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Pragmatic Functions of English/Setswana Code-Switching in WhatsApp Groups of a Communication Class

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Abstract—WhatsApp is a widely used technological and social platform. It is officially recognized as a channel of communication between lecturers and students at some public tertiary institutions in Botswana. As a multilingual digital space, WhatsApp enables users to alternate between languages within a single interaction, making it a fertile environment for code-switched communication. The features and purposes of code-switched communication therefore deserve scholarly attention because they provide a rich linguistic resource for pragmatic analysis. Thus, this study aimed to identify various situational uses of code-switching in the WhatsApp group of Communication Skills classes, analyze the pragmatic functions of code-switched messages, and relate these functions to students' learning needs. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach involving content analysis and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Drawing from the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), data was collected from WhatsApp groups of two classes for content analysis and from discussions with twenty (20) students. The findings reveal that except for subtle rebukes and requests, the pragmatic analysis of extracted WhatsApp data aligned with the Focus Group Discussion findings. The main convergent pragmatic functions were clarification, emphasis, humour, and cultural identity, and the only divergent pragmatic function was exclusion. The research concludes that code-switching is influenced by socio-cultural factors, particularly culture and language, as students strive to provide detailed information and seek clarification concerning their academic studies. The research recommends that students should be encouraged to communicate in English, which is understandable to lecturers and students, as code-switching often leads to linguistic marginalization and dominance.

Index Terms—communication, translation, technologies, speech acts, code-switching

I. INTRODUCTION

People are constantly changing to meet their dynamic needs (Hamdan, 2021), especially in the education sector. In recent times, there have been concerns about the pedagogical and non-pedagogical uses of indigenous languages in Botswana (Mokibelo et al., 2025; Akinkurolere et al., 2025), despite the policy statement on the use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education. An everyday use of English and Setswana (the indigenous language) was observed in class WhatsApp interactions. Notably, students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and the only indigenous language for codeswitching is Setswana. This highlights the sociolinguistic issues of English linguistic dominance and Setswana's marginalisation, as well as the marginalisation of non-Setswana speakers due to English's global status (Ntombela, 2023).

In language teaching, pragmatics enables students to explore both the communicative and practical uses of language as they gain insights into utterance production and interpretation (Farinde & Oyedokun-Alli, 2020). As such, social interactions serve pragmatic functions (Al-rojaie, 2012; Cohn et al., 2023), because pragmatics is a sub-linguistic field that focuses on the contextual meaning of language among interactants (Al-Saidat et al., 2024; Yule, 2020). In teaching communication courses, language use is a pedagogical method that helps learners to retain the knowledge of the language used. It is this focus on language use in real situations that makes pragmatics a relevant linguistic approach for students' communication and teachers' guidance (Farinde & Oyedokun-Alli, 2020).

In essence, pragmatics reveals a speaker's or writer's hidden meanings while Semantics focuses on words' meanings (Siddiqui, 2018). Niu (2023) also opines that pragmatics explores the meaning-relationship between language and context. Based on these pronouncements, language, meaning, and context are key elements in pragmatics because this sub-linguistic field allows for the exploration of language use and its meaning in context (Dey, 2023). Pragmatic functions of linguistic concepts such as borrowing, hedges, politeness principles, honorifics, and speech acts within and outside education, among others, have been critically studied and reviewed (Tang, 2013; Jia, 2022; Almossa, 2023;

Wibowo et al., 2023). Borrowing is related to codeswitching because it cuts across language use, even though the structural integration of borrowing suggests that these are two linguistic concepts with various levels of integration (Jia, 2022).

Intrasentential and intersentential switching are types of code-switching which manifest in communication for varied reasons (Khalil & Firdaus, 2018). Intersentential code-switching is influenced by social factors such as mood, limited vocabulary, clarification, and emphasis (Jia, 2022). In contrast, intrasentential code-switching is characterised by discourse markers, nouns, and verbs, as observed in the case study of parliamentary debates among Malaysian bilinguals. Moreover, codeswitching is motivated by the presence of bilinguals who share similar languages, necessitating the establishment of a sense of identity or belonging across them. It suffices to say that efforts are made to provide a dominant view of both intrasentential and intersentential codeswitching, along with other types, even though Yusuf et al. (2018) identify four types of code-switching: inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching, tag switching, and continuity in code-switching. The first two are the most common types.

In consonance with previous studies, reasons for code switching include limited terminology, social acceptance, confirmation, personalization, clarification, emphasis, linguistic prowess, exclusion, and sense of belonging (Jia, 2016; Halim & Maros, 2014; Mabule, 2017). Indeed, the body of evidence in intercultural pragmatics research indicates that cultural concepts in one language may pose challenges in other languages (Guo & Dong, 2025). Therefore, a lack of appropriate English terms could lead to code-switching to Setswana without due regard for non-Setswana speakers.

Larsson (2023) argues that the environment influences learning processes beyond the recognition of learning as a purposeful process. This highlights the fact that a linguistic environment, as exhibited by students within and outside the classroom, has implications for students' learning. In classroom interactions, Kemaloğlu-Er and Özata (2020) identify meaning clarification, task procedures, equivalence, and emotional expression as significant purposes of code-switching. Codeswitched utterances have pragmatic implications and purposes that serve functions (Barredo, 1997), which can be better understood through pragmatic skills. For instance, interpreting playful conversations and jokes, and Facebook likes on status updates requires pragmatic skills (Bischetti et al., 2019; Hamdan, 2021), and pragmatic functions have been studied. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships and social cohesion could be established through implied or indirect politeness (Yang, 2023), while code-switching that is learner-directed enhances clarification in the classroom interaction (Zhu & Vanek, 2015).

Teachers of English as a foreign language code-switch due to the low proficiency in the language, its skills, and beliefs, while simultaneously trying to guide students in understanding vocabulary, grammar, and cultural concepts (Temesgen & Hailu, 2022). However, substantial evidence indicates that international students disapprove of the code-switching practice by local teachers in English-medium instruction universities (Zhang & Lütge, 2022). Nevertheless, there are some learning process techniques, such as humour, which could be achieved through codeswitching (Akinkulore et al., 2017). Also, cultural concepts could trigger codeswitching because students learn within specific contexts. No wonder, Ghabisha (2019) emphasizes the challenges and complexities of translating Arabic cultural words into English, with meaning preservation as the most challenging aspect.

However, there is limited data on the application of CAT to code switching in WhatsApp groups. Therefore, there is a need to fill the identified gap in students' codeswitching practices between English and Setswana. Moreover, there are instances where a lecturer and the students do not understand Setswana. Thus, the extent to which such functions meet their needs warrants scholarly attention. The results provide further insights into the rules or policymaking for class WhatsApp communication, because despite continual warnings from lecturers and other students, cases of code-switching persist. This study, therefore, considered the need to explore the pragmatic functions of code-switching among Setswana-English bilinguals by answering the following three research questions: What are the situational uses of English/Setswana code-switching in the WhatsApp group of communication skills classes in Botswana? What are the pragmatic functions of code-switched messages? How do the functions relate to students' learning needs?

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Communication Accommodation Theor, previously known as the Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT), was initially developed in the 1970s by Howard Giles (Shu, 2021). As a sociolinguistic theory, it applies to both verbal and non-verbal communication of digital discourse in education. The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) explains how people adjust their linguistic behaviours through different strategies to create divergence and convergence (Rahadigama, 2023). The theory is relevant to the exploration of pragmatic functions of code switching, premised on its concepts of convergence, divergence, maintenance, and influencing factors.

Even though pragmatics has main frameworks such as deixis, speech acts, politeness, maxims, and implicatures that are relevant to the investigation of the relationship between language and context (Siddiqui, 2018; Niu, 2023), broadly speaking, pragmatics keeps expanding its analytical frames across all kinds of communication of discourse, including images (Schlöder & Altshuler, 2023).

Prominent among scholars who have applied the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to discourse are Rahadigama (2023), on political speeches, and Cohn et al. (2023), on human-computer interactions. The tenets of divergence and convergence of CAT are critically explored in Joe Biden's election acceptance and victory speech. In response to the fact that primary theories of pragmatics may not adequately capture contextual goals of specific digital

discourse, CAT was considered a suitable framework because of the pre-communication rule in the digital context, WhatsApp group, and the statement that students should only communicate in English as the official medium of instruction in the University, and the only language understood by all students. Also, why learners code-switch between dialects to portray cultural identities and create inclusion and exclusion is explainable through CAT.

III. METHODS

The study relied on a mixed methods approach using a public university in Botswana as a case study. The content analysis involved data derived from WhatsApp group communication from the Academic Literacy classes for the Sciences, focusing on examples for each of the identified functions, in line with the basic tenets of the Speech Accommodation Theory. The classes' WhatsApp groups were purposively sampled from 27 groups comprising 12 lecturers, because one of the classes was taught by an international lecturer who does not speak Setswana. This was to ensure that the analysed interactions were never meant for the lecturer. Even though the data were derived from a social media platform, the group was also restricted to the lecturer and students as an academic group. The FGD involved 20 students, purposively selected from 40 students who communicated in the class WhatsApp group through code-switching. All the 40 selected students were invited to participate in an FGD, but only 20 showed up, and they were divided into two sessions. Students participated in a two-and-a-half-hour discussion anchored by two of the researchers. The students were compensated with pens for their time, while ethical considerations of informed consent, anonymity, disclosure, and confidentiality were strictly adhered to. The FGD was recorded, transcribed, and arranged into themes. One response was chosen in cases of repetition and similar responses. Hence, ethical considerations were considered, with informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. The interactions were translated using the Setswana Translation App, while two Botswana (Botswana Nationals) lecturers cross-checked the translation for reliability and validity. The WhatsApp interactions that featured codeswitching over one semester, from January to May 2025, were analysed thematically for pragmatic functions. For the analysis, English was considered the primary language because it is the officially recognised and approved medium of instruction in Botswana's higher education.

IV. RESULTS

Based on the content analysis, about 20% of the WhatsApp communications contained code switched messages. This figure is justified because the students knew that their lecturer neither spoke nor understood Setswana. Even though the primary language was English students code-switched intentionally to achieve pragmatic functions, revealed in this section. The primary purpose of FGD was to corroborate the pragmatic functions of extracted data in the class WhatsApp groups as analyzed through the Communication Accommodation Theory.

1 Function of Emphasis

Some sentences show that students code-switch to highlight a point, as shown in 'ii' and 'iii' below.

- i. '@Ma'am, mine has not yet been graded, and it does not allow editing.'
- ii. Bagaetsho ako le mphayeng email ya ga mam gongwe o ta responda.' (Inter-sentential)
(*Friends, please give me ma'am's email, maybe she will respond.*)
- iii. 'Le nna ntsenyeng guys. Ke hardworker ya nfana 🤖' (*Me too, please add me, guys. I am a hard worker, I swear 🤖.*) (Intrasentential)

Sentence 'ii' above implies that students preferred to mention or discuss the lecturer, who was a member of the group, by relying more on Setswana than English. Only two words, 'guys' and 'email', are English words. The previous message was included to indicate that the student's earlier message had not yet been responded to by the female lecturer. Therefore, the student relied on other students, albeit Setswana speakers, to reiterate and emphasize her request, which was no longer intended for the lecturer but rather a means of contacting the lecturer by email. Consequently, it would be herculean, if not impossible, for the lecturer to interpret the message. Pragmatics is about the implied meaning meant by the speaker and interpreted by the hearer, as highlighted and defined in Al-Saidat et al. (2024). The students emphasized their need for abilities in Sentence 'iii' during the grading and project work processes. These are essential and relevant to their learning needs and experiences.

Furthermore, Sentence 'iii' indicates that the student desperately needed a group with which to work on a group-based project. The extent of swearing to attest to one's academic ability as a hard worker is an emphasis to convince group members with a small number of students. Both 'ii' and 'iii' demonstrate the lecturer and non-Setswana speakers' exclusion, which connects with the notion of divergence in the Communication Accommodation Theory.

It was also noted that the examples illustrating emphasis are also good examples of the pragmatic function of request. Therefore, it could be argued that an instance of code switching could serve more than one pragmatic function.

Emphasis is a primary pragmatic function that kept recurring, just as clarification did, in the discussion with the students. This highlights the significance of emphasis in the class WhatsApp group through code-switching. The findings from the students' discussion underscore the pragmatic function of emphasis in classroom code-switching. The emphasis, is intended to highlight and draw attention to key concepts and ideas that were notable in the FGD. This is not far-fetched, given that students always yearn for clarity in messages, leading to emphasis. Therefore, emphasis is a

response to a request for clarification. Students were eager to reiterate the emphasis on code-switching as a pragmatic function as illustrated in the verbatim extracts below:

- i. *Emphasis....when trying to imply more on something that I feel is important to be understood by all.*
- ii. *Emphasis (expressing points in both Setswana and English).*
- iii. *Emphasis: My native language has available options to highlight a point.*
- iv. *Adding emphasis.*
- v. *For emphasis or clarification—for example, explaining certain concepts to a native Setswana speaker helps them better understand them.*
- vi. *Emphasis, so that they fully understand what I am saying. I would say a word in English, then say it in Setswana.*

Both emphasis and clarification are intricately woven around the understanding and dissemination of information. Through these, the students found English-Setswana code-switching to be a social act with pedagogical implications for learners. The pedagogical functions identified earlier by Jia (2016) are justified by further empirical investigations in another context, which add to their credibility. No doubt, the pragmatic function of emphasis plays a converging role in communication accommodation.

2 Pragmatic Function of Request

Copious examples indicate that students seek information through code-switching, as shown under the pragmatic function of emphasis and below.

- i. 'For those of you doing PHY122... Ke kopa drive ya experiment 12... Inbox please' (Intra-sentential)
(*For those of you doing PHY122... Please send me the drive for Experiment 12... Inbox me, please.*)

- ii. Student A: Ke yeo cv. Looking for a group! (*Here is my CV*) (Inter-sentential)

Student B: Le nna 🙋 (Me too)

Student C: Le nna (Me too)

The above is a conversation between three students. The first is codeswitched between English and Setswana, while the other two students responded in Setswana. The example of 'i' is not just a request, but a polite one using 'please.' Even though the student addressed other students, the nature of the request and the cultural underpinning politeness play out in the utterance. This implies that politeness relates to the culture of request in the Botswana context, which is also identified as an element of culture by Widiyanti (2021) in Japanese work culture. It is worth noting that students did not explicitly state that they code-switch when making requests. This is understandable because, at their level, they perceive a request as a form of clarification. Further probing into the use of code-switching for specific requests, as Example 2, was intended to elicit a negative response; hence, students perform certain pragmatic acts, such as making a request, without realizing it.

3 Pragmatic Function of Humour

When students joke or adopt a playful tone, they often code-switch. This aligns with Kemaloğlu-Er and Özata's (2020) submission that students code-switch for emotional expressions in groups. The following expressions are humorous.

- i. 'It's obviously ko Biac Mme kana bagolwane bame 🙄' (Intra-sentential)

(*It is obviously at BIAC, but seriously, my elders 🙄*)

- ii. 'Dumelang Botsadi ke kopa go addiwa mo di Groupon tsa class cause ke mosha and ga ke na Group so ke kopa go addiwa 🙏🙏🙏🙄🙄' (Intra-sentential)

(*Greetings parents, I am requesting to be added to the class WhatsApp groups because I am new and I do not have a group, so please add me 🙏🙏🙏🙄🙄*)

Students attempted to create a humorous atmosphere by referring to more knowledgeable students as 'elders' and 'parents'. These humorous messages are intended for fellow Setswana-speaking students to convey politeness, thereby, making a fun joke of politeness. The only person who deserved some degree of respect in the group was the lecturer, but ironically, she did not understand Setswana. Instead, the students were directing their humorous politeness to fellow students. By implication, Yang's (2023) observation that indirectness in politeness helps establish pragmatic functions in euphemism applies to codeswitching in this context, as the students attempted to strengthen interpersonal relationships.

In WhatsApp communication, students tend to crack jokes with one another, as evidenced by hypothetical examples extracted from their chats. In these extracts, the humorous statements are not meant for the lecturer and international students. The use of humor in the class WhatsApp group is not only intentional but it also indirectly excludes non-Setswana speakers. For example, some perspectives extracted from students' FGD are stated below.

- i. *I think humor because Setswana has a way of bringing life to conversations and is very funny.*
- ii. *Humour- Some puns and some words are best said in Setswana for better understanding and for the pun to come through among learners.*
- iii. *Other times, I use it for humour, even though it may make international students feel left out.*
- iv. *Humor, mostly comments, not a lot.*

The mention of international students' exclusion in humorous messages suggests that they did not mind their presence. This indicates that they were insensitive to the plight of such international students as they are totally excluded from

humorous conversations. Research has shown that incorporating humour into the learning process improves knowledge retention (Akinkulore et al., 2017). Therefore, facts, information, and concepts joked about may not be forgotten by the students.

4 Pragmatic Function of Subtle Rebuke

In any group, conflict is likely to arise when students have diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Widiarti (2021) identifies a lack of understanding and misperceptions as the causes of misunderstanding. It was noted that some students could be rude in requesting information and addressing the lecturer, while others softly criticized by relying on codeswitching and leveraging their shared native language. Ironically, most of the insulting words were never used in English to exclude the lecturer. In the course of rebuking such misconduct, fellow students also leveraged codeswitching to correct others or react to a rebuke, without involving the lecturer. In essence, both the lecturer and non-Setswana speakers were excluded from such interactions.

i. 'My bruh u are talking to maam kana do u know that?' (*My bruh, you are talking to ma'am, do you know that?*) (Intra-sentential)

ii. 'Ron's re kwala ka di 11 ke bona gotwe 4-11. Leska nkgolegaa, maybe I was dreaming.' (*We were told to write at 11, but I saw it says 4-11. Please do not judge me—maybe I was dreaming.*) (Intra/inter-sentential)

At the time of data retrieval, the initial message addressed to the lecturer had already been deleted. Evidently, the pragmatic function of rebuke yielded the intended result, even though the accused gave a defence with an implied apology by saying, 'I was dreaming.' Therefore, a fellow student was rebuked without exposing the student to the lecturer through code-switching.

5 Pragmatic Function of Clarification

Students leveraged code switching to seek or provide clarification. Learning is about assimilating information. Even when information is shared, clarification is still required most of the time. Students tended to code-switch when seeking clarification.

i. 'Any group dah.' (*Any group available?*)

ii. 'Kana ba re senang re similoleng ya rona.' (*They said those of us without a group should start our own.*)

iii. 'Ok dira group ya WhatsApp o re tsenye.' (*Okay, create a WhatsApp group and add us.*)

The above shows how students code-switched when their course mates responded to their enquiries. 'They' in Sentence ii is a honorific pronoun for the lecturer. This proves Zhu and Vanek (2015) right in their assertion that codeswitching aids clarification in the classroom, as the WhatsApp platform serves as an informal digital classroom. Moreover, some students could miss vital information when they missed lessons.

In the FGD, the students highlighted clarification as a key function and purpose of their code-switching practices in the class WhatsApp group.

Specific verbatim extracts from the students are as follows:

i. *I code-switch when there is a task to do and instructions to follow.*

ii. *Because I am not fluent in English, it will be hard to clarify.*

iii. *I use Setswana in instances where it is not easy to articulate a concept in English. In that scenario, we use Setswana to clarify amongst ourselves before we switch code back to English after coining a meaningful translation without deviating from the context for the benefit of everyone involved.*

iv. *When asking for some information e.g., deadline ya assignment ke leng? (What is the deadline for the assignment?)*

v. *I use Setswana with English when I want to clarify something that others may not understand well in English.*

The above provides compelling evidence that code-switching to clarify instructions, complex concepts, tasks, and information is a key pragmatic implication recognized by students. The application of this function aligns with the learning objective. Thus, students must find code-switching beneficial to their academic success. No wonder students were able to note the advantages of code switching between English and Setswana.

The discussed advantages are embedded in the use of clarification, as students gained a better understanding, participated in discussions, and engaged more in class group communication. By saying "*The understanding becomes more easier, and more understanding means more participation in class*", "*It encourages participation without limiting students*" and "*It enhances student's understanding and participation as they will be able to be more engaged in the discussions since their home language is used*", indicate that the use of code switching to achieve clarification, which is sacrosanct as a convergent purpose in the Communication Accommodation Theory.

6 Pragmatic Function of Exclusion

All the code-switched messages demonstrate a deliberate attempt to exclude the lecturer, and non-Setswana Speakers. This serves as a point of divergence in thoughts and interpretations according to the Communication Accommodation Theory (Rahadigama, 2023).

i. 'Ke ko Biac' (*I am at BIAC*)

ii. 'Are you sure Biac O kgakala kana ake batle go boa Kwa ke timetse lesson tla tloga E fela' (*Are you sure it is BIAC? It is far, and I do not want to go there and miss the lesson for nothing.*)

The interaction above is between two students and was about the location of the lesson. The choice of the general group necessitates code switching to exclude the lecturer and non-Setswana speakers. Aside from the above example, which outrightly demonstrates exclusion, their expressions also serve as primary functions alongside exclusion.

In the FGD, exclusion was noted as both a pragmatic act and a disadvantage. From their responses, it is apparent that it could be performed deliberately and unintentionally, and they both put international students at a disadvantage. Some of the students highlighted points include the following:

- i. *Code-switching excludes Setswana-speaking students.*
- ii. *Code-switching is disadvantageous for international students.*
- iii. *Some students feel left out when we communicate in a language they do not understand, e.g., Setswana.*
- iv. *Code-switching makes some students feel excluded.*
- v. *Exclusion- not everyone speaks Setswana.*

Students' discussion provides in-depth insights into the exclusionary act of English-Setswana code-switching in class WhatsApp communication. Even though codeswitching facilitates engagement and interaction, its role in a diverse class is acknowledged as hindering an inclusive learning environment. This is consistent with previous research (Jia, 2016; Halim & Maros, 2014; Mabule, 2017) that shows that code-switching can lead to exclusion by non-speakers of other languages.

It is notable that the revelation that 'code switching makes some students feel excluded' in example 'iv' places the act of exclusion as a generated reaction on the part of non-speakers than an admission of the act committed by the speaker. This implies that such an act of codeswitching was meant for English-Setswana speakers. Therefore, the benefits of code-switching could only be maximized by Setswana-English bilingual students.

7 Pragmatic Function of Belongingness/ Cultural Identity

The deployment of Setswana in code-switching implies an attempt to connect only with its speakers. This is the underlying force of convergence in the Communication Accommodation Theory. In situations where students' identities are challenged, codeswitching can help navigate this complexity, achieve acceptance, and make a positive impact (Wright et al., 2022).

- i. 'Dumelang, ke kopa group hleng 🙏' (*Hello, I am requesting to join a group please 🙏*) (Intersentential)

'Dumelang' is the main traditional greeting in Botswana. This creates a cultural and linguistic bond in the learning process. Since it is a form of greeting, the use of 'Dumelang' here is not limited to establishing a cultural bond but also serves as a polite function only to Setswana speakers. It is noteworthy that the sentence 'i', above, acts as a polite request too. There are other traditional instances of using Setswana words such as 'friends', 'parents', and 'elders' for course mates in code-switched messages, which signify politeness. The use of emoticons and emojis demonstrates politeness, courtesy, or loyalty, but this falls outside the purview of the foci of this study, even though Zheng (2023) argues that emojis are standard features of online communication and serve as substitutes for non-verbal behaviours (Li & Yang, 2018).

During FGD sessions, the students discussed codeswitching as a way to express their identity and create a sense of belonging. This is deeply rooted in the convergence principle of the Communication Accommodation Theory. This underscores the pivotal role of codeswitching in fostering cultural bonds among Setswana speakers, thereby corroborating the pragmatic analysis of the communication extracted from the class WhatsApp group.

- i. *Identity, for example, if someone asks me about my origin, I will speak Setswana to prove my identity.*
- ii. *I codeswitch to portray my identity as a Motswana (Botswana citizen).*
- iii. *I codeswitch when talking about Batswana culture, which is advisable, as it would be better to use Setswana to describe the words, so they do not lose their meaning.*
- iv. *It makes me feel at ease and gives me a sense of belonging.*
- v. *Using Setswana in the class WhatsApp group helps me feel connected to my cultural identity and builds a sense of belonging"*
- vi. *English/Setswana codeswitching is good when talking about the Batswana culture, as it is advisable to use Setswana to describe the words, so they do not lose their meaning.*

Emerging subthemes in the students' discussion include cultural preservation and meaning preservation, aligning with Ghabisha's (2019) assertions on the importance of preserving the meaning of cultural concepts. Indeed, code-switching is one of the solutions to the problems of translating cultural concepts. This pragmatic function reveals that students used their native language (Setswana) as a valuable tool for convergence, in line with the Communication Accommodation theoretical principles.

Furthermore, permitting students to code-switch when discussing cultural concepts could help non-Speakers understand the meanings of these concepts and ideas, as well as help establish rapport among Setswana speakers. This does not undermine the possibility of cultivating divergence among learners, as understanding Setswana depends on the interests of international students.

V. DISCUSSION

The results from the classes' WhatsApp communication and FGD sessions have proved that code-switching is deployed to perform pragmatic functions in class communication. These functions have direct learning implications

because learning is intentional and purposeful (Larsson, 2023). Functions of clarification, request, and emphasis relate to information sharing, hence, exclusion robs non-speakers of vital information that facilitates learning.

However, humour, subtle rebuke, and connections between cultural identity/sense of belonging have cultural underpinnings, enabling intercultural integration through borrowing (Jia, 2022) and codeswitching. Code-switching in WhatsApp communication falls under the Media (M) category in Akinkurolere et al.'s (2025) BATOME model of formal uses of indigenous languages in higher education. This usage in media can be achieved through intra-sentential code-switching; whereby non-Setswana Speakers could easily guess or decode the meaning of one or two words based on context. This is both a pragmatic act and skill as implied in the work of Farinde and Oyedokun-Alli (2020).

Furthermore, some participants were not English-Setswana bilinguals but Setswana semilinguals, who code-switched with minimal words for emphasis, sense of belonging, and clarity, among others, such as using 'Kana' (I think). 'I think' and 'I do not think' in interactions are examples of stance markers, which function pragmatically (Sabet & Zhang, 2018). This is an example of attempt by non-speakers to integrate linguistically and culturally.

Also, given Jia's (2022) position on pragmatic functions of borrowing, it is challenging to differentiate intrasentential code-switching from borrowing, especially when it involves only one word and serves an emphatic function. Users' perspectives could help unravel whether they borrow or code-switch in unique situations involving a single word, whether in English or Setswana. At times, codeswitching is used through divergence strategies to defend one's identity (Jazeri & Nurhayati, 2019), as students find their true identity in their native language.

There is no doubt that accommodation strategies could be linguistically and culturally challenging when group members have different first languages (Rogerson-Revell, 2010). In fact, the more group members have different first languages, the more challenges arise in interactions. However, since no other indigenous language was employed in codeswitching aside from Setswana, this implies minimal challenges for non-speakers and it establishes Setswana as an indigenous language of dominance, and code-switchers' deliberate refusal to adjust their interactions for an international audience, thereby decolonising class WhatsApp interactions.

However, the lecturer-students WhatsApp group communication was rich in linguistic resources beyond code-switching. Codeswitched messages produced are relevant for expanding, elaborating, explaining, introducing a new topic, and sustaining the platform, just like interactions in one language (Almossa, 2023). Others include borrowing, emoticons, abbreviations, and speech acts. Exclusion and subtle rebuke are the pragmatic functions of divergence. At the same time, emphasis, request, clarification, belonging, and humour constitute the pragmatic functions of convergence in students' codeswitched messages during their class WhatsApp communication.

Regarding how code-switching meets students' learning needs, students posited that *'code-switching can help them understand topics better'* and *'it helps local students comprehend the message effectively'*. Another significant response is *'it encourages students to participate in discussion'*. By implication, codeswitching has pedagogical benefits for users of the languages. It is clear that codeswitching patterns and discussions are intricately woven around Shu's (2021) submission that new media platforms are mostly convergent, and that readers' habits and language patterns influence this. In addition, Shetewi (2023) asserts that issues of identity and language prestige influence interactions in group communication. These, indeed, contribute towards the accommodation patterns in the class WhatsApp group. Hence, group or intergroup communication can be interpreted through the communication accommodation theory (Cohn et al., 2023).

