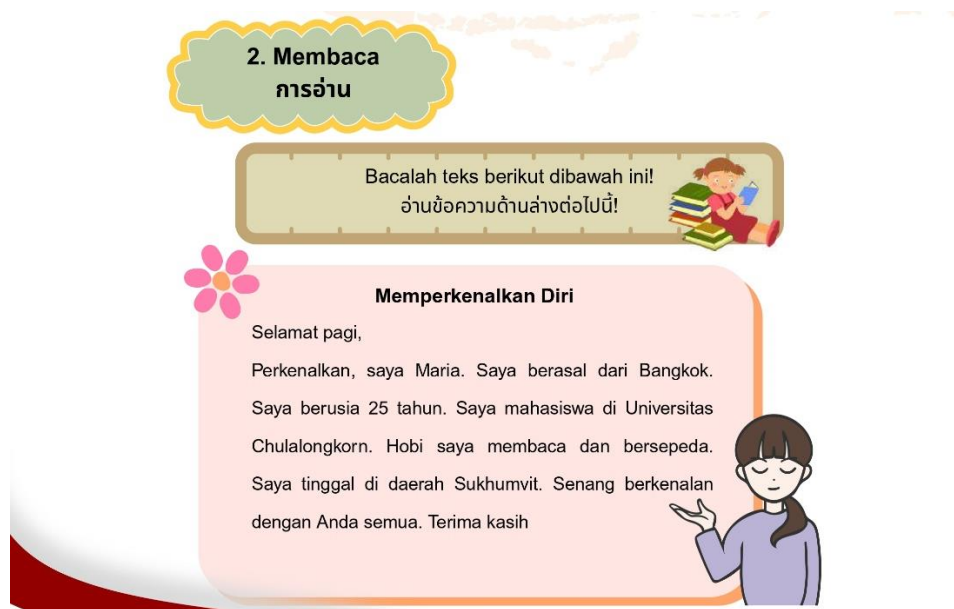


Figure 3. Chapter 1 Greeting

Next are the supporting features of each chapter. Each chapter is comprehensively designed to develop the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). It presents new vocabulary ('*Kosa Kata*'/คำศัพท์) and grammar ('*Tata Bahasa*'/ไวยากรณ์) gradually. Each chapter also comes with 'Learning Objectives' (วัตถุประสงค์การเรียนรู้), reading texts ('*Membaca*'/การอ่าน), contextual exercises ('*Kegiatan*'/กิจกรรม) for each skill, engaging illustrations, explanations in Thai to facilitate understanding, and 'Cultural Notes' (บันทึกทางวัฒนธรรม) to provide cross-cultural insight into Indonesia.

Supplementary materials in the development of teaching materials for everyday Indonesian language skills for Thai learners in beginner-level BIPA courses are designed to improve learners' language skills through various engaging approaches. One of the supplementary materials presented is a set of cultural notes at the end of each chapter. The cultural notes provide explanations of the language use differences between Indonesians and Thais. For example, in the section on Greeting (Chapter 1), greetings in Indonesia highly value politeness, adjusted according to age, status, and social relationships. The use of formal greetings (*Pak, Bu, title*) for elders/respected individuals differs from informal greetings (*name, bro, sis*) for peers. There are differences in greetings for formal and informal situations, as well as regional-specific greetings (such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese) and religious greetings (such as *Assalamualaikum*). Gestures such as smiling or handshakes are also important. Asking about someone's well-being ('How are you?') or even 'Have you eaten?' is a common form of greeting.

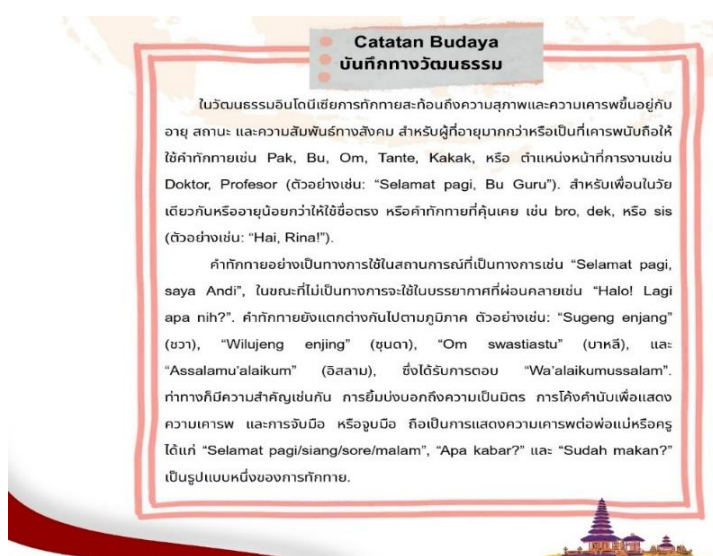


Figure 4. Notes on Greeting Culture in Indonesia

There is also an additional section. This book also includes a '*Competency Mapping*' section at the beginning, detailing the competency standards, language competencies (including language knowledge and vocabulary), and language skill targets for each chapter. Additionally, there is a '*Preface*' (คำนำ) in both Indonesian and Thai, as well as a

'Table of Contents'. Each unit is developed based on the principle of spiral learning, from simple vocabulary and structures to the use of more complex language. For each theme, competency standards, language competencies, language knowledge, vocabulary, and integrated language skill activities (including listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are presented. For example, in Chapter 1, "Greeting," participants learn to recognize and use formal and informal greetings in various social contexts.



Ungkapan menanyakan kabar สำนวนการถามสบายดีไหม	
Apa kabar?	สบายดีไหม?
Bagaimana kabar Anda?	คุณเป็นอย่างไร?
Gimana kabar? (Nonformal)	คุณเป็นอย่างไร? (ไม่เป็นทางการ)

Figure 5. Chapter 1 Greeting (Asking About Well-Being)

As a learning product, *Sawadi Indonesia* has a pedagogical function that supports a communicative language teaching model. Each section is designed to encourage learners to actively interact, whether through oral exercises, group dialogues, or independent writing and reading tasks. This approach enables Thai learners not only to master the linguistic aspects of the Indonesian language but also to comprehend the socio-cultural values embedded within it.

Printed teaching materials based on everyday life are a practical alternative teaching resource for beginner-level BIPA learners, which integrate and collaborate four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the listening skill, these teaching materials present information from everyday Indonesian life recounted by learners in clear and easily understandable Indonesian. BIPA learners can listen to this daily information and grasp both the essence and the cultural values it contains. Through listening exercises, learners not only learn the language but also gain an understanding of the everyday Indonesian context, which is an inseparable part of the language itself.

The listening attentively activity (การฟัง) in the book "*Sawadi Indonesia*" is designed to train understanding of spoken Indonesian through audio accessed via a QR code. This exercise helps learners recognize sounds, vocabulary, and sentence structures in simple conversations or narratives. These activities are designed to be gradually introduced, starting with the identification of vocabulary and phrases, where learners are asked to write down the words they hear or choose the correct phrases from similar options.



Ungkapan Menyapa คำทักทาย	
Hai	สวัสดี
Halo	สวัสดี
Selamat pagi	สวัสดีตอนเช้า
Selamat siang	สวัสดีตอนเที่ยง
Selamat sore	สวัสดีตอนเย็น
Selamat malam	ราตรีสวัสดิ์
Assalamualaikum	อัสসাละมูอะลัยกุม
Walaikumussalam	วาอะลัยกุมสาลาม

Figure 6. Greeting Vocabulary

Next, learners are trained to grasp a detailed understanding through tasks such as answering multiple-choice questions or determining the truthfulness of statements about specific information in a story or audio description.

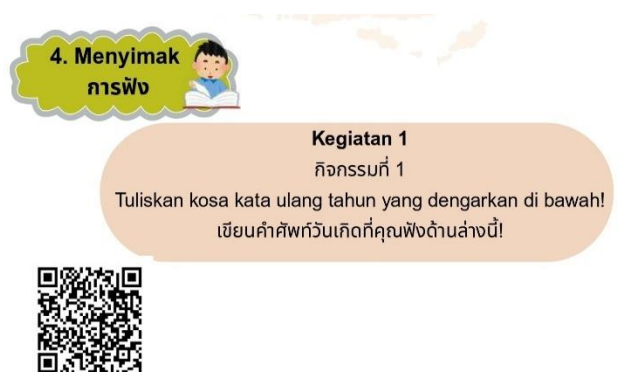


Figure 7. Listening to the Birthday Audio "Activity 1"

Then, the exercises in the printed teaching materials based on Daily Life Interactive are designed to develop the four language skills for beginner-level BIPA learners: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, using everyday Indonesian life as the learning medium. In the listening skill, learners will listen to information about regional culture from everyday life, presented by the learners themselves. After listening to the regional cultural information, learners are asked to express their opinions and discuss the daily life information they have listened to. These exercises help learners improve their listening skills and focus on details in the Indonesian language.

In Chapter 3 (Family), Activity 2, learners listen to an audio (via QR code) about Monthita's family, then answer multiple-choice questions such as: "1. How many members are there in Monthita's family? a. five b. six c. seven".



Figure 8. Listening Exercise "Family"

Based on evaluation and analysis, this teaching material has the following advantages: (1) high contextual relevance, (2) a bilingual and multimodal approach, (3) integration of cultural aspects, (4) attractive visual design and technology support (although not yet optimal), and (5) flexibility of use. These advantages make the teaching material not only a tool for language instruction but also a strategic medium for intercultural learning in the ASEAN context and cross-national education. The weaknesses identified in this developmental study include: (1) limited integration of interactive digital media, (2) field testing that is still limited, (3) evaluative exercises that are not yet varied, (4) constraints in teacher competence and local context, and (5) limited learning duration and intensity. These weaknesses are important considerations for further development of the teaching material to make it more optimal and contextual.

The effectiveness test of the *Sawadi Indonesia* textbook model, particularly through the implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the developed textbook based on learner needs, demonstrates that systematically designed textbooks are effective in improving learners' language skills. This improvement is evaluated comprehensively through specific activities such as "reading comprehension activities", "combined reading and writing activities", as well as speaking exercises, including "creating short dialogues and... storytelling" (Sari & Cahyani, 2020). The results of this study are relevant to various language teaching material development (R&D) studies for BIPA, which explain that developing new targeted textbooks, such as for speaking or writing skills, can indeed "enhance learners' language competence" and contribute to the "improvement of BIPA learning quality" (Ramadhani & Harsiati, 2016; Suharsono et al., 2022; Puspita et al., 2021).

The development of learning media that supports BIPA learning of the Indonesian language quality can help preserve their communication in daily life. The use of *Sawadi Indonesia* to enhance the language skills of learners has been proven to make students more creative and enthusiastic about learning the Indonesian language.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that Thai learners need teaching materials for everyday Indonesian language skills, namely: (1) considering the differences between the Thai and Indonesian language systems, especially in the aspects of phonology, morphology, and syntax, (2) presenting authentic and relevant everyday communication contexts that meet the needs of Thai learners, (3) integrating Indonesian cultural aspects to facilitate understanding of the socio-cultural context in language use, (4) using a communicative approach with a systematic gradation of materials from simple to complex, (5) supplemented with components that support self-learning, such as a bilingual glossary, audio-visual media, and self-assessment tools. These five interrelated aspects form a unity that must be considered when developing BIPA teaching materials for beginner-level Thai learners.

Based on the research's conclusions, several recommendations are presented. For BIPA (Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers) instructors, they can use the results of this research as a reference in selecting and adapting teaching materials that suit the needs of Thai learners, developing supplementary materials that can complement the shortcomings of the available teaching materials, and conducting ongoing reflection and evaluation on the use of teaching materials in learning. Future researchers can conduct further studies on the development and implementation of BIPA teaching materials, examine the effectiveness of these materials in enhancing the Indonesian language skills of Thai learners, and expand the scope of research by involving Thai learners at higher levels of proficiency.

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Evaluating Large Language Models and Neural Machine Translation Systems in Translating *Liaozhaizhiyi*: A Cross-Cultural Literary Study

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Abstract—Neural machine translation has demonstrated strong performance in high-resource languages and commercial translation contexts. However, its effectiveness in translating classical Chinese literature remains insufficiently examined. This study conducts a comparative evaluation of three translation systems—ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Youdao Translate—using selected texts from *Liaozhaizhiyi* as the research corpus. The analysis focuses on four dimensions: semantic alignment, measured by BLEU scores; translation fluency; stylistic fidelity; and the detectability of machine-generated translation patterns. The results indicate that ChatGPT achieves superior performance in stylistic fidelity, particularly in preserving poetic tone, as well as in semantic alignment when translating idiomatic expressions and culturally embedded references. In addition, translations produced by ChatGPT exhibit fewer mechanical artefacts commonly associated with neural machine translation outputs. Further experiments demonstrate that structured prompt engineering strategies contribute to improved literary naturalness and greater cultural coherence in the translated texts. These findings suggest that large language models offer notable advantages in the translation of classical literary works and provide empirical insights into the role of artificial intelligence in facilitating cross-cultural interpretation and the international transmission of Chinese literary traditions.

Index Terms—ChatGPT, Neural machine translation, Google translate, Youdao translate, *Liaozhaizhiyi*, Chinese classical literature, cross-cultural communication

I. INTRODUCTION

Machine translation (MT), first conceptualised by Weaver (1955), has evolved from rule-based machine translation (RBMT) and statistical machine translation (SMT) to neural machine translation (NMT), driven by advances in deep learning and resulting in substantial improvements in fluency and scalability (Castilho et al., 2017; España-Bonet et al., 2016). Despite its widespread deployment in global trade, diplomacy, and education (Koehn, 2009), NMT systems continue to face persistent challenges when translating culture-specific items (CSIs), metaphorical language, poetic structures, and historically embedded expressions (Drobot, 2021; Toral & Way, 2018). These limitations are particularly pronounced in literary translation, where semantic accuracy must be accompanied by stylistic coherence and cultural resonance.

Recent advances in large language models (LLMs) have opened new possibilities for literary translation. LLMs demonstrate strong capabilities in contextual modelling, discourse-level coherence, and stylistic adaptability, all of which are essential for handling complex literary texts (Jiao et al., 2023). However, most existing studies of LLM-based translation focus on what is often termed ‘universal text translation’, referring to informational or procedural genres such as news reports or technical manuals that are structurally simple and culturally neutral. In contrast, literary translation involves culturally dense and stylistically intricate texts, including historical narratives and classical prose, where meaning is closely intertwined with rhetorical form and cultural symbolism. Recent scholarship indicates that the translation of such works remains underexplored, with systematic evaluations of cultural and stylistic representation still limited in scope (Akabli & Khaloufi, 2024).

The translation of classical literature requires more than the accurate transfer of lexical meaning. It demands the preservation of poetic tone, narrative rhythm, and stylistic subtlety, while minimising mechanical or template-like artefacts commonly associated with machine-generated output. Although NMT systems trained on large parallel corpora achieve strong performance in general translation tasks (Bahdanau et al., 2014; Cho et al., 2014), they frequently struggle

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to convey figurative language, poetic structure, CSIs, and historical context, thereby limiting their ability to approximate the adaptive strategies employed by human literary translators (Toral & Way, 2018; Hadley et al., 2019). While Ahrenberg (2017) focuses on general translation, his comparison between human and machine translation suggests that effective literary translation similarly depends on preserving stylistic nuance and cultural depth.

Within this context, ChatGPT, built on a decoder-only Transformer architecture and trained using reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF), has attracted increasing attention for its capacity to generate coherent and stylistically adaptive text (Christiano et al., 2017; Jiao et al., 2023). Based on the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) framework, LLMs have demonstrated strong performance across a wide range of natural language processing tasks (Qin et al., 2023). Nevertheless, their effectiveness in classical literary translation, particularly for texts characterised by dense cultural embedding and stylistic complexity, remains underexplored. *Liaozhaizhiyi*, a canonical work of classical Chinese literature, exemplifies these challenges through its extensive use of allegory, culturally specific imagery, and rhythmically constrained narrative structures that resist literal translation.

Although ChatGPT has demonstrated promising results in general-purpose translation, its performance in translating classical Chinese literature such as *Liaozhaizhiyi* has not been systematically examined. The tales in *Liaozhaizhiyi* present substantial difficulties for MT systems due to their condensed syntax, rich symbolic content, and pervasive metaphorical expression, reflecting broader challenges in translating idiomatic, culturally embedded, and context-dependent language identified in recent MT research (Naveen & Trojovský, 2024). Traditional NMT systems, including Google Translate and Youdao Translate, rely primarily on large-scale parallel corpora and often fail to capture cultural nuance, interpret figurative language, or preserve literary aesthetics, particularly when confronted with non-compositional expressions and idioms that challenge current Transformer-based approaches (Dankers et al., 2022).