VI. CONCLUSION

Codeswitching among Setswana-English bilinguals in a Communication Skills class WhatsApp group is a deliberate exclusion of lecturers to achieve certain pragmatic functions among learners. Also, this exclusion affects non-Setswana speakers, indicating Setswana's dominance. Indeed, the prohibition of Setswana in the WhatsApp group has failed because students are motivated to perform certain pragmatic functions. Hence, it is obvious that they prioritise pragmatic functions over WhatsApp communication rules.

The pragmatic functions of clarification, emphasis, and request are significant for students' cognition and overall learning experiences, and both the extracted data and the FGD have established this. The study recommends a further qualitative study on use of code-switching in class group discussions in higher institutions of learning to elicit other pragmatic functions and students' insights into face-to-face interactions. Nevertheless, lecturers should encourage students to communicate in English, but Setswana use should include translation in WhatsApp groups to promote inclusion of international students, non-Setswana speakers, and lecturers.

Non-speakers, such as international lecturers and students, should explore Setswana translation software or applications to understand Setswana utterances, as this contributes to cross-cultural understanding. For equity, lecturers, whether Motswana or not, should never communicate in Setswana, as WhatsApp communication contributes to the overall teaching and learning processes, as established through communication extracts and focus group discussions.

APPENDIX

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

TITLE: THE USE OF ENGLISH-SETSWANA CODESWITCHING IN WHATSAPP GROUPS OF COMMUNICATION CLASS

Purpose of the Focus Group: This purpose of the group is to gather views and practical experiences on the use of English-Setswana codeswitching in WhatsApp group in a communication class. This discussion will help to identify the pragmatic functions of English-Setswana codeswitching.

1. Discuss the language use in the class WhatsApp group.

How often is English-Setswana used in WhatsApp group communication in your class?

2. Explain the pragmatic functions of English-Setswana codeswitching.

In what situations or for what purposes do you codeswitch in class WhatsApp group (e.g., clarification, emphasis, examples, humor, etc.)

3. Discuss your perceptions on codeswitching as a motivating factor in class WhatsApp group.

How does the use of English-Setswana codeswitching influence students' understanding and participation in class despite having non-Setswana speakers in the group?

4. Discuss the pedagogical Implications of English-Setswana codeswitching.

How does English-Setswana codeswitching influence your general learning experience? Can you share specific examples?

5. Advantages and Disadvantages of Codeswitching in a Learning Context

What are the merits and demerits of English-Setswana codeswitching in the class WhatsApp group?

6. Recommendations

What recommendations would you give regarding the future use of English-Setswana codeswitching in university class WhatsApp discussion?

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Translating Narrative Voice in *The Book Thief* Into Arabic

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Abstract—Narrative voice is a central element of prose fiction, as it shapes the story structure, conveys values, and establishes the narrative stance. This study investigates the translation of the narrative voice in Markus Zusak's (2005) *The Book Thief*, in which Death serves as narrator. Voice is studied through Phelan's (2023) triad of style, tone, and values, with Leech and Short's (2013) stylistic categories used to trace voice across source and target languages. Chesterman's (1997) strategies are employed to explain and classify shifts identified in translation. It is hypothesized that although Arabic translation accurately conveys narrative events, it recurrently introduces modifications to narrative voice through explicitness and trope change. The study draws on five selected samples taken from *The Book Thief*, through which narrative voice is identified using foregrounding and deviation. The study reveals shifts in Death's voice that stem from overlooking narrative voice. These shifts align with Arabic norms of clarity and descriptive detail, yet at the expense of weakening narrative voice. Cross-cultural variations further shape how voice is perceived across the two languages. The study concludes with an examination of the impact of translation strategies on style, tone, and values. A lack of thematic awareness leads to a loss of coherence in the representation of the narrator's moral and emotional stance. It also concludes that translating complex narratives requires a unified sensitivity to the narrator's style, tone, and values, along with awareness of the novel's central theme and of cultural differences between Arabic and English.

Index Terms—narrative voice, *The Book Thief*, tone, Chesterman's translation strategies, power of words

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation is defined as the process of establishing equivalence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). The translator seeks to reproduce in the target reader an effect comparable to that of the original. However, achieving equivalence becomes increasingly complex when what must be translated is not merely meaning, but the distinctive voice through which meaning is conveyed. Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* presents such a challenge through Death's voice—a blend of irony, compassion, and moral reflection. This study examines how the Arabic translation reconstructs voice, analyzing the interaction of stylistic choice and cultural context. Building on Phelan's (2023) account of narrative voice and its triad components, the study foregrounds the emotional and moral dimensions of narrative across languages. Leech and Short's (2013) stylistic framework reveals where foregrounding and deviation contribute to voice construction, while Chesterman's (1997) strategies reveal how shifts reshape meaning. It argues that translating the narrative voice depends on preserving moral vision, and emotional and thematic depth across cultural contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Narrative has evolved into a site of interdisciplinary scholarship, bridging literary theory, stylistics, cognitive and cultural studies, and criticism. It permits layered exploration at both micro and macro levels—from stylistic choices like metaphor and metonymy to broader concerns such as voice, structure, and genre. Due to their differences and complementarity, interdisciplinary studies can more comprehensively interpret the formal aspects of narrative fiction (Shen, 2025). The so-called “narrative turn” in contemporary scholarship confirms this expanded scope (Lambrou, 2020). In line with this orientation, the present study draws on narratological and stylistic frameworks that illuminate different sides of fiction. Together, they offer a more thorough account of narrative form, illustrating how a story functions. This integrated approach allows macro narrative structure and micro stylistic devices to be interpreted together.

A. Narrative

Narrative can be defined as anything that tells or shows, be it oral narration, written texts, visual imagery, staged performance, or a multimodal combination of these (Jahn, 2025). Narrative appears in contexts as varied as conversation, jokes, novels, plays, films, comic strips, and blogs. This can be illustrated in the following figure:

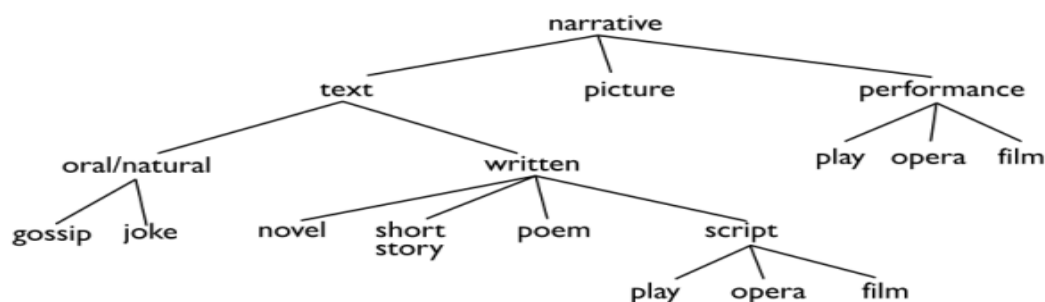


Figure 1. Barthes's Loose List of Narrative Forms, Genres, and Media (as cited in Jahn, 2025, p.16)

Rimmon-Kenan (2005) describes narration as comprising (1) a communication process in which the addresser transmits the narrative as a message to the addressee and (2) the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message. It is this verbal nature that distinguishes narrative fiction from other types. A story in a narrative fiction, in turn, refers to a sequence of events involving characters who act as agents (causes of events), patients, or beneficiaries (affected by events), unified by a central theme that holds the whole novel together.

According to structuralist theory, narratives consist of two levels: a story (*histoire*), which includes what happens, who is involved, and settings, and discourse (*discours*), which refers to how these elements are organized and narrated. In short, the story is “what,” and discourse is “how” (Chatman, 1978).

Genette (1980) in his influential “Narrative Discourse” distinguishes three domains: tense, which examines the relationship between story time and discourse time, mood, which addresses narrative distance and narrative perspective as devices of representation, and voice, which analyzes narrative situation involving both narrator and audience, whether real or implied.

B. Narrative Voice

At the heart of every narrative discourse lies the narrator. Defined most simply, the narrator is the voice—spoken or written—that mediates the text, maintains communication with the narratee, manages the unfolding of events, selects perspective and sequence, and withholds what remains untold. The narrator’s authority extends further, allowing for metanarrative comments that draw attention to the moral or thematic significance (Prince, 2003; Rimmon-Kenan, 2005; Margolin, 2013).

Depending on the narrator’s relationship to the story—the question of whether they are or were present or absent in the storyworld—Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002) distinguish between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, while in his book “*Discourse and Story*”, Chatman (1978) distinguishes between overt and covert narrators. An overt narrator can be identified through certain features. They speak in a distinct personal voice, employing rhetorical figures, imagery, evaluative phrases, and emotive or subjective expressions, and often intervene directly to insert philosophical or metanarrative commentary. In contrast, covert narrators are those who completely erase their presence. They have no distinct voice, no individual style, and no reference to themselves or to narratees, and appear nameless and beyond gender.

C. James Phelan’s Rhetorical-Narratological Approach to Narrative Voice

In his rhetorical narratological theory, James Phelan introduces the concept of narrative voice. In *Narrative Medicine* (Phelan, 2023), he acknowledges Genette’s (1980) separation of perspective and voice, and introduces “voice as the answer to the question, who is speaking?” (p. 8). To Phelan (2023, p. 209), “rhetorical theory adds that voice is a synthesis of style, tone, and values”. Those three key aspects can be illustrated as follows:

- 1- Style: includes the narrator’s choices of diction and syntax, whether rhythmic or not,
- 2- Tone: refers to the speaker’s evaluative attitude toward what is said, and
- 3- Values: include the ethical and ideological commitments informing style and tone.

D. Stylistic Realization of Narrative Voice

Building on the stylistic framework proposed by Leech and Short (2013), this study analyzes foregrounding and deviation markers in shaping literary style. Their framework situates stylistic analysis within a linguistic account of English narrative prose, demonstrating how an author’s creative writing emerges through deliberate deviation from linguistic expectation. In alignment with Prague School tradition, foregrounding is viewed as an artistically motivated deviation that produces textual salience through which readers apprehend the individuality of a writer’s style.

Foregrounding theory constitutes a foundational framework within stylistics, developed by “Russian Formalists” (Shklovsky, 1988; Jakobson, 1964) and the Prague School of linguistics (Mukařovský, 1964), who formulated the principle of making a literary text more noticeable” (Yemet, 2019, p. 95). Arnold (as cited in Yemet, 2019) defines foregrounding as “the ways of the text organization which focus the reader’s attention on certain elements of the message” (p. 95). Yemet would prefer to replace the word “certain” with “significant” or “pragmatic importance” to widen the reader’s attention to pragmatically important elements of the message. Leech (2013, p. 118) also argues that

“foregrounding –significant literary ‘deviation’ against the background of non-literary form— is just applicable to the pragmatic study of language in context as to other, more formal, aspects of language.” According to the majority of stylisticians, including Leech (2013), foregrounding is of two types: parallelism and deviation.

(a). *Parallelism*

Schemes such as parallelism and repetition are devices that achieve stylistic distinctiveness through structural repetition that reinforces emphasis, rhetorical persuasion, or emotive intensity. They also help the reader seek meaningful connections of ideas that have the same degree of importance arranged in successive lines (Almehmdawi, 2018).

(b). *Deviation*

Deviation is one of the foregrounding strategies that marks intentional departure from standard norms (Scott, 2023). It addresses multiple linguistic levels. At the syntactic level, deviation manifests through intentional breach of grammatical conventions or patterned irregularities. At the semantic level, deviation entails the reorientation of meaning through figurative expression, whereby words breach the expectations of meaning and create stylistic salience through tropes such as metaphor and metonymy.

In this study, conceptual metaphors are incorporated into the analysis as instances of semantic deviation, aligning with Leech and Short’s stylistic categories. They illuminate how Death adopts Liesel’s developing perceptual world into figurative expressions that shape narrative voice. The novel’s richness in conceptual metaphors justifies their inclusion, particularly when examining how Chesterman’s semantic and pragmatic translation strategies are employed in translation.

Lexical deviation occurs when a writer departs from conventional vocabulary through the use of rare lexemes, morphological distortion, or unconventional collocations. At the graphological level, deviation manifests through unconventional orthography, punctuation, or spacing.

E. *Translation Strategies*

Chesterman’s (1997) translation strategies distinguish three primary groups: mainly syntactic/grammatical (coded as G), semantic (S), and pragmatic (Pr). Chesterman notes that these categories often overlap: those pragmatic strategies usually involve syntactic and semantic ones, and strategies from different groups frequently co-occur in the same translation decision.

(a). *Syntactic Strategies*

These strategies involve duplicating the SL form, either partially or completely, through syntactic or grammatical adjustments. Chesterman (1997) identifies ten main types of syntactic strategies: “literal translation (G1), loan, calque (G2), Transposition (G3), Unit shift (G4), Phrase structure change (G5), Clause structure change (G6), Sentence structure change (G7), Cohesion change (G8), Level shift (G9), and Scheme change (G10)” (p. 91).

(b). *Semantic Strategies*

Chesterman introduces semantic strategies as changes that primarily affect lexical meaning, encompassing certain clause-level alterations, such as emphasis. Rooted in Vinay and Darbelnet’s concept of modulation (Munday et al., 2022), these strategies adjust meaning in response to the demands of natural expression in the target language. This group includes “synonymy (S1), antonymy (S2), hyponymy (S3), converses (S4), abstraction change (S5), distribution change (S6), emphasis change (S7), paraphrase (S8), trope change (S9), and other semantic changes (S10)” (Chesterman, 1997, p. 98).

(c). *Pragmatic Strategies*

While syntactic and semantic strategies deal with form and meaning, respectively, pragmatic strategies can be used to manipulate the message itself. These strategies typically involve more extensive shifts, often combining both form and meaning, and emerge from the translator’s global decisions concerning the overall orientation of the target text. Chesterman (1997, p. 104) identifies ten such strategies: “cultural filtering (Pr1), explicitness change (Pr2), information change (Pr3), interpersonal change (Pr4), illocutionary change (Pr5), coherence change (Pr6), partial translation (Pr7), visibility change (Pr8), transediting (Pr9), and other pragmatic changes (Pr10)”.

F. *The Case Study: Markus Zusak’s The Book Thief*

Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief* (2005) offers a distinctive foundation for a stylistic and narratological examination of narrative voice in translation. With Death as the narrative voice, the narrative fuses irony and compassion to depict Liesel’s life, including her relationship with her foster parents, Max, a Jewish fist-fighter who hides in Hubermann’s basement to escape Nazi persecution, and other main characters during destruction. The narrator’s shifts between moral detachment and emotional intensity shape the thematic force of the “power of word,” which is foregrounded through linguistic deviation and other stylistic markers. Analyzing its Arabic translation provides insights into how narrative stance and stylistic form interact to preserve or modify the novel’s central concern with the power of words across languages.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study limits itself to Phelan's (2023) account of narrative voice as an interaction between style, tone, and values, providing a framework for understanding how stylistic form conveys narrative voice and contributes to the novel's thematic significance. Leech and Short's (2013) account of foregrounding provides the analytical basis for examining how deviation, parallelism, and repetition serve as stylistic markers closely tied to the theme of the power of words. Chesterman's (1997) taxonomy of translation strategies is used to clarify and interpret the translator's decisions that produce shifts in the rendering of narrative voice between the English and Arabic versions. The samples comprise five texts from Markus Zusak's (2005) *The Book Thief* and its Arabic translation by Dalia Masri (2018), chosen for their high concentration of narrative markedness, stylistic foregrounding, and thematic relevance. A qualitative approach guides the analysis, which proceeds by identifying foregrounded patterns in the source text, evaluating their contribution to narrative voice and thematic emphasis, and contrasting them with their Arabic renderings to uncover stylistic shifts. These shifts are then interpreted through translation strategies to clarify how equivalence in tone and narrative stance is negotiated. When necessary, suggested translations are provided to restore the intended stylistic and emotional effect. The ultimate objective is to determine whether the translation maintains or redefines the narrator's distinctive voice and whether stylistic transformations alter the thematic depth of the translated narrative.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the data, the analysis reveals that deviations in narrative voice stem from the translator's partial handling of style, tone, and values, and from overlooking how these components work collectively. This limited attention ultimately compromises the formation of narrative meaning in the Arabic version.

Example (1): Original Text

"Liesel could see it on her face. Blood leaked from her nose and licked at her lips. Her eyes had blackened. Cuts had opened up, and a series of wounds were rising to the surface of her skin. All from the words. From Liesel's words" (Zusak, 2005, p. 204).

Translation

استطاعت ليزيل أن ترى آثار ذلك على وجهها. تسرب الدم من أنفها ومسح شفيتها، واسودت عيناها، وتفتحت جروحها، وارتقت سلسلة من الجروح الدامية إلى سطح جلدّها. كل ذلك بسبب الكلمات. بسبب كلمات ليزيل

(Dalia, 2018, p. 321)

Although Death narrates the passage in the third person and past tense, it carries an emotive intensity that aligns with Liesel's consciousness. This scene is not merely a confrontation between two characters; it marks a moment of emotional release from accumulated grief. This pain is conveyed through metaphorical language drawn from the source domain of bodily harm, in addition to personification and parallelism through which Death expresses his style, tone, and values.

Style

Death's style displays an ordered, figurative narrative. The violent imagery of physical injury transforms language into wounds, functioning as a semantic deviation through conceptual metaphor and personification. The recurrent patterns themselves generate parallelism that builds a stylistic crescendo, reflecting Death's instinct to narratively structure pain.

Tone

Death's tone balances emotional intensity with narrative control. His calm narration refrains from direct emotional commentary; yet this detachment is not indifference but discipline, allowing the violence of the scene to speak for itself. The tone resembles a witness's calm testimony—measured, respectful, and deliberate.

Values

Death's values reveal his moral philosophy: He sees words as dual-edged—words can heal, but they can also wound. The line "All from words. From Liesel's words." captures his belief that pain can arise from verbal violence as much as physical harm.

The translator has employed literal translation (G1) in translating 'Blood leaked from her nose', 'Her eyes had blackened', and 'Cuts had opened up' into Arabic directly without stylistic modulation, and scheme change (G10) where the recurrent patterns in the ST have been successfully translated into the TT through the same scheme, that of parallelism. As for semantic strategies, she has employed emphasis change (S7), which appears in translating 'a series of wounds were rising to the surface of her skin', where the addition of 'الدامية' intensifies the depiction of injury. The choice of 'ارتقت' instead of 'were rising' also creates emphasis in the TT. Additionally, trope change (S9) is evident in translating the verb 'licked' as a verb with a faint trace of agency, 'مسح', leading to a shift that weakens the personification and results in a less emotionally charged image. As for pragmatic strategies, she has applied illocutionary change (Pr5); the translator has preserved the metaphor in the TT, but it is delivered in a clinical, sequential report. This reframes Death's voice from symbolic witness to medical reporting, resulting in a clear illocutionary change (Pr5). Such tonal displacement corresponds to Popović's generic shift, where the constitutive features of the text as a literary genre may change (Bassnett, 2005).

The TT does not capture Death's style, tone, and values in the ST, mainly because the figurative language and its functional impact are lost in translation. The Arabic version delivers the scene with clinical directness, which undermines the tone and moral reflection found in the ST.

Proposed Translation

استطاعت ليزيل ان ترى آثار ذلك على محياها فقد وشح السواد عينيها واستوطنت شفقتها حروفاً قانيةً وهكذا انتفضت جروحها سيلاً من الكدمات وجعاً نابضاً.

In the proposed translation, the researcher has applied trope change (S9) to recreate the ST's metaphor in a form that aligns with the Arabic literary genre, ensuring that the emotional and thematic weight of Liesel's hurtful word remains prominent. The scheme change (G10) is similarly maintained, though its elements are reordered to support the progression of imagery.

Example (2): Original Text

"They read through the early hours of morning, circling and writing the words she did not comprehend and turning the pages toward daylight."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 69)

Translation

قرأ خلال الساعات الأولى من الصباح، ورسم دوائر حول الكلمات التي لم تفهمها ليزيل، وتدرجاً عليها كعادتهما إلى أن يزغ ضوء النهار.

(Dalia, 2018, p. 109)

Although the sentence is written in third-person past tense—typically signaling Death's narration—its linguistic cues, such as the pronoun "she" and the verb "comprehended," signal Liesel's consciousness, producing an instance of free indirect discourse. In this fusion, the phrase "turning the pages toward daylight" stands as a form of semantic deviation—realized through conceptual metaphor—that still bears the imprint of Death's stylistic presence, expressing his calm tone, moral reflection, and alignment with Liesel.

Style

Through style, the metaphor transforms reading into an act of enlightenment, reinforced by rhythmic parallelism that links physical persistence with intellectual survival.

Tone

Through tone, the metaphor conveys Death's empathy and admiration toward the girl's effort to grasp the meaning through words.

Values

Death's values are revealed through the moral metaphor of daylight, fostering understanding and reverence for language.

The translator, employing the abstraction change strategy (S5), has rendered the phrase "toward daylight" as "إلى أن يزغ ضوء النهار", adding the verb "يزغ" which flattens the metaphorical vitality of the original. Gebbia (2023) supports the claim that literalness results in neutral, less connotative renditions. The style becomes literal and descriptive, no longer performing the figurative function of reading, and instead becomes a mere temporal reference. The tone, once empathetic and reverent, turns neutral. Consequently, Death's values—his association of light with moral force—become weakened, and the translation erases the ethical resonance that framed reading as a journey toward enlightenment.

Proposed Translation

حتى تشرق أنوار الكلمات في قلبها

The researcher has applied explicitness change (Pr2) to add clarity, reinforce the emotional function, and support the narrative central theme. The rendition preserves the metaphorical function by clarifying the symbolic link between light and understanding and ensuring that the emotional impact of the original is carried into the TL.

Example (3): Original Text

"Upstairs, when they returned, they found Mama sitting in the kitchen, alone and pensive. When she saw them, she stood and beckoned Liesel to come over, noticing the dried-up tears that streaked her. She brought the girl into her and heaped a typically rugged embrace around her body.

'Alles gut, Saumensch?'

She didn't need an answer.

Everything was good.

But it was awful, too."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 155)

Translation

عندما عادا إلى الطابق العلوي، وجدا ماما جالسة في المطبخ، وحدها متأملة. عندما رأتهما، وقفت وأشارت

إلى ليزيل لتقترب أكثر. لاحظت الدموع التي جفت على وجهها، وضمت الفتاة إليها في معانقة خشنة.

"أليس غوت ساومينش؟" هل كل شيء على ما يرام، أينها الخنزيرة؟

لم تكن في حاجة إلى إجابة.

كل شيء على ما يرام.

إلا أنه فظيع أيضاً.

(Dalia, 2018, p. 251)

Unlike the previous two examples, in which the selected samples were narrated through Death, this line is direct speech by Rosa, Liesel's foster mother, to Liesel. Here, the narrative voice steps aside, allowing the character's voice to emerge unmediated. Genette (1980) describes this as a case in which "the narrator is obliterated and the character substitutes for him" (p. 174). Nevertheless, his filtering presence persists, guiding what is shown and concealed. His covert stance masks his stylistic identity, yet his decision to include this scene suggests an awareness of its emotional and thematic significance.

Style

In this scene, Death remains in the background, making it impossible to trace his stylistic imprint. His narrative presence fades, allowing Rosa's unfiltered language and emotional immediacy to take center stage.

Tone

Death's tone conveys quiet compassion and restrained sensitivity through the inclusion of this scene. His framing — "She didn't need an answer. Everything was good. But it was awful, too." — embodies irony with empathy, balancing serenity with grief.

Values

Death's controlled narration makes his moral stance emerge with quiet clarity. He values empathy and endurance as the last safeguards of humanity. Rosa's rough language, full of hidden care, proves that compassion still breathes under cruelty. His silence is an act of moral witnessing, honoring love's small defiance against violence.

In the Arabic rendering of the metaphor "Saumensch", a form of semantic deviation which is used to describe Liesel, the translator has rendered it as "الخنزيرة". She has successfully employed borrowing and calque (G2) by preserving the German form through transliteration while transferring the word's meaning into Arabic. She has also successfully applied trope change (S9) by translating the metaphor in the ST into a metaphor in TT, though without achieving the appropriate cultural equivalent in Arabic. However, the interpersonal change (Pr4) strategy has been applied unsuccessfully, specifically by translating an informal German expression into formal Arabic.

Although this rendering foregrounds the cultural specificity of the original, it disregards its stylistic nuance—specifically the italics—and distorts its emotional intent. Consequently, the Arabic term "الخنزيرة" conveys deep insult and moral offense, which makes it unsuitable for expressing Rosa's rough affection toward Liesel.

The translator has failed to capture Death's tone and values. The tone of the Arabic version alters the narrative voice's emotional stance. By replacing the slang intimacy of the source with Standard Arabic formality, the translation diminishes the narrator's empathy and weakens the interpersonal bond between Rosa and Liesel. This distortion extends to values, erasing Death's moral awareness of Rosa's affection.

Proposed Translation

آليس غوت ساومينش "كل شي تمام يا شيطانة؟"

In this proposed translation, the researcher combines borrowing and calque (G2), supported by italicization to keep the cultural identity of "Alles gut, Saumensch?" in the ST. The researcher also employs trope change (S9) to render Rosa's rough yet caring tone, substituting the original insult with a culturally resonant Arabic metaphor.

Example (4): Original Text

"Did you see the sky tonight?"

'No.' Max looked at the wall and pointed. On it, they all watched the words and the picture he'd painted more than a year earlier—the rope and the dripping sun. 'Only that one tonight,' and from there, no more was spoken. Nothing but thoughts."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 293)

Translation

"هل رأيت السماء الليلة؟"

لا. "نظر ماكس إلى الجدار وأشار. وعلى الجدار، شاهدوا جميعاً الكلمات والصورة التي رسمها منذ ما يزيد على السنة — الحبل والشمس التي تقطر باللون الأصفر. "لم أرها سوى في تلك الليلة فقط". بعدها، لم يتحدث أحد. لم يكن سوى الأفكار المتزاحمة

(Dalia, 2018, p. 461)

This sample exemplifies a moment of narrative convergence, collapsing the boundary between Death and Max. The moment captures the tension between silence, memory, and survival, transforming Death from a distant narrator into a silent witness of endurance.

Style

Irony, interruptions, and a grim wit typically mark Death's stylistic signature. However, in the "dripping sun" scene, his style shifts. Instead of reducing the mural to a simple description, Death repeats Max's own metaphor of "dripping sun". This repetition creates an intentional stylistic echo. Stylistically, the effect approximates free indirect discourse because Death's language folds Max's imagery into his own narration. The "dripping sun" thus signifies both Max's painted hope and Death's empathy and intimacy.

Tone

In this scene, Death's tone is not detached but compassionate, reducing narrative distance and positioning the narrator as a fellow witness who shares Max's longing. Death essentially steps back from his intrusive persona to let Max's imagery speak for itself.

Values

The narrator's reuse of "dripping sun" is not a neutral choice. Death's decision to echo Max's metaphor reveals his recognition of its emotive impact and the persistence it symbolizes. This evaluative alignment is reinforced by Oliveira and Maggio (2017, p. 136):

Such a long shift on focalization might be justified by the empathy Death feels towards the suffering of the Jews, whose inner voices he hears every time he goes to concentration camps or any other site where Jews are being killed. Nevertheless, Death assumes a neutral position in relation to this vision and refrains from making any kind of comment before, during or after this vision. It is relevant to say that Death, when collecting the souls of murdered Jews, does not make any of his sarcastic comments either, which might imply a respectful attitude towards the miserable situation Max is going through.

Death's silence here is not absence but ethical presence, preserving the dignity of suffering without irony.

In translating "dripping sun", the Arabic rendering "الشمس التي تقطر باللون الأصفر" employs trope change (S9) and explicitness (Pr2). Although the verb "تقطر" conveys lexical deviation that matches the verb "drip", the added adjective "yellow"—which is absent in the ST—constitutes a significant translation shift. In this scene, Zusak's original expression serves as a conceptual metaphor for both the diminishing of hope and art as a form of resistance.

Unlike the ST, the TT reformulates the phrase as a relative clause, fixing the image in an explicit color description. While in English the sun conventionally symbolizes hope and renewal, in Arabic, light (النور/الضياء) serves that symbolic function. The translator's recourse to yellow thus reduces the ST's interpretive openness.

The translator has failed to capture Death's style, tone, and values. Transforming the metaphor "the dripping sun" into a plain description erases its stylistic compression, and the added "yellow" shifts toward descriptive commentary, giving the line a factual, detached tone. As for values, in the ST, the metaphor sustains an empathetic alignment with hope and resistance, whereas in the TT, it is recoded in terms that carry the connotation of the color yellow in Arabic.

Proposed Translation

شمس يقطرُ ضيائها

Although the proposed rendering "شمس يقطرُ ضيائها" introduces a degree of explicitness (Pr2) by anchoring the metaphor in the domain of light, this explicitness is functionally justified. In Arabic literary culture, it is light, not the sun, that carries the symbolic weight of hope and renewal, and the translation, through trope change (S9), aligns the metaphor accordingly as a metonymy in the TL. More importantly, it maintains the thematic significance of the power of words: like light, words are fragile and vulnerable, yet they continue to resist darkness. The explicitness, therefore, secures their symbolic alignment with one of the novel's central themes.

Example (5): Original Text

(1) "On the wall, he painted a long, tightly knotted rope with a dripping yellow sun at the end of it, as if you could dive right into it. On the ropy cloud, he drew two figures—a thin girl and a withering Jew—and they were walking, arms balanced, toward that dripping sun. Beneath the picture, he wrote the following sentence.

THE WALL-WRITTEN WORDS

OF MAX VANDENBURG

It was a Monday, and they walked
on a tightrope to the sun."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 193)

(2) "Liesel came over from the wall. She'd been writing the word argumentsix times, next to Max's picture of the ropy cloud and the dripping sun. Max handed her the paper and she confirmed it. 'That's him.'"

(Zusak, 2005, p. 200)

(3) "'Did you see the sky tonight?'

'No.' Max looked at the wall and pointed. On it, they all watched the words and the picture he'd painted more than a year earlier—the rope and the dripping sun. 'Only that one tonight,' and from there, no more was spoken. Nothing but thoughts."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 293)

(4) "PASSED ITEMS, HAND TO HAND

Blocks of cement and roof tiles.

A piece of wall with a dripping sun painted on it. An unhappy-looking accordion, peering through its eaten case."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 377)

(5) "Personally, I like to imagine her looking briefly at the wall, at MaxVandenburg's tightrope cloud, his dripping sun, and the figures walking toward it."

(Zusak, 2005, p. 397)

Translation

(1) على الحائط، رسم حبلًا طويلًا معقودًا بإحكام وفي نهايته شمس تقطر باللون الأصفر، كما لو أنه يمكن للمرء أن يغوص فيها. ورسم على السحابة " التي أخذت شكل حبل، شخصيتين - فتاة نحيلة ويهودي يزوي - كانا يمشيان، وأيديهما ممدودة على جانبيهما ليتوازنا فوق الحبل، في طريقهما نحو الشمس تحت الصورة، كتبت العبارة التالية الجدار - الكلمات التي كتبها ماكس فاندنبورغ

كان ذلك يوم اثنين، وقد سارا معاً، على جبل مشدود، نحو الشمس

(Dalia, 2018, p. 305)

اقتربت منه ليزيل، التي كانت تكتب على الحائط كلمة "جدال" ست مرات، بجانب الصورة التي رسمها ماكس لغيمة على شكل جبل والشمس التي

تقطر باللون الأصفر

(Dalia, 2018, p. 316)

(3) "هل رأيت السماء الليلة؟"

"لا". نظر ماكس إلى الجدار وأشار. وعلى الجدار، شاهدوا جميعاً الكلمات والصورة التي رسمها منذ ما يزيد على السنة — الجبل والشمس التي تقطر

باللون الأصفر. "لم أرها سوى في تلك الليلة فقط". بعدها، لم يتحدث أحد. لم يكن سوى الأفكار المنزاحة

(Dalia, 2018, p. 461)

(4) من يد إلى يد

كنل من الاسمنت وقرميد السقف

قطعة من جدار مرسوم عليها صورة شمس تقطر باللون الأصفر

أكورديون تعيس، يُحدّق من حقيبته المتأكلة

(Dalia, 2018, p. 591)

شخصياً، أحب أن تصوّرنا تنظر لفترة وجيزة إلى الجدار، حيث رسم ماكس فاندنيبورغ غيمته ذات الجبل المشدود، وشمسه التي تقطر باللون

الأصفر، والشخص التي تمشي نحوها

(Dalia, 2018, p. 626)

The five repetitions of "the dripping sun" across separate instances transform it from an individual image into a shared moral symbol. Through this recurrence, the metaphor conveys narrative empathy and affirms Death's alignment with Max's endurance.

Style

Stylistically, Death is well known for his fragmented and intrusive style. However, in his fivefold use of this metaphor, his narration achieves thematic discipline, shifting from discursiveness into structured rhythm. The use of repetition parallels Genette's (1980) frequency technique, employed as a device of thematic insistence.

Tone

Death, through his use of "the dripping sun" metaphor, shows calm continuity and complete alignment with Max's endurance. By abstaining from commentary or judgment, Death's tone reflects an ethical gesture of respect toward Max's suffering.

Values

Death's repeated echo of Max's metaphor marks his moral and ethical stance. The recurrence turns language into an act of witnessing.

While the translator accurately has reproduced the repetition of the ST in the TT through scheme change (G10), she has compromised the metaphor's layered meaning by dissolving its ambiguity through trope change (S9) and explicitness change (Pr2). Consequently, the style, tone, and values weaken due to the illocutionary shift (Pr5). Interestingly, in sample (4), she managed to preserve the indefiniteness of "a dripping sun," which the narrative voice in the ST uses on purpose to treat items as fragments and foreground the broken, partial nature of the remaining world, and this has to do with Death's tone and values.

The table below summarizes the practical analysis of the five samples in this study.

TABLE 1
A SUMMARY OF FOREGROUNDING DEVICES, NARRATIVE VOICE'S ELEMENTS, AND APPROPRIATENESS IN THE TRANSLATION

Text no.	Types of Foregrounding					Narrative Voice			Appropriateness	
	Scheme		Deviation			Style	Tone	Value	Partial	Full
	Parallelism	Repetition	Semantic	Lexical	Graphological					
1	+		+			+	-	-	+	-
2			-			-	-	-	+	-
3			+		-		-	-	-	-
4			-	+		-	-	-	+	-
5		+	-	+		-	-	-	+	-

Notes:

(-) Foregrounding devices are present in the ST, but the translator failed to use them in the TT.

(+) means that the device exists in both ST and TT.

(-) In the narrative voice, this means the translator has failed to convey the same element in the TT.

(+) means that the translator has successfully conveyed the same element in the TT.

(-) Inappropriateness means that the translation does not match the interpretation in the ST.

(+) means that the translation conveys the same interpretation intended in the ST.

V. CONCLUSION

The close analysis shows that syntactic strategies (G1, G2, and G10) function reliably, preserving syntactic flow and stylistic rhythm between the source and target texts. In contrast, semantic (S9) and pragmatic (Pr5) strategies were responsible for the majority of interpretive shifts. The persistent failures in trope change (S9) reveal the translator's

difficulty in maintaining the figurative depth of the source metaphors. Likewise, repeated illocutionary shifts (Pr5) weaken the narrator's stance, replacing reflection with neutrality. In sample 1, the translator has successfully maintained the metaphor (S9) but at the expense of an illocutionary shift (Pr5). Beyond the dominant (S9) and (Pr5), additional interpretive shifts emerged through (S5), (S7), (Pr2), and (Pr4). The misapplied abstraction change (S5), the overemphasis on emotion (S7), the explicitation of meaning (Pr2), and the personal reframing of the statement (Pr4) collectively displaced Death's voice from moral reflection to descriptive commentary. Taken together, these shifts reveal that the translation succeeds linguistically at the micro level but fails to reconstruct Death's moral stance, thereby weakening the thematic continuity of the power of words. This study emphasizes that effective literary translation lies not only in applying translation strategies effectively but also in the translator's ability to interpret narrative voice as the intersection between stylistic form and ethical vision. The study also highlights the importance of tracking the underlying theme to ensure that the same intended meaning is conveyed in the target text. While this study is based on five selected samples, this limitation reflects a deliberate emphasis on qualitative depth and stylistic precision. Such an approach is particularly suited to examining subtle shifts in narrative voice. However, future investigations may broaden the analytical scope by engaging larger corpora, diverse genres, or comparative methodologies, thereby reinforcing the stylistic appropriateness as a tool for translation assessment.

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Reframing Aging: Narrative and Cultural Gerontology in the Works of Penelope Lively and Helen Small

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Abstract—Literature possesses the efficacy to render human life artfully and to represent humanity through its narratives. Aging is one of the extensive areas still being studied, and the interdisciplinary nature of literary gerontology offers considerable scope for research in the contemporary world. The paper focuses on Penelope Lively's *Ammonites and Leaping Fish: A Life in Time* (2013) and Helen Small's *The Long Life* (2007), two significant texts in the context of aging studies. Lively adopts a memoiristic style in her rendering of the aging experience, while Small takes up a philosophical approach to growing old. Two frameworks, narrative gerontology and cultural gerontology, have been used in analysing each of the texts. Penelope Lively's portrayal of her aging, blended with the themes of memory and identity, is examined through the discourse of narrative gerontology. At the same time, Helen Small, through her work, carries out cultural representation and philosophical inquiry, and thus the theory of cultural gerontology has been applied to her text. A parallel study of both approaches is conducted in this research, offering possibilities for exploring the encompassing nature of the study of aging. Aging is an amalgamation of both lived experience and collective cultural expression, and the paper studies aging as a meaningful and dynamic phase of life. This study contributes to the existing body of gerontological discourse by highlighting the importance of personal narratives and cultural inquiry in fostering diverse and inclusive perspectives on ageing.

Index Terms—aging, memory, literary gerontology, narrative gerontology, cultural gerontology

I. INTRODUCTION

Aging is both a personal journey and a complex cultural phenomenon. "Aging, as the term implies, is a process. It begins even before birth and continues until death. As such, aging is synonymous with human development" (Burgess, 1960, p. 4). As a subject of inquiry, aging is often situated within biomedical, sociological, or demographic domains. Yet, in subjective experience, aging extends beyond the boundaries of these frameworks. Dominant medical, economic, and social discourses emphasise decline, loss, and dependency. Literature, however, possesses the unique capacity to refract and reinterpret lived experiences, offering a powerful counterpoint to these reductive narratives. This research paper examines the potential of literature to reframe the subtractive view of aging and to illuminate its more affirmative possibilities. Accordingly, this parallel study explores how both authors challenge prevailing cultural scripts about aging. In their works, the authors employ two distinct approaches to conveying the experience of growing old, providing ample scope for analysis through narrative and cultural gerontology, respectively. Both Penelope Lively and Helen Small contribute significantly to the critical reimagining of age. As Oró-Piqueras (2016) states in her paper, "Being a woman and entering into old age is a double-sided jeopardy which has increasingly been present in contemporary fiction" (p. 1). Lively, writing in her eighties, constructs a memoir-like reflection that interweaves her cumulative life experiences with nuanced observations of the material world as perceived in later life. "Lively is part of a growing number of women writers and artists who are not only productive in their later years but who provide valuable accounts both fictional and autobiographical -of their own ageing" (O'Neill & Schrage-Früh, 2019, p. 1). In *Ammonites and Leaping Fish*, Lively (2014) states: "This is not quite a memoir. Rather, it is the view from old age" (p. 3). She reasserts the authority of an aging voice, one refined and deepened by the passage of time. Helen Small adopts a philosophical and critical standpoint in her approach to aging. Her book *The Long Life* interrogates representations of old age in Western philosophy and literature.

Gaidash (2019) notes that literary gerontology emerged in the mid-1970s within the context of age studies, and researchers in literary gerontology analyse gerontological indicators inside fictional works. In contrast to sociologists or medical gerontologists, who perceive biological ageing as a decline of the body and mind, literary scholars examine

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fictional portrayals of late adulthood through a more critical lens, highlighting how elderly individuals confront various negative stereotypes in a youth-centric culture. The primary notion in literary gerontology is ageism, whose etymology is derived from the term age. The original meaning of lifetime; maturity; vital force has been obscured over time, evolving to signify decline. This idea, while taken into consideration, is itself central to this study, which seeks to demarcate ageist stereotypes from mainstream narratives and to highlight the strength and positivity that should guide the study of aging. Since, in today's world, the concept of aging is shaped not only by biological processes but also through cultural representations, it becomes essential to challenge the ageist narratives around us. Media portrayals of the aged as merely weak, an economic system that often stresses productivity over wisdom, are all examples of how societal renditions lead people to focus on the ill aspects of aging. The result of portraying the bleak side of aging through cultural representations is a stagnant mindset in which aging is seen as a problem to be solved or managed, rather than as a natural phase of life. In the *Handbook of Indian Gerontology*, Ramamurti and Jamuna (2005) point out that the predictions of the United Nations indicate that by 2050, the population of elderly individuals is anticipated to rise more than threefold, from 600 million to over 2 billion. The proportion of the elderly population is anticipated to increase from 10 to 21 per cent. The escalation will be particularly significant and swift in some nations in Asia and Latin America. Currently, one in ten individuals globally is aged 60 or older. It is anticipated that by 2050, this ratio will rise to one in five, and by 2150, it will escalate to one in three.

Thus, there is a growing need to rethink and remodel the understanding of aging, as demographic shifts lead to a larger aging population. The twenty-first century is itself regarded as a century of aging, making awareness on aging-related issues essential. In the *Encyclopedia of Gerontology* (2nd ed.), edited by James E. Birren, Phillipson and Vincent (2007) argue that globalization is a constituent of the risk society and may generate new forms of insecurity, of which anxieties and fears about growing old represent one significant aspect. They pose the question of whether a new cohort of older people will give a different voice and meaning to the nature of growing old. It is important to mention the term 'population ageing' here. According to Phillips et al. (2012), population or demographic aging denotes the continuous transformation of the global age structure, resulting in a rise in both the proportions and absolute numbers of elderly individuals. Population ageing is widely seen as a global phenomenon, as the majority of nations are currently undergoing this shift in age structure. Literature plays an integral part in shaping societal attitudes, and thus analysing any piece of art or literature is not a waste of time, but rather a truly functional process that is likely to elevate our humanity to a superior level. Aging is undoubtedly a critical humanitarian concern, and it is society's responsibility to protect older adults in the vulnerable stages of their lives. Hepworth (2000) suggests that engagement with creative forms such as literature, visual art, film, and music enables individuals to reflect imaginatively on their own aging. He further argues that such works help audiences acknowledge the lived experiences and subjectivities of older people and reveal how age and aging are shaped through cultural meanings rather than biology alone. "The future of global aging depends on our collective ability to honour both universal human dignity and cultural diversity in our approaches to later life. By embracing this complexity, we can develop more nuanced, effective, and respectful frameworks for promoting positive aging outcomes across the rich tapestry of human cultures and experiences" (Begam, 2025, p. 44).

This paper examines the humanitarian role of literature in cultivating awareness about aging, and the selected texts and theoretical frameworks collectively offer a robust foundation for advancing research in the interdisciplinary field of gerontology. The aim is to analyse the story of old age both as a personal narrative and as a cultural construct, and the objective of this parallel study is to articulate a holistic understanding of aging as simultaneously an experience and an area of inquiry. This paper adopts a qualitative research method, and the expected outcome is a reframed understanding of aging that challenges the conventional ageist stereotypes prevalent in society.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework aims to explore narrative gerontology and cultural gerontology through a close reading of the select novels. The term 'narrative gerontology' (Kenyon et al., 1999; Ruth & Kenyon, 1996) is intended as a heuristic for the study of ageing. Its purpose, as we see it, is to emphasise and coordinate a particular set of insights about the ageing process itself and how we investigate it. As the word "narrative" implies, its main agenda for gerontological theory, research and practice is to explore the entailments of the metaphor of "life as story" (Kenyon & Randall, 1999). Of the two selected texts, *Ammonites and Leaping Fish* by Penelope Lively (2014) offers an account of the author's personal journey as an older woman, articulated through a narrative form. This text is analysed through the lens of narrative gerontology to examine the central role of storytelling in understanding old age and identity. Narrative gerontology is an inquiry that listens to the stories of later life and examines how they are shaped by social factors. "Life stories often accompany a person's growth and journey. Therefore, the life stories of older adults are crucial for us to understand their lives and provide feedback" (Fan & Wu, 2024, p. 149).

Twigg and Martin (2015) state that cultural gerontology has become an active and insightful area of academic study in the last decade. It combines research from the humanities and social sciences, and this field has transformed how we examine later years, challenging old stereotypes. It also introduces new theories, methods, and ways to engage politically and intellectually. Cultural gerontology is an interdisciplinary field that studies how cultural meanings and representations shape old age and aging. Within this theoretical context, Helen Small's *The Long Life* (2007) is selected as a key text for analysis under the framework of cultural gerontology. Cultural gerontology understands aging as something shaped by

culture rather than biology alone. It pays attention to how different social practices and everyday assumptions influence what growing old means in different societies and across time. Over the years, this approach has become an important part of gerontological studies, encouraging new ways of thinking about later life as well as new directions in research and critical debate.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researchers use a textual analysis method to examine and interpret narrative gerontology and cultural gerontology in the novels. The primary materials for the study are *Ammonites and Leaping Fish* (2014) by Penelope Lively and *The Long Life* (2007) by Helen Small, and secondary sources like articles, research papers, and e-resources that deal with aging. This paper incorporates insights on Narrative Gerontology, helping the researchers understand aging as a meaning-making process in which narratives shape identity, memory, and the continuity of the self across the life course. Through an examination of the narrative told by Penelope Lively, researchers intend to discover the complex ways in which identity takes shape through memory and lived experience. Furthermore, looking at the ideas of researchers like Twigg and Martin (2015) on Cultural Gerontology, this study examines how cultural representations, social discourses, and symbolic meanings shape the understanding and experience of aging in society. Through this framework of cultural gerontology, Helen Small's *The Long Life* (2007) is analysed, which critically interrogates philosophical and literary traditions to reveal how cultural narratives construct, regulate, and often problematise old age.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Narrative Gerontology and the Authority of Experience in Penelope Lively's *Ammonites and Leaping Fish*

Narrative gerontology is a concept that has developed based on the ideas of autobiographical and narrative memories (Fan & Wu, 2024, p. 148). In *Ammonites and Leaping Fish*, Penelope Lively, in her eighties, reflects on her life story and considers the passage of time, memory, and the sense of identity she possesses as an older woman. A personal and nuanced picture of what it means to grow old is articulated through her words. Memory is central to her work, and she demonstrates an interest in understanding how memory functions and the role it plays in shaping our sense of self. Lively (2014) states that she wants to put her focus on her generation, which has become a large part of the Western population, and look into both their lives and the way society views them. She is concerned about the role of memory and how it connects and shapes people's identities. Reflecting on her own life, she brings up the major historical events that influenced her generation, including the Suez Crisis, the Cold War, and the cultural changes of the late twentieth century. She compares how people experienced these episodes at the time with the way they are viewed and judged today when looking back.

Lively links the individual to the broader cultural context through her story. For her, old age is an ambushing stage of life, in which her personality remains unchanged even as she reaches a different place and time. The duality of continuity and change in old age is clearly evident here. Lively (2014, p. 10) reflects on the experience of aging by observing, "We have to get used to being the person we are, the person we have always been, but encumbered now with various indignities and disabilities, shoved as it were into some new incarnation. We feel much the same, but clearly are not. We have entered an unexpected dimension; dealing with this is the new challenge." Other than memory, self and identity are the themes Lively seeks to unveil through her narrative. As an elderly woman, the unexpected stage of old age she has reached has made her realise that her personality has remained the same, although time has added its own weariness to it. Her self has undergone the pressures of time, but this does not diminish the identity she retains.

On recollecting her memory of childhood, Lively says, "The experience of childhood presents the greatest challenge. It is in one sense crystal clear, in another sense irretrievable" (Lively, 2014, p. 65). She was a wartime child in Egypt during the early 1940s and reminisces about how the war pervaded her thoughts at that time. "Wartime Cairo steamed with poets. Bernard Spencer, Robin Fedden, Terence Tiller, John Gawsworth, John Cromer, Gwyn Williams, Robert Liddell - none of these names would be familiar today to anyone outside the arcane world of mid-twentieth-century poetry studies" (Lively, 2014, pp. 68-69). The years she has lived and the wisdom she has acquired are conveyed through her narrative, and this personal experience carries a universal significance that warrants careful consideration.

Lively's narrative is significant in that it can be considered what Margarette Gullette has termed a 'Progress Narrative.' Unlike narratives of decline, this work beautifully portrays old age as an important and enjoyable phase of life, rather than as a problem to be managed. In her book *Agewise: Fighting the New Ageism in America*, Gullette (2011, p. 5) revisits ideas from her earlier work by explaining "decline" as a cultural way of thinking that makes growing older after youth feel negative, rather than part of a meaningful and continuing life. Although Lively recounts her life in detail, the narrative contains no sentimental overtones; instead, it offers a powerful and unsentimental perspective on the experience of aging. Medeiros (2016) observes that the importance of viewing life as a journey is that it emphasizes the past over the present or future. This suggests that, from the perspective of later life, all meaningful experiences have already occurred in a pilgrimage-like journey through time, leading to a stage of wisdom, reflection, and acceptance in older age. Connected to this concept is the feeling of loneliness—the belief that, as social circles have diminished over time, the likelihood of forming new relationships has decreased. This notion prevails more generally, but Lively's narrative provides an alternative image, highlighting a positive and brighter portrayal of old age.

Birren and Deutchman (1991) observe that a writer's capacity to truly empathize with older characters is often tied to their own age. Younger poets, novelists, and playwrights sometimes make the mistake of thinking that elderly characters lack emotional depth or the ability to surprise, overlooking the nuances of later life. While some younger writers possess the curiosity to bridge this gap, it's generally true that writers reach middle age and can tap into their own experiences to write more authentically about aging. The author emphasizes the advantage of writing about old age as an older person, which aligns with the above statement. According to her, it would be very difficult for someone younger to anticipate the years ahead and write about old age. For Lively, however, writing about growing old comes effortlessly, as she has experienced the passage of time and reached a position from which she can authentically render her lived experiences. She says, "One of the few advantages of writing fiction in old age is that you have been there, done it all, experienced every decade" (Lively, 2014, p. 19). According to Guillemot and Urien (2010, pp. 25–43), older adults' engagement in storytelling is driven by six intrinsic motivations that align closely with the concerns of narrative gerontology: flattering the ego - through the need for recognition; repairing the ego - alleviating discontentment; being remembered - way of accepting inevitability; sharing - to create social ties; transmitting experiences - to prepare younger generations for the future; and bearing witness - to preserve information for posterity. Together, these motivations highlight the potential of narrative gerontology to foster resilience at both individual and community levels. A sense of self-assurance resonates throughout Lively's narrative, stemming from her experience, and she acknowledges the authority of this experience in the text. Lively (2014) remarks that age allows a person to speak with a certain authority because they have become familiar with its realities and can look back on the accumulated weight and memories of a lifetime. Although the writer does not focus extensively on the losses of aging, an emphasis on psychological resilience remains evident. "Acceptance has set in, somehow, has crept up on you, which is just as well, because the alternative - perpetual rage and resentment - would not help matters" (Lively, 2014, p. 41). This is a form of ego repair. To be remembered is a recurring motive – "We go, but hang in for a while in other people's heads - something we said, something we did; we leave a ghostly imprint on our backdrop. A very few people go one further and are distilled into a blue plaque on a building" (Lively, 2014, p. 3). This awareness and desire to be remembered connects her personal narrative to transgenerational memory. Although Lively has written a personal memoir, it contributes to the collective understanding of old age. "There can be a certain detachment about it; the solipsism of writing about oneself tempered by the more compelling interest of general concerns - what it means to be old, what the long view does to us, or for us, how we mutate with our times" (Lively, 2014, p. 4). Thus, the narrative serves as a resource for mutual learning. The act of transmission and the shared nature of aging are also emphasised in the text. The work embodies the intrinsic motivations of narrative gerontology, and the author highlights the significance of both individual and community resilience through her narrative.

B. Cultural Gerontology and the Ethics of Representation in Helen Small's *The Long Life*

Helen Small's *The Long Life* is a paradigmatic text for cultural gerontology, as it examines literary and philosophical frameworks of Western culture. Philosophical underpinnings are also present in Lively's work, highlighting traditional philosophy as a domain that has largely neglected old age. Old age was historically considered an exceptional phase of life, and the author seeks to challenge this prevalent notion. The work encompasses both classical and modern philosophical perspectives, from Plato and Aristotle to contemporary theorists. It also references several literary texts, including Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, and works by Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, and J. M. Coetzee. The purpose of integrating these perspectives is to explore the philosophical questions raised by old age. The book situates old age within contemporary discourse and highlights the challenges posed by aging populations in Western countries. It critiques the framing of old age as a social burden and instead calls for broader considerations of social justice and empowerment initiatives. In the Preface, Small (2007) observes that, instead of viewing the elderly as the problem, we should consider the deeper causes of the significant differences in life expectancies between countries. Instead of focusing on the 'burden of retirees,' we need to think more broadly about the overall nature and purpose of work. A persistent pattern in the author's observations of old age lies in its duality: "For every conventional negative association of 'old age' there is an equally recognizable counter-association: rage/serenity; nostalgia/detachment; folly/wisdom; fear/courage; loss of sexual powers and/or opportunities/liberation from sex; loss of the capacity or right to labour/release from a long life of labour" (Small, 2007, p. 2). Since antiquity, these opposing views have remained consistent, reflecting the ambivalent nature of aging and how cultural metaphors both hinder and enable individual experience.

Helen Small contrasts Cicero's moralistic optimism on old age with the unflinching truth found in Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, and later literary figures such as Shakespeare (notably *King Lear*), Villon, Corneille, Molière, Proust, Yeats, Ionesco, and Beckett. *King Lear* has been interpreted as an early form of absurdist theatre, depicting old age as a state of detachment. The author illustrates how literature has served as a source for philosophical reflection. Philosophers have drawn on literature to elucidate the complexities of old age. For instance, Homer's Priam was used by Aristotle to discuss vulnerability in old age; Dickens and Beckett were referenced by Adorno to show the diminishing nature of old age; *King Lear* was employed by Amartya Sen to examine well-being over time; and Karel Čapek's *The Makropulos Case* was used by Bernard Williams to explore the tedium of immortality. These literary figures assisted philosophers in addressing abstract metaphysical issues related to aging. By situating old age at the intersection of multiple disciplines and perspectives, *The Long Life* deepens our understanding of old age not as decline but as a complex phase that highlights the need to address major societal concerns such as ageism and stereotyping.