In contrast, ChatGPT offers potential advantages in contextual sensitivity and stylistic adaptability through prompt-based interaction and structured guidance, consistent with recent findings on chain-of-thought prompting in LLMs (Wei et al., 2022). However, whether ChatGPT can consistently outperform conventional NMT systems in classical literary translation, and how prompt engineering influences its output, remain open empirical questions.

Recent studies have begun to address these issues. Gao et al. (2024) report that ChatGPT outperforms Google Translate and DeepL in preserving poetic rhythm and imagery in Chinese classical poetry when guided by customised prompts. Zhou and Cheng (2025), comparing ChatGPT with human translation by Ken Liu in Chinese science fiction, find that although ChatGPT produces coherent and structurally sound translations, it often lacks deeper cultural insight and stylistic refinement. Extending this line of inquiry to ancient prose, Si et al. (2024) highlight both the contextual strengths of ChatGPT under prompt support and its limitations in rendering classical style and resolving named entities. Collectively, these findings suggest that while ChatGPT demonstrates advantages in fluency and structural coherence, its capacity to capture the cultural and aesthetic complexity of classical Chinese literature warrants further systematic investigation.

To address this gap, the present study compares ChatGPT with traditional NMT systems in the translation of classical Chinese literary texts into English. Focusing on selected tales from *Liaozhaizhiyi*, the evaluation is structured around four core dimensions: semantic alignment, fluency, stylistic fidelity, and MT style detectability. By combining automatic metrics with expert-based human evaluation, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the strengths and limitations of LLM-based translation in culturally embedded literary contexts. In addition, the study examines how prompt engineering, particularly context-enriched prompting strategies, shapes the translation behaviour of ChatGPT, thereby contributing to the development of AI-assisted translation approaches that are more sensitive to literary style and cultural nuance.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Materials and Data

This study is based on the bilingual Chinese–English edition of *Liaozhaizhiyi* (2007), published in the Chinese Classics Library series and annotated by literary scholars to ensure cultural authenticity and linguistic fidelity. This edition provides complete original texts, authoritative English translations, and scholarly annotations and therefore serves as a reliable reference for translation analysis. As shown in Table 1, the selected texts include *Niexiaoqian* (《聂小倩》), *The Cricket* (《促织》), *Fox Girl Qingfeng* (《狐女》), *The Snake Eater* (《蛇癖》), and *Candidate for the Post of City God* (《考城隍》). The selected tales were chosen to represent a range of narrative forms and stylistic complexities relevant to the evaluation of literary translation. Each tale foregrounds distinct thematic and stylistic concerns. *The Cricket* satirises imperial bureaucracy and social injustice; *Fox Girl Qingfeng* explores emotional intimacy and moral tension through romantic fantasy; *The Snake Eater* presents a grotesque portrayal of obsession and compulsive desire; and *Candidate for the Post of City God* offers a moral reflection on justice through a supernatural examination system. *Niexiaoqian* centres on the intersection of human–spirit intimacy, moral integrity, and social norms, combining romantic fantasy with ethical restraint and narrative realism. As the longest text in the corpus (2,325 Chinese characters), it provides a comparatively extended narrative structure that enables discourse-level analysis of characterisation, dialogue, and stylistic continuity.

TABLE 1
OVERVIEW OF FIVE SELECTED TEXTS USED IN THE TRANSLATION EXPERIMENTS

Title (English)	Title (Chinese)	Length (Chinese characters)	Notable Features
<i>Niexiaoqian</i>	《聂小倩》	2,325	Extended romantic supernatural narrative focusing on human–spirit relationships; strong ethical orientation and moral restraint; dialogue-driven storytelling; sustained discourse-level stylistic coherence
<i>The Cricket</i>	《促织》	1,816	Satirical portrayal of imperial bureaucracy; culture-specific references, such as tribute systems; integration of supernatural motifs; allegorical narration in a classical prose style
<i>Fox Girl Qingfeng</i>	《狐女》	1,648	Romantic supernatural narrative structured around transformation motifs; culturally embedded symbolism; allegorical expression combined with lyrical and poetic rhythm
<i>The Snake Eater</i>	《蛇癖》	78	Highly condensed grotesque narrative; vivid corporeal imagery; metaphorical depiction of obsession and taboo; intense sensory emphasis
<i>Candidate for the Post of City God</i>	《考城隍》	461	Satirical treatment of religious belief and bureaucracy; evaluative and judgement-oriented language; dreamlike narrative framing moral reasoning; dense use of poetic idioms

B. Translation Systems and Prompt Design

Three translation systems were examined in this study: ChatGPT (GPT-5.2) as a representative large language model, and Google Translate and Youdao Translate as NMT systems based on encoder–decoder architectures. The two NMT systems rely on large-scale parallel corpora and demonstrate strong performance in general-purpose translation tasks but remain limited in preserving stylistic nuance, discourse coherence, and cultural references in literary texts. By contrast, ChatGPT is based on a decoder-only Transformer architecture and incorporates reinforcement learning from human feedback, enabling stronger contextual modelling and adaptive language generation (Christiano et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2022). Its output is highly sensitive to prompt design, making prompting strategies a critical factor in determining translation quality. To examine the role of prompting, two prompt conditions were employed. Prompt 1 was a standard prompt consisting of a direct instruction to translate the source text into English without additional contextual or stylistic guidance. Prompt 2 was an enhanced prompt that guided the model to first interpret the semantic and symbolic content of the text and then produce a style-adaptive translation that preserved literary rhythm, metaphor, and cultural imagery. This two-stage prompt design integrates advanced prompting strategies, such as chain-of-thought and related multi-step decomposition methods, which have been shown to enhance output coherence and other qualitative aspects in LLMs (Gozzi & Di Maio, 2024).

To support transparency and reproducibility, representative prompt formulations are provided. Prompt 1 used a minimal instruction, asking the model to translate a classical Chinese literary text into English. Prompt 2 added historical context, thematic framing, and stylistic constraints to guide the translation process more explicitly. This controlled variation establishes well-defined experimental conditions, allowing system performance to be compared while isolating the effects of structured prompt guidance on translation quality.

The exact prompt formulations used in the experiments are reported below in order to document the input conditions.

Prompt 1 consisted solely of the instruction:

“Translate the following classical Chinese literary text into English.”

Prompt 2 required the model to carry out a sequence of internal analytical operations before producing a translation:

Step 1: Semantic interpretation.

Identify the core events, characters, and causal relations in the text. Summarise the central narrative meaning in neutral terms, without introducing interpretation beyond what is implied by the text itself.

Step 2: Cultural and symbolic reasoning.

Identify culturally embedded concepts, symbolic imagery, idiomatic expressions, and historically grounded references present in the text. Explain how these elements function within the narrative context, drawing only on information available in the source text.

Step 3: Stylistic and rhetorical analysis.

Analyse the dominant narrative tone, rhetorical structure, and literary style of the original text, including features such as narrative rhythm, figurative language, evaluative stance, and moral implication.

Step 4: Translation.

On the basis of the preceding analysis, produce a fluent and coherent English literary translation that preserves the original meaning, stylistic tone, and cultural resonance.

The model was instructed to output only the final English translation.

The overall design is consistent with recent developments in interactive MT using LLMs (Wang, 2025) and supports systematic analysis of how prompt engineering shapes semantic reasoning and stylistic simulation in literary translation (Kulkarni et al., 2023).

C. Evaluation Metrics and Dimensions

In this study, translation quality was evaluated across four dimensions: semantic alignment, fluency, stylistic fidelity, and MT style detectability. Semantic alignment was measured using BLEU and BERTScore, which capture surface-level overlap and contextual semantic similarity with reference translations, respectively (Papineni et al., 2002; Zhang et al., 2019). Fluency was assessed through human judgement, with evaluators focusing on grammatical well-formedness and overall readability. BLEU and BERTScore were reported alongside these judgements as complementary automatic indicators of similarity (Papineni et al., 2002; Zhang et al., 2019).

Stylistic fidelity and MT style detectability were evaluated manually. Stylistic fidelity concerned the extent to which translations preserved literary tone, rhetorical structure, and cultural context, with particular attention to narrative and poetic expression (Jing et al., 2019). MT style detectability focused on the presence of mechanical, formulaic, or templated linguistic patterns, with lower scores indicating output perceived as more human-like (Aharoni et al., 2014).

To improve interpretability and balance across evaluation dimensions, a hybrid framework was adopted. Automatic metrics offered efficient and reproducible assessments of surface-level quality, while expert human evaluation addressed rhetorical, contextual, and aesthetic features that remain difficult for automated measures to capture reliably (Toral & Way, 2018; Lau et al., 2024). Manual scoring criteria drew on principles from MT-assisted language learning research, including rhetorical coherence, intonational plausibility, cultural reproduction, and linguistic naturalness (Deng & Yu, 2022).

BLEU scores were calculated using the SacreBLEU Python library with default settings and four-gram overlap, and were reported on a 0–100 scale (Post, 2018). BERTScore was computed using the official implementation with the RoBERTa-large encoder and inverse document frequency rescaling. Manual evaluations employed a five-point Likert scale for both stylistic fidelity and MT style detectability. Automatic and human evaluation results were reported separately but interpreted jointly in order to provide complementary perspectives on translation quality.

The selection of these four dimensions reflects both the practical demands of literary translation and recent calls for more comprehensive, behaviour-oriented evaluation paradigms in natural language processing (Ribeiro et al., 2020). Taken together, they capture semantic accuracy, linguistic naturalness, stylistic depth, and perceived human likeness in translated literary texts.

D. Expert Evaluation Protocol

Expert evaluation was conducted to address the limitations of automatic metrics in capturing literary tone and stylistic nuance. Two dimensions were assessed: stylistic fidelity and MT style detectability. Evaluations were carried out using a five-point Likert scale ranging from very poor to excellent. All source texts were translated in full, and each translation was assessed in its entirety.

Initial scoring was undertaken by the research team. To ensure reliability and consistency, three bilingual scholars with professional expertise in translation studies or comparative literature independently reviewed and validated the scores. These reviewers did not assign new ratings but assessed the coherence and consistency of the existing evaluations against standardised guidelines. Any discrepancies exceeding two points were resolved through discussion prior to finalising the scores.

To reduce potential evaluation bias, assessments were conducted under double-blind conditions. All system identifiers and prompt information were removed, and evaluators were unaware of the translation source. Final scores for each system output were calculated as the mean of the validated ratings.

The evaluation process did not involve human participants, personal data collection, or physiological measurement. All assessments were based solely on anonymised textual materials.

E. Data Collection and Statistical Procedures

ChatGPT under two prompt conditions, Google Translate, and Youdao Translate were used to generate English translations of the selected tales, yielding a total of twenty complete translation samples. Each translation was evaluated using the four predefined dimensions described above. BLEU and BERTScore were employed as automatic indicators of semantic alignment and fluency, while stylistic fidelity and MT style detectability were assessed through expert manual scoring.

To examine overall differences between systems under the standard prompt condition, a one-way analysis of variance was performed. Within-system comparisons for ChatGPT under Prompt 1 and Prompt 2 were analysed using paired t tests. In addition, a linear mixed-effects model was constructed to account for random variation associated with source text and rater identity, with translation system and prompt type specified as fixed effects. Model specification followed the recommendations of Barr et al. (2013), with the alpha threshold set at 0.2 to balance statistical power and control of Type I error (Matuschek et al., 2017).

All analyses were conducted on anonymised textual data. No personal data were collected.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Overall System Performance

Across all evaluation dimensions, ChatGPT outperformed the two NMT systems, Google Translate and Youdao Translate. For cross-system comparisons, the ChatGPT results reported in this section are based on outputs generated

under Prompt 2 (the context-enriched prompt), which was identified as the model's most effective configuration in the automatic evaluation (see Table 2).

As illustrated in Figure 1, performance was compared across four dimensions—semantic alignment, fluency, stylistic fidelity, and MT style detectability—for ChatGPT under both prompt conditions (Prompt 1 and Prompt 2), as well as for Google Translate and Youdao Translate. Figure 1 presents aggregated expert ratings across all systems and conditions, providing an overview of relative performance patterns.

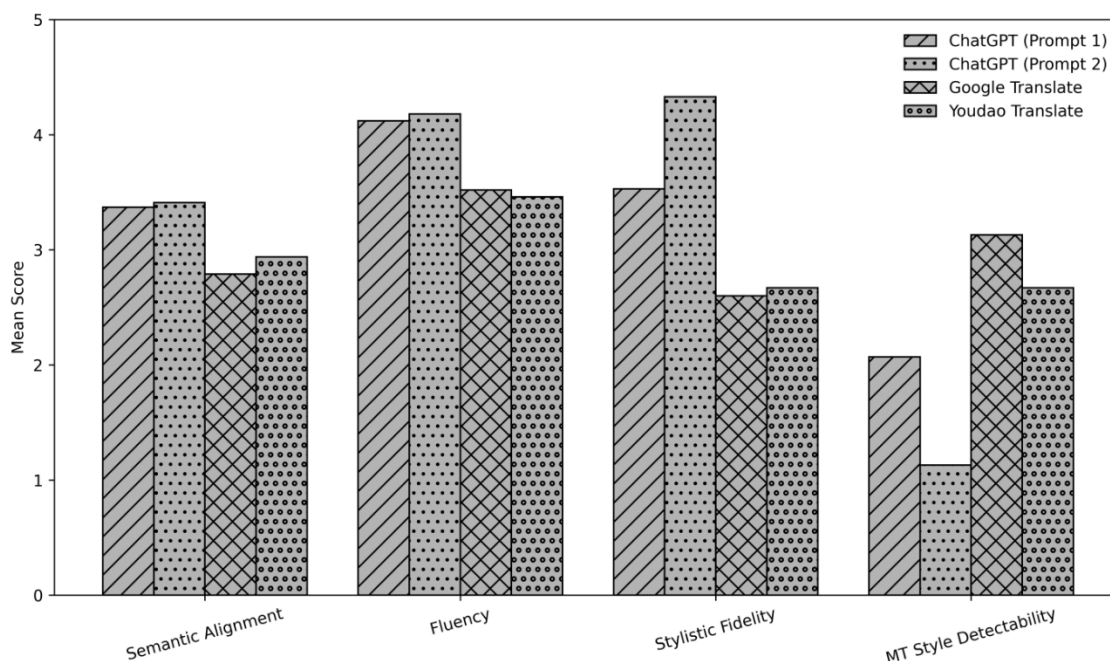


Figure 1. Expert Evaluation Results of Translation Quality Across Systems and Evaluation Dimensions

With respect to semantic alignment and fluency, expert evaluators relied on qualitative judgement informed by close reading and comparative interpretation rather than numerical scoring. Across the texts examined, ChatGPT outputs were consistently judged to display stronger discourse coherence, smoother information flow, and more contextually appropriate reconstruction of source meaning than those produced by Google Translate and Youdao Translate. By contrast, the NMT systems more frequently exhibited fragmented semantic relations and weaker sensitivity to implicit narrative context, particularly in passages containing culturally specific references.

Quantitative expert ratings reinforce these qualitative observations (Matuschek et al., 2017). For stylistic fidelity, ChatGPT under Prompt 2 achieved the highest mean score ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.49$), substantially exceeding the scores for Google Translate ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.51$) and Youdao Translate ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.49$). A one-way analysis of variance confirmed a statistically significant effect of system type on stylistic fidelity, $F(2, 42) = 59.18$, $p < 0.001$. This result indicates a markedly stronger capacity on the part of ChatGPT to preserve literary tone, rhythmic patterning, and stylistic features characteristic of classical Chinese prose.

A comparable pattern emerged for MT style detectability, where lower scores correspond to translations that are less readily perceived as machine-generated. ChatGPT under Prompt 2 recorded the lowest mean detectability score ($M = 1.13$, $SD = 0.35$), compared with Google Translate ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.64$) and Youdao Translate ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.49$). The effect of system type was again statistically significant, $F(2, 42) = 63.86$, $p < 0.001$, suggesting that ChatGPT outputs contain fewer mechanical or formulaic features typically associated with NMT.

Results from automatic evaluation further support these findings. As reported in Table 2, ChatGPT, particularly under the context-enriched prompt condition (Prompt 2), achieved higher average BLEU and BERTScore values across the classical texts. These scores indicate stronger surface-level semantic overlap and embedding-based similarity with the reference translations. Consistent with previous research, however, automatic metrics remain limited in their ability to capture stylistic nuance and cultural resonance, underscoring the importance of complementary expert evaluation.