“Ageism, defined as the systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, has been widely debated since first formulated by Robert Butler in the late 1960s. Initially, as Simon Biggs (1993) notes, the concept provided impetus to social movements (such as the Gray Panthers) that sought to challenge age-based discrimination. But the idea of ageism helped, in some measure, to raise the profile of social gerontology and was part of a broader critical agenda introduced by feminist and Marxist perspectives as applied to the study of old age” (Anderson, 2002, p. 46). Helen Small draws on her cross-disciplinary work on aging to raise awareness of the intricacies of ageist notions. The alienation and objectification experienced by older individuals in modern societies are foregrounded in Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist critique *La Vieillesse (The Coming of Age)*, and Small contrasts this with the classical tradition. According to Beauvoir, the sufferings of the elderly are not natural but are exacerbated by social and cultural structures. She quotes, “We must assume a reality that is certainly ourselves, although it reaches us from the outside and although we cannot grasp it. There is an insoluble contradiction between the obvious clarity of the inward feeling that guarantees our unchanging quality and the objective certainty of our transformation. All we can do is waver from the one to the other, never managing to hold them both firmly together” (Beauvoir, 1972, p. 290). Beauvoir refuses to separate the phenomenology of aging from its representational dimensions, and this notion is highlighted by Small in her text. Small critiques the tendency of philosophy and social science to treat literary depictions of old age as mere representations of reality rather than as metaphorical constructions. For instance, *King Lear* is typically interpreted as a meditation on power or human suffering, and only rarely as a play about old age; yet its central dramatic tension is rooted in Lear’s aging and his loss of authority.

Small situates her work within the broad field of cultural gerontology, which encourages the integration of literary, philosophical, and scientific approaches to growing old. The emergence of “critical gerontology” is also noted by the author, providing a critical stance toward the cultural construction of aging. Luborski and Sankar (2001) note that the primary objective of the critical gerontology (CG) framework is to recognise broader societal factors that impact the issues being studied, to investigate the process of theorising, and to evaluate the effects of various research methods and theoretical developments. Small’s approach is eclectic, oscillating between philosophical argument and literary analysis, thus advocating the need to examine the cultural constructs of aging within a broader framework. A central concern in *The Long Life* is the ethics of representing old age, as it explores how cultural representations shape public attitudes as well as self-awareness among older individuals. Small is wary of certain storylines, particularly those that emphasise natural deterioration, and contends that they have the potential to reinforce ageist stereotypes. She emphasises that biological decline is inevitable but maintains that social and cultural contexts significantly influence the meaning of human life. Accordingly, she stresses the importance of understanding the uncertain nature of old age constructively. A rethinking of the relationship between longevity and the good life is necessary, according to her. Isolating the elderly as a ‘problem’ cannot address the challenges they face; instead, a broader reckoning to value older individuals is required. Helen Small notes: “In many respects I am starting where Simone de Beauvoir left off: with the recognition that, if we want to think differently about old age, we need to think differently about ‘life itself’—and (I would add) about thinking itself. ‘The whole system’, as she put it, ‘is at issue’” (Small, 2007, p. 21).

C. *Two Voices on Aging*

The paper illustrates two distinct perspectives in the portrayal of old age. A parallel analysis of Penelope Lively’s memoir *Ammonites and Leaping Fish* and Helen Small’s philosophical study *The Long Life* applies an intersection of narrative gerontology and cultural gerontology. To explore aging as a lived experience, Lively employs a personal narrative, whereas Small interrogates cultural representations of old age through literary and philosophical interpretative lenses. Together, these works provide complementary frameworks for understanding aging as both a subjective and cultural construct.

Narrative gerontology focuses on how life stories shape identity in aging, and Lively’s memoir exemplifies this notion. Her narrative is structured around *Ammonites* and *Leaping Fish* as metaphors for memory and time. ‘Ammonites,’ a fossilised remnant, symbolises layered history, while the ‘leaping fish’ represents the transient nature of vitality. The emphasis of narrative gerontology on both the continuity of life and the fragmentation or disruption of aging is evident through these dual metaphors. Lively reflects: “A lifetime is embedded; it does not float free, it is tethered - to certain decades, to places, to people. It has a context; each departure leaves a person-shaped void - the absence within a family, the presence lost within a house, in a community, in society itself” (Lively, 2014, p. 3). In the final section of her text, Lively identifies six objects that, for her, encapsulate who she is. These objects serve not merely as personal belongings but as anchors of memory, functioning as narrative devices that counter reductive stereotypes of decline. By foregrounding these material traces of her past, Lively challenges the notion that aging follows a simple, linear trajectory. She observes: “We are the people we have always been - splendidly various, and let us respect that. The young are in control, which is as it should be, and mostly we wouldn’t wish to be out there now taking the flak, though there have always been majestic exceptions, with politicians the high fliers: think Churchill, Prime Minister at eighty, think Gladstone, think Bismarck. But we do not wish to be arbitrarily retired” (Lively, 2014, p. 21). This assertion foregrounds the writer’s narrative agency, which remains a central concern within the framework of narrative gerontology.

Cultural gerontology examines the societal discourses that construct the idea of aging, and Helen Small’s work seeks to deconstruct the dominant Western cultural narratives. Small analyses literary texts by Cicero, Beauvoir, and others to expose the nature of cultural binaries and how these binaries obscure the complexity of aging. She critiques the

Bildungsroman as an “upward mobility” narrative, demonstrating how literature and other cultural scripts impose progressive expectations that are often unfit for later life. According to Small, cultural constructs that sentimentalise old age constrain autonomy, and this notion aligns with the emphasis on power dynamics in cultural gerontology. It can be observed that while Lively grounds aging in the material engagements of memory—for instance, the fossils, books, and keepsakes that anchor her past—Small, in contrast, investigates aging in relation to abstract philosophical conceptions of time, including Aristotelian teleology, the narrative unity of time, and metaphysical boundaries. Thus, a dialogue emerges between the palpable experience of time lived and the cognitive structures through which time is defined. When Lively asserts authority as a “native of old age,” writing as one who inhabits that stage and speaks with the authority of presence, Small—who writes in midlife about a concept that lies ahead of her—positions herself as an observer who calls for philosophy to take old age more seriously as an abstract category. This contrast draws an analogy between lived witnessing and critical distance: one experiential, the other analytical. Lively foregrounds personal objects such as ammonites, ducks, fish, and books as loci of identity, treating them as archives of her selfhood. Conversely, Small turns to canonical texts by Plato, Cicero, Beauvoir, Dickens, and Coetzee as cultural artefacts that shape how old age is conceived and narrated.

Though both works emphasise how meaning is stored, the difference lies in the fact that one does so through personal relics, while the other relies on societal traditions. Lively makes an effort to show how aging is shaped by historical contingency, noting how life expectancy in earlier centuries rendered her own longevity an exception. She illustrates that aging as a process is not influenced solely by biological factors but is also significantly shaped by historical circumstances that are contingent or accidental. She highlights that life expectancy in earlier centuries was generally much lower, making her long life unusual when compared to typical lifespans in those periods. She underscores that aging and longevity must be understood within specific historical contexts because what counts as normal or exceptional can vary dramatically depending on the era in which one lives. Meanwhile, Small insists that old age is an unavoidable universal reality, and that all who live long enough must confront bodily decline. Both authors trace how aging differs across periods and contexts, yet they also affirm that it remains a universal and inevitable aspect of human life. In Lively’s work, she tempers the discomforts of aging with wit, anecdote, and ironic distance, finding play even in decline. Small, however, while acknowledging cultural ambivalence, operates within serious philosophical frameworks—justice, virtue, and metaphysics—that treat aging as a problem of meaning. Thus, the juxtaposition reveals two modes of coping with old age: one employing humour as a survival strategy, and the other employing argument as a form of intellectual resistance.

Looking at the parallels between the works, both texts reject decline narratives. Time is subjective—a backward glance of memory—for Lively, whereas for Small it is cultural, or a critique of life as narrative. The meaning of selfhood appears as varieties of one’s own self for Lively, but as a dialectic of self and other representations for Small. Concerning agency, in Lively’s memoir it emerges as a narrative reclamation, whereas in Small’s inquiry agency operates as resistance to cultural determinism. Lively portrays memory as a ballast against dementia, while for Small it is an ethical duty toward complex representation. Lively’s nonlinear memory parallels Small’s critique of teleological life models. Together, Lively and Small reframe aging as a dialogic process. Lively’s memoir demonstrates how her personal narrative counters omission; as a writer in her eighties, she asserts authority against ageist dismissal. Urging critical engagement, Small shows how philosophical traditions inform modern stereotypes. Both works emphasise heterogeneity. Thus, both texts demand a nuanced representation and understanding of aging.

V. CONCLUSION

A complex and multifaceted understanding of aging is provided by the parallel study of Penelope Lively’s *Ammonites and Leaping Fish: A Life in Time* and Helen Small’s *The Long Life*. It shows how both narrative and cultural gerontology help to reframe old age as a significant, intricate, and dynamic stage of life. The research highlights the importance of integrating personal narrative and cultural scripts to foster an inclusive and holistic understanding of aging. Lively’s book emphasises the power of lived experience and provides a rich context to analyse through narrative gerontology. Her reflections are active, engaging with memory, identity, and time, rather than meditating on passive memories of the past. By deploying ‘ammonites’ and ‘leaping fish’ as metaphors, Lively transforms old age into a period rich with memories and meaning. She challenges linear, diminished portrayals of old age prevalent in public discourse, and presents later life as a stage of continuity and adaptation. As Lively demonstrates, recalling memories is a way of situating oneself with time, place, and social context. The primary focus of narrative gerontology is on how storytelling constructs identity and fosters resilience in later life, and this focus aligns with the recollections and assertions that Lively makes through her authoritative voice. Helen Small’s *The Long Life* questions the social, philosophical, and literary structures that have shaped people’s understanding of old age and appropriately frames it for the critical lens of cultural gerontology. Small places aging at the intersection of multiple disciplines and underscores the drawbacks of approaching old age solely from a scientific or economic perspective. She advocates for a more comprehensive analysis of social justice and representation. This critique of ageism illuminates the dangers of pathologising old age, and the writer therefore calls for a more holistic approach to the challenges of old age. Through the intersection of narrative and cultural gerontology, the need for a more comprehensive understanding of aging becomes evident. The study shows that aging is not merely about getting older physically; it is also shaped by stories, beliefs, and expectations—both those people create for themselves and those society imposes. Thus, aging is shaped by culture and narrative, not solely by biology or time. To create a more inclusive

and empowered view of aging, a dialogic relationship between self and culture, memory and representation, is required. In conclusion, Lively and Small's works illustrate how the humanities enrich the emerging field of gerontology through both personal narratives and cultural understanding. By offering tools for empathy, self-reflection, and social change, they assist us in moving beyond negative representations of aging. As the world's demographics shift and the proportion of older people rises, such humanistic and interdisciplinary approaches are essential to building communities that value, empower, and learn from elders. The paper reinforces the need to reconsider what it means to live and age well.

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Turkic–Mongolic Lexical Layer in *Shajara-i Tarakima*: Historical-Phonetic and Semantic Perspectives

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Abstract—This article investigates the seventeenth-century chronicle *Shajara-i Tarakima* (“Genealogy of the Turkmens”) by Abu’l-Gazi Bahadur Khan as a key source for understanding the historical interaction of Turkic and Mongolic languages. Far beyond its genealogical narrative, the text preserves a rich lexicon and structural features that reveal a sustained bilingual environment in Central Asia. Using comparative-historical, philological, and contact-linguistic methods, the study examines more than four thousand distinct lexemes recorded in the best manuscript and printed editions. Quantitative analysis shows that roughly one quarter of the vocabulary is of Mongolic origin, while the remainder reflects Oghuz, Kipchak, and Chagatai Turkic layers. Administrative and military terminology—*daruga*, *tümen*, *sölde*—anchors the Mongolic component, whereas everyday, natural, and spiritual terms remain predominantly Turkic. Phonological evidence such as the retention of initial *b*- and the Mongolic *d > j* alternation confirms that two sound systems operated side by side. Morphological investigation demonstrates full integration of many borrowings. Words like *tümen*, *sölde*, and *jirga* accept Turkic plural, possessive, and case suffixes and even generate new derivatives (*tümenlik*, *söldeshi*, *jirgalash*). Semantic analysis reveals further adaptation: *batur* broadens from “warrior” to “moral leader,” *nökör* expands from sworn companion to intimate friend, and *tör* narrows to the concrete seat of rulership. These changes mirror shifting political and social realities of the Khivan Khanate. The findings show that *Shajara-i Tarakima* records a reciprocal, long-term process of language contact in which Turkic and Mongolic elements merged into a stable hybrid idiom.

Index Terms—*Shajara-i Tarakima*, Turkic–Mongolic contact, historical phonology, morphological integration, semantic change

I. INTRODUCTION

Shajara-i Tarakima (“Genealogy of the Turkmens”) is a seventeenth-century chronicle written by the Khivan ruler and scholar Abu’l-Gazi Bahadur Khan. Beyond its value as a historical record of tribal lineages, the work is an exceptional linguistic monument that captures the vocabulary, phonetics, and stylistic features of its time. The text presents a rich blend of Turkic and Mongolic lexical layers, reflecting centuries of interaction between these language families in Central Asia. For historical linguistics, the chronicle provides direct evidence of how the Turkic languages developed and how they absorbed, adapted, and coexisted with Mongolic elements.

Understanding the historical formation of modern Turkic languages—Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Karakalpak, Turkmen, Tatar, and others—requires a careful examination of sources like *Shajara-i Tarakima*. The chronicle preserves not only political and cultural information but also rare lexical items, archaic grammatical structures, and phonetic patterns that reveal the dynamics of contact between Turkic and Mongolic peoples. Many words and expressions recorded in the manuscript remain key to tracing etymological relationships and phonological changes across the Turkic world.

The object of this study is the Turkic–Mongolic lexical stratum within the text of *Shajara-i Tarakima*. The subject is the historical-phonetic, morphological, and semantic properties of these lexical items and the mechanisms of their mutual influence. By analysing this material, the research seeks to reconstruct the processes of sound change, morphological adaptation, and semantic shift that occurred during the period of intensive Turkic–Mongolic interaction.

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The primary aim is to provide a comprehensive linguistic description of the Turkic and Mongolic elements in *Shajara-i Tarakima* and to clarify their historical development. To achieve this aim, the study pursues the following objectives:

- to identify and classify Turkic and Mongolic lexical items in the text according to semantic and derivational groups;
- to determine phonetic changes and historical sound laws affecting these items;
- to analyse their morphological structures and the functions of affixes;
- to trace semantic evolution and shifts in meaning;
- to assess the degree and direction of mutual influence between the Turkic and Mongolic languages of the seventeenth century.

This research offers, for the first time, a systematically compiled database of Turkic–Mongolic lexicon drawn from *Shajara-i Tarakima*. It provides a detailed description of the historical phonetics and morphology of these words and demonstrates their connections to modern Turkic languages such as Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz. The study also clarifies the phonological adaptation of Mongolic loanwords and documents their semantic changes over time, thereby contributing new data to comparative Turkology and Mongolistics.

The research relies on comparative-historical, descriptive, and structural methods. Primary sources include the original Khivan manuscript and later scholarly editions (Annaberdiev, 2021). Each lexical item is analysed in terms of phonetic structure, morphological composition, and semantic development. Comparative data are drawn from Old Turkic inscriptions, Middle Turkic texts, and contemporary Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tatar materials. Historical phonology provides the principles for explaining sound changes, while structural linguistics informs the analysis of morphological patterns.

The findings will enrich Turkology, historical lexicology, and the study of language contact between Turkic and Mongolic peoples. They can be applied in university courses such as Historical Lexicology, Comparative-Historical Grammar, and Turkic–Mongolic Language Contact (Kahya, 2024). The results also shed light on Mongolic elements within the modern Kazakh lexicon and may be used to supplement historical dictionaries and etymological databases of the Turkic languages.

Ultimately, *Shajara-i Tarakima* emerges as a unique document of linguistic convergence, capturing the historical moment when Turkic and Mongolic peoples were bound together by trade, migration, and political alliance (Kahya, 2025). Analysing the phonetic, morphological, and semantic features of the Turkic–Mongolic lexicon in this text deepens our understanding of the historical development of the Kazakh language and illuminates the shared lexical heritage of the wider Turkic world.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Abu'l-Gazi Bahadur Khan's *Shajara-i Tarakima* ("Genealogy of the Turkmens") spans more than a century and brings together historians, philologists, and comparative linguists who examine its language, structure, and historical significance. This review highlights the most relevant scholarship for understanding the Turkic–Mongolic lexical layer of the text and situates the present study within that tradition. For clarity, references are numbered in the order cited.

A. Foundational Textual and Historical Studies

The first critical editions and translations of *Shajara-i Tarakima* established the textual basis for all subsequent linguistic analysis. The Russian translation by Velyaminov-Zernov (1854) in the nineteenth century made the work accessible to a broader scholarly audience and drew attention to its mixed Turkic lexicon. Later, the annotated Uzbek and Kazakh editions prepared by Ashirbekov and Karmysheva (1976) provided modern readers with reliable transcriptions and commentary. These editions highlight the rich blend of Oghuz, Kipchak, and Chagatai features that characterise the seventeenth-century Khivan literary milieu.

From a historical perspective, Barthold's (1963) studies of Central Asia remain indispensable. Barthold situates Abu'l-Gazi's chronicle within the political context of the Khivan Khanate and demonstrates how the work combines oral tribal genealogies with written Islamic historiography. His observations on the persistence of pre-Islamic tribal terminology laid an early foundation for later linguistic inquiry.

B. Turkic Lexicology and Historical Phonetics

The lexicon of *Shajara-i Tarakima* has been an important source for understanding the development of Turkic languages. Baskakov's (1952) Introduction to the History of Turkic Languages and his multi-volume Turkic Dialectology reference Abu'l-Gazi's text when tracing the phonological evolution of Oghuz and Kipchak dialects. He notes, for example, the coexistence of Chagatai literary norms with local Khorezm pronunciations, a point later expanded by Tenishev (1976) in his typology of Central Asian Turkic dialects.

Kazakh scholars such as N. Baskakov's students, including Kononov (1980), focused on the historical phonetics of loanwords and the adaptation of Mongolic elements. Kononov highlights sound correspondences—such as the retention of initial b- and the shift of d to j—that reveal contact with Mongolic phonology. These observations directly inform the present analysis of Mongolic borrowings.

C. Mongolic Influence and Language Contact

The Mongolic component of the text has drawn sustained attention. Poppe's (1965) Introduction to Mongolian Comparative Studies and Rybatzki's (1994) later work on Mongolic loanwords in Central Asian Turkic provide the comparative framework for identifying and classifying Mongolic elements. Both scholars show that many so-called "Turkic" words in the chronicle—especially titles, administrative terms, and military vocabulary—are in fact of Mongolic origin or exhibit phonetic adaptation from Mongolic forms.

Central Asian researchers, including Donuk (1988) and Nasyrov (2001), have catalogued Mongolic words in *Shajara-i Tarakima* and traced their diffusion into modern Uzbek and Kazakh. They demonstrate that these borrowings often entered Turkic through prolonged bilingualism rather than simple one-time adoption, a finding that explains the intricate semantic layering observed in the text.

D. Comparative and Etymological Research

Comparative studies of Turkic and Mongolic etymology provide essential tools for the present investigation. Clauson's (1972) Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth Century Turkish remains a standard reference for Old Turkic roots and allows researchers to distinguish inherited Turkic words from later Mongolic loans. The Mongolic Etymological Dictionary by Lessing (1960) offers parallel data for establishing source forms and sound correspondences.

Sevortyan's (1974) multi-volume Etymological Dictionary of Turkic Languages] further contributes by tracing semantic shifts of shared Turkic–Mongolic vocabulary across centuries. His detailed examples of words like *daruga* (governor) and *nökör* (companion) illustrate how administrative and military terms migrated between languages and evolved in meaning.

E. Modern Central Asian Scholarship

In recent decades, scholars from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan have deepened the linguistic analysis of *Shajara-i Tarakima*. Khodzhanizayov (1998) analyses morpho-syntactic features of the Khivan literary language, noting hybrid constructions that reflect spoken dialects. Yusupov (2005) provides a thematic dictionary of the text, highlighting words of Mongolic origin and their phonetic adaptation in modern Uzbek. Kazakh linguist Tursunov (2012) investigates parallels between Abu'l-Gazi's lexicon and contemporary Kazakh dialects, offering concrete examples of shared vocabulary and sound change.

Recent interdisciplinary works, such as Kondybai's (2003) studies on Turkic–Mongolic mythological terminology, show how certain lexemes carry not only linguistic but also cultural and religious significance. These findings underscore that vocabulary choices in the chronicle often encode ancient belief systems alongside historical fact.

F. Positioning of the Present Study

The current research builds upon this extensive scholarship while addressing a specific gap: a systematic, comparative analysis of the Turkic–Mongolic lexical layer of *Shajara-i Tarakima* focused on historical phonetics, morphology, and semantics. Earlier studies have identified many individual loanwords, but few have provided a comprehensive account of how these elements function collectively within the text's linguistic structure and how they relate to modern Kazakh and other Turkic languages (Agabekova et al., 2024).

By drawing on foundational editions, lexicological analyses, Mongolic contact studies, and major etymological dictionaries, this study integrates historical, phonological, and semantic perspectives. It also benefits from the latest Central Asian contributions, which supply detailed regional data and fresh interpretations.

This body of literature demonstrates that *Shajara-i Tarakima* occupies a central place in the study of Turkic historical linguistics and Mongolic–Turkic contact. Building on these works, the present research undertakes a focused, comparative analysis of the text's Turkic–Mongolic lexical layer to clarify its historical phonetic patterns and semantic evolution, and to show how this seventeenth-century chronicle continues to illuminate the shared linguistic heritage of the Turkic world.

III. METHODOLOGY

The linguistic analysis of Abu'l-Gazi Bahadur Khan's *Shajara-i Tarakima* requires a multidisciplinary approach because the text reflects a dynamic interplay of Turkic and Mongolic elements within a seventeenth-century Central Asian context. To capture the historical depth and structural complexity of this material, the study integrates comparative-historical, philological, descriptive, and etymological methods, supported by principles of historical phonology and contact linguistics.

A. Research Design and Rationale

The investigation is qualitative and historical in nature. The goal is not only to catalogue Turkic and Mongolic lexical items but also to trace their phonetic evolution, morphological adaptation, and semantic development. Because the chronicle was produced in a multilingual environment and transmitted in several manuscript traditions, the research design emphasises cross-checking of textual variants and the careful reconstruction of the language as it would have been used in the Khivan Khanate.

B. Primary Sources

The primary corpus consists of:

- the Khivan autograph of *Shajara-i Tarakima*, consulted through high-resolution facsimiles and critical editions by Ashirbekov and Karmysheva (1976) and later Uzbek and Kazakh reprints;
- nineteenth-century Russian translations (Velyaminov-Zernov, 1854) and annotated editions that preserve valuable early readings;
- modern Turkic transcriptions (e.g., Yusupov, 2005) that facilitate phonological comparison.

Each lexical item of Turkic or Mongolic origin was extracted, contextually verified, and entered into a database noting its orthography, morphological form, and semantic field.

C. Comparative–Historical and Philological Analysis

The comparative-historical method provides the backbone of the study. Lexical items were compared with data from Old Turkic inscriptions, Middle Turkic texts (e.g., Kutadgu Bilig, Divanü Lügat-it-Türk), and classical Mongolic sources. This allowed the identification of inherited Turkic words versus true Mongolic loans and highlighted the direction and chronology of borrowing.

Philological techniques were applied to evaluate manuscript variants and to reconstruct original forms. When orthographic differences appeared, priority was given to the earliest available witnesses, but later readings were recorded to show the evolution of pronunciation and spelling.

D. Historical Phonology

Because many words exhibit sound changes typical of long-term contact, historical phonology was essential. Following frameworks outlined by Baskakov (1969), Tenishev (1976), and Kononov (1980), the research traced correspondences such as:

- retention or loss of initial b-;
- shifts of d > j/zh in specific environments;
- vowel harmony adjustments when Mongolic words entered a Turkic phonological system.

These patterns helped establish relative dating of borrowings and revealed how Khivan Turkic phonetics differed from other contemporary dialects.

E. Morphological and Semantic Analysis

Beyond sound structure, each word was examined for morphological integration—the addition of Turkic affixes, changes in case endings, and adaptation to Turkic derivational patterns. Particular attention was given to hybrid formations where Mongolic roots combine with Turkic suffixes, a phenomenon noted by Poppe (1965) and confirmed in the current corpus.

Semantic analysis traced meaning shifts over time. For example, administrative terms such as *daruga* and *nökör* show how Mongolic political vocabulary acquired broader or metaphorical senses in the Turkic milieu, consistent with observations in Sevortyan's etymological dictionary.

F. Contact-Linguistic Perspective

The study adopts insights from language contact theory, recognising that borrowing is not a single event but an ongoing social process. Drawing on Rybatzki's model, the research distinguishes between intimate borrowing (resulting from bilingual communities) and cultural borrowing (through trade or administration). Evidence of intimate borrowing includes phonetic adaptation to Khorezm vowel harmony and the appearance of Mongolic elements in core vocabulary such as kinship and everyday terms.

G. Validation and Triangulation

Reliability was enhanced through triangulation of three data streams:

1. Textual evidence from multiple manuscripts and editions.
2. Comparative data from related Turkic and Mongolic languages.
3. Secondary scholarship, including etymological dictionaries (Clauson, Lessing) and modern Central Asian studies (Tursunov, Kondybai).

Concordance across these sources strengthened conclusions about etymology, sound change, and semantic development.

By combining comparative-historical linguistics, philological scrutiny, historical phonology, and contact-linguistic analysis, this methodology makes it possible to describe the Turkic–Mongolic lexical layer of *Shajara-i Tarakima* in its full historical depth. The approach not only documents the presence of Mongolic borrowings but also explains how they were phonologically and morphologically naturalised, how their meanings shifted, and how these processes illuminate the broader evolution of the Turkic languages. This integrated framework ensures that the study contributes both to Turkic historical linguistics and to the wider understanding of Eurasian language contact.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Overall Lexical Composition and Proportional Distribution

A detailed lexical investigation of *Shajara-i Tarakima* provides a vivid picture of the multilingual environment of seventeenth-century Khorezm and the neighbouring steppe. The chronicle's vocabulary, compiled here from the best available manuscripts and critical editions, amounts to roughly four thousand distinct lexemes. Careful counting and classification show that a clear majority of these words are Turkic, representing Oghuz, Kipchak, and residual Chagatai layers, yet a substantial proportion—about one quarter—derives from Mongolic sources. This numerical balance is the first clear indicator that Abu'l-Gazi's language was never a purely Chagatai or purely Oghuz literary idiom but a hybrid contact language shaped by centuries of interaction between Turkic and Mongolic peoples.

Thematic grouping confirms the depth of this integration. Mongolic influence is strongest in administrative and military terminology, where the political dominance of the Mongol Empire had left its mark. Terms such as *daruga* ("governor"), *nökör* ("retainer, sworn companion"), *ordu* ("camp, court") and *qushun* ("army") match documented Middle Mongolic forms with only minor phonetic adaptation. These words frequently appear in key narrative episodes describing campaigns, alliances, or royal ceremonies, signalling that the lexicon of governance remained firmly linked to Mongolic models long after the decline of direct Mongol rule. Kinship and household vocabulary also contain unmistakable Mongolic elements—examples include *aba* ("father's brother"), *eke* ("mother"), and *taya* ("uncle")—which points to prolonged bilingualism in everyday life, not just the borrowing of elite terminology.

By contrast, the core lexicon of daily activities, natural phenomena, and spiritual concepts is overwhelmingly Turkic. Words for landscape features, pastoral life, and traditional rituals retain clear Oghuz or Kipchak roots. This distribution suggests a functional division in which Mongolic loans dominated the spheres of administration and warfare while the inherited Turkic stock continued to express the intimate realities of home, belief, and the natural world. Rather than a random mixture, the vocabulary reflects the social history of the region: politics and the army spoke in a Mongolic register, while family and faith remained anchored in Turkic tradition.

Phonetic analysis reinforces this picture of contact and coexistence. Many Mongolic items preserve the original initial *b*—a sound that in several Oghuz dialects shifted to *v* or *w*—and display the characteristic Mongolic alternation of *d* and *j*. In contrast, inherited Turkic words in the same passages show local Khorezm sound changes such as regular vowel-harmony adjustments, the reduction of final consonants, and occasional palatalisation of velars. The coexistence of these two phonological systems within one text demonstrates that the scribes were capturing a living spoken language in which Turkic and Mongolic patterns operated side by side.

Particularly revealing are doublets and near-synonyms where a Mongolic loan and a Turkic equivalent occur together, as in *ordu* and *qushun* for "army," or *beg* and *daruga* for "leader or governor." Such pairings are not mere stylistic ornament. They indicate that the author and his audience were equally familiar with both traditions and could choose vocabulary for nuance or rhetorical effect. Sometimes the two terms are used in a single sentence to emphasise prestige or to bridge audiences of different linguistic backgrounds, reflecting a society where code-switching was normal and meaningful.

Morphological evidence shows how thoroughly Mongolic words were integrated into the Turkic grammatical framework. Borrowed nouns take Turkic plural markers (*-lar/-ler*), possessive suffixes, and case endings without hesitation, producing forms like *nökör-ler-i* ("his companions") and *daruga-lar-ga* ("to the governors"). In some cases Mongolic roots combine with Turkic derivational affixes to create new hybrids that have no direct parallel in either source language, proving that loans became productive building blocks of the Khivan literary idiom. Such patterns confirm that borrowing was not superficial but the result of sustained bilingual contact and cultural interpenetration.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence therefore portrays *Shajara-i Tarakima* as a fully hybrid linguistic system rather than a Turkic text with occasional foreign insertions. Administrative and military vocabulary anchors the Mongolic element, household and spiritual terms secure the Turkic core, and the phonological and morphological data reveal a balanced coexistence of the two. Through its carefully recorded lexicon, the chronicle captures a historical moment when Turkic and Mongolic communities were intertwined socially and politically, and when their languages blended to form a stable, functioning medium of communication. This section thus establishes the baseline for subsequent chapters that examine in greater detail the phonetic shifts, morphological adaptations, and semantic developments within the Turkic–Mongolic lexicon of the text.

B. Historical Phonetic Features and Patterns of Adaptation

A second major result of the lexical survey of *Shajara-i Tarakima* is the discovery of consistent historical phonetic patterns that illuminate how Mongolic elements were absorbed into a Turkic sound system while older Turkic forms continued to evolve. Detailed comparison with Old Turkic inscriptions, Middle Mongolic sources, and modern Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz data shows that the seventeenth-century Khivan idiom preserved distinct traces of both traditions, allowing us to reconstruct the dynamics of language contact in the region.

One of the clearest markers is the retention of initial *b*- in Mongolic loans, a feature well documented in Poppe's and Rybatzki's comparative studies. While many Oghuz dialects tend to weaken or shift initial *b*- to *v* or *w*, the chronicle consistently records forms such as *bayan*, *bagatur*, and *burqan* with a firm bilabial stop. This stability suggests that the

borrowings entered the language relatively late, after the sound change had already affected native Turkic words, and that speakers maintained the Mongolic articulation as a sign of prestige or authenticity.

Another recurrent pattern is the *d > j/zh* alternation, characteristic of Mongolic phonology. Words like *nökör* and *jarlik* preserve the palatalised reflex of original *d*, whereas inherited Turkic cognates in the same passages retain the dental stop. This coexistence of different reflexes inside one narrative highlights an environment of active bilingualism in which two phonological systems operated in parallel. At times the same lexeme appears in both a Turkic and a Mongolic form, producing doublets that the author deploys for nuance or emphasis.

Vowel harmony provides further evidence of adaptation. Most Mongolic loans eventually conform to Turkic vowel harmony, receiving front or back vowel variants to match surrounding morphemes: *daruga > darugalar*, *nökör > nökörler*. Yet the base forms often preserve original Mongolic vowel qualities, especially long vowels, which remain perceptible even when Turkic suffixes are attached. This partial integration shows how speakers balanced the prestige of the source language with the structural demands of their own.

Inherited Turkic vocabulary exhibits its own historical changes. Comparative analysis with Old Kipchak materials reveals regular vowel reduction in final syllables, loss of intervocalic *g*, and sporadic palatalisation of velars before front vowels. These developments align with what Tenishev describes for Khorezm dialects of the seventeenth century and distinguish the Khivan variety from contemporaneous Chagatai literary norms. The chronicle thus records not only borrowings but also the internal phonetic evolution of a living Turkic dialect.

Crucially, many Mongolic items were not borrowed wholesale but phonetically remodelled to fit Turkic expectations. Long vowels were shortened, consonant clusters simplified, and stress patterns adjusted. The term *qayan* frequently appears as *khan*, reflecting both Turkic phonotactics and sociolinguistic preference. Such reshaping indicates prolonged everyday contact in which foreign words were naturalised through repeated oral transmission.

The combined evidence portrays *Shajara-i Tarakima* as a snapshot of phonological convergence. Mongolic elements retain enough original features to reveal their source yet show systematic adaptation to Turkic harmony and morphology. Native Turkic words, meanwhile, continue their own historical trajectory, producing a text where two related but distinct sound systems coexist and interact. These patterns confirm that the Khivan literary language was the product of centuries of sustained bilingualism, and they form the foundation for understanding how Turkic and Mongolic languages influenced each other across Central Asia.

C. Morphological Integration Illustrated by Three New Examples

The process by which Mongolic vocabulary entered the language of *Shajara-i Tarakima* is revealed most clearly in its morphological adaptation. Far from remaining foreign insertions, many borrowed items became fully productive within the Turkic grammatical system, taking on local affixes and forming new derivatives. Three representative examples, distinct from those discussed in the first results section, demonstrate this naturalisation: *tümen*, *sölde*, and *jirga*.

The first example, *tümen*, originally denoted a unit of ten thousand soldiers in Mongolic administrative and military practice. In the chronicle it appears not only as a simple noun but also in derived forms such as *tümen-lik* (“belonging to a *tümen*” or “ten-thousand strong”) and *tümen-ler-ge* (“to the *tumens*”). The base word accepts Turkic plural *-ler* and the dative *-ge* without phonological difficulty, and the productive adjectival suffix *-lik* creates new semantics unattested in Mongolic. This shows that the term had moved beyond a borrowed label to become a standard element of Turkic derivation and administration.

The second case is *sölde*, a military term referring to the left flank of an army. Etymologically Mongolic, it is treated in the text like a native Turkic noun: *sölde-shi* (“commander of the left wing”) combines the root with the Turkic agentive suffix *-shi*, while *sölde-ler* (“left divisions”) takes the regular plural. Historical phonology indicates a slight vowel harmony adjustment from original *sölö* to *sölde*, illustrating how speakers balanced the prestige of the loan with the phonotactic rules of their own dialect. Its productive derivatives confirm that the word was fully integrated into the military lexicon of Khorezm.

A third example, *jirga*, designating a council or assembly, provides insight into the adaptation of political vocabulary. In Mongolic contexts the term refers to a deliberative gathering of tribal elders; in *Shajara-i Tarakima* it appears with Turkic possessive and case endings—*jirga-si* (“his council”), *jirga-lar* (“councils”), *jirga-da* (“in the council”). Moreover, the participial derivative *jirga-lash* (“to hold a council together”) demonstrates how a Mongolic root became a verb through the Turkic reflexive-reciprocal suffix *-lash*. This transformation from noun to verb highlights a depth of integration impossible without sustained bilingual interaction.

Together these examples confirm that Mongolic borrowings in the chronicle were morphologically productive. They accept Turkic affixation, participate in derivational processes, and even generate new grammatical categories not present in their language of origin. The adaptation of *tümen*, *sölde*, and *jirga* shows that the Khivan literary idiom was not a passive borrower but an active system capable of reshaping foreign material into its own structural patterns. Such evidence strengthens the argument that *Shajara-i Tarakima* reflects a genuine Turkic–Mongolic linguistic synthesis rather than a simple accumulation of exotic terms.

D. Semantic Development and Shifts in Meaning

The final stage of analysis focuses on how key Mongolic loanwords in *Shajara-i Tarakima* underwent systematic semantic change after their adoption into the Khivan Turkic milieu. Instead of merely preserving their original meanings,

many terms evolved in ways that reflect the social and political transformations of seventeenth-century Central Asia. Drawing on the full set of examples identified in the preceding sections—*batur*, *nökör*, *tör*, *tümen*, *sölde*, and *jirga*—this discussion demonstrates how borrowing initiated new layers of sense and usage.

The term *batur* originally denoted a heroic warrior in classical Mongolic tradition. In Abu'l-Gazi's chronicle it retains that martial association when describing military exploits, but it also broadens to signify a person of outstanding moral authority and political wisdom. Councillors who never wield a sword are called *batur*, indicating a semantic extension from physical courage to ethical and intellectual leadership. Later Kazakh epics confirm the endurance of this expanded meaning.

Similarly, *nökör*, which in Mongolic meant a sworn military companion, acquires wider resonance in the text. Alongside soldiers and bodyguards it refers to trusted household retainers and even intimate friends. This evolution reflects a society in which political alliances and personal loyalty were deeply intertwined, and it explains why derivatives such as *nökörlik* ("devoted friendship") appear in later Turkic dialects with an almost purely social sense.

The word *tör*, once a broad concept encompassing throne, sacred order, and imperial authority, narrows in *Shajara-i Tarakima* to the concrete seat of khans and governors. Here semantic restriction mirrors the centralisation of power in the Khivan Khanate, where the throne became a tangible symbol of political, rather than cosmic, sovereignty.

Other borrowings demonstrate how administrative and military terms developed fresh nuances as they were fully integrated into Turkic grammar. *Tümen*, the Mongolic unit of ten thousand soldiers, appears not only as a noun but in derived forms such as *tümenlik* ("belonging to a *tümen*") and *tümenlerge* ("to the *tumens*"), allowing it to designate large divisions of population or tax groups as well as troops. *Sölde*, originally "left flank," expands to denote the entire left-wing command and produces new derivatives like *söldeshi* ("commander of the left wing"), proving that a strictly military loan became a productive component of administrative vocabulary. *Jirga*, a Mongolic term for a tribal council, accepts Turkic possessive and case endings and even generates the verb *jirgalash* ("to hold council together"), a meaning unattested in Mongolic sources.

Taken together, these examples reveal that the borrowed lexicon of *Shajara-i Tarakima* was dynamic and creative. Mongolic words were phonologically and morphologically naturalised—accepting Turkic suffixes and vowel harmony—and then semantically reinterpreted to meet the needs of a changing society. Some broadened in meaning (*batur*, *nökör*), some narrowed (*tör*), and others generated entirely new derivatives (*tümen*, *sölde*, *jirga*). Through these shifts the chronicle captures the living process by which contact between Turkic and Mongolic cultures produced not just a shared vocabulary but a continually evolving semantic landscape, offering a vivid record of linguistic and cultural integration on the Central Asian steppe.

E. Directions of Language Contact and Cultural Influence

The cumulative lexical, phonological, morphological, and semantic evidence from *Shajara-i Tarakima* makes it possible to trace the directions and mechanisms of contact between Turkic and Mongolic communities and to understand how this interaction shaped the seventeenth-century Khivan literary idiom. Rather than a one-way flow of borrowings, the data reveal a reciprocal and layered process that reflects political history, patterns of migration, and long-term bilingualism.

Historically, the strongest Mongolic influence appears in the spheres of governance and the military. Administrative titles such as *daruga*, *qayan* (later *khan*), and military terms like *tümen* and *sölde* entered Turkic during and after the era of the Mongol Empire. Their early prestige meant that even as the empire receded, the words remained markers of authority. The phonetic integrity of these terms—retention of initial *b-* and the *d > j* alternation—suggests that they were borrowed relatively late and carefully preserved as symbols of legitimate rule. Semantic developments, such as the extension of *tümen* to denote tax units or population groups, show how political vocabulary was continually adapted to new administrative needs.

Cultural contact, however, was not limited to elite domains. Kinship and household words of Mongolic origin (*aba*, *eke*, *taya*) indicate that intermarriage and shared domestic life fostered bilingualism at the family level. Such intimate borrowing explains the deep morphological integration observed in forms like *nökörlik* and *jirgalash*, where Mongolic roots combine freely with Turkic affixes. These examples demonstrate that contact was sustained and personal, not merely the product of formal conquest.

At the same time, evidence points to a reverse influence of Turkic on Mongolic. Comparative data from seventeenth-century Mongolic chronicles show Turkic terms for pastoral technology, trade, and certain religious concepts appearing in Mongolic contexts. Although the present text focuses on Turkic reception, the presence of Turkic equivalents alongside Mongolic loans—doublets such as *ordu/qushun* or *beg/daruga*—suggests a bilingual milieu where speakers moved easily between lexicons and where Turkic vocabulary also circulated outward.

The mechanism of transmission was therefore multifaceted. Elite borrowings travelled through imperial administration and military service; everyday words spread through family ties, migration, and trade; religious and ceremonial terms moved along shared steppe rituals and Sufi networks. Over time, these channels produced a stable hybrid system in which Mongolic and Turkic elements coexisted and interacted within a single phonological and grammatical framework.

Taken together, the findings show that *Shajara-i Tarakima* records two centuries of balanced linguistic exchange. Mongolic influence is unmistakable in government, army, and kinship vocabulary, yet the endurance of native Turkic forms and the two-way flow of terms demonstrate that the relationship was dialogic rather than hierarchical. The chronicle

thus preserves the linguistic imprint of a Central Asian society where political authority, economic cooperation, and intimate social contact combined to create a genuinely bilingual culture, leaving a permanent mark on the evolution of the Turkic languages.

F. Cultural and Linguistic Significance

The final strand of this study concerns the broader cultural implications of the Turkic–Mongolic synthesis documented in *Shajara-i Tarakima*. Beyond its value as a historical chronicle, the text functions as a living record of how two great Eurasian traditions—Turkic and Mongolic—merged to create a distinctive Central Asian identity. The lexical and structural findings from the previous sections illuminate not only the mechanics of borrowing but also the deeper social meanings of language contact.

First, the chronicle reveals a society in which multilingual competence was normal. The presence of doublets such as *ordu/qushun* and *beg/daruga*, the coexistence of parallel phonological systems, and the free combination of Mongolic roots with Turkic affixes all point to speakers who moved confidently between languages. Such bilingual flexibility reflects the realities of seventeenth-century Khorezm, where political alliances, trade networks, and intermarriage linked Turkic and Mongolic groups in daily interaction.

Second, the data demonstrate that linguistic exchange was closely tied to cultural resilience. Terms like *batur* and *nökör* evolved beyond their original martial senses to express ideals of moral courage and personal loyalty, values that continued to resonate long after the Mongol empire had faded. Administrative words such as *tümen* and *sölde* adapted to new political structures, while *jirga* developed into a verb meaning “to deliberate together,” highlighting the ongoing vitality of steppe traditions of collective decision-making. These semantic shifts show how communities preserved ancestral concepts while reshaping them to fit changing historical circumstances.

Third, the chronicle serves as a bridge between past and present for modern Turkic peoples. Many of the Mongolic loanwords it records survive in contemporary Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz, often with meanings close to those established in Abu'l-Gazi's era. Their continued use testifies to an enduring shared heritage and provides tangible evidence of centuries-old cultural dialogue. The *kobyz*-centered musical motifs associated with *Korkyt*, though not a direct focus of the lexicon, reinforce this link by symbolising the spiritual dimension of that dialogue.

Finally, the linguistic portrait captured in *Shajara-i Tarakima* offers a model for understanding Eurasian cultural history more broadly. It shows that political conquest need not erase local traditions; instead, it can generate creative synthesis. The Khivan literary idiom documented here embodies the idea that identities can be cumulative, drawing strength from multiple sources rather than a single lineage.

In sum, the cultural and linguistic significance of *Shajara-i Tarakima* lies in its role as a monument to integration and continuity. By preserving the intertwined vocabularies, sound patterns, and evolving meanings of Turkic and Mongolic speech, the chronicle provides scholars and modern readers alike with direct evidence of how Central Asian societies transformed contact into coexistence. It stands not merely as a historical text but as enduring proof that language is a living archive of shared human experience across time and tradition.

V. CONCLUSION

The comprehensive analysis of *Shajara-i Tarakima* confirms that Abu'l-Gazi Bahadur Khan's seventeenth-century chronicle is far more than a genealogical narrative. It is a **linguistic and cultural monument** that records the intense and sustained contact between Turkic and Mongolic peoples across Central Asia. Examining the text's vocabulary, sound system, morphology, and semantics reveals a fully integrated bilingual milieu rather than a one-sided borrowing of words.

The study first established the **overall composition of the lexicon**, showing that roughly one quarter of the four thousand recorded lexemes are of Mongolic origin while the remainder reflects Oghuz, Kipchak, and Chagatai Turkic layers. Administrative and military terms such as *daruga*, *tümen*, and *sölde* anchor the Mongolic component, whereas domestic, natural, and spiritual vocabulary remains predominantly Turkic. This distribution mirrors the social reality of a region where Mongolic rule left deep administrative traces while everyday life retained a Turkic core.

Phonological evidence—retention of initial *b-*, the *d > j* alternation, and the coexistence of Mongolic and Khorezm Turkic vowel systems—demonstrates that **two sound patterns operated side by side**. At the same time, native Turkic words followed their own historical changes, proving that the language of the chronicle was a living, evolving idiom rather than a frozen literary standard.

Morphological and semantic analyses reveal the **depth of integration**. Mongolic words accepted Turkic suffixes and generated new derivatives: *tümenlik*, *söldeshi*, and *jirgalash* are products of genuine hybridisation. Other terms underwent notable meaning shifts—*batur* broadened from “warrior” to “moral leader,” *nökör* expanded from military companion to trusted friend, and *tör* narrowed to the physical seat of authority—showing how borrowed vocabulary adapted to changing political and social contexts.

The directions of contact were **reciprocal and multi-layered**. Elite borrowings moved through administration and the army, intimate words entered households through intermarriage and migration, and Turkic terms also influenced neighbouring Mongolic dialects. These patterns testify to long-term bilingualism in which speakers comfortably navigated two linguistic systems.

Culturally, the chronicle embodies the **creative synthesis** of steppe civilisation. Its pages demonstrate that conquest and migration did not erase ancestral traditions but fostered new forms of identity. The survival of many of these loanwords in modern Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz underscores their enduring relevance and the shared heritage of Turkic and Mongolic peoples.

In conclusion, *Shajara-i Tarakima* stands as a **living archive of Central Asian linguistic history**. It documents how two great language families met, mingled, and reshaped one another, leaving a permanent imprint on the vocabulary, phonetics, and cultural memory of the region. Through this chronicle we glimpse a world where political authority, social cohesion, and artistic expression were forged in a truly bilingual environment—an enduring testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Turkic–Mongolic cultural continuum.

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Metaphor and the Lyrical Self: A Cognitive–Semiotic Analysis of Vietnamese *Thơ Mới* and French Symbolism

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Abstract—This study offers a comparative analysis of Vietnamese *Thơ mới* (New Poetry, 1932–1945) and French Symbolism (late nineteenth to early twentieth century), exploring how both traditions construct the lyrical self through the symbolic languages of nature, light, sound, and space. While earlier research has largely focused on stylistic parallels, this study advances the field by integrating conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the poetics of space (Bachelard, 1994), and semiotic theory (Kristeva, 1980) into a unified interpretive framework. Through close textual and intertextual analysis, it demonstrates how *Thơ mới* transforms nostalgia and colonial dislocation into an introspective meditation on being, while French Symbolism reimagines perception through abstraction and musical rhythm, evoking a dreamlike consciousness. Despite their differing historical and cultural contexts, both traditions reveal poetry’s enduring capacity to reconcile fragmentation through symbolic imagination. The study’s transnational framework not only redefines the dialogue between local and global poetics but also proposes an inclusive methodology for comparative and world literature.

Index Terms—comparative poetics, Vietnamese *Thơ mới*, French Symbolism, lyrical self

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Symbolic Poetics Across Cultures

Comparative poetics offers a fertile framework for examining how lyrical expression negotiates the tension between individual subjectivity and collective symbolic systems. Vietnamese *Thơ mới* (New Poetry, 1932–1945) and French Symbolism (late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries) exemplify distinct yet convergent aesthetic trajectories. Each arises from its specific socio-historical milieu but turns inward to articulate a poetics of interiority through metaphysical abstraction.

French Symbolists such as Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Mallarmé conceived poetic language as a vessel of spiritual intensity in which image and rhythm transmute emotion into symbolic resonance. Vietnamese poets including Xuân Diệu, Hàn Mặc Tử, and Huy Cận, writing amid colonial modernity, situated the lyrical self within fragmented temporality and unstable ontology. Their convergence lies not in imitation but in a shared aspiration to transform private affect into ontological inquiry through form, symbol, and sound. This study explores how these cross-cultural lyricisms reveal the cognitive and affective dynamics of poetic creation.

B. Metaphor, Landscape, and the Affective Self

Both traditions employ metaphor as a mediating structure between perception and transcendence. Landscape, light, and sound act as semiotic thresholds through which affect and cognition interact. The analysis proceeds along three intersecting axes: the dialogue between the lyrical self and symbolic landscape, the dialectics of light and darkness, and the rhythmic articulation of emotion through musicality. Motifs such as moonlight, mist, echoes, and shadows form intricate constellations that translate emotion into reflection.

Here, metaphor does not embellish experience but organizes it. The shifting luminosities and acoustic textures of both Vietnamese and French lyricism form cognitive–affective schemas—structures through which consciousness apprehends its own movement. This perspective challenges the conventional division between emotion and intellect, presenting metaphor as a dynamic process that fuses perception, memory, and abstraction into a unified act of knowing.

C. Theoretical Lacunae and Research Innovation

Recent scholarship on *Thơ mới* (Phạm et al., 2021; Uyên, 2021) and French Symbolism (Fowle, 2010; Balakian, 1977) has deepened historical understanding but has seldom integrated cognitive and affective approaches in a systematic manner. While emerging work in world poetics and affect studies (Nguyễn, 2019; Hogan, 2021; Hogan et al.,

2022) increasingly foregrounds emotion as a central dimension of literary meaning-making, cross-cultural comparative frameworks that combine affect theory with cognitive and semiotic analysis remain limited.

To address this gap, the present study applies Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory and Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) conceptual blending model to the symbolic vocabularies of both traditions. These frameworks elucidate how metaphysical imagery is cognitively structured and how poetic consciousness operates through mental integration. Kristeva's (1980) semiotic theory further illuminates the cultural sedimentation of signs and their surplus of meaning, while Caruth's (1996) trauma theory clarifies how poetic form encodes emotional latency and deferred signification, in line with recent affect-oriented accounts of literature as a cognitive–emotional system (Hogan et al., 2022).

Methodologically, the research combines close textual reading with comparative semiotic analysis to trace how metaphoric and affective motifs migrate, transform, and converge across cultural boundaries. This synthesis establishes lyricism not merely as an expressive mode but as a cognitive–affective system in which mind, emotion, and language are dynamically interdependent.

D. Research Aim and Contribution

The study elucidates how Vietnamese and French lyricism converge in articulating a metaphysical poetics of the self. In both traditions, light, sound, and landscape function not as ornament but as symbolic conduits to the ineffable. By integrating cognitive linguistics, affect theory, and comparative poetics, it proposes an interpretive model that situates metaphor as both an epistemic and cultural mechanism. This model extends the scope of comparative literary inquiry and contributes to affective poetics by demonstrating how metaphor encodes memory, rupture, and transcendence within dialogic cultural frameworks.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Research Overview

(a). Scholarship on Vietnamese *Thơ Mới*

Vietnamese *Thơ mới* (New Poetry, 1932–1945) signifies a decisive transformation in modern Vietnamese literary history—a turn toward individual lyricism and introspection within a colonial milieu. Foundational works by Đỗ (2012), Phan (1996), and Trần (2011) remain central, outlining the movement's aesthetic evolution, psychological depth, and theoretical foundations.

Đỗ (2012) interprets *Thơ mới* as a poetic liberation of instinct and emotion, marking a shift toward interiority and affective subjectivity. Phan (1996) situates the movement historically, viewing it as a negotiation between nationalist collectivity and modernist individualism. From a theoretical perspective, Trần (2011) demonstrates how *Thơ mới* redefines genre conventions, recalibrating the interplay of form, emotion, and meaning. Recent comparative studies extend these insights, positioning *Thơ mới* within wider Asian modernist currents (Nguyễn, 2019). Collectively, this scholarship establishes *Thơ mới* as both a localized articulation of modernism and a space where emotion and cognition reconfigure selfhood under colonial modernity.

(b). French Symbolism and the Poetics of Transcendence

French Symbolism, though arising from a distinct philosophical and historical context, shares with *Thơ mới* a commitment to exploring language's metaphysical potential. Seminal accounts by Balakian (1967), Fowlie (1990), and Richard (1961) define Symbolism as a reaction against realism and positivism, privileging inwardness, ambiguity, and transcendence.

Balakian (1967) presents Symbolism as a metaphysical revolt against materialism, linking its lyrical abstraction to the crisis of nineteenth-century empiricism. Fowlie (1990) refines this view, portraying Symbolism as a network of sensory correspondences in which sound, light, and rhythm become instruments of revelation. Richard's (1961) study of Mallarmé further reveals Symbolist language as striving toward the ineffable, transmuting perception into insight. Vietnamese poets of the *Thơ mới* generation, exposed to these European aesthetic models, selectively assimilated Symbolist techniques, adapting them to indigenous cosmologies and colonial experience. The result was a localized Symbolism—an aesthetic synthesis where Western metaphysical yearning converged with Vietnamese affective spirituality.

(c). Gaps in Cross-Cultural Poetic Studies

Despite substantial research on *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism, systematic cross-cultural analyses grounded in cognitive and affective frameworks remain scarce. Existing studies often emphasize surface parallels or influence rather than the symbolic binaries—light and darkness, sound and silence, movement and stillness—that shape both traditions' metaphysical imagination. These oppositions are essential for understanding how poetic language mediates between sensory perception and transcendence.

Addressing this lacuna, the present study interprets *Thơ mới* not as derivative but as a dialogic transformation of Western Symbolist poetics. Its theoretical foundation integrates Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, Bachelard's (1971) poetics of reverie, and Kristeva's (1980) semiotic cosmology to illuminate how

metaphysical imagery becomes cognitively structured and symbolically embodied. In tandem, Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity and Said's (1978) critique of cultural translation interrogate how colonial contact generates new aesthetic and epistemic formations. Recent advances in affect theory and world poetics (Hogan, 2021) further underscore metaphor's dual cognitive and emotional function, enabling literature to articulate both universal and culturally specific experiences of transcendence.

Methodologically, the study employs comparative textual and semiotic analysis of selected poems by Xuân Diệu, Hàn Mặc Tử, Huy Cận, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé. It examines how metaphorical and affective structures migrate across languages and cultures, forming symbolic constellations that bridge the sensory, spiritual, and cognitive dimensions of modern poetic experience.

B. Theoretical Background

This study draws on five interrelated frameworks—conceptual metaphor theory, the poetics of reverie and transcendental space, intertextual semiotics, postcolonial hybridity, and sonic rhythm. Together, they offer a multidimensional lens for interpreting the spatial, emotional, and cultural dynamics of Vietnamese *Thơ mới* (New Poetry) and French Symbolism. Each illuminates a distinct dimension—cognitive, spatial, semiotic, hybrid, or affective—while forming an integrated foundation for comparative analysis.

(a). Conceptual Metaphor and Blended Cognition

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) redefine metaphor as a cognitive structure that organizes perception and renders the ineffable expressible (pp. 3–4, 19). Extending this view, Kövecses (2002) shows how metaphor reshapes perception and experience (p. xi), while Fauconnier and Turner (2002) introduce “blended spaces,” where distinct mental domains merge to create imaginative meaning (p. 40). In poetry, such blending generates symbolic constellations through which images of light, space, and sound transcend description, enabling the lyrical self to enact both cognitive and emotional agency.