TABLE 2
AUTOMATIC EVALUATION RESULTS

System	BLEU	BERTScore
ChatGPT (Prompt 1: standard prompt)	15.2	0.789
ChatGPT (Prompt 2: context-enriched prompt)	14.8	0.795
Google Translate	15.3	0.664
Youdao Translate	13.9	0.703

B. Effect of Prompt Design on ChatGPT Performance

As Google Translate and Youdao Translate do not support prompt-controlled input, the impact of prompt design was examined solely within ChatGPT by comparing outputs generated under Prompt 1 (standard prompt) and Prompt 2 (context-enriched prompt).

Expert evaluations indicate that prompt design has a pronounced effect on dimensions requiring higher-level interpretive judgement. For stylistic fidelity, translations produced under Prompt 2 were consistently rated more highly than those generated under Prompt 1, reflecting stronger preservation of literary tone, stylistic features, and rhetorical coherence. A similar pattern was observed for MT style detectability, with Prompt 2 yielding lower detectability scores, suggesting a reduced presence of mechanical or formulaic linguistic patterns commonly associated with machine-generated translation.

By contrast, automatic evaluation metrics reveal only modest differences between the two prompt configurations. As shown in Table 2, ChatGPT achieved a BLEU score of 15.2 under Prompt 1 and 14.8 under Prompt 2, while BERTScore increased slightly from 0.789 to 0.795. These small variations suggest that context-enriched prompting does not substantially affect surface-level semantic overlap or embedding-based similarity with reference translations, and may involve minor trade-offs in n-gram overlap.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the principal contribution of context-enriched prompting lies not in improving surface-level accuracy as captured by automatic metrics, but in supporting higher-order stylistic reconstruction and cultural adaptation, as reflected in expert judgement. Explicit cultural and contextual guidance appears to enable ChatGPT to move beyond baseline linguistic competence and more closely approximate human literary translation practices.

C. Dimension-Based Case Analysis

To illustrate system differences while maintaining analytical conciseness, one representative case is presented for each evaluation dimension.

(a). Semantic Alignment

A representative example was drawn from *Fox Girl Qingfeng*, focusing on the culturally embedded expression ‘秋波流慧’. Both Google Translate and Youdao Translate rendered the phrase as ‘bright and intelligent eyes’, which conveys the basic propositional meaning but fails to capture its metaphorical richness. ChatGPT under Prompt 1 produced ‘her intelligent eyes shone with wisdom’, partially restoring figurative nuance. Under Prompt 2, the phrase was translated as ‘her gaze filled with an ethereal intelligence’, offering a more effective reconstruction of metaphor and cultural resonance. This example illustrates ChatGPT’s stronger capacity for context-sensitive semantic alignment in literary discourse.

(b). Fluency

Fluency was examined using a long, verb-dense sentence from *The Cricket*. Google Translate and Youdao Translate preserved core propositional content but generated syntactically rigid and rhythmically uneven output. ChatGPT under Prompt 1 improved clause variation and logical cohesion, while Prompt 2 further refined narrative rhythm by reshaping sentence flow into more natural literary prose. This case highlights ChatGPT’s advantage in managing sentence rhythm and discourse coherence in the translation of classical narrative texts.

(c). Stylistic Fidelity

Stylistic fidelity was analysed through a symbolic passage from *The Cricket* involving ritualised action and narrative suspense. The NMT outputs were semantically adequate but stylistically flat, lacking allegorical tone and atmospheric tension. ChatGPT under Prompt 1 preserved narrative pacing but remained stylistically restrained. By contrast, Prompt 2 achieved a closer approximation of the source text’s symbolic cadence and tonal restraint, demonstrating improved stylistic fidelity through controlled elaboration.

(d). MT Style Detectability

MT style detectability was illustrated using a concise emotional statement from *Candidate for the Post of City God*. The NMT systems produced literal translations with clear traces of structural alignment to the source text. ChatGPT under Prompt 1 reduced some mechanical features but remained closely tied to source structure. Prompt 2 generated a more idiomatic and rhetorically elevated rendering, substantially reducing the detectability of machine-generated style. At the same time, this example highlights the need to balance stylistic enhancement with semantic discipline, as excessive elaboration may introduce elements not fully grounded in the source text.

D. Interim Summary

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative analyses indicate that ChatGPT consistently outperforms traditional NMT systems in semantic alignment, fluency, stylistic fidelity, and MT style detectability when translating classical Chinese literature. While enhanced prompting does not substantially affect surface-level accuracy, it markedly improves stylistic reconstruction and cultural sensitivity. These findings underscore the importance of prompt design as a key mechanism for aligning large language model translation output with the norms and expectations of literary translation.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study examined the performance of ChatGPT and two widely used NMT systems, Google Translate and Youdao Translate, in translating four short tales from *Liaozhaizhiyi* across four dimensions: semantic alignment, fluency, stylistic fidelity, and MT style detectability. The findings show that ChatGPT consistently outperforms the two NMT systems across all dimensions, with particularly marked advantages in stylistic fidelity and MT style detectability. To account for these differences, this section interprets the results from several perspectives, including underlying model mechanisms, prompt design strategies, structural limitations of conventional NMT systems, and insights derived from the case-based analysis.

A. Sources of ChatGPT's Translation Advantages

ChatGPT's stronger performance in literary translation can be attributed primarily to its capacity for contextual modelling and flexible language generation as a large language model (Brown et al., 2020; Karpinska & Iyyer, 2023). Training techniques such as reinforcement learning with human feedback and the use of chain-of-thought-style reasoning contribute to its ability to handle ambiguous metaphors, culturally embedded expressions, and stylistic nuance (Wei et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2024). Under Prompt 2, the structured, context-enriched design explicitly engages processes of semantic interpretation and stylistic reconstruction, resulting in marked improvements in stylistic fidelity and cultural adaptation. These mechanisms allow ChatGPT to represent narrative shifts and symbolic imagery more effectively, elements that are central to the literary texture of *Liaozhaizhiyi*.

B. Structural Limitations of NMT Systems

By contrast, Google Translate and Youdao Translate rely primarily on encoder-decoder architectures trained on large-scale parallel corpora. Although effective for general-purpose translation, such systems face structural limitations when applied to literary genres characterised by symbolic language, classical syntax, and culturally specific rhetoric. The recurrent production of stylistically flat output, template-like constructions, and semantically simplified renderings observed in the translations reflects these constraints (Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2022; Karpinska & Iyyer, 2023). For example, the expression ‘母年七十无所依倚’ in *Candidate for the Post of City God* was translated as a neutral statement of information, failing to convey the Confucian ethical framework and emotional restraint embedded in the original narrative.

C. Mechanism and Risks of Prompt Strategy

Prompt design plays a central role in shaping the performance of LLM-based translation. In this study, Prompt 2, which combines chain-of-thought-style reasoning with a least-to-most structure, proved effective in enhancing textual coherence and cultural embedding (Zhang et al., 2023). At the same time, the analysis highlights potential risks associated with high-flexibility prompting strategies. In some instances, ChatGPT produced stylistically elaborate renderings that introduced details not fully supported by the source text, resulting in overly literary output and reduced semantic fidelity. This tendency reflects the broader risk of hallucination associated with generative models and underscores the importance of maintaining balanced prompt constraints when translating culturally sensitive literary material (Zhang et al., 2019).

D. Implications From Case-Based Analysis

Analysis of representative passages characterised by dense cultural and rhetorical features indicates that ChatGPT under Prompt 2 performs most strongly in stylistic fidelity and MT style detectability. Under this configuration, the model is better able to reconstruct emotionally charged and culturally nuanced expressions, effectively conveying themes such as moral conflict, compassion, and reversals of fate that are central to classical Chinese narrative. At the same time, the comparatively stable semantic performance of the NMT systems contrasts with their recurrent stylistic flattening and distortion, reinforcing limitations identified in earlier work (Toral & Way, 2018). Taken together, these findings extend recent discussions on the role of prompt mechanisms in translation tasks involving high levels of cultural embedding (Lau et al., 2024).

E. Practical Prospects and Future Research Directions

Although this study concentrates on classical narrative prose, the applicability of LLM-based translation to other genres remains to be examined systematically. This includes poetry, low-resource languages, and texts with complex syntactic or rhetorical structures. Future work could explore adaptive prompt designs, cross-linguistic transferability of prompt strategies, and hybrid translation workflows that incorporate human post-editing. Further research is also needed to assess the role of LLM-based translation systems in educational settings, cultural dissemination, and broader forms of cross-cultural communication. Taken together, the prompt enhancement approach examined in this study offers a practical avenue for improving LLM performance in culturally embedded literary translation and provides a methodological reference point for subsequent empirical research and system development.

V. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the performance of ChatGPT and two widely used NMT systems, Google Translate and Youdao Translate, in translating four classical narrative tales from *Liaozhaizhiyi*. Translation quality was assessed across four dimensions: semantic alignment, fluency, stylistic fidelity, and MT style detectability. The findings indicate that ChatGPT consistently outperforms the traditional NMT systems across all dimensions, with particularly pronounced advantages in stylistic fidelity and MT style detectability.

Further analysis demonstrates that the structured, context-enriched prompt (Prompt 2) plays a decisive role in enhancing ChatGPT's capacity to reconstruct literary style and cultural nuance. By explicitly guiding semantic interpretation and stylistic reconstruction, this prompt strategy reduces mechanical language patterns while improving aesthetic quality and cultural resonance in translated literary texts. These results support the practical effectiveness of chain-of-thought reasoning and least-to-most prompting in complex literary translation tasks. At the same time, the findings also indicate that context-enriched prompting may introduce risks of excessive rhetorical elaboration or source-unsupported additions in certain cases. This underscores the need to balance stylistic enrichment with semantic fidelity and interpretive discipline.

The primary limitation of this study lies in its exclusive focus on classical narrative prose, without extending the analysis to other challenging text types such as poetry, low-resource languages, or abstract philosophical writing. Future research could examine adaptive prompt strategies across genres, cross-linguistic transferability, and hybrid translation workflows that incorporate human post-editing. Overall, the stylistic sensitivity and cross-cultural expressive capacity demonstrated by ChatGPT point to the broader potential of large language models as tools for the international dissemination of Chinese literary heritage and for fostering cross-cultural understanding. With carefully calibrated prompt design and output control, LLM-based translation systems may become an important technical medium for cross-linguistic literary exchange and global cultural communication.

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The Use of Metaphors in Paremiological Units of English, Russian, and Kazakh Languages: A Study Based on the Thematic Group "Labor-Idleness"

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Abstract—This study investigates metaphorical functions in proverbs related to *labor* and *idleness* across three languages: English, Russian, and Kazakh. A corpus of 17 semantically equivalent proverbs was selected and analyzed through a comparative qualitative approach, drawing on the theoretical framework of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Kharchenko's classification of metaphorical functions. The findings reveal both universal and culture-specific patterns: English proverbs emphasize individual responsibility and rational pragmatism, Russian proverbs highlight collective values and moral lessons, while Kazakh proverbs embody the nomadic worldview, pastoral imagery, and ethical-religious undertones. The study demonstrates that metaphor in proverbs functions not only as a cognitive and linguistic device but also as a cultural code shaping attitudes toward work and idleness. These insights contribute to cross-cultural paremiology and cognitive linguistics, offering implications for translation studies, language teaching, and intercultural communication.

Index Terms—proverbs, metaphor, labor, idleness, cross-cultural comparison

I. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are integral to the comprehension and interpretation of paremiological units, such as proverbs and sayings. Since Aristotle's definition of metaphor as a transfer of meaning by analogy (Bywater, 2018), scholars have emphasized its role as a fundamental cognitive mechanism (Quine, 1977; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010). Proverbs, as condensed forms of folk wisdom, rely heavily on metaphorical mappings that encapsulate not only linguistic creativity but also culturally specific worldviews. As Pishghadam (2013, 2024) notes, language embodies "culturing," or cultural memes that are transmitted across generations through proverbs, sayings, and literature.

Previous research in paremiology has highlighted the cognitive, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions of metaphor. Comparative studies have explored metaphorical representations of key cultural domains such as wealth (Bredis, 2024), taxation (Ulisko, 2017), gender (Ramanova et al., 2024; Dabbagh & Babaii, 2023), and education (Wołńciej & Paul,

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2019). These investigations demonstrate that metaphorical language in proverbs functions simultaneously as a cognitive model, a cultural code, and an instructional tool. Moreover, cross-linguistic analyses (Galieva, 2021; Ramlan, 2021; Alyoshin & Zinovieva, 2021) have revealed both universal patterns and culture-specific variations in the metaphorical conceptualization of human experience.

However, despite the growing body of literature, relatively little attention has been paid to the metaphorical conceptualization of labor and idleness, particularly in a trilingual comparative perspective. This semantic domain is central to cultural identity, reflecting values of diligence, responsibility, and morality, yet its representation across languages remains underexplored. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing proverbs related to labor and idleness in English, Russian, and Kazakh. The choice of these languages is motivated by Kazakhstan's unique trilingual context, where Kazakh functions as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as the global lingua franca.

The study aims to identify the metaphorical functions of proverbs related to labor and idleness across the three languages, to determine both universal conceptual tendencies and culture-specific patterns, and to highlight the cultural values encoded in these proverbial metaphors. By integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) with cultural-linguistic perspectives, this research contributes to cross-cultural paremiology, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of metaphor has undergone a profound transformation since the publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's groundbreaking work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). Their conceptual metaphor theory established a fundamentally new perspective, arguing that metaphors are not peripheral ornaments of speech but central cognitive mechanisms that shape human thought, perception, and communication. This theoretical stance positions metaphor as a structural principle of human cognition, whereby abstract concepts are understood and organized through mappings from more concrete, embodied domains of experience.

At the core of Lakoff and Johnson's framework lies the concept of **conceptual metaphors**, which demonstrate that human beings do not merely *use* metaphors but actually *live by them*. Expressions such as *time is money* or *life is a journey* are not linguistic coincidences; rather, they reflect underlying mental models through which individuals perceive and interpret reality. Such metaphors, therefore, constitute the foundation of cognitive activity, guiding the way speakers of a language conceptualize relationships, events, and experiences.

Another essential dimension of the theory emphasizes the role of **embodiment** in metaphorical thought. Human bodily experiences, such as verticality, movement, and spatial orientation, form the basis for metaphorical mappings. For instance, metaphors like *prices are rising* or *spirits have lifted* are rooted in the bodily perception of upward movement as a symbol of control, positivity, or authority. This embodiment principle highlights the inextricable link between the physical and the cognitive, suggesting that abstract reasoning is always grounded in lived experience.

Equally significant is the recognition of **cultural variation** in metaphorical frameworks. While some metaphors, such as *life is a journey*, are prevalent in Western contexts, other cultures may employ alternative conceptualizations, shaped by their own historical, social, and ecological realities. This observation underscores the necessity of cross-cultural analysis in order to reveal both universal and culture-specific patterns in metaphorical thought.

Alongside conceptual metaphor theory, research in Russian and post-Soviet linguistics has provided a rich functional perspective on metaphor. Notably, Kharchenko (1991) identifies metaphors as multivalent semiotic tools capable of performing a wide array of linguistic and communicative functions. She enumerates fifteen distinct metaphorical functions, ranging from the nominative and informative to the emotional-appraisal, ethical, heuristic, and traditional. This classification shifts attention from metaphor as a purely cognitive phenomenon to its diverse pragmatic roles in discourse, thereby complementing Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive model.

For example, the **nominative function** illustrates how metaphors facilitate lexical innovation, especially in the language of children or in terminology related to plants and animals. The **informative** and **mnemonic** functions demonstrate the pedagogical and memory-enhancing roles of metaphor, often evident in scientific literature and proverbial wisdom. Equally important are the **style-making** and **genre-making** functions, which highlight the contribution of metaphor to literary expression, from fiction to lyrical poetry. Other functions, such as the **heuristic** and **interpretative**, underscore the epistemological significance of metaphor in shaping new scientific concepts and discoveries.

Furthermore, Kharchenko's identification of the **emotional-appraisal** and **ethical** functions foregrounds the evaluative potential of metaphor in transmitting values and emotional states. Meanwhile, the **coding** and **secretive** functions show how metaphor condenses complex ideas or deliberately obscures meaning, as in riddles and esoteric discourse. Finally, the **traditional** function reveals the conventionalization of metaphor in stable communicative genres such as greetings and condolences. Importantly, Kharchenko stresses that metaphors in proverbs rarely operate in isolation; instead, they often combine multiple functions simultaneously, thereby enriching the interpretative depth of proverbial language.