(b). Poetics of Reverie and Ontological Space

If metaphor structures thought, Bachelard's (1994) *The Poetics of Space* situates that structure within reverie, where interiority and exteriority converge. His “oneiric space” reveals the reciprocity of material form and imagination, transforming poetic space into a reservoir of memory and reflection (pp. 3–4, 127). He writes that “poetry offers a shelter for the soul,” as motifs such as night, moonlight, or river become thresholds to transcendence (p. 201). This perspective clarifies how *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism transform landscape into a metaphysical terrain—an ontological structure through which consciousness moves between longing and cosmic communion.

(c). Intertextual Semiotics and Cultural Echo

Building from space to discourse, Kristeva (1980) conceives every text as a “mosaic of quotations,” where symbolic orders intersect (pp. 37, 66). Poetry thus becomes a “polyphonic field” in which prior discourses are re-voiced and reconfigured, allowing collective memory and individual identity to surface dialogically (p. 74). Within this framework, “influence” becomes transformation: Vietnamese poets engaging with Symbolist imagery did not imitate but re-embedded these motifs within indigenous cosmologies. The poem emerges as a cultural palimpsest layered with resonances that traverse the temporal and spatial dimensions of selfhood.

(d). Postcolonial Hybridity and Cultural Reconfiguration

Kristeva's intertextuality meets the politics of contact in Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity as an “interstitial space” where identity and meaning are renegotiated (pp. 2, 219). Hybridity operates not only as resistance but also as creation, generating “third spaces” of cultural production (p. 55). Viewed through this lens, *Thơ mới* becomes a dynamic dialogue with Western Symbolism under colonial pressure. Vietnamese poets rearticulated transcendental motifs through vernacular cosmologies, effectively “Vietnamizing” imported aesthetics. Said's (1978) theory of cultural translation further reveals that such hybridizations constitute symbolic contests over memory and authorship.

(e). Rhythm, Silence, and Sonic Imagery

From cultural reconfiguration to form, Barthes (1977) identifies rhythm as the structure through which poetry shapes emotion and time (pp. 179–180). Rhythm is cognitive rather than decorative, giving temporal form to affect through repetition, pause, and fragmentation. Jakobson (1960) likewise emphasizes the emotive power of musicality, where caesura and tonal shift heighten associative resonance. Working alongside conceptual metaphor, rhythm functions as a sensory counterpart—translating abstraction into embodied form. In both Vietnamese and French traditions, silence and fragmentation become expressive intervals—gestures of longing and metaphysical displacement—aligning with Kristeva's (1980) polyphonic model of overlapping sonic textures.

(f). Toward a Synthesis of Poetic Space

Taken together, these frameworks reveal how metaphor, rhythm, memory, and hybridity co-constitute poetic space, positioning poetry as a site where symbolic form and affective experience intersect. Recent affect-oriented scholarship further supports this view by conceptualizing emotion as an organizing force across cognitive, cultural, and formal

dimensions of literature (Hogan et al., 2022). From this perspective, poetic space functions not merely as a representational setting but as an affective–cognitive structure through which perception, memory, and meaning are dynamically configured.

Vietnamese *Thơ mới* thus emerges not as imitation but as a dialogic field of symbolic innovation—simultaneously local and global, shaped by colonial encounter yet rooted in vernacular imagination. As Friedman (2006) observes, “literature does not merely reflect but actively constructs cultural space” (p. 425). Accordingly, this study adopts a comparative strategy tracing recurrent metaphoric, rhythmic, and spatial motifs across Vietnamese and French texts. Poetry appears as a spatialized form of thought—traversing cognitive, emotional, and cosmological domains—and as both epistemological inquiry and cultural negotiation.

III. RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA

A. Research Design and Methodology

This study adopts a comparative–contrastive qualitative methodology grounded in literary theory and discourse analysis. As Culler (2011) observes, comparison must move beyond surface resemblance to reveal the structural logics shaping textual and cultural systems (p. 129). Accordingly, the framework privileges symbolic structure, spatial metaphor, and cultural reconfiguration rather than thematic similarity.

The approach draws on Fairclough’s (1992) conception of discourse as a site where power, ideology, and collective memory intersect. Poetic symbols are thus treated not as ornament but as semiotic traces of historical trauma, metaphysical longing, and cultural self-fashioning. This qualitative design favors interpretive depth over computational scale, allowing sensitivity to metaphorical nuance and cross-linguistic affect. By combining close reading with contextual interpretation, the method integrates textual precision with cultural reflexivity, enabling a multiscale analysis of symbolic poetics.

B. Data Sources and Literary Corpus

The corpus comprises twenty-four poems—twelve from Vietnamese *Thơ mới* and twelve from French Symbolism—selected for canonical status, symbolic density, and thematic convergence around space, light, and transcendence. The Vietnamese texts include Huy Cận’s “Tràng giang,” Xuân Diệu’s “Đây mùa thu tới,” and Hàn Mặc Tử’s “Tôi tân hôn”; the French corpus features Baudelaire’s “Correspondances,” Verlaine’s “Clair de lune,” and Mallarmé’s “L’Azur.”

All poems were examined using bilingual, annotated scholarly editions to ensure semantic accuracy and cultural fidelity. The theoretical corpus draws upon Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Kristeva (1980), Bachelard (1994), Bhabha (1994), and Friedman (2006), each informing one analytical dimension of the study’s interpretive framework.

C. Research Procedure

The analysis unfolded in three interrelated phases. First, primary and theoretical texts were compiled and contextualized. Second, open coding identified recurrent symbolic motifs—light, moon, shadow, silence, echo, and spatial markers—through thematic clustering. Manual coding ensured interpretive nuance and preserved the affective and metaphorical subtleties that algorithmic methods might overlook. Coding reliability was reinforced through iterative triangulation between theoretical categories and textual instances, maintaining consistency across both poetic traditions.

The third phase involved comparative synthesis, tracing convergences and divergences in (a) the positioning of the lyrical self, (b) the structure of transcendental space, (c) the orchestration of sound and silence, and (d) the adaptation of Symbolist motifs in Vietnamese poetics. Insights derived from motif analysis directly inform the evaluative dimensions summarized in Table 1, bridging theoretical frameworks and textual interpretation.

D. Analytical Criteria and Evaluation Metrics

Drawing from this synthesis, the analysis is organized around four interrelated dimensions that translate the theoretical framework into analytic categories. These dimensions serve as interpretive coordinates for examining the cross-cultural semantics of silence, symbolism, and affect. The following table outlines the analytical dimensions, their theoretical foundations, and corresponding focal concerns.

TABLE 1
ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS AND THEORETICAL ANCHORS

Dimension	Theoretical Framework	Key Analytic Focus
Lyrical Self	Kristeva (1980); Lakoff and Johnson (1980)	First-person subjectivity, affective projection, metaphysical reflexivity
Transcendental and Cosmic Space	Bachelard (1994)	Spatial metaphors—void, moon, night, river—as psychic architecture
Light, Shadow, and Sound Symbols	Barthes (1977); Jakobson (1960)	Rhythmic and phonic patterning; aesthetic gaps as affective thresholds
Cultural Hybridity and Symbolic Translation	Bhabha (1994); Said (1978)	Local resemanticization of Symbolist tropes; colonial and cosmological negotiation

Source. Author's synthesis of theoretical models (Kristeva, 1980; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Bachelard, 1994; Barthes, 1977; Jakobson, 1960; Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978).

This framework offers a structured yet adaptable model for textual analysis, ensuring theoretical coherence while accommodating the cultural and semiotic particularities of each poetic corpus.

E. Limitations, Reflexivity, and Future Directions

The study confines itself to canonical texts from the classical phases of *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism, excluding later or contemporary reinterpretations such as Valéry, Apollinaire, or digital poetics. While privileging interpretive over quantitative approaches, the study acknowledges its qualitative boundaries. Future research may triangulate these findings with corpus-based metrics or cognitive-stylistic modeling to expand methodological scope.

Two directions appear particularly promising: first, examining post-1986 Vietnamese *Đổi mới* (Renovation) poetry and postwar French modernism; second, exploring symbolic spatiality in twenty-first-century experimental and digital poetics. Such inquiries could extend this comparative framework, tracing how metaphor, rhythm, and affect evolve across new technological and geopolitical contexts.

Methodological Reflection:

As a comparative inquiry grounded in close reading and cross-cultural hermeneutics, this study recognizes the researcher's interpretive role as both mediator and participant in meaning-making. Analytical choices were guided by an awareness of linguistic asymmetry, cultural translation, and the affective resonance of metaphor. Rather than aspiring to neutrality, the analysis embraces interpretive reflexivity—acknowledging that understanding poetic consciousness across traditions requires both intellectual distance and empathetic engagement.

IV. RESULTS

A. General Comparison: The Lyrical Self

(a). Fragmented Yearning and Sensual Resistance in Vietnamese *Thơ Mới*

Building on earlier analyses of metaphor, space, and affect, this section examines how *Thơ mới* (Vietnamese New Poetry) and French Symbolism articulate lyrical subjectivity through intersecting symbolic frameworks. In *Thơ mới*, the self appears not as a stable identity but as a fragmented, desire-inflected locus. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue, metaphor shapes not only language but also thought and action, positioning poetry as a medium for reconfiguring perception.

Xuân Diệu's *Vội vàng* (Xuan Dieu, 2019) dramatizes a resistance to temporal decay, as the following lines illustrate:

“Tôi muốn tắt nắng đi,
Cho màu đừng nhạt mất;
Tôi muốn buộc gió lại,
Cho hương đừng bay đi.”

(I want to snuff out the sun

So that colors do not fade;

I want to bind the wind

So that fragrance will not fly away.)

As Bachelard (1994) observes, “Inhabited space transcends geometrical space” (p. 47). Nature here becomes an ontological medium through which the lyrical “I” seeks to suspend impermanence. Butler (2005) reminds us that the self “is always in becoming” (p. 44); in *Thơ mới*, that becoming unfolds through desire and resistance, poised between mastery and acceptance of loss.

Huy Cận's *Tràng giang* (Huy Can, 1940) extends this vision:

“Thuyền về nước lại, sầu trăm ngả /

Củ một cành khô lạc mấy dòng.”

(Boats return with the water, a thousand ways of sorrow,

A single dry branch drifting through many currents.)

Here, the drifting branch becomes a metonym of solitude and estrangement. Barthes (1977) describes the poetic voice as a presence—submerged yet resonant. The image gestures toward Freud's (1961) anxiety of existence and

Jung's (1964) archetypal disconnection, while recent Vietnamese scholarship (Lê, 2019; Trần, 2021) situates such interiority within colonial and linguistic dislocation.

(b). *Transcendental Abstraction in French Symbolism*

French Symbolism shares *Thơ mới*'s metaphysical impulse but renders selfhood through abstraction and musical ambiguity. Baudelaire's *L'Invitation au voyage* (Baudelaire, 2017) envisions the beloved in a harmony of spirit and sensation:

“Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.”
(*There, all is order and beauty,
Luxury, calm, and pleasure.*)

Sensual imagery crystallizes into metaphysical order, language serving as a conduit to transcendence. This serenity collapses into crisis in Mallarmé's *L'Azur*:

“— Le Ciel est mort. — Vers toi, j'accours !”
(— *The sky is dead — toward you I run!*)

Caruth (1996) reads such cries as “the story of a wound that cries out” (p. 7). The azure, once a symbol of the divine, dissolves into absence, yet the voice persists—toward *toi*, toward renewal. Across Baudelaire and Mallarmé, this movement from harmony to void maps a modernist dialectic in which abstraction becomes the means of spiritual endurance.

(c). *Comparative Matrix of Lyrical Patterns*

The preceding readings reveal parallel modes of self-formation through symbol and rhythm; the synthesis below situates these dynamics within a broader comparative frame. Viewed together, the two traditions articulate complementary poetics of selfhood: *Thơ mới* stages a sensuous, fractured “I” suspended between passion and transience, while Symbolism abstracts identity into dreamlike resonance. Both portray lyric subjectivity as oscillation—between dissolution and affirmation, self and world, language and silence.

To clarify these intersections and divergences, Table 2 below synthesizes the key comparative parameters of the lyrical self in *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism, outlining their major aesthetic, emotional, and philosophical dimensions.

TABLE 2
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICAL SELF IN VIETNAMESE NEW POETRY AND FRENCH SYMBOLISM

No.	Criterion	Vietnamese New Poetry	French Symbolism
1	Lyrical Subject	Romantic, nostalgic, metaphysically burdened	Transcendental, ambiguous, dreamlike
2	Emotional State	Existentially fractured, sensually urgent	Ethereal, melancholic, disembodied
3	Symbolic Imagery	Light, fragrance, river, dry branch	Azure, mirror, voyage, silence
4	Cultural–Poetic Context	Postcolonial negotiation, Eastern cyclicity	Rejection of realism, archetypal suggestion
5	Representative Poems	Xuân Diệu (<i>Vội vàng</i>), Huy Cận (<i>Tràng giang</i>)	Baudelaire (<i>L'Invitation au voyage</i>), Mallarmé (<i>L'Azur</i>)

Note & Source. Author's comparative synthesis based on close readings of canonical Vietnamese and French poetic works.

Both traditions configure the lyrical self through distinct symbolic vocabularies yet share a modernist pursuit of transcendence. Ultimately, the poetic self emerges as a mutable synthesis of perception and affect—a continuous becoming that negotiates impermanence, language, and the metaphysical unknown. Through this comparative lens, lyric modernity appears as both a shared affective structure and a culturally distinct articulation of humanity's enduring desire for permanence within impermanence.

B. *Imagery, Nature, and the Symbolic Landscape*

(a). *Nature as Metaphysical Landscape*

In modern poetry, nature evolves from mere scenery into a metaphysical landscape—a mirror of interior consciousness. Bachelard (1994) observes that “Inhabited space transcends geometrical space” (p. 47), capturing how imagination transforms matter into mind. As discussed in Section 2.2, metaphor and conceptual blending shape perception; the poetic landscape thus becomes a cognitive-affective field where emotion and world converge. Both *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism exemplify this dynamic: the former infuses nature with sensual immediacy, while the latter renders it a locus of mystical abstraction and psychic depth.

(b). *Vietnamese New Poetry: Nostalgia and Sensory Vitality*

In *Thơ mới*, nature articulates transience and embodied feeling. Xuân Diệu's *Đây mùa thu tới* (Xuan Dieu, 2019) transforms landscape into self-reflection:

“Đây mùa thu tới – mùa thu tới
Vội áo mơ phai dệt lá vàng
Hơn một loài hoa đã rụng cành
Trong vườn sắc đỏ rữa màu xanh.”

(Here comes autumn — autumn comes
In a faded-dream garment woven of yellow leaves;
More than one flower has shed its branch;
In the garden red hues scour the green.)

The “faded-dream garment” visualizes beauty on the verge of loss; poetic space externalizes affect (Barthes, 1977, p. 49). Hàn Mặc Tử’s *Mùa xuân chín* (Han Mac Tu, 1936) fuses light and emotion in what Bachelard (1994) calls a “space of reverie” (p. 200):

“Trong làn nắng ửng: khói mơ tan,
Đôi mái nhà tranh lấm tấm vàng.
Sột soạt gió trêu tà áo biếc,
Trên giàn thiên lý. Bóng xuân sang.”
(In the rosy sunlight, dreamlike mist dissolves,
Thatched roofs gleam faintly with golden specks.
A teasing breeze stirs the blue silk hem,
Beneath the pergola of telosma—spring’s shadow arrives.)

Here, mist and breeze act as emotional atmospheres; perception and feeling merge, turning nature into a living metaphor of impermanence.

(c). French Symbolism: Surreal Masks and Sacred Correspondences

French Symbolism reimagines nature through abstraction and suggestion. Verlaine’s *Clair de lune* (Verlain, 1869) stages the soul as a dreamlike theatre, aligning with Kristeva’s (1980) concept of the “semiotic field” (p. 16), where language suspends stable reference:

“Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmants masques et bergamasques,”
(Your soul is a chosen landscape
Where charming masks and bergamasks go to and fro.)

Baudelaire’s *Correspondances* (Baudelaire, 2017) envisions nature as sacred architecture, an “architecture of metaphysical longing” (Bachelard, 1994):

“La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles...”
(Nature is a temple where living pillars
Sometimes let slip confused words...)

The Symbolist landscape, sensed rather than described, dissolves the boundaries between matter and mind, image and absence.

(d). Synthesis: Spatial Functions and Cultural Poetics

Both traditions transform nature into a mirror of interiority, yet their symbolic orientations diverge: *Thơ mới* translates space into emotional immediacy, while Symbolism abstracts it into metaphysical form. This Vietnamese reanimation of landscape also reflects colonial temporal dislocation, where nature becomes both refuge and reflection of cultural selfhood.

To clarify these convergences and divergences, Table 3 below synthesizes the main comparative parameters of the two traditions, highlighting how imagery, space, and emotion operate as intertwined vehicles of symbolic meaning.

TABLE 3
COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF NATURE AND SPACE IN VIETNAMESE NEW POETRY AND FRENCH SYMBOLISM

No.	Criteria	Vietnamese New Poetry	French Symbolism
1	Key Imagery	Autumn, spring, mist, moon – melancholic, vital	Moonlight, masks, temples – mystical, intertextual
2	Poetic Function	Resonance of nostalgia and solitude	Portal to unconscious reverie and metaphysical rupture
3	Nature of Space	Expansive, synesthetic, grounded in emotion	Multilayered, symbolic, detached from realism
4	Symbolic Dynamics	Layering of sorrow with seasonal decay	Opposition of form and absence, sound and silence
5	Emotional Register	Warm, tragic, embodied	Cool, spectral, refracted

Note & Source. Author’s synthesis from selected poems by Xuân Diệu, Hàn Mặc Tử, Baudelaire, and Verlaine.

These symbolic dynamics reveal a shared reliance on metaphorical cognition, where spatial imagery fuses perception and affect. *Thơ mới* transforms realism into reverie to externalize inner life, while Symbolism abstracts nature into a cipher of transcendence. Each tradition shapes a metaphysics of perception in which landscape and psyche interpenetrate as reciprocal dimensions of poetic being.

C. Images of Light, Darkness, and Transcendental Symbols

Extending the spatial–affective dynamics outlined in 4.2, this section explores how light and shadow crystallize the metaphysics of lyric consciousness in *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism. In both traditions, illumination and obscurity form a dialectic through which poets articulate memory, selfhood, and transcendence. As Bachelard (1994) observes,

“Inhabited space transcends geometrical space” (p. 47); light and dark thus become inner architectures rather than surface effects. Affective poetics likewise reads luminosity as a perceptual rhythm that mediates feeling and cognition. Within this spectrum, Vietnamese lyricism tends toward fragile immediacy, while French Symbolism moves toward spectral abstraction and metaphysical distance.

Xuân Diệu’s *Nguyệt cầm* (Xuan Dieu, 1938) exemplifies this interplay:

“Mây vắng, trời trong, đêm thủy tinh;
Lung linh bóng sáng bỗng rung mình
Vì nghe nương tử trong câu hát
Đã chết êm rằm theo nước xanh.”
(*Clear sky, clouds gone, a crystal night;
The trembling light shimmers, soft and bright,
For in the song of the river maiden’s refrain
She died on the full-moon night, beneath the blue waves.*)

Radiance fuses with remembrance, the crystal night trembling with cultural memory. As Butler (2005) notes, “An account of oneself is always given to another...” (p. 31); here, light performs that disclosure, translating solitude into an ethical address shaped by intersubjective modernity.

Mallarmé’s *Brise marine* (Mallarmé, 1899) transforms illumination into resistance against despair:

“La chair est triste, hélas ! et j’ai lu tous les livres.
Fuir ! là-bas fuir ! Je sens que des oiseaux sont ivres
D’être parmi l’écume inconnue et les cieux !”
(*The flesh is weary, alas! and I have read all the books.
To flee! away—there, to flee! I feel that birds are drunk
With being amid the unknown foam and the skies!*)

The “deserted brightness of my lamp” borders on erasure; darkness becomes a medium of dissolution. Kristeva (1980, p. 16) describes such textures as semiotic intensities—energies that bypass rational articulation to convey affective depth.

Verlaine’s *La lune blanche* (Verlaine, 1874) offers a counterpoint of calm illumination:

“La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois ;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée ...
Ô bien-aimée.”
(*The white moon
Shines through the trees;
From every bough
There comes a voice
Beneath the arbor —
O my beloved.*)

Serene light merges stillness with feeling; reflection transforms darkness into resonance. “Rêvons, c’est l’heure”—“Let us dream, it is time”—invites dwelling in reverie, a luminous threshold of consciousness (Bachelard, 1994, p. 202).

Though distinct in tone, both traditions treat illumination and obscurity as relational forces rather than opposites. To clarify their construction, Table 4 synthesizes key convergences and divergences.

TABLE 4
COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS IN VIETNAMESE NEW POETRY AND FRENCH SYMBOLISM

No. Criteria	Vietnamese New Poetry	French Symbolism
1 Light	Fragile, nostalgic, emotionally expressive	Ambiguous, ethereal, metaphysical force
2 Darkness	Cold, melancholic, emotionally charged	Liminal space of the unconscious, symbolic dissolution
3 Symbolic Function	Mirror of memory, spiritual witness	Portal to the unconscious, metaphysical introspection

Source. Compiled by the author based on Xuân Diệu (n.d.), Mallarmé (1865), Verlaine (1874), and theoretical insights from Bachelard (1994), Butler (2005), and Kristeva (1980).

The dialectic of light and shadow culminates in a poetics that finds coherence through fragmentation. *Thơ mới* channels transcendence through remembrance and sensual immediacy, transforming light into a vessel of longing; French Symbolism destabilizes perception, turning brilliance and obscurity into thresholds of consciousness. In both movements, illumination and darkness figure modernist temporality itself—a consciousness suspended between revelation and loss, where the divided self glimpses a fleeting unity of being.

D. Sound, Musicality, and Metaphysical Metaphors

Building on the spatial and visual metaphors examined earlier, this section turns to sound—the medium through which both *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism explore the boundaries between emotion, perception, and transcendence. Drawing on Bachelard's phenomenology of reverie and Kristeva's concept of semiotic rhythm, sound is treated here as an affective bridge between feeling and metaphysical cognition.

(a). *Vietnamese New Poetry: Sonic Intimacy and Emotional Atmosphere*

In *Thơ mới*, sound is more than ornament—it becomes a vessel of emotion, a texture that binds memory, tenderness, and reflection. Huy Cận's *Ngâm ngủi* (Huy Can, 1940) captures this intimacy with quiet precision:

“Sợ buồn con nhện nhện giăng mau,
Em ơi! hãy ngủ, anh hầu quạt đây.
Lòng anh mở với quạt này,
Trăm con chim mộng về bay đầu giường.
Ngủ đi em, mộng bình thường,
Ru em sẵn tiếng thùy dương mấy bờ.”
(*The spider weaves its thread of sorrow;
Sleep, my dear, I will fan you here.
My heart opens with this fan,
A hundred dream birds come to the bed's edge.
Sleep, my dear, your dreams will be ordinary,
I will lull you with the voice of the casuarina by the riverbank.*)

The rhythmic fan, the murmur of dream birds, and the whispering *thùy dương* translate tenderness into sound. These quiet tones do not merely soothe—they weave continuity within impermanence, turning stillness into devotion. Shaped by colonial uncertainty, such sonic intimacy transforms private emotion into a subtle act of cultural resilience.

Xuân Diệu's *Nguyệt cầm* (Xuan Dieu, 2019) extends this resonance toward the cosmic:

“Trăng nhập vào dây cung nguyệt lạnh,
Trăng thương, trăng nhớ, hồi trăng ngàn...
Đàn buồn, đàn lặng ôi đàn chậm,
Mỗi giọt rơi tàn như lệ ngân.”
(*The moon blends with the cold strings of the lute,
The moon yearns, the moon remembers, O pale moon.
The lute is sad, the lute is silent, O the slow lute!
Each fading note like a silver tear.*)

Here, light and sound converge in a single synesthetic movement. Each vibration echoes longing; each pause turns silence into utterance. Musicality becomes a metaphysical language—a rhythm through which the self confronts its own fragility.

(b). *French Symbolism: Echoes of the Subconscious and Cosmic Fusion*

In French Symbolism, sound becomes a metaphysical principle uniting perception and the unconscious. Baudelaire's *Correspondances* (Baudelaire, 2017) envisions this universal resonance:

“Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.”
(*Like long echoes that merge in the distance,
In a deep and shadowy unity,
Vast as night and as the light,
Perfumes, colors, and sounds respond to one another.*)

These “long echoes” evoke an invisible harmony where sensory boundaries dissolve and music becomes a way of knowing. Verlaine's *Chanson d'automne* (Verlaine, 1866) distills this abstraction into emotional minimalism:

“Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l'automne
Blessent mon cœur
D'une langueur
Monotone.”
(*The long sobs
Of the violins
Of autumn
Wound my heart
With a monotonous
Languor.*)

Its rhythm enacts the very languor it describes. Each drawn-out note mirrors the exhaustion of feeling, turning repetition and pause into the sound of grief itself. The poem becomes what Kristeva (1980, p. 40) calls a “semiotic rhythm of affect,” where language yields to sound to reveal the pulse of the unconscious.

(c). *Resonances and Divergences*

Across both traditions, sound mediates between the self and the world. *Thơ mới* anchors musicality in the immediacy of lived emotion—domestic quietude, nostalgia, and the presence of absence—while Symbolism abstracts it into a metaphysical register, transforming sound into the language of the ineffable.

To synthesize these parallels and distinctions, Table 5 summarizes how rhythm, resonance, and symbolism shape the auditory imagination in Vietnamese and French lyric traditions.

TABLE 5
COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF SOUND AND SYMBOLISM IN VIETNAMESE NEW POETRY AND FRENCH SYMBOLISM

No.	Criteria	Vietnamese New Poetry	French Symbolism
1	Key Imagery	Sonic Fan sounds, dream birds, moon lute — gentle, intimate, emotional	Echoes, violin sobs — abstract, surreal, intermodal
2	Poetic Musicality	Lyrical, melancholic, evoking nostalgia and quietude	Hypnotic, irregular, invoking metaphysical dissonance
3	Role of Symbolism	Fusion of nature and feeling through auditory metaphor	Sound as universal connector within the symbolic cosmos

Source. Compiled by the author from primary poetic texts and theoretical references (Bachelard, 1994; Kristeva, 1980).

Sound thus becomes an epistemic metaphor—revealing knowledge through resonance rather than articulation and transforming listening into a mode of understanding. Through rhythm, silence, and vibration, poetry turns hearing into knowing: an acoustics of existence that binds emotion, memory, and metaphysical imagination.

E. *Comparative Matrix: Nature, Light, Sound, and the Self in Vietnamese New Poetry and French Symbolism*

(a). *Convergences in Poetic Vision*

Expanding on earlier analyses of space, light, and sound, this section examines how both traditions articulate parallel metaphysical grammars of the lyrical self. Though separated by culture and era, Vietnamese *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism share a common aspiration—to translate sensory experience into a language of inner being. Here, nature, light, and sound function not merely as imagery but as mediums of consciousness where emotion and transcendence intersect. Guided by Bachelard’s (1994) poetics of interior space and Kristeva’s (1980) semiotics of affect, both traditions reveal language as a dwelling for thought and feeling.

To illustrate these intersections, Table 6 summarizes the principal parallels in the symbolic treatment of nature, imagery, sound, and transcendence.

TABLE 6
COMPARATIVE PARALLELS BETWEEN VIETNAMESE NEW POETRY AND FRENCH SYMBOLISM

No.	Aspect	Vietnamese New Poetry	French Symbolism
1	Nature	Interior landscape reflecting solitude and memory	Dreamlike, metaphysical terrain echoing the unconscious
2	Light and Darkness	Figures of nostalgia, faith, and emotional fragility	“Cosmic metaphors” uniting inner and outer dimensions
3	Sound and Musicality	Lulling tones bridging self and nature	Surreal harmonies evoking dream and reverie
4	Transcendent Symbols	Moon, mist, river, lute — signs of yearning and stillness	Light, silence, sea — emblems of infinite desire
5	The Lyrical Self	Solitary, emotive, seeking unity and resonance	Abstract, visionary, aspiring toward totality

Note. Table synthesizes shared characteristics based on textual analysis. Source: Author’s comparative synthesis drawing on Bachelard (1994) and Kristeva (1980).