These insights resonate with the position advanced by Telia (1996), who conceptualizes metaphor as a dynamic word-formation model. For Telia, metaphors act both "privately" and "non-standardly" in the language, serving as a

creative mechanism for generating new meanings. Her view reinforces the notion that metaphor is not a static figure but a productive linguistic process, bridging cognitive, cultural, and pragmatic dimensions of communication. Taken together, these approaches establish a robust theoretical foundation for the present study. The cognitive orientation of Lakoff and Johnson provides the necessary tools for understanding how proverbs reflect universal patterns of conceptualization through embodied metaphors. Simultaneously, the functional classifications of Kharchenko and the creative perspective of Telia offer valuable insights into the pragmatic and stylistic roles of metaphors within specific cultural traditions.

In this research, the integration of cognitive and functional frameworks enables a comparative analysis of proverbs in English, Russian, and Kazakh. These three languages, belonging to distinct cultural and linguistic traditions, provide fertile ground for examining both universal metaphorical mappings and culturally specific expressions. English proverbs, rooted in Western individualism and rationalist traditions, often emphasize linearity and progress through metaphors such as *life is a journey*. Russian proverbs, shaped by Orthodox Christian and communal values, reveal metaphors of endurance, fate, and morality. Kazakh proverbs, grounded in nomadic culture and oral tradition, display metaphors linked to nature, livestock, and collective wisdom.

By situating the study at the intersection of cognitive and functional theories of metaphor, this framework not only highlights the multifaceted role of metaphor in language and thought but also demonstrates the importance of cultural context in shaping metaphorical expression. The synthesis of these perspectives ensures a comprehensive understanding of the metaphorical imagery and functions of proverbs across English, Russian, and Kazakh languages, thereby advancing both theoretical and applied dimensions of metaphor research.

III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach to analyze metaphorical functions in proverbs related to labor and idleness. The research was conducted in several stages:

1. Data Selection

A corpus of 17 semantically equivalent proverbs was compiled from English, Russian, and Kazakh. The choice of these three languages was motivated by Kazakhstan's unique trilingual context, where Kazakh serves as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as a global lingua franca. This sociolinguistic situation provides a valuable framework for cross-cultural analysis. Proverbs were selected on the basis of their semantic equivalence, i.e., they expressed comparable ideas about diligence, work, laziness, or idleness. Kazakh proverbs were taken from *Proverbs in the archive* by outstanding Kazakh academician Sarybayev (2023), Russian proverbs from *Dictionary of Russian proverbs and sayings* by Seryakov (2005), and English proverbs from *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* edited by Simpson and Speake (2008).

2. Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Kharchenko's (2017) classification of metaphorical functions in proverbs. This framework made it possible to identify both the cognitive and cultural dimensions of metaphor.

3. Procedure

Each set of proverbs was examined according to:

- their metaphorical imagery and conceptual mappings;
- the functions assigned to metaphor (didactic, evaluative, ethical, pragmatic);
- cultural and worldview-specific features encoded in the language.

4. Comparative Analysis

The results were compared across the three languages to reveal universal conceptual tendencies as well as culture-specific differences in framing labor and idleness.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before analysis we perform seventeen proverbs and sayings with similar meanings but different form of metaphorical representation:

TABLE 1
ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND KAZAKH PROVERBS ON THE TOPIC 'LABOR-IDLENESS' AND METAPHOR FUNCTIONS

English proverbs	Metaphor function	Russian proverbs	Metaphor function	Kazakh proverbs	Metaphor function
1. Four eyes are better than two.	informative	Две головы лучше, чем одна. Latin transliteration: Dve golovy luchshe, chem odna English translation: Two heads are better than one	informative	Келісіп пішкен тон келте болмас. Latin transliteration: Kelisip pishken ton kelte bolmas. English translation: The sheepskin coat that was sewn together will not be short	ethical
2. A good deed never	informative	Добрые дела живут вечно. Latin transliteration: Dobrye dela	informative	Ігіліктің ерте кеші жоқ. Latin transliteration: Igiliqtıñ erte	informative

goes unpunished.		zhivut vechno. English translation: Good deeds live forever		keşi joq. English translation: There is no early or late for goodness.	
3. All things are difficult before they are easy.	mnemonic	Всякое начало трудно. Latin transliteration: Vsyakoe nachalo trudno English translation: Every beginning is difficult	mnemonic	Басы қатты болса, аяғы тәтті болады Latin transliteration: Basy qatty bolsa, aiaǵy tätti bolady English translation: If the beginning is severe, the end will be sweet.	mnemonic
4. A bad shearer never had a good sickle.	ethical	Мастер глуп - нож туп. Latin transliteration: Master glup - nozh tup English translation: The master is stupid - the knife is dull	game	Орақшының жаманы орақ таңдайды. Latin transliteration: Oraqsynyñ jamany oraq tañdaidy English translation: A bad reaper takes a long time to choose his sickle	informative
5. He that would eat the fruit must climb the tree.	ethical	Любишь кататься, люби и саночки возить Latin transliteration: Lyubish' katar'sya, lyubi i sanochki vozit' English translation: If you love to ride, you must love to carry the sled.	ethical	Еңбегіне қарай өңбегі. Latin transliteration: Eñbegine qarai õñbegi. English translation: You reap what you sow	mnemonic
6. Diligence is the mother of success.	mnemonic	Терпение и труд все перетрут. Latin transliteration: Terpenie i trud vse peretrut. English translation: Patience and hard work will grind everything down.	mnemonic	Еңбек етсең – емерсің, ерінбесең – жеңерсің. Latin transliteration: Eñbek etseñ – emersıñ, erınbeseñ – jeñersıñ. English translation: If you work, you will eat, if you're not lazy, you will win.	mnemonic
7. The burden of one's own choice is not felt.	self-sustaining	Своя ноша не тянет. Latin transliteration: Svoya nosha ne tyanet. English translation: Your own burden is not heavy.	self-sustaining	Өзіңнің ісің мақтадай жеңіл, кісінің ісі тастай ауыр. Latin transliteration: Öziñniñ isıñ maqtadaı jeñıl, kısıniñ ısı tastai auyr. English translation: Your work is as light as cotton, but the work of others is as heavy as a stone.	self-sustaining
8. A lazy sheep thinks its wool heavy.	game	Ленивой лошади и хвост в тягость Latin transliteration: Lenivoj loshadi i hvost v tyagost' English translation: A lazy horse's tail is a burden	game	Жалқаудың жанына барсаң, Сылтаудың астында қаласың. Latin transliteration: Jalquadyñ janyına barsañ, Syltaudyñ astynda qalasyñ. English translation: If you approach a lazy person, you will remain under excuses.	game
9. He that fears every bush must never go birdwatching.	game	Не ходи в лес, коли зайца боишься. Latin transliteration: Ne hodi v les, koli zajca boish'sya. English translation: Don't go into the forest if you're afraid of the hare.	game	Шымшықтан қорыққан тары екпес. Latin transliteration: Şymşyqtan qoryqqan tary ekpes. English translation: Those who are afraid of birds will not plant millet.	game
10. Better to do well than to say well.	ethical	Визга много, а шерсти нет. Latin transliteration: Vizga mnogo, a shersti net. English translation: There's a lot of squealing, but no fur.	game	Ерді сөзіне қарап емес, ісіне қарап бағала. Latin transliteration: Erdı sözine qarap emes, isıne qarap baǵala. English translation: Judge a man by his actions, not by his words.	ethical
11. Easy come, easy go.	informative	Пришло махом - ушло прахом. Latin transliteration: Prishlo mahom - ushlo prahom. English translation: It came in one fell swoop - it went to waste.	game	Еңбексіз тапқан мал есепсіз кетеді. Latin transliteration: Eñbeksız tapqan mal esepsız ketedı. English translation: Livestock earned without labor will be lost without accounting.	informative
12. Every tub must stand on its own bottom.	game	Живи всяк своим умом да своим горбом. Latin transliteration: Zhivi vsyak svoim umom da svoim gorbom. English translation: Let everyone live by their own wits and their own hump.	game	Дирменді өзің тарт, базарыңды өзің қыл. Latin transliteration: Diirmendı öziñ tart, bazaryñdy öziñ qyl. English translation: Pull your own millstone, make your own market.	game
13. He that will thrive,	ethical	Рано вставши, больше работает.	ethical	Ерте тұрған жігіттің, Ырысы артық; Ерте тұрған қатынның,	ethical

must rise at five.		Latin transliteration: Rano vstavshi, bol'she narabotaet. English translation: The early riser gets more work done.		Бір ісі артық. Latin transliteration: Erte tūrğan jıgıttıñ, Yrсы артық; Erte tūrğan qatynnyñ, Бір ісі артық. English translation: A man who gets up early, has more wealth; A woman who gets up early, has one more thing to do.	
14. Honour and profit lie not in one sack.	informative	Честным трудом богат не будешь. Latin transliteration: Chestnym trdom bogat ne budesh'. English translation: You can't get rich by honest work.	self-sustaining	Адал еңбекпен мал таппас. Latin transliteration: Adal eñbekpen mal tappas. English translation: One cannot acquire cattle (wealth) through honest labor.	ethical
15. Idleness is the mother of all evil.	informative	У лентяя Федорки всегда отговори. Latin transliteration: U lentyaya Fedorki vseгда otgovorki. English translation: Lazy Fedorka always has excuses.	game	Жалқаудың ертеңі бітпес Latin transliteration: Jalquadyñ erteñi bitpes English translation: A lazy person's "tomorrow" never ends.	game
16. Everything comes to him who waits.	self-sustaining	Терпение и труд все перетрут. Latin transliteration: Terpenie i trud vse peretrut. English translation: Patience and hard work will grind everything down.	self-sustaining	Сабыр түбі-сары алтын. Latin transliteration: Sabyr tübi-sary altyn. English translation: The result of patience is pure gold.	self-sustaining
17. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.	ethical	Никогда не откладывай на завтра то, что можно сделать сегодня. Latin transliteration: Nikogda ne otkladyvaj na zavtra to, chto možhno sdelat' segodnya. English translation: Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.	ethical	Бүгінгі істі ертеңге қалдырма. Latin transliteration: Bügingi isti erteñge qaldyrma. English translation: Don't put off today's work until tomorrow.	ethical

Proverbs 1: The first three proverbs emphasize the value of collective intelligence, cooperation, and advice. They suggest that joint efforts and the exchange of opinions lead to better decision-making. The English proverb *"Four eyes are better than two"* highlights the importance of an additional perspective, metaphorically referring to assistance and support. The Russian proverb *"Two heads are better than one"* underscores the significance of multiple minds, as two people can generate more solutions than one. The Kazakh proverb *"Kelisip pishken ton kelte bolmas"* (A coat tailored by agreement will not be too short) serves as a metaphor for discussion and collective decision-making, which results in an optimal outcome. The English proverb emphasizes "eyes," symbolizing observation and additional insight. The Russian proverb refers to "heads," alluding to intellect, reasoning, and analysis. The Kazakh proverb employs the imagery of tailoring, representing collaborative work and consensus. This aligns with the traditional Kazakh culture, where mutual agreement within the community is a fundamental principle.

Thus, while all three proverbs foreground collaboration, they draw upon different conceptual metaphors: *vision* (English), *intellect* (Russian), and *crafting* (Kazakh). In terms of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, these represent culturally specific mappings that structure how collective action is perceived.

Proverbs 2: At first glance, these proverbs convey a similar message; they emphasize the significance of good deeds. However, the English proverb carries an ironic undertone, while the Russian and Kazakh proverbs have a more positive connotation.

"A good deed never goes unpunished" (English proverb): Ironic meaning – good actions may lead to unforeseen negative consequences; this proverb is used in situations where a person performs a good deed but unexpectedly faces unfavorable outcomes.

"Добрые дела живут вечно" (Good deeds live forever) (Russian proverb): Straightforward and positive meaning: good actions leave a lasting impact on the world and people; it highlights the value and enduring nature of kindness.

"İgılıktıñ erte keşi joq" (There is no early or late time for a good deed) (Kazakh proverb): Good deeds are always appropriate and significant, regardless of timing and it emphasizes the process of doing good rather than the moment it occurs.

The English culture exhibits an element of realism and irony, possibly reflecting a pragmatic outlook on life. In Russian culture, there is an emphasis on eternal values, altruism, and moral legacy. The Kazakh culture, on the other hand, underscores the timeliness and naturalness of good deeds, aligning with traditional values of hospitality and mutual assistance. Although all three proverbs address the theme of good deeds, their metaphorical meanings differ:

The English proverb serves as a warning about unexpected consequences. The Russian proverb asserts the immortality of good actions. The Kazakh proverb highlights that goodness is always appropriate. This analysis illustrates how proverbs reflect cultural characteristics and moral perspectives in different societies. From the

perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, these represent divergent mappings of the abstract domain of *morality*: as *risk* (English), as *eternity* (Russian), and as *timeliness* (Kazakh).

Proverbs 3: All three proverbs convey the idea that any undertaking is initially difficult but, with time, effort, and practice, it becomes easier and yields results. The English proverb "*All things are difficult before they are easy*" employs a contrast between difficulty and ease, emphasizing the natural process of learning and adaptation. The Russian proverb "*Всякое начало трудно*" ("Every beginning is difficult") similarly highlights the initial stage as the most challenging but does not explicitly suggest subsequent ease. The Kazakh proverb "*Басы қатты болса, аяғы тәтті болады*" ("If the beginning is hard, the end will be sweet") employs a richer metaphorical image: the beginning is difficult, whereas the end is sweet, symbolizing the path to success through overcoming obstacles.

The English proverb reflects a pragmatic and universal approach, portraying difficulties as a natural stage preceding ease. The Russian proverb serves as a statement of fact, underscoring the inherent challenges of any beginning without necessarily promising future relief. The Kazakh proverb is rooted in the traditional nomadic way of life, where the initial stages of a journey or endeavor may be arduous, but the outcome brings joy and satisfaction. Despite differences in wording and cultural nuances, all three proverbs emphasize patience and the necessity of overcoming challenges to achieve success.

Proverbs 4: A metaphorical analysis of proverbs in English, Russian, and Kazakh reveals a common underlying meaning: an unskilled worker tends to blame their tools rather than acknowledge their own shortcomings. Let us examine the metaphors employed in each proverb.

"*A bad shearer never had a good sickle*" (English proverb): "Bad shearer" symbolizes an unskilled worker, while "good sickle" represents a high-quality tool, which form general meaning that an inexperienced or lazy worker will always find excuses for their failures, attributing them to external circumstances rather than their own incompetence.

"*Мастер глуп – нож туп*" (A foolish craftsman has a blunt knife) (Russian proverb): "Foolish craftsman" represents a person lacking skill, while "blunt knife" symbolizes poor work results or an excuse for incompetence. If a person lacks the necessary skills, they will blame their tools instead of recognizing their own inadequacy.

"*Орақшының жаманы орақ таңдайды*" (A bad harvester chooses the sickle) (Kazakh proverb): "Bad harvester" represents an unskilled person, while "choosing the tool" suggests searching for excuses instead of working. Those who lack skills tend to complain about their tools and seek ideal conditions rather than improving themselves.

All three proverbs employ the metaphor of a tool (sickle, knife, or scythe), representing an individual's skills and capabilities. The central idea is to avoid shifting responsibility to external factors and instead acknowledge one's own mistakes while striving for improvement. The English and Kazakh proverbs specifically mention a harvester's tool (sickle/scythe), whereas the Russian proverb is more universal, referring to a knife, making it applicable to various professions. Thus, despite differing cultural contexts, the meaning of all three proverbs remains the same: an inexperienced individual blames external circumstances rather than themselves. From the standpoint of conceptual metaphor theory, these proverbs embody the metaphor *failure is an external obstacle*, contrasted with the implicit moral that true mastery comes from internal skill, not external conditions.

Proverbs 5: All three proverbs convey the idea that effort is required to achieve a result (fruit, fish, harvest). They emphasize the connection between labor and reward. The English proverb ("He that would eat the fruit must climb the tree"): metaphor – the tree represents the path to success, while the fruit symbolizes the reward. Climbing signifies effort. The proverb presents a vivid and physical process – one must overcome an obstacle (climb) to reach the goal (fruit); the reward already exists (the fruit is hanging), but it must be attained through effort.

The Russian proverb ("*Без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда*." / "Without effort, you won't even pull a small fish out of a pond."): metaphor – the pond represents the sphere of labor, while the fish signifies the result. Pulling the fish out symbolizes the effort required. The result is hidden (the fish is underwater) and must be "retrieved," which necessitates work. Unlike the English version, this proverb emphasizes the process of labor itself rather than overcoming an obstacle.

The Kazakh proverb ("*Еңбегіне қарай өнбегі*." / "The yield depends on the labor."): metaphor – the harvest (*önbegi*) symbolizes the result, while labor (*eñbek*) represents effort. A farming metaphor highlights a cause-and-effect relationship: the more one sows, the more one reaps. The idea of direct dependence between effort and outcome is central to this saying.

So, the English proverb focuses on overcoming obstacles, the Russian proverb highlights the necessity of effort in the process of work, and the Kazakh proverb expresses the idea of natural retribution, one's results are directly proportional to one's labor. Despite cultural differences, these proverbs illustrate the universal value of hard work. However, the ways in which this idea is expressed depend on imagery familiar to each culture: trees (the West), fishing (Russia), and agriculture (Kazakhstan).

The English proverb illustrates Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) concept of metaphor as an obstacle-to-goal mapping, where effort is framed as overcoming barriers. The Russian proverb reflects Kharchenko's (2017) view of metaphor as emphasizing the processual function of labor rather than the outcome. The Kazakh proverb exemplifies the cultural-linguistic principle of cause-and-effect framing, where work and reward are directly proportional (Pishghadam, 2013).

Proverbs 6: All three proverbs emphasize the importance of hard work and perseverance. Success is regarded as a reward for persistence.

The English proverb, *"Diligence is the mother of success,"* employs a metaphor in which diligence is depicted as the "mother" of success, implying that success is born from persistent effort. In other words, hard work serves as the source that gives life to success, just as a mother gives life to a child.

The Kazakh proverb, *"Еңбек етсең – емерсің, ерінбесең – жеңерсің,"* conveys a similar idea through two distinct metaphors. The first part, *"Еңбек етсең – емерсің" (If you work hard, you will reap the results),* associates labor with harvest, symbolizing the fruits of one's efforts. The second part, *"ерінбесең – жеңерсің" (If you are not lazy, you will win),* links perseverance to victory, suggesting that psychological resilience leads to triumph. Thus, physical labor is metaphorically connected to reaping a harvest, while mental endurance is associated with overcoming challenges.

The Russian proverb, *"Терпение и труд всё перетрут" (Patience and hard work grind down all obstacles),* presents a metaphor where patience and labor are likened to a force capable of "grinding down" any barriers. This imagery highlights the gradual yet inevitable overcoming of difficulties through persistence.

Each proverb conveys a similar underlying message but utilizes distinct metaphors. The English proverb focuses on the origin of success, portraying it as the "offspring" of diligence. The Kazakh proverb introduces two separate metaphors – harvest (the outcome of labor) and victory (overcoming laziness). The Russian proverb emphasizes the process of overcoming obstacles through perseverance, depicting hard work as an unstoppable force that erodes difficulties over time. These variations reflect cultural perspectives: the English proverb highlights creation (success as a product of diligence), the Kazakh proverb underscores reward and triumph, while the Russian proverb emphasizes endurance and the power of persistence in overcoming hardships.

Proverbs 7: All three proverbs (See Table 1) convey the idea that people find difficulties easier to endure when they have chosen them themselves or when they are accustomed to a particular type of work. In contrast, unfamiliar tasks or responsibilities tend to seem more burdensome. The English proverb employs the metaphor of a "burden," which is associated with physical weight. However, the underlying meaning suggests that personal choices and responsibilities are perceived as less burdensome. The Russian proverb uses the term "ноша" (burden), similarly evoking the notion of physical weight, emphasizing that one's own duties feel lighter than those of others. The Kazakh proverb contrasts "мақтадай жеңіл" (light as cotton) with "тастай ауыр" (heavy as stone), which intensifies the contrast between personal and external responsibilities. The English version highlights the aspect of choice, aligning with an individualistic culture that places significant emphasis on personal responsibility. The Russian proverb reflects collectivist values, suggesting that one's own burdens feel lighter due to familiarity. The Kazakh proverb underscores comparison, which is characteristic of Eastern wisdom and the oral traditions of the steppe culture.

Despite linguistic and cultural differences, all three proverbs express a universal idea: people perceive the burdens they choose or are accustomed to as lighter than those imposed by others. The distinction lies in emphasis, while the English version focuses on choice, the Russian version highlights subjective perception, and the Kazakh version stresses the contrast in perceived weight.

Proverbs 8: All three proverbs reflect the idea that a lazy person tends to exaggerate difficulties and find excuses instead of taking action. The English proverb *"A lazy sheep thinks its wool heavy"* employs the image of a sheep complaining about its own wool. This serves as a metaphor for individuals who perceive even light tasks as burdensome. The Russian proverb *"A lazy horse finds its own tail a burden"* presents a horse that struggles even with carrying its own tail, emphasizing the extreme nature of laziness. The Kazakh proverb *"If you visit a lazy person, you will be buried under a pile of excuses"* uses the metaphor of excuses accumulating like a physical mass, overwhelming the listener. In the English proverb, the sheep is a symbol of meekness and passivity; highlights the inability of a lazy person to cope with even natural responsibilities. The Russian proverb features a horse, an animal traditionally associated with hard work, but here depicted as lazy, making the metaphor particularly striking. In the Kazakh proverb, the focus is on the verbal aspect of laziness – excuses, which is especially significant given the importance of oral tradition in Kazakh culture.

Proverbs 9: All three proverbs mean that excessive fear hinders action and prevents one from achieving goals. They emphasize that risk is an inherent part of any endeavor, and if one fears every obstacle, success may remain unattainable. *"He that fears every bush must never go birdwatching."* (English proverb) with literal meaning: if one fears every bush, it is better not to go birdwatching. The "bush" symbolizes potential danger and fear of the unknown. "Birdwatching" represents determination, curiosity, and a willingness to take risks. Excessive caution prevents one from experiencing life and embracing new opportunities.

"Не ходи в лес, коли зайца боишься." (Russian proverb) with literal meaning: if you are afraid of a hare, do not go into the forest, where the "forest" symbolizes new opportunities, adventures, or life challenges. The "hare" represents minor fears or insignificant difficulties that should not deter one from pursuing a goal. Being overly fearful of small challenges means missing out on greater opportunities.

"Шымыықтан қорыққан тары екпес." (Kazakh proverb) with literal meaning: one who fears the sparrow will not sow millet. In this metaphorical structure, the "sparrow" represents minor problems or risks, while "millet" symbolizes work or effort that yields rewards. Fear of small troubles can lead to missed opportunities for greater achievements.

The English proverb employs the image of a bush, which may conceal potential danger, evoking a sense of anxious anticipation. The Russian proverb exaggerates the fear of a harmless hare to highlight the absurdity of excessive cowardice. The Kazakh proverb emphasizes practical labor and illustrates how fear of minor obstacles can prevent one

from achieving results. Despite their differences in imagery, all three proverbs underscore the importance of overcoming fear of small difficulties, as success is impossible without taking risks.

Proverbs 10: "Better to do well than to say well" (English Proverb): metaphor – a contrast between words and actions. Actions are more important than mere words.

"Визга много, а шерсти нет" ("A lot of yelping, but no wool" (Russian Proverb): metaphor – comparing empty talk to a barking dog that brings no benefit. Much noise, but no tangible results.

"Ерді сөзіне қарап емес, ісіне қарап бағала" ("Judge a man not by his words, but by his actions" (Kazakh Proverb): metaphor – evaluating a person based on their deeds rather than their speech. Actions matter more than words, as they reveal a person's true nature.

All three proverbs convey the same fundamental principle: words are meaningless unless supported by real actions. The English proverb expresses this idea directly: "It is better to do well than to say well." The Russian proverb uses imagery – noise (yelping) without result (wool) – to emphasize the futility of empty words. The Kazakh proverb introduces a moral dimension: a person's worth is determined by their actions rather than their speech.

These proverbs reflect the cultural values of their respective societies: English culture – pragmatism, protestant ethics, and a focus on tangible results. The English proverb embodies a rational approach, highlighting that success is defined by actions. Russian culture – a tendency toward irony and criticism of empty rhetoric. The Russian proverb mocks those who speak much but achieve little. Kazakh culture – emphasis on honor, deeds, and male dignity. The proverb aligns with traditional nomadic values, where actions, not words, determine a person's reputation.

Although these proverbs originate from different cultures, they express a universal truth: words lose their significance without real actions. The only difference lies in the metaphors each culture chooses to illustrate this idea.

Proverbs 11: All three proverbs reflect the idea that anything acquired quickly and effortlessly tends to disappear just as swiftly and without a trace. They serve as a warning against a careless attitude toward resources, wealth, or achievements obtained without effort.

English proverb: *"Easy come, easy go"* is based on the contrast between acquisition and loss. The simplicity and ease of both actions convey the idea of instability and the fleeting nature of possessions.

Russian proverb: *"Пришло махом – ушло прахом"* (literally, "Came in a flash – turned to dust") employs a rhythmic structure and a vivid antithesis. The word *"махом"* (rapidly, suddenly) and *"прахом"* (dust, ruin) reinforce the notion of impermanence and the destructive nature of easily acquired wealth.

Kazakh proverb: *"Еңбексіз тапқан мал есепсіз кетеді"* translates literally as "Wealth gained without labor disappears without a trace." The key terms *"еңбексіз"* (without labor) and *"есепсіз кетеді"* (vanishes without being accounted for) emphasize the importance of honest work in preserving wealth.

In Anglophone culture, the proverb reflects a laissez-faire attitude toward life and finances, characteristic of the entrepreneurial spirit of the West. In Russian tradition, it carries an element of fatalism – the belief that wealth acquired too easily is inevitably lost. In Kazakh culture, the idea is rooted in the traditions of nomadic pastoralism, where labor and resource management play a crucial role in survival.

Proverbs 12: These proverbs reflect the idea of self-reliance and personal responsibility for one's own life. They emphasize that individuals must rely on their own strengths rather than expecting help from others.

The English proverb *"Every tub must stand on its own bottom"* employs the image of a tub (or barrel) that must be stable on its own. This serves as a metaphor for independence and self-sufficiency.

The Russian proverb *"Живи всяк своим умом да своим горбом"* ("Live by your own mind and your own hump") utilizes two metaphors: mind as a symbol of intellect and hump as a representation of physical labor. This suggests that success depends on both mental and physical effort.

The Kazakh proverb *"Диірменді өзің тарт, базарыңды өзің қыл"* ("Turn the mill yourself, set up your own market") features the mill as a symbol of the production process, emphasizing the necessity of labor to achieve results, while the *market* symbolizes organizing one's life and financial well-being.

Despite cultural differences, all three proverbs convey the same core idea that individuals should rely solely on themselves. However, the metaphors vary depending on the cultural context: the English proverb emphasizes stability (*a tub*), the Russian proverb highlights a combination of intellect and physical labor, and the Kazakh proverb focuses on both work processes (*the mill*) and resource management (*the market*). Thus, while the underlying message remains consistent, each culture shapes its metaphors according to its unique worldview.

Proverbs 13: All three proverbs convey the idea that waking up early contributes to success, prosperity, and productivity. They emphasize the importance of discipline, diligence, and efficient time management.

The metaphor of time – in these proverbs, early rising is associated with greater opportunities. Time is portrayed as a resource that must be used wisely.

The metaphor of labor – waking up early provides an advantage in work, symbolizing progress, prosperity, and well-being.

The metaphor of luck and fate – in the Kazakh proverb, the word *"ырғу"* (*ырысы артық*) signifies well-being, luck, and prosperity. This highlights the connection between hard work and success in life.

The English proverb emphasizes a specific time ("rise at five"), which may reflect a more structured approach to scheduling and productivity. The Russian proverb underscores the causal relationship between waking up early and the

amount of work completed, emphasizing the quantity of labor. The Kazakh proverb differentiates advice for men and women: a man gains more luck (*yrysy*), while a woman manages to complete more tasks (*bir isi artyk*). This distinction reflects traditional gender roles in Kazakh culture.

Despite linguistic and cultural differences, all three proverbs express a universal idea: those who wake up early gain more opportunities for success. This confirms that the values of diligence and self-discipline are recognized across different cultures.

Proverbs 14: A metaphorical analysis of these proverbs – exploring their hidden meanings, imagery, and cultural features. The image of a sack in the English proverb "*Honour and profit lie not in one sack.*": it employs the metaphor of a sack to illustrate the incompatibility of honor and wealth, suggesting that they cannot coexist in the same place. This phrase highlights a contrast between moral values (honor) and material gain (profit).

Labor and wealth in the Russian proverb "*Честным трудом богат не будешь.*" (One cannot become rich through honest labor.). Unlike the English version, the Russian proverb does not explicitly feature the image of a sack, yet it conveys the same idea: honesty and wealth rarely go hand in hand. The metaphor of "honest labor" is used, contrasting with wealth and implying that significant financial success is often achieved through dishonest means.

The Kazakh proverb and the moral aspect "*Адал еңбекпен мал таппас.*" (One cannot acquire wealth through honest labor.) It includes the word "адал" (adal), meaning "honest" or "conscientious," which aligns with the Russian version. The metaphor of "мал" (mal), meaning "livestock" or "property," reflects the traditional nomadic way of life, in which wealth was measured by the number of animals owned.

All three proverbs express the idea that wealth and honesty are incompatible. The English proverb uses the metaphor of a "sack" to symbolize limitation, suggesting that opposing elements cannot be contained within the same space. The Russian and Kazakh versions employ the metaphor of honest labor, which is portrayed as an insufficient means of acquiring wealth. The Kazakh proverb is closely tied to a traditional lifestyle in which livestock represented economic prosperity.

Thus, despite cultural differences, these proverbs reflect a shared worldview regarding the relationship between moral values and material prosperity.

Proverbs 15: All three proverbs condemn laziness and inaction, emphasizing their negative consequences. They employ metaphorical constructions to convey the idea that idleness leads to undesirable outcomes.

English proverb "*Idleness is the mother of all evil.*": metaphor – idleness is portrayed as the "mother" of all evil. Laziness gives rise to other vices, such as poverty, crime, and misfortune. The use of a familial metaphor makes the message vivid and easily comprehensible.

Russian proverb "*У лентяя Федорки всегда отговorkи*" (A lazy Fedorka always has excuses): metaphor – the collective image of "Fedorka" represents a stereotypical lazy person. A lazy person will always find excuses to avoid work. The folk character's name adds a cultural nuance, making the proverb emotionally expressive.

Kazakh proverb "*Zhalqaudyn erteñi bitpes*" ("A lazy person's 'tomorrow' never ends"): metaphor – "tomorrow" is depicted as endless, implying perpetual procrastination. Lazy people continuously postpone tasks but never complete them. The notion of temporal infinity reinforces the idea of idleness being futile.

The English proverb highlights the consequences of laziness (leading to evil), the Russian proverb focuses on its psychological aspect (excuses), while the Kazakh proverb illustrates a behavioral pattern (procrastination). While the core idea remains the same in all three, each reflects a distinct cultural perspective.

Proverbs 16: These proverbs in English, Russian, and Kazakh convey a similar idea about patience, diligence, and the inevitable reward for perseverance. Let us examine them more deeply from a metaphorical perspective. The English proverb "*Everything comes to him who waits.*": metaphor – waiting is depicted as a tool that leads to the desired outcome. This expression conveys the idea that time plays a crucial role in achieving one's goals. The Russian proverb "*Терпение и труд все перепрут.*" (Patience and labor will grind everything down.): metaphor – the concepts of "patience" and "labor" are portrayed as forces capable of eroding any obstacles, akin to sandpaper or millstones that gradually wear down a stone. The Kazakh proverb "*Сабыр түбі – сары алтын.*" (The essence of patience is pure gold.): metaphor – patience (sabyr) is compared to "sary altyn" (pure gold), emphasizing its value. In Kazakh culture, gold symbolizes wisdom, wealth, and success. Patience is ultimately rewarded, much like one who mines for gold.

In the English proverb, the key element is "waiting," highlighting the passive aspect of patience. The Russian proverb combines patience with labor, emphasizing active effort. Meanwhile, the Kazakh proverb associates patience with gold, underscoring its intrinsic value. These proverbs reflect the cultural characteristics of their respective nations while conveying a universal truth: diligence and patience lead to success.

Proverbs number 17 are nearly equivalent in three languages, and equally urge not to leave today's affairs for tomorrow.

V. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of proverbs related to labor and idleness in English, Russian, and Kazakh confirms earlier findings in cognitive linguistics that metaphors function as universal conceptual tools while simultaneously reflecting culture-specific worldviews (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). In line with Gibbs (1994), our results show that metaphors in proverbs are not merely stylistic devices but cognitive models that shape social values.

English proverbs in the corpus demonstrate a strong orientation toward pragmatism, efficiency, and individual responsibility. This finding resonates with previous studies on Anglo-Saxon cultural models, where metaphors often highlight productivity and rational action. Russian proverbs, in contrast, foreground collective morality and social evaluation, which supports Kharchenko's (2017) claim that Russian paremiology reflects communal and ethical dimensions of work. Kazakh proverbs stand out for their nomadic imagery and religious-ethical undertones, confirming earlier ethnolinguistic research that Kazakh proverbial metaphors encode the pastoral worldview and emphasize harmony with nature and divine order.