Both traditions envision poetry as a threshold to the unseen. *Thơ mới* internalizes nature as an archive of emotion and remembrance, while Symbolism reimagines it as a spectral architecture of consciousness. Each transforms the visible into vibration, merging the sensuous and the spiritual. Xuân Diệu’s moonlit tenderness and Baudelaire’s perfumed soundscapes embody this shared impulse to voice the ineffable through rhythm, image, and reverie.

(b). *Divergences in Poetic Logic and Cultural Context*

Yet these affinities arise from distinct historical and philosophical conditions, producing different configurations of the lyric self and its aesthetic mission. The contrasts below reflect not opposition but variation in how each movement approaches modernity and the sacred.

To clarify these distinctions, Table 7 presents the principal divergences between *Thơ mới* and French Symbolism across historical, aesthetic, and philosophical dimensions.

TABLE 7
COMPARATIVE DIVERGENCES BETWEEN VIETNAMESE NEW POETRY AND FRENCH SYMBOLISM

No.	Aspect	Vietnamese New Poetry	French Symbolism
1	Historical Context	Colonial rupture and search for identity	Reaction to modernity's disenchantment and alienation
2	Sources of Inspiration	Countryside, love, nostalgia, personal memory	Dreams, metaphysics, the unconscious
3	Artistic Aims	Assertion of personal voice within hybridity	Art as metaphysical passage and escape
4	Philosophical Focus	Emotion, vulnerability, longing for resonance	Ambiguity, abstraction, quest for the ineffable
5	Artistic Form	Concrete imagery, folk tonality, fluid rhythm	Ambiguous symbolism, synesthesia, indeterminate form

Note. Table reflects synthesized contrasts from close textual and contextual analysis. Source: Author's comparative synthesis grounded in Bachelard (1994) and Kristeva (1980).

Thơ mới humanizes transcendence through tactile imagery—Huy Cận's rivers, Xuân Diệu's trembling light—while Symbolism abstracts emotion into metaphysical suggestion. The former grounds the ineffable in intimacy; the latter transforms emotion into idea. Their divergence is creative rather than oppositional: in distinct idioms, both articulate a modernist consciousness of fragmentation, transforming dislocation into imaginative renewal. Ultimately, each mediates between perception and the infinite, translating fleeting sensations into enduring forms of meaning.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Poetic Space as Symbolic Topology

This discussion situates the preceding analyses within a broader framework of symbolic poetics, showing how space, sound, and selfhood converge across cultural contexts. In both Vietnamese *Thơ mới* (New Poetry) and French Symbolism, poetic space unfolds as a symbolic topology—a landscape where memory, longing, and transcendence intersect. Recent affect-oriented scholarship underscores that such spatial configurations function not merely as representational settings but as sites where emotional experience is cognitively organized and culturally mediated (Hogan et al., 2022).

As Bachelard observes, “Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space,” redefining it as lived resonance rather than static geometry (Bachelard, 1994, p. 183). This vision informs Huy Cận's *Tràng giang* (“Long River”), where the drifting branch—“Củi mấy cành khô lạc mấy dòng”—embodies dispersion and existential solitude. Likewise, Verlaine's *Clair de lune* evokes the soul as an interior landscape of reverie: “Votre âme est un paysage choisi.” Spatial imagery thus maps not external surroundings but the architecture of consciousness itself (Barthes, 1977).

If space represents the dwelling of the self, sound becomes its motion—an auditory extension of spatial awareness.

B. Sound, Silence, and Metaphysical Resonance

Across both traditions, sound and silence serve as key poetic modes for approaching what exceeds direct articulation. Rather than conveying stable meanings, they register emotion as transient sensation, positioning affect between presence and disappearance.

In Vietnamese lyric modernism, Xuân Diệu's *Nguyệt cầm* exemplifies how sound functions as a fragile trace of feeling. Musical imagery renders emotion through vibration and fading resonance, allowing affect to surface as sensory intensity rather than declarative meaning. Emotion thus appears as a momentary impression that resists symbolic fixation.

A similar dynamic characterizes French Symbolist poetry. In Verlaine's *Chanson d'automne*, sound is detached from narrative development and reshaped as rhythmic pressure, through which melancholy unfolds as cadence rather than concept. Feeling acts directly on perception before it is organized into meaning.

Silence is no less active. Mallarmé's *Brise marine* figures stillness as a threshold where creation and negation coexist, suspending language at the edge of articulation. Silence here intensifies perception rather than signaling absence.

Together, sound and silence operate as complementary forms of metaphysical resonance, mediating between affect and abstraction. Through their interplay, lyric expression sustains emotional movement at the limits of language, where perception remains open and unstable.

C. The Fragmented and Transcendental “I”

Both movements foreground a self in transformation—fractured, desiring, and perpetually becoming. In Xuân Diệu's *Vội vàng* (“Hastily”), the cry “Tôi muốn tắt nắng đi” expresses the impossible wish to halt time and preserve light. In Mallarmé's *L'Azur*, “Le Ciel est mort. — Vers toi, j'accours !” transforms despair into a gesture of defiance. As Butler (2005, p. 44) argues, the self is not a fixed ground but a process shaped through affect and social inscription. The poetic “I” thus emerges as a shifting node where memory, emotion, and aspiration intersect.

These tensions crystallize within the symbolic binaries that structure perception and meaning.

D. Symbolic Binaries and Cultural Encoding

In both poetic traditions, recurrent binaries—such as light and darkness, sound and silence, nature and self—function as generative structures rather than fixed oppositions. Extending earlier analyses of sensory and spatial interplay, these

dualities disclose the architecture of modern poetic consciousness, in which tension operates as a productive force. In *Thơ mới*, shaped by historical rupture and cultural uncertainty, such binaries register both personal dislocation and broader shifts in collective sensibility.

In Hàn Mặc Tử's *Đây thôn Vĩ Dạ*, images of light and distance sustain a simultaneous sense of intimacy and estrangement, indicating that perception unfolds through oscillation rather than resolution. French Symbolist poetry similarly reframes dualities as thresholds of the unconscious, where sensory convergence produces synesthetic coherence. In Baudelaire's poetics, nature functions as a symbolic system in which scent, sound, and color interact to suggest latent unity beneath apparent division.

Across these contexts, binary structures become zones of negotiation in which fragmentation generates possibility. Rather than reinforcing rigid oppositions, such pairings mediate between rupture and continuity, allowing modern poetic imagination to emerge as a hybrid space where cultural inheritance and aesthetic innovation intersect.

E. Intercultural Poetics and Aesthetic Convergences

Despite differing histories, *Thơ mới* and Symbolism converge in viewing poetry as revelation rather than representation. The postcolonial longing of Vietnamese verse mirrors the Symbolist pursuit of transcendence amid spiritual disenchantment. Both articulate a crisis of presence, turning to image, rhythm, and sound to voice what language alone cannot hold. Ultimately, modern poetry—across cultures—becomes a form of ontological inquiry: through space, sound, and symbol, it inscribes the human spirit within a larger metaphysical order. In this sense, both traditions participate in the world-literary negotiation of modernity, where poetic language becomes a universal mode of knowing. Together, they reaffirm literature's enduring power to mediate between perception and transcendence.

VI. CONCLUSION AND ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS

A. Theoretical Synthesis

This study has demonstrated that Vietnamese *Thơ mới* (New Poetry) and French Symbolism, though formed within distinct historical and cultural contexts, converge in their reimagining of the lyrical self. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the poetics of space (Bachelard, 1994), and the semiotics of subjectivity (Kristeva, 1980), both movements articulate a shared existential impulse—the longing to transcend empirical reality and recover coherence amid fragmentation.

In *Thơ mới*, the self arises from postcolonial rupture, suspended between nostalgia and disillusionment. Natural imagery—moonlight, mist, fading autumn hues—becomes an interior geography of emotion rather than mere description. Within this landscape, the poet, caught between inherited tradition and emerging modernity, seeks a fragile ontological harmony.

French Symbolism, born of fin-de-siècle disillusionment, turns inward toward abstraction and reverie. Nature becomes alchemical; musicality fractures syntax; and light and shadow oscillate between revelation and erasure. The Symbolist poet does not mirror the world but reconfigures it through a liminal imagination that transforms perception into thought.

Kristeva's concept of the *chora*—a pre-symbolic rhythm beneath language—clarifies the emotional cadence that animates both traditions. The Symbolist's musical reverie and the Vietnamese poet's lyrical resonance unfold within this rhythmic continuum, where meaning precedes articulation. Both share the symbolic imperative to locate the self within an imagined order that redeems alienation.

Their recurring binaries—reality and dream, light and darkness, sound and silence—form a shared topology through which transcendence becomes thinkable. In *Thơ mới*, these oppositions express a yearning for unity between human interiority and cosmic vastness; in Symbolism, they signal dissolution into the ineffable. As seen in Xuân Diệu's luminous imagery and Mallarmé's abstract harmonies, both traditions pursue coherence through symbolic transformation. Through the interplay of rhythm and space, they inhabit the *chora*—that pre-symbolic dwelling where meaning and being converge.

The convergence of these symbolic structures opens new pathways for critical and pedagogical reflection, reframing poetry as both method and revelation.

B. Academic and Practical Implications

Academic Implications

This research advances comparative poetics by integrating cognitive metaphor, semiotic theory, and postcolonial critique into a unified analytical model. It challenges Eurocentric readings of Vietnamese modernity while resisting reductive equivalences between traditions. By tracing how each constructs its symbolic architecture, the study situates lyric poetry as a philosophical medium where affect, cognition, and form converge. It also contributes to decolonizing literary theory and broadening the epistemic reach of world literature.

Practical Implications

Pedagogically, this research proposes a transnational model for teaching modern poetry that prioritizes dialogue over hierarchy. In multilingual classrooms, comparative reading fosters empathy and intercultural awareness, encouraging

engagement with both local and global traditions. Such comparative practice also cultivates a hybrid intellectual space where cultural difference becomes a source of creation rather than division (Bhabha, 1994).

The findings offer practical value for creative writing, translation, and adaptation, revealing how auditory and visual symbolism migrate across languages and media. Moreover, the interdisciplinary framework links literature, philosophy, and aesthetics, demonstrating how poetic structures can function as instruments of cultural understanding.

Ultimately, lyric poetry emerges as a dynamic form of knowledge—a space where identity, history, and transcendence intertwine. In bridging perception and the infinite, these poetic traditions affirm literature's enduring role as a vessel of consciousness, linking the human spirit to the world's symbolic continuum. Future research might extend this framework to later modernist and postcolonial poetries, exploring how symbolic cognition evolves across linguistic, historical, and geopolitical frontiers.

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The Poetry of Al-Mu'tadid bin Abbad: A Stylistic and Contextual Analysis

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Abstract—This study examines the stylistic aspects of aesthetic foregrounding in the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid bin Abbad to elucidate the pragmatic implications of his poetry. It addresses syntactic, phonological, and morphological issues by examining both internal and external rhythm, repetition, foregrounding and backgrounding, ellipsis, speech acts, and conjunctions. A descriptive-analytical approach is utilized to outline the intertwined semantic and pragmatic relations. The study concludes that Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's poetry reflects his complex personality through various themes and contradictory qualities. Overall, Ibn Abbad's cohesive use of language produces harmonious and coherent texts.

Index Terms—aesthetics, context, linguistics, poetry, stylistics

I. INTRODUCTION

Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad, the ruler of Seville, occupies a distinguished position in the political and literary landscape of Andalusia. Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad is also a model of the literary king who combines power and culture. This intervention was reflected in his poetic output, which combined a sense of power with a delicate sense of sensibility. It was an expression of self-awareness that transcended the confines of poetic expression to a linguistic act that engages with reality and reshapes it (Al-Ghammaz, 2023; Tahir et al., 2025). The importance of Al-Mu'tadid's poetry—despite the small amount of it that has survived to us—lies in its revelation of an internal struggle between the poet's position of authority and his own stance, and the need for awe and longing for human expression. Accordingly, Al-Mu'tadid's poetry is considered a fertile field for stylistic study, which views language as a tool for expressing psychological, social, and political positions simultaneously (Alkam et al., 2026; Al-Ghammaz, 2025; Alqaryouti, 2025).

With this concept in mind, the study approaches Al-Mu'tadid's poetry from a stylistic, contextual approach, based on an analysis of the linguistic structure of the texts, considering the contexts that produced them. The study does not merely examine artistic features but also attempts to uncover the relationship between style and context, between linguistic formation and its resulting meaning, based on the conviction that a literary text is inseparable from its cultural and social environment. Furthermore, the study investigates questions related to the nature of style in Al-Mu'tadid's poetry, the extent of its interaction with the experience of power he experienced, and the extent to which self-awareness and political awareness are present in the formulation of poetic discourse. Addressing these questions requires utilizing a contextual stylistic approach that links the linguistic levels of the text: lexical, syntactic, phonetic, and semantic, with the historical and psychological data that illuminate its background to determine the stylistic specificity of this poetry (Al-Ruzzi & Yunus, 2019; Alqaryouti, 2025).

Of note, this research work is of high significance as it is shown in its exploration of Al-Mu'tadid's poetry from a modern stylistic perspective, shedding light on its aesthetic dimensions. By analyzing linguistic elements, the study provides insights into the poet's artistic choices and their impact on the overall meaning and effectiveness of his work. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Al-Mu'tadid's literary legacy and enriches scholarly discourse on medieval Arabic poetry. Our study focuses on examining the stylistic aspects of the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad, which, to the researchers' knowledge, has not been explored by scholars using a modern approach to uncover its aesthetic dimensions. The significance is also articulated in using the stylistic analysis in our examination of poetic texts. Thanks to the nature of the study, the descriptive-analytical approach is utilized to uncover the stylistic features in the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad. The descriptive-analytical approach is utilized, as it helps to delve into syntactic, phonological, and morphological elements such as rhythm, repetition, foregrounding, backgrounding, ellipsis, speech acts, and conjunctions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical and literary sources, as well as biographical books—especially those recently published on the Taifa kings, such as the book *Al-Dhakhira*—contain accounts of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's cruelty and brutality toward those around him, the fruitful garden of skulls, and the killing of individuals based on suspicion (Ibn Bassam, 1997; Al-Maqqari, 1995). Ibn Bassam's description of the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad as "having a freshness in the meanings that nature provided him with, in which he achieved his will, and which writers wrote for excellence" (Ibn Bassam, 1997, p. 28) creates the need to explore, examine and analyze his poetry, in addition to the scarcity of studies that addressed his poetry.

Few studies have addressed the poetic aspects of Al-Mu'tadid. Badawi (2002) showed the intellectual themes and artistic characteristics of Al-Mu'tadid's poetry. In a study addressing violence in Poetry, Al-Ajili (2017) examines Al-Mu'tadid's personality, analyzes his behavior, and his motivations for violence through his poetic works, relying on what was reported about him in the sources. His presentation and mention of a dictionary of terms related to violence and some images, while discussing the manifestations of violence in his works. However, his discussion and study of these terms were superficial, without delving into their meaning or stylistic analysis, which proves the significance of conducting this study.

In recent decades, stylistics has addressed diverse models of ancient and modern Arabic poetry. These studies form the epistemological foundation used to construct this paper in its analytical approach. Canaan's 2013 study is an applied model for analyzing pre-Islamic poetry at the phonetic, syntactic, and rhetorical levels, revealing the coherence of pre-Islamic poetic discourse through rhythmic and linguistic characteristics. In a related research, Tata (2018) also discussed the analysis of linguistic and semantic phenomena in a contemporary text, highlighting the role of displacement, repetition, and syntactic parallelism in constructing the poetic structure.

In another academic study, Al-Zahrani (2020) analyzed the relationship between grammatical structure and stylistic structure, emphasizing that grammatical phenomena are not merely linguistic structures, but rather tools for artistic and semantic formation. In an unpublished master's thesis, Chol and Daga (2022), presented an in-depth analysis of phonetic and syntactic phenomena in Al-Mutanabbi's poetry, highlighting how displacement and repetition are employed to create the internal rhythm of the text. In a parallel context, Burabaa (2018) focused on how the linguistic structure interacts with the existential and political experience of the Palestinian poet.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A. Stylistics

Stylistics has occupied a prominent place in literary and linguistic studies in general, and it is considered one of the most important developments in modern language sciences. It constitutes a field of literary criticism that emerges from linguistic structures, focusing on the study of the text and describing its formulation method. Stylistics is the most capable contemporary linguistic approach to scientifically identify texts and express them without relying entirely on other societal, political, ideological, or other influences.

The text, with its linguistic elements and qualitative characteristics, constitutes the arena of stylistic activity, not extending beyond external influencing factors. Simultaneously, it does not suffice to merely observe the existing relationships between linguistic symbols. Rather, it transcends the relationship between thought and expression, which can only be revealed through contemplation and reflection on the idea and expression. This started by defining the various expressive means, such as semantic units, syntactic and rhythmic patterns, and their aesthetic effects. As for style, Maslough sees it as selection, reactions, contradiction, "shift-deviation", addition, and inclusion (Maslough, 1992). Stylistics relies on its study of composition on the grammatical aspect that describes the rules by which sentences are composed of meaningful units, as "every stylistic is subject to the specific grammatical rules of the intended language" (Al-Masdi, 1982).

In terms of syntax, as it describes the rules, it constitutes the center of stylistic studies. Stylistics emerges from behind syntax to move freely because syntax defines how sentences are formed, the positions of words, and their functions in terms of their ability to regulate the laws of speech. Therefore, we find that syntactic structures are subject to the laws of syntax, whether real or figurative. These structures cannot be distinguished by creativity without adhering to the language's standards and constants. Randomly changing the positions of words disrupts the structure and does not serve the meaning. The recipient cannot understand it until they rearrange the words and connect the sign with its meaning. Hence, we must differentiate between our choice of structures that serve the text and through which we can infer the speaker's purpose (Abdel Muttalib, 1994). We will study from syntactic structures the presentation and delay, verb tense, linking tools of conjunctions and prepositions, and emphasis and negation tools.

B. Rhythm

There is a harmony between the auditory rhythm and the psychological or emotional rhythm in the poetic experience, which is a blend of the flow of feelings and sensations conveyed by the poet as he perceives them through the musical rhythm expressed by words with their letters and compositions. The reader feels astonishment, excitement, and admiration through the text's suggestions of its music, images, and compositions, which make the reader feel sadness or joy, noise or calmness, or other sensations when reading or hearing a particular text.

(a). *External Rhythm*

It represents the structural framework of the poem and serves as the driving force behind its rhythm. As external rhythm comprises meter and rhyme, the poet's heartbeat reflects their emotional state; it beats rapidly in times of joy and slows in times of sorrow and despair. This affects the tone of recitation. Thus, when the poet is in a state of grief and sadness, they tend to choose long meters with many sections to express their emotions and relieve their sorrows. We have received only forty-nine poems from the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn 'Abbad, covering various poetic purposes including praise, admonition, wisdom, longing, patience, and love. These are arranged in different poetic meters selected by the poet to align with the poetic purpose and his emotional state at the time of composition, reflecting the emotions and feelings stirring within him.

The love poems occupied the largest space in Al-Mu'tadid's anthology, totaling thirty-six poems out of forty-nine, while there were only four praise poems, two patience poems, one admonition poem, one wisdom poem, and one longing poem. Additionally, four poems covered general topics. They were distributed among various poetic meters, with nineteen poems in the long meter, nine in the simple meter, two in the light meter, four in the fast meter, three in the abundant meter, two in the regular meter, four in the complete meter, one in the convergent meter, three in the divisible complete meter, two in the divisible abundant meter, and one in the divisible regular meter. This indicates that the long meter had the lion's share of the total poetic meters used by Al-Mu'tadid in his anthology compared to other meters, followed by the simple meter, complete meter, fast meter, abundant meter, and the divisible complete meter, then the light meter, regular meter, divisible abundant meter, convergent meter, and divisible regular meter. The scope doesn't allow for an analysis of all meters used in Al-Mu'tadid Ibn 'Abbad's anthology, so we will focus on the most used meters.

Poetic Meter	Love	Praise	Patience	General	Admonition	Wisdom	Longing
Long (Tawil)	14	2	1	1	1	-	-
Simple (Basit)	5	1	1	1	-	-	1
Light (Khafif)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fast (Sari')	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abundant (Wafir)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Running (Munsarih)	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Convergent (Mutqarib)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Complete (Kamil)	2	-	-	1	-	-	1
Divisible Complete	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Divisible Abundant	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Divisible Regular	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

When examining the poems of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn 'Abbad, we notice that the romantic poems were primarily focused on the complete long meter, which had fixed rhythmic patterns, both in terms of meter and rhyme scheme. This is exemplified by the verse:

"فعولن مفاعيلن فعولن مفاعيلن فعولن مفاعيلن"

Transliteration: "Fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun"

In the fully realized "tweel" long meter, we find the most musicality in the verses of Al-Mu'tadid bin Abbad, due to the diversity in its four activations. In the activation pattern "fa'oolun," it is influenced by the "qabḍ" (contraction), as explained by Al-Hashimi (2006), granting the text a rhythmic flexibility resulting from incidental variations on the original pattern "fu'ulan - fu'ul". The contraction "qabḍ" process assured the prosodic constraints while retaining the meter's fluidity, leading to a more melodious expression due to the abundance and flow of movements. However, the "ajz" (incomplete meter) relies on "suwākin" (stability) for its structure. Even though attempts were made to apply contraction (fa'oolun - fa'ool) to revive its musicality, it's the "darb" (complete meter) that revitalizes this musicality, resetting the meter to its original form (Al-Rashood, 2020). In a mesmerizing poem by Al-Mu'tadid bin Abbad, where he indulges in wine, the fully realized "tweel" long meter is chosen to depict his indulgence in wine until dawn, relishing its pleasures and sweetness. He wishes for the night to prolong so he could have more wine, yet his nights with it end swiftly.

"وليل أدمنا فيه شرب مدامية إلى أن بدا للصبح في الليل تأثير"

"فعولن / مفاعيلن/فعولن/ مفاعيلن فعولن / مفاعيلن / فعولن/ مفاعيلن"

Transliteration: "Wa-layl admanā fīhi shariban madāmatin ilā an badā lil-ṣubḥ fī al-layl ta'thīr."

"Fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun"

In another romantic poem of the long meter, he expresses his feelings of love that stir his heart. He appeals to his beloved and scatters his descriptions, portraying the pain of love he endures and the qualities with which he adorns his beloved.

رعى الله من يصلي فؤادي بحبه سعيراً وعيني منه في جنة الخلد

فعولن / مفاعيلن/فعولن/ مفاعيلن فعولن / مفاعيلن / فعولن/ مفاعيلن

Transliteration: "Ra'ā Allāh man yaṣlī fu'ādī biḥubbih, Sa'īrān wa'īnī minhu fī Jannat al-Khuld."

"Fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun fu'ulan mufa'ilun"

This long-meter allows the poet to express what he feels and senses, presenting a clear picture of his heart's emotions through verbal and conceptual compositions and expressive tools from the lexical repertoire of the language to which the poet belongs, making the rhythmic system of the meter more vivid. This indicates the harmony between the dominant calm rhythm and the rhythmic pace associated with love, longing, and nostalgia.

As for the simple meter chosen by Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad after the long one, on which he composed 9 poems out of 49 in his collection, Al-Mu'tadid succeeded in selecting this pattern for its significant role in conveying his emotions and music, and its role in balancing between meaning and form to deliver his poetic message to the reader in an engaging manner. Through it, he managed to convey his meanings, feelings, and emotions in a linguistic context where the consonants and vowels are arranged through long activations, in addition to the semantic coherence and rhythmic harmony of the piece. Despite its brevity, the poet was able, through prosodic variations, to embody an auditory flow in the music performed by linguistic units, ranging from the minor pause (فعلن) to the light causatives (مفعّلن).

“عرفت عرف الصبا إذ هب عاطره من أفق من أنا في قلبي أشاطره”
مُتَفَعِّلُن / فاعِلُن / مُسْتَفَعِّلُن / فَعْلُن مُسْتَفَعِّلُن / فَعْلُن / مُسْتَفَعِّلُن / فَعْلُن

Transliteration: "Araftu 'arafa al-subaa idh hab 'aatirahu, min ufuq man ana fi qalbi ashaturuh."

"Mutafaa'ilun/faa'ilun/mustafaa'ilun/fa'ilun mustafaa'ilun/faa'ilun/mustafaa'ilun/faa'ilun"

The poet expresses his longing and nostalgia for his son-in-law, Mujahid al-Aamiri, the husband of his daughter, Hakam Daniyah. He shares with him love and affection, praising him as the victorious leader of armies, hoping for a meeting with him.

"ذخرى أبا الجيش هل يقضى اللقاء لنا فيشتقي منك جفن أنت ناظره"

Transliteration: "Thukhra abal jayshi hal yaqdi al-liqaa lanaa? Yashatfi minka jafn anta naadhira."

We see that the poet succeeded in choosing the poetic meter that leads to the poetic purpose through which he expresses what is going on in his mind. Important topics with deep meaning and impact were given the complete long meters, such as the long, simple, and complete meters, because they allow the poet to express his thoughts and feelings to a large extent. As for easy topics with gentle meanings and fleeting feelings, he chose easy and fast weights for them, such as the broken wafer, the broken rajaz, and the broken kamel.

(b). Rhyme and Assonance

Rhyme is the foundation of poetic meter, and without it, a poem cannot be called poetry. The presence of both rhyme and assonance is what distinguishes poetry from prose. Rhyme is the corner of the poem and the secret of the strength of the poetic verse that needs it to complete the meaning, which is confirmed by Ibrahim Anis's definition of rhyme: "Rhyme is nothing but several sounds that are repeated at the ends of the lines or verses of the poem, and this repetition is an important part of the poetic music. It is like musical intervals, the listener expects them to be repeated and enjoys such repetition that knocks on the ears at regular intervals and after a certain number of segments with a special system called weight" (Anis, 1952).

"The basic function of rhyme does not appear except in its relationship to meaning" (Cohen, 1986, p. 2). Hence, we find that not all poems are distinguished from each other by the rhythmic formation of the rhyme if we consider the rhyme as the assonance letter, because it is subject to the rhythmic system. However, if we consider rhyme to be a group of sounds that are repeated in the rhyme, this is what distinguishes one poem from another in the rhythm of its rhyme, and what distinguishes the poet's rhythmic sense from other poets.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

When examining the rhythmic formation of the rhyme in Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's poetry in terms of its freedom, restriction, and letters, we find that restricted rhyme dominates the collection, accounting for 42 rhymes, compared to 7 free rhymes. This represents a ratio of 85.7% for restricted rhyme and 14.3% for free rhyme. The use of restricted rhyme indicates that Al-Mu'tadid wanted to give himself a position in his poetry that befits his position in his society and environment. He was a strong-willed ruler who set restrictions and laws, and he adhered to them even in his poetry.

However, his use of restricted rhyme also demonstrates the poet's skill in mastering the rhyme and its diversity in terms of restriction or freedom. The poet managed it with great care according to the requirements of the situation, purpose, and occasion. This gives the poems a captivating musical sound on the one hand and creates an atmosphere of change and variation on the other hand, which helps to prevent boredom and monotony for the reader.

A. The Assonance "End Rhyme" in Arabic Poetry

Assonance, also known as the end rhyme (rawy), is the letter on which the poem is built. A strong element dictates the rhyme scheme because it is a key part of it. The poem is attributed to this letter, so it is called a "Daliyya" poem if the end rhyme is the letter "Dāl" (ﺩ), a "Lamia" poem if it's "Lām" (ﻝ), and so on. Since it necessarily appears at the end of every line in the poem, it is one of the prominent fundamental components of a poem. From this, we understand that the repeated assonance letter restricts the rhyme and forces the poet to adhere to it, making them constrained by this letter.