The differences identified suggest that metaphor in proverbs operates as a double-layered mechanism: universal in its cognitive function yet deeply shaped by cultural and historical experience. This duality explains why semantically equivalent proverbs across languages still convey different nuances in evaluating labor and idleness. For instance, while diligence is praised in all three traditions, English proverbs frame it as a path to success, Russian proverbs as a moral duty, and Kazakh proverbs as both ethical obligation and survival strategy in nomadic life.

This study is not without limitations. The analysis was restricted to 17 proverb pairs, which provides only a partial picture of the broader paremiological systems. Moreover, the qualitative nature of the study, while suitable for cultural interpretation, could be complemented in future research by corpus-based quantitative methods to verify frequency and contextual variation.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to cross-cultural paremiology by integrating conceptual metaphor theory with cultural-linguistic analysis. The findings may have practical implications for translation studies, language pedagogy, and intercultural communication, where understanding metaphorical differences is crucial for fostering mutual comprehension across cultures.

The comparative analysis of English, Russian, and Kazakh proverbs has shown that metaphor serves as a universal but culturally adapted mechanism for conceptualizing labor and idleness. Despite shared human experiences reflected in similar proverbial meanings, each language encodes distinct cultural priorities: pragmatic efficiency in English, moral didacticism in Russian, and ethical-nomadic worldview in Kazakh. These differences highlight the role of metaphor as both a cognitive and cultural tool, shaping attitudes toward work across societies. The study expands the field of cross-linguistic paremiology by integrating conceptual metaphor theory with cultural-linguistic perspectives. Future research may extend this approach to other semantic domains, such as family, nature, or emotions, thereby deepening our understanding of how metaphors encode collective values in diverse linguistic traditions.

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On Intensifiers in Thai and Korean: Grammaticalization and Contrastive Perspectives

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Abstract—Intensification is a language universal (Rainer, 2015, p. 1340) since adding emphasis to the meaning of a particular linguistic form is among language users' basic needs in discourse. Intensification is frequently realized by means of an intensifier, a degree-modifying adverb in many languages. Despite the universal presence of intensifiers across world languages, their morpho-syntactic makeup and lexical strengths may vary (Hendriks et al., 2024). This paper utilizes a comparative perspective to analyze intensifiers in two languages that are typologically distinct and genealogically unrelated, i.e., Korean and Thai, and reveals that Thai has fewer items with a much higher level of specialization as compared to Korean, reinforcing the claim that Thai uses the polysemy strategy whereas Korean uses the monosemy strategy (Khammee & Rhee, 2022). It further reveals that, unlike Korean, in which diverse source lexemes are involved, Thai intensifiers are built on a more restrictive number of lexemes, utilizing the primary marker complemented with particles, lexical items, or even reduplication. Korean intensifiers are sometimes used in repetitive forms but univerbation of such forms is rather rare. The present paper also presents a number of intriguing aspects of grammaticalization and lexicalization that may be attributed to typological and idiosyncratic differences between the two languages.

Index Terms—intensifier, grammaticalization, contrastive analysis, monosemy strategy, polysemy strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Intensification is a linguistic universal and is realized by morphological means in many languages (Rainer, 2015, p. 1340). Rhee (2021a, p. 461) observes that among the universal needs and desires of speakers engaged in interaction is the desire to emphasize the message they intend to convey or otherwise modify the semantic force of a word (note that some researchers use the term 'intensification' as encompassing both upward and downward semantic modification; Biber, 1998; see below for discussion of terminology). The human propensity for emphasis vis-à-vis down-toning has been observed by Mustanoja (1960, p. 316), who notes that intensifiers are far more numerous than attenuators.

Since intensification is closely related to a speaker's subjective perception of the world and the expression thereof, it is also intimately connected to stance-taking with respect to either an object (subjective stance) or an interlocutor (intersubjective stance); therefore, intensification is generally regarded as ubiquitous (Englebretson, 2007, pp. 69-71) and possibly inevitable in most instances of language use (Rhee, 2016a, 2016b). Intensifiers constitute an interesting class of words by virtue of being at the border of lexical and grammatical categories. Thus, their development is often equivocal between lexicalization, i.e., creation of a relatively open class item, and grammaticalization, i.e., creation of a discourse-organizing exponent carrying metatextual functions (cf. Núñez-Pertejo, 2013). Linguistically, intensifiers present interesting aspects of language change in that they are susceptible to replacement because the novelty of the form wears out quickly and its lexical strength weakens, as has been observed as early as Stoffel (1901, p. 2), who claims that emphasis quickly grows stale and "new words are in constant requisition, because the old ones are felt to be inadequate to the expression ... of a quality to the very highest degree of which it is capable..." (see also Bolinger, 1972; Hopper & Traugott, 2003; and literature review below). Thus, a multiplicity of intensifiers has been observed across languages, including Thai and Korean.

This paper addresses intensifiers in Thai and Korean, two genealogically unrelated, geographically distant, and typologically distinct languages, from grammaticalization and contrastive perspectives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Intensifiers in Thai and Korean are an extremely understudied area. Therefore, most extant literature has focused on intensifiers in the English language, although we have included the few existing studies on Thai and Korean.

Intensification may be realized in a number of ways at various levels of grammar (Bolinger, 1972; Kwon, 1987; Quirk et al., 1985), and the means used for intensification are diverse (Bylinina & Sudo, 2015; Lee, 2013). Intensifiers have received attention from both grammarians and linguists, and among the more notable studies is by Stoffel (1901), who used the term 'intensives' instead of intensifiers. His work is among the first monograph-length treatments of English

intensifiers ('intensives'; e.g., *full, pure, very, right, quite, so, and as*) along with 'down-toners' (e.g., *rather* and *pretty*). Providing extensive historical data, he observes that the intensifiers originally expressed 'completeness', which later came to mean 'merely a high degree of a quality' (p. 1). This type of semantic weakening was later observed by various researchers, such as Bolinger (1972), Hopper and Traugott (2003), Peters (1994), Rhee (2016b), among others.

Bolinger (1972) provides a comprehensive analysis of 'degree words', including intensifiers. Notably, he distinguishes intensifying adverbs into grammaticalized intensifiers (e.g., *full, pure, awful(ly), terribly*, etc.) and 'ungrammaticalized' intensifiers (*extreme, sure, awful*, etc.) depending on their ability to modify adjectives, and asserts that historically some of the former grammaticalized from the latter. Similarly, he includes both monolexical and periphrastic expressions that can intensify verbal meanings (*talk much, dance all the time*, etc.) in his inventory of intensifiers, and further presents a list of verbal intensifiers according to focused aspects, such as size, strength, impact, abandonment, tangibility, consistency, evaluation, irremediability, singularity, and purity/veracity.

Quirk et al. (1985), in their comprehensive description of English adverbs (pp. 399-474), address modifying adverbs in two major categories: 'amplifiers' (*very, awfully*, etc.) and 'downtoners' (*almost, fairly*, etc.), and include intensifiers that modify pronouns (*nearly everybody*), predeterminers (*about double the amount*), and numerals (*fully ten weeks*). Their study provides an in-depth exposition of intensifiers in terms of their semantic and syntactic behavior.

More recently, Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) explored the use of the adjective-modifying intensifiers *really* and *very* in the city of York with age and gender variables, and concluded that intensifiers continually change due to frequency of use and lexical preference. They report that *really* and *very* are the most frequently used intensifiers in contemporary Canadian English, and that, incidentally, gender has no clear influence. A similar study of *very, really*, and *so* was conducted by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), which contrasts the previous study by finding that *so* is the most frequently used intensifier. More recently, Rhee (2016b) analyzed seventy-two intensifiers in English with a special focus on their stance-marking function and their conceptual sources, specifically, MARKEDNESS, COMPLETENESS, EMOTION, and TABOO.

In Thai, intensifiers have been reported by Haas (1946) and Yuttapongtada (2017). Haas's short note introduces two special 'techniques' of intensifying the degree of quality denoted by the word being modified. She mentions a few intensifiers that can be used with only certain words and a special type of reduplication. Since they are lexically-controlled, idiosyncratic forms, they cannot be generally applied to other lexemes. More recently, Yuttapongtada (2017) discusses a few intensifiers that developed from impolite words in Thai, such as 'bomb', 'disaster', 'monitor lizard', etc., which, despite their negative word origin, can be used in certain contexts to denote 'very'.

Intensifiers in Korean have been explored by several researchers. Kwon (1987) discusses diverse manifestations of emphasis in Korean: phonological, inflectional, derivational, lexical, and syntactic. Intensifying adverbs were not given detailed treatment due to their wide scope. Additionally, Lee (2013) has discussed the diverse ways that intensification manifests at various levels of grammar. Kim (2008) analyzes the common intensifier *nemwu* 'too much' and its more recent variants in spoken Korean, focusing on their grammaticalization processes, and in a later study (Kim, 2016), focuses on the collocation patterns of *nemwu*. Park (2007) addresses the intensifying adverbs *acwu, maywu, and nemwu*, all of which denote 'very', focusing on their semantic functions, distributional frequency, and degree of emphasis. Rhee (2022) analyzes of a larger set of intensifiers in which degree markers in the categories of superlatives, inferiors, superlatives, relatives, and excessives are discussed in the context of comparative constructions in Korean.

The research background described above clarifies that intensifiers in Thai and Korean are underrepresented. The limited extant research has addressed only a few or a subset of intensifiers in each language. Neither a macroscopic study analyzing intensifiers as a whole grammatical paradigm in each language, nor a contrastive study of the paradigms in the two languages has been conducted to date. The present study intends to fill the research gap.

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The present study is based on two theoretical frameworks: the theory of grammaticalization and the theory of intensifiers, especially that of amplifiers. Grammaticalization theory was pioneered by Meillet (1912), and further elaborated and refined by Kurylowicz (1975, 1965), Heine et al. (1991), Hopper and Traugott (2003), Narrog and Heine (2021), among others. Kurylowicz (1975, 1965) views grammaticalization as gradient and acknowledges grammatical forms that have undergone grammaticalization processes to lesser or greater degrees, a view accepted by most grammaticalization researchers. Heine et al. (1991, p. 167) consider adverbs to be weakly grammaticalized forms, located between the primary category (nouns and verbs) and adpositional category (prepositions and postpositions). Following these authors, the present study regards intensifying adverbials as grammaticalized forms. At the same time, since intensifying adverbials belong to an open-class by virtue of easy creation, morphosyntactic operations of creating such forms are considered lexicalization strategies.

Regarding the theory of intensifiers, it is to be noted that the terminology is not uniform among scholars, as Ito and Tagliamonte (2003, p. 258) have pointed out. Quirk et al. (1985, pp. 445-446) use a two-way classification of 'amplifiers' (upward scale) and 'downtoners' (downward scale) for intensifiers, with amplifiers further divided into 'maximizers' (extreme scale), e.g., *absolutely great, completely independent*, etc., and 'boosters' (higher degree), e.g., *so funny, very dangerous*, etc. (see also Tagliamonte, 2008, pp. 361-362). Although intensifiers include both upward and downward modifiers, it is implicit in a large number of the studies that amplifiers are the primary category of intensifiers. The present

study will focus on amplifiers (labelled ‘intensifiers’) in Thai and Korean, exploring their source meanings and target functions and conceptual motivations involved in their grammaticalization processes.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As indicated above, the languages chosen for comparison are Thai and Korean. The motivation for these selections is to contrast two languages that are distant in a number of parameters. The distinctive features of the two languages, in terms of geography, genealogy, and typology, are summarily presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
KOREAN AND THAI IN CONTRAST

	Thai	Korean
Geography	Southeast Asia	Northeast Asia
Genealogy	Kra-Dai	Transeurasian/Altaic
Morphological Cohesion	Isolating	Agglutinating
Morphological Complexity	Analytic	Synthetic
Head-Directionality	Head-initial	Head-final
Word Order	SVO	SOV
Tone	Tonal	Non-Tonal

The present study uses a conceptual, qualitative research method supplemented by descriptive frequency analysis, and involved no experimentation. The data have been collected from diverse sources, including lexica, historical and contemporary corpora, and online resources. In particular, the researchers consulted the 33.4-million-word Thai National Corpus (TNC), an online searchable contemporary corpus (mostly 1988-2017), for data and frequency information for Thai. This corpus has been constructed with written data compiled from various sources such as newspapers, speeches, news reports, academic articles, fiction, and short stories. Korean data and frequency information have been drawn from the Drama & Movies Corpus (KDMC), a 24-million-word, contemporary corpus compiled by Min Li. It is to be noted that the data sources for the two subject languages lack complete alignment insofar as the Thai data are largely written and ‘writing-based’, whereas the Korean data are written and ‘speech-purposed’ (Culpeper & Kytö, 2010, p. 17). Using these corpora is a forced choice since there exist no comparable corpora in the two languages with complete alignment in terms of genres, size, time, etc. However, we believe that any discrepancy resulting from the differences of the corpora is insignificant.

The frequency information is based on the number of tokens attested in the corpus, and the figures represent the frequency of the occurrence per million words (pmw). For the ‘heterosemous’ intensifiers (i.e., those that carry historically-related but contemporarily-different functions; Lichtenberk, 1991), only the intensifier uses are counted. When the total hits exceeded 1,000, frequency was projected from random sampling.

V. RESULTS: FORMS AND FUNCTIONS

A. Thai Intensifiers

(a). Lexical Sources and Strengths

A data search from the diverse Thai data sources yielded 23 terms that may be classified as (amplifying) intensifiers. They are functionally equivalent to the English intensifiers *very* and *very much*, i.e., they are adjectival and verbal modifiers, exemplified with *maak* and *maak-mai*, which are among the most frequently used intensifiers in contemporary Thai. Note that Thai is a head-initial language and the modifier follows the modified.

- (1) a. *Chan chop naɲsue lem ni maak*
I like book CLS this INTS
‘I like this book very much.’ (modified: like this book)
- b. *Khao mi ɲan maak-mai*
he has money INTS
‘He has a lot of money.’ (modified: money)

The 23 intensifiers have developed from diverse sources and their lexical strengths are widely variable, as shown in Table 2. While Thai does not practice inter-lexical spacing, complex forms are hyphenated for visual clarity.

TABLE 2
SOURCES AND TOKEN FREQUENCIES OF THAI INTENSIFIERS (N=23)

Intensifier	Frequency (pmw; %)	Lexical meaning	Intensifier	Frequency (pmw)	Lexical meaning
a. <i>maak</i>	111,327 (78.0%)	(ad) a lot, very much	m. <i>maak-luaʔ-kəən</i>	0	(ad) so much, so many <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>luaʔ</i> : surplus <i>kəən</i> : exceed
b. <i>kəən</i>	10,866 (7.6%)	(ad) too much (v) exceed	n. <i>maak-mai-luaʔ-kəən</i>	0	(ad) so much, so many <i>maak</i> : very much <i>mai</i> : [euphonious suffix] <i>luaʔ</i> : surplus <i>kəən</i> : exceed
c. <i>maak-mai</i>	8,758 (6.1%)	(ad) a lot, very much, <i>mai</i> : [euphonious suffix]	o. <i>maak-sææn-maak</i>	0	(ad) very, very much <i>maak</i> : very much <i>sææn</i> : hundred thousand
d. <i>khən-khaaŋ</i>	5,752 (4.0%)	(ad) quite, rather <i>khən</i> : almost, nearly <i>khaaŋ</i> : side, flank, toward	p. <i>maak-yaan-yiŋ</i>	0	(ad) very much <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>yaan</i> : like <i>yiŋ</i> : more
e. <i>yəʔ</i>	5,288 (3.7%)	(ad) a lot (a/ad) many, plenty, much	q. <i>maak-maak-lai</i>	0	(ad) very much <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>lai</i> : [particle]
f. <i>yəʔ-yæʔ</i>	712 (0.5%)	(ad) many, much <i>yəʔ</i> : a lot, many, plenty <i>yæʔ</i> : abundantly, amply	r. <i>yəʔ-muan-kan</i>	0	(ad) a lot, too <i>yəʔ</i> : a lot, many, plenty <i>muan</i> : like, as <i>kan</i> : together
g. <i>maak-mai-kai-kəəŋ</i>	49 (0%)	(ad) massively <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>mai</i> : [euphonious suffix] <i>kai</i> : stack, pile up <i>kəəŋ</i> : heap, pile	s. <i>yəʔ-yəʔ</i>	0	(ad) a lot <i>yəʔ</i> : a lot
h. <i>maak-kəən-pai</i>	0	(ad) too much <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>kəən</i> : exceed <i>pai</i> : go	t. <i>yaan-maak</i>	0	(ad) greatly <i>yaan</i> : at <i>maak</i> : much, many, very
i. <i>maak-dʒon-kəən-pai</i>	0	(ad) too much <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>dʒon</i> : until <i>kəən</i> : exceed <i>pai</i> : go	u. <i>yaan-suuŋ</i>	0	(ad) highly <i>yaan</i> : at <i>suuŋ</i> : high
j. <i>maak-pai</i>	0	(ad) too much <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>pai</i> : go	v. <i>dʒiŋ-dʒiŋ</i>	0	(ad) really <i>dʒiŋ</i> : true, truly
k. <i>maak-thii-sut</i>	0	(ad) the most <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>thii</i> : at <i>sut</i> : end	w. <i>sut-dʒa</i>	0	(ad) too <i>sut</i> : end <i>dʒa</i> : [modal]
l. <i>maak-mai-mahasaan</i>	0	(ad) immensely <i>maak</i> : much, many, very <i>mai</i> : [euphonious suffix] <i>mahasaan</i> : great	Total	142,752	

As the frequency information in Table 2 shows, only five intensifiers, i.e., from (a) through (e), occur at the token frequency of 1,000 pmw or higher in the 33-million-word corpus. (A frequency of ‘0’ indicates an attestation of lower than 33 total tokens; it does not necessarily indicate ‘no attestation’.) The highest frequency occurred with *maak* at 111,327 pmw, followed by *kəən* at 10,966 pmw, *maak-mai* at 8,758 pmw, and *khən-khaaŋ* at 5,752 pmw. Among the more notable aspects of use frequency is the absolute primacy of *maak* as an intensifier in contemporary Thai, accounting for 78 percent of all intensifier uses. Its frequency is ten times the second most frequent intensifier *kəən* (with frequency of 7.6%), and is a prominent example of ‘specialization’ (Hopper & Traugott, 2003; see also Discussion below).

The conceptual sources of Thai intensifiers are PLENTIFULNESS, COMPLETENESS, MARKEDNESS, and SEMBLANCE, all of which converge into AMPLIFICATION, the core concept of intensifiers, diagrammed below in Figure 1.

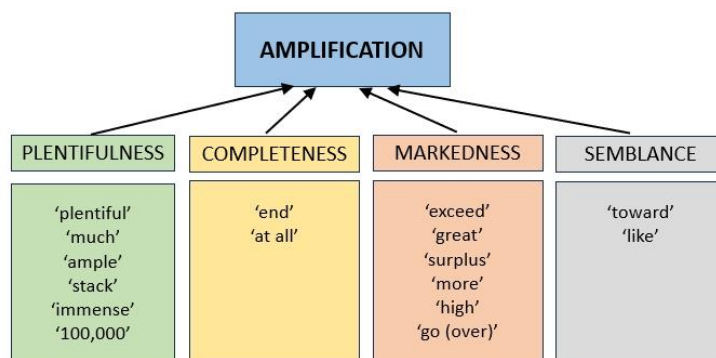


Figure 1. Source Concept and Conceptual Network of Thai Intensifiers

(b). Structural Patterns

A common desire of speakers observed crosslinguistically is to increase the force of an already intensified expression, and among the commonly found means for achieving this is to repeat the intensifier. Spoken data shows numerous instances of such repeated intensifiers, e.g., *kroot maak maak* 'very very angry' to intensify *kroot maak* 'very angry'. Although cases of simple repetition were not separately counted in the inventory, if an expression involves additional elements behaving and perceived as a single unit, it is listed as a separate intensifier. For example, *maak-maak* is not considered a separate intensifier but (o) *maak-sæen-maak* and (q) *maak-maak-lai* are. There are instances, however, where a single form and a complex form created by repetition of the form have differences in meaning and/or morpho-syntactic distribution, e.g., (e) *yəʔ* and (s) *yəʔ-yəʔ*, which are regarded as separate forms.

Even a cursory look at the formal composition of Thai intensifiers in Table 2 clearly shows that there is, in addition to repetition, another recurring pattern in forming complex forms: reinforcement. Reinforcement may utilize an additional intensifier or other lexemes to add intensifying meanings. In principle, these specially-constructed, complex intensifiers may express higher intensity, but they are often considered by Thai speakers to be a slightly modified 'emphatic' variant of an intensifier, and their English translation may not reflect different, fine-grained degrees of intensity. This is exemplified in the following with the verb *chəp* 'like':

- (2) a. *chəp maak-mai* 'really like it'
 b. *chəp maak-mai-thii-sut* 'really like it' (lit. 'really like it to the end')
 c. *chəp maak-mai-luaʔ-kəən* 'really like it' (lit. 'really like it so much')
 d. *chəp maak-mai-kai-kəən* 'really like it' (lit. 'really like it to pile up')
 e. *chəp maak-mai-mahasaan* 'really like it' (lit. 'really like it greatly')
 f. *chəp maak-pai* 'really like it' (lit. 'really like it too much (go over)')
 g. *chəp maak-kəən-pai* 'really like it' (lit. 'really like it going too much')
 h. *chəp maak-dʒon-kəən-pai* 'really like it' (lit. 'really like it until going exceedingly')

Still another strategy of intensifier formation is adverbial derivation. For this, the lexeme *yaan* 'style, mode' is used. The lexeme *yaan* is a Sino-Thai word (Khammee et al., 2025) with diverse meanings such as 'style' as a noun, 'like' as an adjective, a classifier for types, and a manner-adverbializing prefix, the last being analogous to the English suffix *-ly* (e.g., *yaan-maak* ('in a manner of being a lot'), *yaan-suun* ('in a manner of being high'), etc.).

(c). Functions

The main function of Thai intensifiers is to strengthen the meaning of an adjective (as in 'very interesting'), adverb (as in 'very loudly'), or predicate (as in 'run very fast') to emphasize the degree of the property. Although intensifiers typically add the meaning of increased intensity (as in 'very tasty', 'very smart', etc.), some intensifiers may imply that the intensity is excessive (as in 'work too much'). Such intensifiers tend to involve the lexeme *kəən* 'exceed', *pai* 'go', or both. However, due to semantic weakening, the excessiveness meaning in modern usage is less prominent than in earlier times.

Intensifiers across languages tend to carry a discourse marking function, such as *absolutely*, *exactly*, etc. in English, *lingrenjingya* 'amazingly', *zhende* 'really', etc. in Chinese, *be emet* 'really', *be etsem* 'actually' in Hebrew, *efectivamente* 'truly' in Spanish, *vraiment* 'really' in French, etc. (see Rhee, 2021a; and references therein). The Thai intensifiers, however, have not developed into discourse markers. One exceptional intensifier that carries the function of discourse marker is *dʒin-dʒin* 'really (lit. truly truly)', but as shown in Table 2 its frequency is extremely low (0 pmw). This discourse marker has been analyzed intensively by Khammee (2024).

B. Korean Intensifiers

(a). Lexical Sources and Strengths

An investigation of Korean intensifiers yields a large number of intensifiers. In the official dictionary *Phyocwun Kwuke Taysacen*, approximately 200 headwords signal 'emphasis' (Lee, 2013), although many of these are lexemes that are

inherently marked with the [+emphasis] feature. For instance, the reduplicative *mayil-mayil* [every.day - every.day] is an ‘emphatic’ form of *mayil* ‘every day’, and thus denotes ‘every single day without exception’. Similarly, many emphatic forms in the dictionary fall outside the category of intensifiers, which are adverbial by word class. 60 forms meet this definition and have a reasonable level of circulation. However, intensifiers have different degrees of both intensified force (Park, 2007) and pragmatic salience, i.e., use frequency. It is to be noted that many of these are sensitive to genres and registers. More importantly, from a grammaticalization perspective, most intensifiers in Korean have clear etymology, whereby their conceptual sources and developmental paths can be determined. These 60 intensifiers are listed in Table 3 (for intensifiers with frequency of 100 pmw or higher) and Table 4 (for those with lower than 100 pmw) with their pmw frequency derived from the referenced KDMC corpus and lexical source meanings. Korean has a large number of Sino-Korean (SK) words (i.e., borrowings from Chinese), which, either alone or in combination with native Korean morphemes, constitute complex forms. Also to be noted is that the uninflected verbal roots are indicated with a hyphen, following the convention in Korean linguistics.

TABLE 3
SOURCES AND TOKEN FREQUENCIES OF KOREAN INTENSIFIERS (100 PMW OR HIGHER; N=22)

	Intensifier (%)	Frequency (pmw)	Lexical meaning		Intensifier	Frequency (pmw)	Lexical meaning
a.	<i>cengmal</i>	2,228 (16.1%)	(ad) truly (n) truthful saying <i>ceng</i> : SK correct <i>mal</i> : word	l.	<i>canttuk</i>	242 (1.7%)	(ad) very, fully <i>canttuk</i> : to extreme
b.	<i>nemwu</i>	2,018 (14.6%)	(ad) excessively, very <i>nem</i> :- go over	m.	<i>toykey</i>	239 (1.7%)	(ad) very <i>toy</i> :- not moist, harsh
c.	<i>manhi</i>	1,244 (9.0%)	(ad) very, much <i>manh</i> :- be numerous	n.	<i>ssek</i>	208 (1.5%)	(ad) very <i>ssek</i> : [ideophone, sweepingly]
d.	<i>kkok</i>	1,010 (7.3%)	(ad) exactly, very <i>kkok</i> : [ideophone, tight fit]	o.	<i>wancen</i>	202 (1.5%)	(ad) very (n) completeness <i>wancen</i> : completeness
e.	<i>cincca</i>	953 (6.9%)	(ad) truly (n) genuine article <i>cin</i> : SK genuine <i>cca</i> : thing	p.	<i>tewuk</i>	154 (1.1%)	(ad) even more <i>teu</i> :- add
f.	<i>palo</i>	819 (5.9%)	(ad) straightforwardly <i>pala</i> :- be straight	q.	<i>kacang</i>	143 (1.0%)	(ad) the most <i>kacang</i> : edge
g.	<i>acwu</i>	802 (5.8%)	(ad) very <i>aco</i> : differently, specially	r.	<i>kkway</i>	142 (1.0%)	(ad) very <i>kkway</i> : more than average
h.	<i>mak</i>	680 (4.9%)	(ad) very (a) coarse <i>mak</i> :- block, seal up	s.	<i>emcheng</i>	137 (1.0%)	(ad) very <i>emcheng</i> : extreme degree
i.	<i>ttak</i>	604 (4.4%)	(ad) exactly, very <i>ttak</i> : [ideophone, collision]	t.	<i>wenak</i>	126 (0.9%)	(ad) very <i>wen</i> : SK origin
j.	<i>cham</i>	558 (4.0%)	(ad) very (n) truth <i>cham</i> : true, truth	u.	<i>mwuci(hakey)</i>	108 (0.8%)	(ad) very much <i>mwuci</i> : SK no knowledge
k.	<i>ceyil</i>	390 (2.8%)	(ad) the most, the best <i>ceyil</i> : SK first	v.	<i>hwelssin</i>	100 (0.7%)	(ad) much more <i>hwelssin</i> : [ideophone, excessively open wide]

TABLE 4
SOURCES AND TOKEN FREQUENCIES OF KOREAN INTENSIFIERS (BELOW 100 PMW; N=38)

	Intensifier (%)	Frequency (pmw)	Lexical meaning		Intensifier	Frequency (pmw)	Lexical meaning
a.	<i>ssip(h)al</i>	80 (0.6%)	(ad) very (intj) [expletive] <i>ssipha-</i> : have sex	u.	<i>mwucincang</i>	5 (0%)	(ad) very <i>mwucincang</i> : SK unending
b.	<i>mopsi</i>	65 (0.5%)	(ad) very <i>mos.ssu.i</i> : unusably	v.	<i>simhi</i>	5 (0%)	(ad) very, severely <i>sim</i> : SK extreme, severe
c.	<i>ceypep</i>	65 (0.5%)	(ad) very, fairly <i>ceypep</i> : recognizably	w.	<i>hanchung</i>	4 (0%)	(ad) much more <i>han</i> : one <i>chung</i> : level
d.	<i>chammal(lo)</i>	56 (0.4%)	(ad) truly, really <i>cham</i> : true <i>mal</i> : word	x.	<i>wenchey</i>	4 (0%)	(ad) particularly <i>wenchey</i> : SK origin
e.	<i>thukpyelhi</i>	49 (0.4%)	(ad) particularly, specially <i>thukpyel</i> : SK special	y.	<i>cikukhi</i>	4 (0%)	(ad) extremely <i>cikuk</i> : SK extreme
f.	<i>koyngcanghi</i>	48 (0.3%)	(ad) tremendously <i>koyngcang</i> : tremendous	z.	<i>camos</i>	3 (0%)	(ad) very <i>camos</i> : more than expected
g.	<i>hato</i>	44 (0.3%)	(ad) very, too much <i>ha-</i> : be much	aa.	<i>kwahakey</i>	3 (0%)	(ad) excessively <i>kwa</i> : SK go beyond
h.	<i>mwuchek</i>	42 (0.3%)	(ad) very <i>mwuchek</i> : incomparable	ab.	<i>kukhi</i>	2 (0%)	(ad) extremely <i>kuk</i> : SK extreme
i.	<i>phek</i>	34 (0.2%)	(ad) very, very much <i>phek</i> : above average	ac.	<i>yutalli</i>	1 (0%)	(ad) particularly, specially <i>yu</i> : SK kind, type <i>talu-</i> : be different
j.	<i>maywu</i>	33 (0.2%)	(ad) very, severely <i>mayp-</i> : be pungent	ad.	<i>kwahi</i>	1 (0%)	(ad) too much <i>kwa</i> : SK go beyond
k.	<i>hankyel</i>	32 (0.2%)	(ad) much more <i>han</i> : one <i>kyel</i> : grain, layer	ae.	<i>yupyelnakey</i>	1 (0%)	(ad) particularly, specially <i>yupyel</i> : different kind <i>na-</i> : exit
l.	<i>conna</i>	30 (0.2%)	(ad) very (intj) [expletive] <i>cos</i> : penis <i>na-</i> : come out	af.	<i>namtalli</i>	1 (0%)	(ad) particularly, specially <i>nam</i> : other persons <i>talu-</i> : be different
m.	<i>sangtanghi</i>	28 (0.2%)	(ad) considerably <i>sangtang</i> : SK equivalent	ag.	<i>kwatohi</i>	0	(ad) excessively <i>kwato</i> : SK pass in degree
n.	<i>yunanhi</i>	18 (0.1%)	(ad) specially <i>yunanha-</i> : be uncommon	ah.	<i>kay</i>	0	(ad) very <i>kay</i> : dog
o.	<i>chamulo</i>	17 (0.1%)	(ad) truly <i>cham</i> : true	ai.	<i>taypak</i>	0	(ad) very (intj) excellent! <i>taypak</i> : big gourd
p.	<i>taytanhi</i>	13 (0.1%)	(ad) very <i>taytanha-</i> : be great	aj.	<i>che</i>	0	(ad) very, roughly <i>chi-</i> : hit
q.	<i>kuyamallo</i>	11 (0.1%)	(ad) truly <i>ku</i> : that <i>mal</i> : word	ak.	<i>khay</i>	0	(ad) very <i>kay</i> : dog
r.	<i>samus</i>	10 (0.08%)	(ad) truly, fairly <i>samus</i> : unreservedly	al.	<i>hel</i>	0	(ad) very (intj) surprising! <i>he</i> : [ideophone, exhaling]
s.	<i>cinachikey</i>	10 (0.08%)	(ad) too much <i>cinachi-</i> : go past				
t.	<i>ccang</i>	9 (0.07%)	(ad) very (n) excellent person <i>cang</i> : SK head, chief		Total Intensifiers	13,835	

Tables 3 and 4 show the numerosity of the intensifiers and the diversity of source concepts. Even the word classes of the sources vary widely, e.g., nouns and noun phrases ('correct word', 'truth', etc.), verbs ('go over', 'add', etc.), and adverbs ('differently', 'unhesitatingly', etc.). Some cases developed from syntactic constructions, such as *yupyelnakey* 'particularly' ((ae) in Table 4) that originated from the syntactic construction *yupyel-i na-key* [different.kind-NOMINATIVE exit-ADVERBIALIZER] 'in order that a different kind will emerge'. Similarly, *namtalli* 'particularly' ((af) in Table 4) originated from *nam-kwa talu-i* [other.persons-COMITATIVE be.different-ADVERBIALIZER] 'in order that x will be different from others'. Despite their complex origin, these expressions are fully unverbated (i.e., lexicalized) as single units and are listed as independent lexemes in dictionaries.

In addition to the structural diversity, the conceptual sources are diverse as well. Some forms, by virtue of being polylexemic constructions, cannot be clearly analyzed regarding their conceptual sources, but if only the core concepts are considered, their sources can be summarized as shown in Figure 2.

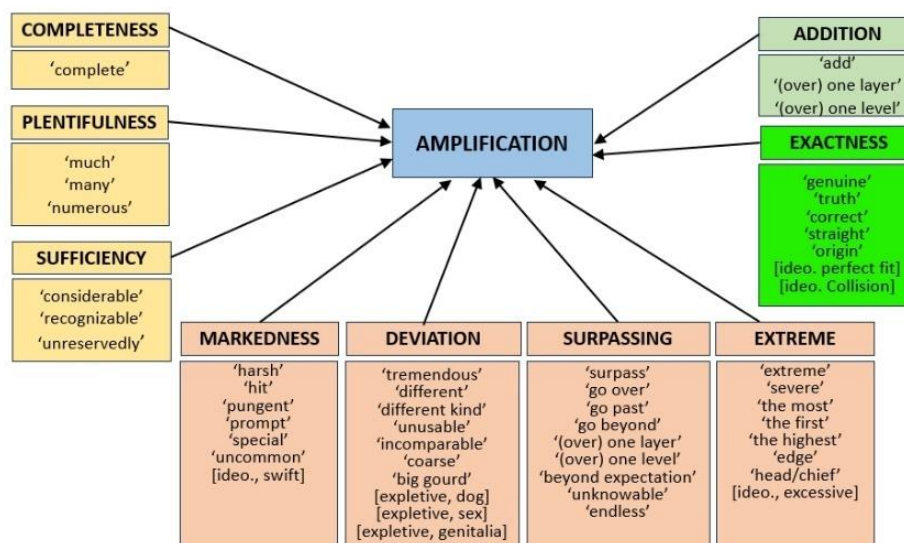


Figure 2. Source Concept and Conceptual Network of Korean Intensifiers

(b). Structural Patterns

Several structurally different patterns of intensifiers exist in Korean. Unlike Thai, in which transcategorical usage is a norm, Korean word classes are rigidly compartmentalized. Therefore, in order to become adverbials, source lexemes in the verbal category must undergo adverbial derivation by way of suffixation, as shown in *nem-* 'go over' (Table 3, (b)), which became *nem-wu* with the adverbializing suffix *-wu*, now denoting 'in a manner of going over' and consequently 'excessively, very'. Similar operations are found with *manhi* (Table 3, (c)) from *manha-* 'be much' suffixed with the adverbializer *-i*, *palo* (Table 3, (f)) from *pala-* 'be straight' suffixed with the adverbializer *-o*, and *toykey* (m) from *toy-* 'be harsh' suffixed with the manner adverbializer *-key*, among others.

Despite the rigid word classes and strict morphological rules, in the development of intensifiers, some morphological operations that are rare elsewhere are observed in Korean. For instance, nouns are often used as adverbs, a case called 'conversion', as in *ceng-mal* [correct-word] 'correct saying' (Table 3, (a)), and *cin-cca* [genuine-thing] 'genuine article' (Table 3, (e)), both of which are used adverbially as 'truly, very'. Other examples include *cham* [truth] (Table 3, (j)), *wancen* [completeness] (Table 3, (o)), *mwuci* [no knowledge] (Table 3, (u)), *han-chung* [one level] (Table 4, (w)), among many others.

Another common morphological operation found in the course of intensifier formation is clipping. For instance, *emcheng*, a nominal with the 'extreme degree' meaning, is first verbalized with a light verb *na-* 'come out' (now *emcheng-na-* 'be of extreme degree'), which is adverbialized through suffixation of the manner adverbializer *-key* (now *emcheng-na-key* 'in an extreme manner, extremely'), which in a drastic turn undergoes clipping to *emcheng* 'extremely', resulting in the identical form with its source noun (Table 3, (s)). Similar operations are found with *cham* (Table 3, (j)), and others.

Yet another structural characteristic is the use of ideophones. Used as intensifiers, ideophones have not been extensively reported (but see Muazu, 2009, for the Khoisan language Kilba; McPherson, 2020, for the Western Mande language Seenku; Newman, 1968, for the Chadic languages Hausa and Tera). Korean has four ideophone-based intensifiers: *hwelssin* (an image-mimetic describing doors and windows excessively and swiftly wide open), *ssek* (a sound- and image-mimetic describing the sound and motion of fast movement across air or another non-dense medium), *ttak* (a sound-mimetic describing the sound of two solid objects colliding), and *kkok* (an image-mimetic describing the tight fit of an object into a larger object).

We have observed in Thai that one of the intensification strategies is to repeat an intensifier or combine multiple intensifiers. A similar strategy is observed in Korean when an intensifier is repeated. In these cases, the native-speaker intuition is that the repeated forms do not create a new intensifier, but, rather, are regarded as instances of mere repetition for increased emphasis. From the corpus, only three repetitive forms are found to occur at the frequency of 10 pmw or higher: *nemwu-nemwu* (51 pmw, cf. Table 3, (b)), a partially reduplicated *te-tewuk* (16 pmw, cf. Table 3, (p)), and *acwu-acwu* (10 pmw, cf. Table 3, (g)).

(c). Functions

Intensifiers in Korean have various levels of functional scopes, specifically, the word level (adjectives or adverbs), phrase level (predicates), or proposition level (clauses or sentences). From the proposition-level function, some intensifiers are further grammaticalized into discourse markers. Since these are notable functions, their usage is presented in more detail below.

The intensifier *cengmal* (lit. 'true word') carries various discursive functions, such as Sudden Remembrance (the 'That reminds me' function), Emphatic (the 'I am serious' function), Frustration (the 'I am annoyed/frustrated' function),

Mirative (the ‘I am surprised’ function), and Filler (the ‘I’m not yet finished’ function) (Rhee, 2021a). Of these, the Sudden Remembrance function is exemplified in the following:

- (3) *a cengmal nic-epeli-lpenha-ys-kwun*
 oh DM forget-CMPL-AVERT-PST-EXCL
 ‘Oh, DM (right), I almost forgot (it)!’ (1912 *Twukyenseng*)

Similarly, the intensifier *cincca* (lit. ‘genuine thing’) carries Emphatic, Mirative, Filler, and Challenge functions (the ‘I am challenging you’ function) (Rhee, 2021a). The Filler function is illustrated in the following:

- (4) (A learns that his girlfriend’s (B’s) father remarried. Now in reference to B’s younger sister he met the other day:)
 B: [So I live with my stepmother’s daughter, and the girl you met the other day is...]
 A: [Aha, I got it. She is the collaborative production of my would-be father-in-law and his new wife!]
 B: (smiles)... *aa... cincca...*
 INTJ DM

‘Oh, DM (come on...)’ (Drama *Chenmanpen salanghay* Episode #22, 2009)

Other discourse marker functions of Korean intensifiers include *acwu* for the Sarcasm function and *cham* for Sudden Remembrance and Filler functions. Some of these intensifiers, especially those developed from exactness (and truthfulness), have been discussed in Rhee (2021a).

VI. DISCUSSION: KOREAN AND THAI IN COMPARISON

Based on the observations described in the foregoing section, we now turn to a discussion of notable aspects of intensifiers in both Korean and Thai, as these display notable differences. We will focus on four select issues: word-class status, lexicalization-grammaticalization strategies, stance-marking, and conceptual motivation.

A. Word-Class Status

As alluded to previously, Thai is a language of high ‘transcategoriality’ (Robert, 2020), and a word’s syntactic status is specified by the discourse. Therefore, while Thai lexemes in general tend to belong to multiple word classes, which is a common characteristic of isolating languages, Thai intensifiers constitute a noteworthy exception in that they nearly always belong to the adverbial word class. One notable exception to this characterization is the intensifier *kəən*, which originated from the verb *kəən* ‘exceed’, and still has strong usage as a verb (about 15% of all tokens).

In this regard, Korean also presents a peculiarity. Since Korean is an agglutinating language with productive and rich morphological rules for word derivation, Korean lexemes in general belong to a single, unique word class. Derived words are clearly marked with category-changing affixes or light-verbs for compounding. However, many Korean intensifiers, in addition to being adverbs, are also classifiable as nouns and adjectives. This idiosyncrasy is largely due to the clipping process in the course of intensifier grammaticalization whereby the category-defining affixes are lost, thus making the form appear in the source word class when in fact it is adverbial because the functional reinterpretation occurred before the clipping (see V-B-(b) above).

B. Lexicalization-Grammaticalization Strategies

The foregoing exposition also shows a clear contrast in intensifier developmental patterns: Thai has a smaller inventory of intensifiers, numbering 23, that are used at a remarkably high frequency, a clear sign of a high level of ‘specialization’ (Hopper & Traugott, 2023), whereas Korean has a large number of intensifiers, numbering 60, that differentiate diverse and subtle nuances in the qualities being intensified. Furthermore, unlike Korean where diverse source lexemes are involved (see Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 2), intensifiers in Thai are built on a more restrictive number of lexemes (see Table 2 and Figure 1), utilizing the primary marker (notably *maak* ‘a lot, much, very’) complemented with suffixes, lexical items, or even reduplication. In this respect, Korean intensifiers reveal a contrast: although they sometimes occur in repeated forms, they do not generally form a new intensifier by way of combining or reduplicating (see V-B-(b) above).

This seemingly isolated case of contrast in fact reflects at a much more global level the different strategies favored by Thai and Korean in lexicalization and grammaticalization, which have been reported in comparative research (Khammee & Rhee, 2022 for lexicalization; Khammee & Rhee, 2025 and Rhee & Khammee, 2024, for grammaticalization). It has been observed in literature that the two languages favor different lexicalization-grammaticalization strategies, and that Thai favors the polysemy strategy (i.e., using one form for various, related meanings, focusing on similarities), while Korean favors the monosemy strategy (i.e., coining new forms for new meanings, focusing on differences) (Khammee & Rhee, 2022). The overall effect of this general tendency is evident in the size of the lexicon: Thai has a smaller vocabulary with a high degree of polysemy, while Korean has a large vocabulary with a lower degree of polysemy (cf. approximately 40,000 headwords in the *Royal Institute’s Dictionary* of Thai and 420,000 headwords of the *Phyocwunkwuke Taysacen* of Korean). In short, when the need for a new form to express a new concept arises, Korean ‘stretches’ the lexicon by coining an entirely new word (resulting in a constantly growing lexicon, e.g., the open dictionary *Wulimalsaym* contains 1.18 million words as of October 2025 and the inventory continues growing), whereas Thai ‘stretches’ the existing word to accommodate the new expression (resulting in the lexicon being a relatively stable size).

This observed contrast adds to the general typological characterization of the two languages. Korean is a language of structural high-specificity (agglutinating with a large number of grammatical morphemes; Rhee, 2020), over-

lexicalization (as a result of extensive monosemy strategy; Khammee & Rhee, 2022), affect-orientation (with a large emotive lexicon; Rhee, 2025), preference for a high-level of granularity in lexicon and grammar (Khammee & Rhee, 2022, 2025), and a (extremely) large vocabulary (see above). Thai contrasts Korean in nearly every typological aspect, being a language of structural low-specificity (thus highly pragmatically-oriented; Rhee, 2021b), under-lexicalization (as a result of extensive polysemy strategy and maximal lexical-recycling; Khammee & Rhee, 2022, 2025), and a (considerably) smaller vocabulary (see above).

C. Stance-Marking Function

The stance-marking function of linguistic forms has received much attention (Gardner, 2001; Mushin, 2001; White, 2003; Englebretson, 2007; Iwasaki & Yap, 2015). Stance is fundamentally interactional (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, 2004; Du Bois & Kärkkäinen, 2012) and is often conceptualized as inseparable from intersubjectivity, i.e., it expresses awareness of the addressee's attitude and beliefs (see also Locher, 2015; Locher & Larina, 2019). For instance, Rhee (2016a, p. 51) notes that intersubjectification is prominent with stance-marking functions, since employment of stance presupposes the presence of discourse partners, be they real or imagined. In the unified framework of Du Bois's (2007, pp. 140-141) stance triangle, the relation (alignment) between the subjectivity of one actor (Subject₁) and that of another (Subject₂) is intersubjectivity, and the relation (positioning) between an actor (Subject) and object (Object) is subjectification; hence, intertwined relations among subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and stance.

In this regard, Thai and Korean intensifiers exhibit notable commonalities and differences. First of all, Korean and Thai intensifiers are largely markers of the stance involving Subject₁ (Speaker) and Object (Text, Information), i.e., markers of subjectivity. For instance, the expression 'drive very fast' involves the speaker's (Subject₁) evaluation of the speed of a vehicle (Object). When intensifiers function as a modifier of an expression describing a particular property, they are invariably subjective stance markers, which feature is shared by Thai and Korean intensifiers. However, a notable difference exists: as discussed above, Thai intensifiers did not grammaticalize into discourse markers, with the exception of *điŋ-điŋ* (lit. 'true-true') (see Khammee, 2024, for detailed description). On the other hand, a number of Korean discourse markers have been grammaticalized from intensifiers (see V-B-(c) above). Such discourse markers are exemplars of stance markers involving Subject₁ (Speaker) and Subject₂ (Addressee) (cf. 'I am annoyed/frustrated', 'I am challenging you', 'I am serious', 'I'm not yet finished – please wait', etc.).

D. Conceptual Motivation

We have seen in the preceding exposition that the development of Thai intensifiers has been conceptually motivated by such key notions as PLENTIFULNESS, COMPLETENESS, MARKEDNESS, and SEMBLANCE (see Figure 1), and Korean intensifiers by COMPLETENESS, EXACTNESS, PLENTIFULNESS, SUFFICIENCY, MARKEDNESS, DEVIATION, SURPASSING, EXTREME, and ADDITION. Admittedly, this categorization could be constructed differently depending on the granularity of analysis and delineation of categorial boundaries. Such flexibility notwithstanding, overall conceptual sources present interesting commonalities and differences. For instance, PLENTIFULNESS, COMPLETENESS, and MARKEDNESS are common sources in both languages. Recruiting these seems to be well-motivated, considering that intensifiers inherently amplify qualities that either can be literally or metaphorically projected onto the size or degree, or claimed to stand out among entities being compared, whether real or imagined.

SEMBLANCE in Thai is based on the concept that the qualities being focused match or are close to the (implicit) high standard. This is close to EXACTNESS in Korean that refers to a standard. The only difference between them is that SEMBLANCE highlights similarity whereas EXACTNESS highlights identity. DEVIATION, SURPASSING, EXTREME, and ADDITION in Korean are similarly well-motivated since DEVIATION and SURPASSING are closely related to MARKEDNESS; EXTREME is closely related to SUFFICIENCY; and ADDITION is closely related to SURPASSING (note that, therefore, '(over) one layer' and '(over) one level' are cross-classified).

Among the strengths of grammaticalization theory is that it highlights a great level of commonalities in terms of motivation, processes, and directionality. The state of affairs elaborated above, however, points to the fact that grammaticalization scenarios may exhibit commonalities across languages at a macro-level while involving significant variability and differences at a micro-level. Thus, efforts to identify sets of source concepts commonly found across languages (cf. the 'source determination hypothesis', Bybee et al., 1994) and to identify the extent of variabilities and preferences within individual languages must supplement each other.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed intensifiers in Thai and Korean with respect to their lexical sources, relative strengths, structural patterns, and functions. The developmental patterns in the two languages reveal both commonalities and differences. Intensifiers, being a language universal, are found in both Thai and Korean, despite differences in the size of the inventory and the frequency of actual uses. More significantly, Korean and Thai intensifiers exhibit significantly different lexicalization strategies, i.e., the polysemy strategy in Thai and the monosemy strategy in Korean. This analysis also found that Thai and Korean intensifiers carry stance-marking functions that are notably different in their extent, as Thai intensifiers tend to be largely subjective stance markers for amplifying qualities and illocutionary forces, whereas Korean intensifiers, while also marking subjective stance, carry intersubjective functions, especially in cases where they

are used as discourse markers. Conceptual motivations also show variability at a micro-level in that, in addition to a few commonly-shared conceptual sources, Thai exhibits more concentration while Korean exhibits more diffusion in recruiting source concepts.

APPENDIX

Part-of-speech and glossing abbreviations. a: adjective; ad: adverb; AVERT: averative; CMPL: completive; DM: discourse marker; CLS: classifier; EXCL: exclamative; IDEO: Ideophone; intj/INTJ: interjection; INTS: intensifier; n: noun; PST: past; SK: Sino-Korean

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