Number of Poems	Assonance Letter
13	Ra (ر)
7	Dāl (د)
5	Bā (ب)
4	Lām (ل)
4	Mīm (م)
4	Qāf (ق)
3	Nūn (ن)
3	Hā (ح)
2	'Ayn (ع)
1	Fā (ف)
1	Dād (ض)
1	Yā (ي)
1	Kāf (ك)
49	Total

B. Analysis of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's Assonance

Looking at the previous table, we notice that Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's assonance letters varied between:

- Common letters known in Arabic poetry: Ra (ر), Dāl (د), and Bā (ب).
- Medium-spread letters: Kāf (ك), Qāf (ق), 'Ayn (ع), Hā (ح), Fā (ف), and Yā (ي).
- Rare letters: Dād (ض).

This indicates that Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad was distinguished by his strong linguistic ability to express and convey his thoughts and feelings in a way similar to other poets. He also used common and medium-spread rhymes and composed poems with rare rhymes, which are difficult rhymes, such as Dād (ض).

C. Internal Rhythm in Arabic Poetry

Internal rhythm is one of the most essential aspects of poetry. It originates from within the poetic experience and is manifested in the choice of words and the structure of phrases. This is because the music in poetry is not only achieved through meter and rhyme and the rhythm they create, but also through the selection, arrangement, and harmony of words. This creates an internal music that gives the poem a unique character and a distinctive tone. In addition to all this, the poet uses internal music creatively, such as repetition, antithesis, and paronomasia. Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad realized this and used verbal refinements, including:

تصريع (Tasrī'):

It is noticeable that most of the poems in the table begin with تصريع (tasrī'), which is the rhyming of the first hemistich with the second hemistich of the opening couplet. Both hemistichs are identical in terms of meter and rhyme. (Tasrī' تصريع) is defined as "A verse whose prosody follows its rhyme scheme, decreasing with its decrease and increasing with its increase". The rhyming prosody is like the rhyme scheme. Therefore, anything whose prosody of the first verse does not differ from the prosody of the rest of the verses of the poem except in the saj' (assonance) is rhymed. This is perhaps what made Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad keen to use it frequently. Here are some examples:

1. إلام وما لومي على الحب واجب وقد صادني طرفت كحيلٍ وحاجبٍ
 Transliteration: "Ilam wa-mā lawmi 'alā al-ḥubbi wājib Wa-qad ṣādani ṭarf kāḥilin wa-ḥājib"
 2. زهر الأسنة في الهيجا غدت زهري غرست أشجارها مستجزل الثمر
 Transliteration: "Zahr al-asnina fī al-hayja ghadath Zuhri Gharast ašjārahā mustajzil al-ṭamar"

Al-Jinas (paronomasia) in Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's Poetry:

Al-Jinas (paronomasia) is a poetic device that involves the use of words that sound similar but have different meanings. It is a common feature of Arabic poetry, and it is used to create a variety of different effects. Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad was particularly fond of using al-jinas (paronomasia) in his poetry. It is a feature of almost all his poems, and it is often used to create a sense of wit and playfulness.

Here are some examples of al-jinas (paronomasia) in Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's poetry:

1. "أنا في الحب مغرمٌ مستنيل كل نيلٍ أناله لي قليل"
 Transliteration: "Ana fī al-ḥubbi muḡram mustanil Kull nīlin anāluhu lī qalīl"
 2. "حسنٌ في خلقٍ وخلق فلم رصيت بالقبح لأفعاكاً"
 Transliteration: "Ḥasanta fī ḥalq wa-ḥuluq fa-lam Raṣīta bi-al-qubḥi li-af'ālika"

Al-Tabaq in Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad's Poetry:

Al-Tabaq is a poetic device that involves the use of two contrasting words or phrases. It is a common feature of Arabic poetry, and it is used to create a variety of different effects, as in:

- "يا درة قلبي بها مقتون يسخو وإن سئل السلو ضنين"
 Transliteration: "Yā durratī qalbī bihā muftūn Yaṣḥaw wa-'in su'ila al-salw ḍanīn"
- "فالدهر شيء بارد ما لم تسخنه براح"
 Transliteration: "Fa-al-dahru šay' un bāridun Mā lam tusakhkhina bi-rāḥ"

Al-Tabaq reveals and clarifies the meaning by using contrasting words. It also enhances the musicality of the poem by transitioning from one pronunciation to another, creating diversity and harmony in the rhythm.

D. Repetition

Al-Kar (الكر) is the return and repetition, as repetition is considered one of the stylistic phenomena, which is the vocal repetition of a letter, word, phrase, formula, audio clip, style, linguistic expression, or others. The close connection between the poet's experiences of different emotions and thoughts is expressed by the word that conveys the hidden meaning within itself, thus describing his feelings and presenting a picture of his inner emotions. "If repetition in prose is a process of stuffing with no benefit, it is not the case in poetry. The repeated image does not carry the same meaning but rather carries a new meaning as soon as it is subjected to repetition. Therefore, we read in the repeated image something different from what preceded it. This repetition contributes to the process of implication and deepens the image in the reader's mind" (Hima, 1998). This means that repetition in poetry is intentional and not spontaneous.

Patterns of Repetition

Repetition of Letter: This refers to the repetition of a sound or letter, which is the smallest unit in the text or the smallest rhythmic unit of poetic language. Each sound has its connotation; abandoned sounds carry a specific meaning, while whispered sounds have their significance. Repetition enriches the internal rhythm of the text and creates music that affects the recipient.

For instance, Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad repeated letters, including (باء), in his verse from the long poem:

ينادون قلبي والغرام يجيب
وللقلب في حين النداء وجيب

Transliteration

Yanādūna qalbi wal-ḡarāmu yujīb

Wa-li-l-qalbi fī ḥīna l-nidā' wa-jīb

The letter "ba" is repeated 14 times in the poem you provided, appearing in the following words (with transliteration): The letter "ba" is a voiced pharyngeal fricative, produced by constricting the pharynx (back of the throat) while vibrating the vocal cords. This sound (ب), often associated with strength and power, creates a sense of urgency or excitement in the poem. Longing, passion, and love have called him, and he responds to the call of love. His heart suffers from passion and love, and he asks about his condition if his beloved neglects him. His heart always arranges the order of his beloveds because he knows the secrets of love and is a healer for the pains of passion. In another poem, we find Al-Mu'tamid Ibn Abbad repeating the sounds of "Aleph" and "Haa" in his poem about the gentle sea:

"قد وجدنا الحبيب يصفي وداده
قرب الحب من فؤاد محب
وحمدنا ضميره واعتقاده
لا يرى هجره ولا إبعاده"

Transliteration

Qad wajadnā l-ḥabīb yuṣṭfi waḍāduhu

Wa-ḥamADNā ḍamīrahu wa-i'tiqāduhu

Qaraba l-ḥubbu min fu'ād muḥibb

Lā yarā ḥajrhu wa-lā ib'āduhu

Al-Mu'tadid repeated the sound of the long vowel "a" in the words "wajadnā" (we found), "yuṣṭfi" (he purifies), "wa-ḥamadnā" (we praised), and "yarā" (he sees). He also repeated the letter "ha" in the words "waḍāduhu" (his love), "i'tiqāduhu" (his faith), "hajrhu" (his abandonment), and "ib'āduhu" (his estrangement). The sound of the long vowel "a" gives the poet a wide space to express himself and to convey his feelings and emotions. The letter "ha" shares this function with the sound of the long vowel "a".

The repetition of words refers to the repetition of nouns and verbs. Perhaps the simplest form of repetition is the repetition of a single word at the beginning of each verse in a series of consecutive verses in a poem, and this is common in our contemporary poetry. This is embodied in the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad in his poem "Basat Allah Al-Makarem in My Palm", where the linguistic root "Kaaf", "Faa", and "Yaa", and all derivations of the word came with different meanings repeated by the poet in different forms. Once it came as a noun ("My Palm") which means the comfort of the hand, and once as a phrase ("My Brother's hand") which means staying away from something, and once as a verb ("it suffices"), meaning stop. Thus, we see that the repetition of this linguistic root came with meanings including emphasizing its generosity, explaining the extent of his adherence to the value of generosity, cementing this idea in the recipient's mind, and arousing his interest in the importance of this value. This is evident in the sentences he uses indicating generosity is inherent to him, such as his use of the term "nature". Generosity, for him, is a part of his nature, and he emphasizes this meaning by saying: "and does not accept being alone to tell her: it's enough." In another poem, Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad says in a poem he composed in long meter:

يطول على الدهر أن لم ألاقها ويقتصر أن لا قيتها أطول الدهر

Transliteration

Yatūlu 'ala l-dahri an lam ulaqiha Wa-yaqṣuru an la uqiṭha aṭwalu l-dahri

The words denoting love and passion have overwhelmed this love poem, expressing what his heart contains of feelings of love and passion. The word "الحب" was repeated three times in its pronunciation, and he came up with synonyms that denote the same meaning, saying: "أنه شيق أبداً والشوق" and the word "الوصل" which came from the same poetic lexicon, and in reference to the time of the lover who has no limit, so he expressed it with the words "أبدًا، الأبد", and even for the meaning to come complete, he comes with the word "الفؤاد" indicating the place of these feelings and emotions, as they rest in the place of feeling for him (the heart). In another poem, he shows the strength of the control of love over him, for love has a sultan who obeys the king of time, where he says in a poem he composed in the perfect (kamel) meter:

لله در الحب ماذا يصنع يعنو له ملك الزمان وبخضع

Transliteration

Lil-lahi dri l-hubbu ma yassna'u

Ya'nu lu mulkuz-zamani wayakhda'u

Al-Mu'tadid marvels at love and its dominion, which subjugates the powerful ruler of time to its laws. He repeats the word "love" twice and uses its synonym "الهوى passion," which he also repeats twice. We also see repetition in meaning in his saying: قلبي، مهجتي: "my heart, my soul," where love and passion reside within him, dominating his feelings and emotions. This achieves harmony and consonance between the auditory rhythm resulting from the repetition of sounds and their distribution in the poetic structure visually, establishing a pattern of rhythmic harmony through word repetition. The repetition aims to encapsulate a specific poetic state, endowing it with a specific realistic attribute not only through the repetition itself but also through its linguistic and semantic shadows and associations.

E. Structural Construction

Structural level concerns issues related to the sentence and the modifications that occur within it. We refer to the poetic sentence, which deviates from the original rules of grammar, becoming less grammatical and more divergent. Poetry manifests its aesthetic character by transforming the sentence into a special condition, where words and structures reveal deeper and more beautiful meanings than usual. The poet's selection and distribution of words occur through the language in which the poet expresses his emotions, feelings, and experiences, followed by their arrangement. In this, the poet paves the way for these words according to his choices and devises specific compositional methods from a range of possibilities, arranging them in certain forms that can be woven together.

Anastrophe

Anastrophe is among the most important stylistic phenomena at the syntactic level, which is "a change in the syntactic system of the sentence that results in a change in connotation and its transition from one level to another" (Abdel Muttalib, 1994). In other words, it is a change that occurs in the ideal structure of the sentence, presenting what is entitled to delay, and latterly what is entitled to be presented for aesthetic and moral purposes, since the literary truth of the wording is expression and influence on one level (Abd al-Muttalib, 1995). The phenomenon of anastrophe is considered a manifestation of linguistic shift (deviation), which depends on breaking linguistic conventions and departing from the norm of commonly used referential relationships to a broader level that elevates the text by giving it an aesthetic character. The anastrophe constitutes "violating the Arabic sentence and disturbing its arrangement, which must attract the attention of the analyst" because the positions of the words and their weaving have an undeniable significance". The phenomenon of anastrophe in the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad: "The fundamental principle in the structure of sentences is arrangement, but the creative poet may deviate from this standard by anticipating what deserves anastrophe, for purposes and meanings drawn from context or structure. This arrangement is subject to the arrangement of meanings within the soul" (Al-Jurjani, 1985).

"لقد بسط الله المكارم من كفي فليست على العلات منها أذا كف"

Transliteration: Laqad basata Allāh al-makārīma min kaffī Fa-lastu 'alā al-'ilal min-hā 'akhā kaff

Delaying the predicate for the subject, Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad here disrupts the order of the nominal sentence by placing the genitive and accusative ahead of the predicate for rhetorical purposes (أذا كف). Al-Mu'tadid praises and describes himself with generosity, as God has spread generosity in his palm, and nothing will prevent feeding and giving no matter what happens. Therefore, he prioritizes (على العلات منها), emphasizing the meaning of giving with him despite its abundance and sometimes difficult circumstances. As for his statement at the end of the poem:

"العمر ك ما الإسراف في طيبة ولكن طبع البخل عندي كالحقف"

Transliteration: La-'umrika ma l-isrāfu fī ṭabī'ah

Wa-lakunna ṭab'u l-bukhlī 'indī kal-ḥaft

So, he asserts at the end of his poem that his generosity is not extravagant. Extravagance is not his nature; rather, his giving is a manifestation of his generosity, existence, and benevolence. Stinginess to him is like destruction, akin to ruin or death, due to the ugliness of stinginess. Hence, he places the adverbial phrase (عندي) ahead of the predicate, contrary to the norm. In another poem, he says: "فالبخل عندي كالضلال" Here, he delays the predicate for the subject (كالضلال) and separates it from the subject with the adverbial phrase (عندي) to emphasize that stinginess, for him, is like going astray and deviating from the right path.

"يطول على الدهر أن لم ألقها ويقصر أن لاقيتها أطول الدهر"

Transliteration: Yaṭūlu 'alayya al-dahru an lam 'alāqihā

Wa-yaqṣuru an lāqaythā 'aṭwalu al-dahri

He delayed the subject (الدهر) for the verb (يطول) and separated them with the genitive and accusative (عليّ) to clarify the effect of time on him. He feels the lengthening of time when he does not meet his beloved; he is in a state of longing and love. Therefore, his separation from his beloved makes time pass slowly for him, thus affecting him psychologically. Similarly, he disrupts the order of the sentence in the second half, where he separates the verb (يقصر) and its subject (أطول) with the verb clause (أن لاقيتها), to highlight the effect of meeting her on him. For even though time may be long, it becomes shorter once he meets her.

"لها غرة كالبدر عند تمامه وصدا عبير نمقا صفحة البدر"

Transliteration: Lahā ghurratu kal-badri 'inda tamāmihi

Wa-ṣidghā 'aṭir namqaṣā saḥḥata al-badri

He prioritized the predicate with the adverbial phrase (لها) over the subject (غرة) for rhetorical purposes, describing his beloved as the full moon at its completion for her beauty. He also separated the verb and the subject with the adverbial phrase (جار ومجور) attached to it. Just as a branch bends with the breeze.

"يا جاهل الحب إن الحب لي سند مهما أجز عنه يوماً سوف اعتمد"

Transliteration: Yā jāhil al-ḥubbi inna al-ḥubba lī sanda

Mahmā ajur 'anhu yawman sawfa a'tamadu

He delayed the predicate "إنَّ (سندٌ)" (that support) and separated it from the noun following "إن" with the adverbial phrase (لي) to emphasize the importance of love to him and that it is his support.

"أبجّل الحب من أضحت به حرق تكاد من حرها الأحشاء تنقد"

Transliteration: Ayajhalu al-hubbu man adhahat bihi hiraqun Tukadu min harriha al-ahsha' tu-taqid.

He disrupted the grammatical order in his statement "أضحت به حرق" (burnt by it) by delaying the noun "أضحت" and placing the prepositional phrase "به" (by it) in the position of the accusative predicate. In the second half, he delayed the doer of the action in "تكاد (الأحشاء)" (almost the insides) and separated them with the prepositional phrase "من حرّها" (from its heat), indicating the fire ignited in his heart by love and longing for his beloved. He concludes his poem with:

"إن يشرب الجسم برد الوصل منتعشا يهدي إليه فؤادي حر ما يجد"

Transliteration:

in yašrab al-jasad ḥarr al-waṣl munt' iṣā yuhdī ilayhi fu'ādī ḥarr mā yajid

So, he separated the verb (يهدي) (guides) from its subject (فؤادي) (my heart) with the prepositional phrase (إليه) (to it) to grab the attention of the recipient. The observer of this linguistic deviation from its norm finds it providing artistic expression besides consolidating the aesthetic aspect in meaning through what he finds of passion and the effects of love. Thus, his heart is guided towards union with what it holds of the warmth of love and affection.

F. Deletion

The deletion phenomenon is a stylistic technique accomplished by the creative writer during the production of literary work. This technique manifests in various stylistic forms and linguistic categories, depending on the orientations of the creators and the aspects of their linguistic achievements that were previously subjects of grammar and rhetoric. The attention of rhetoricians to deletion as a rhetorical device and a form of structural alteration elevates speech from its ordinary level to a higher one, enriched with semantic connotations, characterized by its eloquence and coherence. This technique is deeply rooted in the fundamentals of the Arabic language.

Subject Deletion

"الله درّ الحبّ ماذا يصنع
للحب سلطان عظيم شأنه
يعنو له ملك الزمان ويخضع
مهما يقلّ قولاً فقلبي يسمع
إن يغر بالهجران مالك مهجتي
أقبل إليه بحالتي أتضرع"

Transliteration

li-llāhi darru l-ḥubbi māḍā yaṣna'u ya'nū lahu maliku l-zamān wa-yakhḍa'u
li-l-ḥubbi sulṭān 'aẓīm ṣānuhu mahmā yaqul qaulan fa-qalbī yasma'u
'in yaḡrī bi-l-hijrān māliku mahjati 'aqbilu 'ilayhi bi-ḥālātī 'ataḍarra'u

The displacement through deletion occurs in this verse, where a sentence must consist of a subject and a predicate to be complete. Grammarians have allowed the deletion of the subject if it has been mentioned earlier, and the subject can be represented by a pronoun referring to the mentioned subject. In the previous verses, the subject was deleted for the verb "يصنع" (to do) with its implied subject being "الحب" (love). Therefore, the meaning of the sentence becomes "What does love do?" with the subject being deleted but implied. Similarly, for the verb "يخضع" (to submit), the subject is deleted, indicating what was previously mentioned, "ملك الزمان" (the ruler of time). For the verb "يقُلّ" (to diminish), the subject is deleted, and its implied subject is "الحب" (love). The same goes for the verb "يسمع" (to hear), where the subject is deleted, and its implied subject is "قلبي" (my heart). For the subjunctive verb "يغر" (would lure), the subject is deleted, and its implied subject is "الحب" (love). As for the verb "أقبل" (to approach), the subject has a contextual indicator as "أنا" (I) referring to the poet. Similarly, for the verb "أتضرع" (to implore), the subject is deleted here due to the contextual indication.

"تنام ومدنفها يسهر
لئن دام هذا وهذا به
وتصبر عنه ولا يصبر
سبهلك وجدا ولا يشعر"

Transliteration: tanāmu wa-maḍnafuha yasaharu
la'in dāma ḥādā wa-ḥādā bihi

wa-taṣbiru 'anhu wa-lā yaṣbiru
sayahlaku wajdan wa-lā yaṣ'uru

The poet began his poem with the verb "تنام" (she sleeps), with the subject being omitted, implying "هي" (she), and he did not mention the subject explicitly, leading the reader to guess that the subject is beloved, which is left contextually understandable. He referred to her with the pronoun connected to the object (مدنفها). The verb "يسهر" (he stays awake) has the subject omitted, implying that "he" refers to the one who has been made sleepless by love. The verb "تصبر" (she endures) has the subject omitted, with the implied subject being "هي" (she). The verb "يصبر" (he endures) has the subject omitted, with the implied subject being "he" referring to the lover, which is contextually understandable. As for the verb "دام" (it lasted), the subject is the demonstrative pronoun "هذا" (this), referring to the omitted subject, the separation and distance understood from the context, where the second demonstrative pronoun "هذا" (this) indicates what the poet suffers from separation and distance, leading to the result that the poet will perish from his agony. The omitted subject is indicated by the context. The negative verb "لا يشعر" (he does not feel) has the subject omitted, with the implied subject being "he," referring to the lover. Deletion played a clear aesthetic role in this poem, constructing a cohesive structure of meanings and affecting the recipient through conciseness and hinting at the idea, and stimulating the recipient's mind. It also demonstrates Al-Mu'tadid's ability to achieve a musical balance that captivates the recipient.

G. Pronominal Reference

Pronominal reference is a tool that connects sentences, phrases, and texts. It refers to the process by which a word used refers to a preceding or subsequent word. Griemas considered it as "a partial definable relationship that occurs in discourse between two phrases, used to combine two expressions or two paragraphs" (Lakhlef, 2007). Its function is to link smaller textual structures together, making them interconnected to produce cohesive text (Qassoum, 2018). According to Hassan (1994), pronominal reference can be divided into two types. Textual reference is divided into antecedent reference and postcedent reference. Antecedent reference is when the referred entity precedes the referring one.

(a). Postcedent Reference

It is the opposite of antecedent reference, where the referred entity follows the referring one. Examples include demonstrative pronouns like "ذلك" (that) for distant referents and "هذا" (this) for proximal referents.

(b). Antecedent Reference

When examining Al-Mu'tadid's poetry, we find that he diversified the use of textual reference, including antecedent reference as exemplified in his verse:

"كلام كمثل الدر ننثره نثرا ووصل كظل الروض نعطيكه نثرا"

Transliteration: kalām ka-mithli l-durri nanthuruhu nathran wa-waṣlin ka-ẓilli l-rawḍi na'tīkihi nazran

The "هاء" (hā') in the word "ننثره" (we scatter it) refers to "كلمة" (speech), and this is an example of antecedent reference, where the pronoun refers to what has been previously mentioned. Similarly, the pronoun "هاء" in "نعطيكه" (we give it to you) refers to what has been previously mentioned, which is "كلام" (speech).

"أدية أنت فائدة الزمان فقد فقت الممالك في معان"

Transliteration: 'adīya 'anta fā'idatu l-zamān fa-qad faqt al-mamālik fī ma'an

The movable "تاء" (taa) in the verb "فقت" (you missed) is a connected pronoun in the place of the subject, and it refers to "أدية" (dues), demonstrating antecedent reference.

Postcedent Reference

This is when the reader is referred or directed to a subsequent word in the text. In Al-Mu'tadid's verse:

"هذي السعادة قد قامت على قدم وقد جليست لها في مجلس الكرم"

Transliteration: hādī al-sa'ādatu qad qāmat 'alā qadam wa-qad jalasatu lahā fī majlisi l-karam

We find that the demonstrative pronoun "هذي" (this) refers to what comes after it, namely "السعادة" (happiness), so what comes after the demonstrative pronoun is considered a postcedent reference.

"لقد حصلت يا رندة فصررت لملكنا عقده"

Transliteration: la-qad ḥaṣilta ya randah fa-ṣurti li-malikinā 'aqdah

The movable "تاء" (taa) in the verb "حصلت" (you obtained), which is in the place of the nominative subject, refers to what comes after it, "O Randa," and this is a postcedent reference.

H. Sentences

There are various types of sentences in internal structure, namely: the simple sentence. The Simple Sentence: It is noticeable that the poet extensively employs simple sentences in his collection, as they consist of a simple and uncompounded structure represented by a subject and a predicate, forming a cohesive and independent semantic unit. The characteristics of a simple sentence include:

1. Comprising a single independent structure, either verbal or nominal. A verbal structure is called a verbal sentence, while a nominal structure is termed a nominal sentence (Akasha, 2004). Nominal sentences dominate Al-Mu'tadid's poetry, as hardly any poem is devoid of them.

An example of this can be seen in his romantic poem, part of the complete series, number (5) from his collection:

"من كان يسلو عن نوال فأنا الذي لست يسال"

Transliteration

man, kāna yuslū 'an nawāl fa-'anā al-ladhī lastu bisāl

The nominal sentence predominated in this poem over the verbal sentence. The poem began with a nominal sentence, starting with an interrogative pronoun ("من") followed by a nominal sentence derived from the verb "كان". This was followed by another nominal sentence conjoined with ("فأنا الذي لست يسال"). The second line consists of two nominal sentences coordinated with each other, linked by a reciprocal relationship. As for the third line, it starts with a verbal sentence ("أبصرت رشدي في الندى"), followed by a nominal sentence conjoined with it ("فالبخل عندي كالضلال"). The fourth line contains two nominal sentences conjoined by the conjunction "و".

As for his general poem composed in the Wafir meter, number (43) from the collection, its beginning:

"أدية أنت فائدة الزمان فقد فقت الممالك في معان"

Transliteration: 'adīya 'anta fā'idah al-zamān fa-qad faqa-ta al-mamālik fī ma'an

This poem consists of 20 verses, with each verse containing a verbal sentence. The poet structured each verse around a verbal sentence, using narrative verbs to clarify the intended meaning in the mind of the audience, portraying numerous heroic deeds. He predominantly employed the past tense verb, which signifies the affirmation and acknowledgment of the action's occurrence. The past tense verb appeared 18 times compared to only 10 instances of the present tense verb. The past tense verb is often confirmed with "فقد" (Indeed), serving either as a confirmed affirmation or attributed to the first-person plural pronoun, indicating the speaker. For instance: "بذلنا جهدنا، وطأنا الكماة، اجهدنا العزائم، و أعملنا الحسام". At times,

the past tense verb is connected to the pronoun "تاء الفاعل" (indicating the subject), such as: "فقد فقت، إن درت لباني، انضيت" "الصوارم خاطبات، اقتربت ببريهم يهود، ما أوليت فيهم فحق عليهم شكر" "امتعاضي، جرى في ضميمهم ملء العنان، وتورا محرفة أعزت، فطالت ذلة السبع المثاني، ثار بي عزم يمان، فأدرك سؤله العضب اليماني، كان فضاؤها سحر ليهني أهل مالمقة، سينفذهم و ينجيهم جميعا، أرقبهم ذرى مجد رفيع، كما أجنيهم ثمر الأمان، "البیان، فعاد البر معمورا المغاني، و قام إمام جامعهم، أنست المسامع بالأذان". As for the present tense verb, it indicates continuity and renewal and is found in the following instances: "يجن لهم جناتي، كم خبر ينوب عن العيان، ألم أعتقهم من ذل و كفر، إمام جامعهم يصلي، يكون ثوابه خلد الجنان".

2. The conjunctions and syntactic linking elements played a significant role in the poetry of Al-Mu'tadid, as they appeared frequently in his diwan (Al-Saeed, 1976). The conjunction "و" (waaw) was the most used, occurring 193 times in his diwan, forming the highest percentage of occurrence compared to other linking elements. This can be attributed to the unique flexibility and versatility of the conjunction "و" (waaw) compared to other linking elements. The conjunction "ف" (fa) appeared 51 times, while "أو" (aw) appeared only three times. Additionally, prepositions, which lower the noun that follows them, also contributed to the cohesion and meaning of the text. "من" (min) appeared 46 times, "على" (ala) appeared 32 times, and "في" (fi) appeared 54 times. "باء" (baa) appeared 51 times, "عن" (an) appeared 15 times, "الكاف" (kaaf) appeared 27 times, "لام" (laam) appeared 27 times, and "إلى" (ila) appeared 16 times. "مع" (ma'a) appeared only twice.

In conclusion, these additional connections, especially the conjunctions "و" (waaw) and "ف" (fa), as well as the prepositions "باء" (baa), "من" (min), "في" (fi), "عن" (an), "على" (ala), "الكاف" (kaaf), "لام" (laam), and "إلى" (ila), collectively contributed to the coherence of the text, its structural, semantic, and rhythmic integrity. The poem structure in Al-Mu'tadid's poetry relies on the use of emphasis tools, such as the emphatic particle "إن" (inn), which appeared four times, and "أن" (anna), which also appeared four times. Additionally, the emphatic particle "أن" (an) and the verb particle indicating futurity "قد" (qad) each appeared eleven times. The utilization of these emphatic structures in speech serves psychological and social motives, generating feelings of doubt and estrangement that dominate the poet's psyche. This compels him to reaffirm his positions and life views, often using established structures and diverse emphasis tools to solidify and reinforce various meanings in the mind of the audience.

V. CONCLUSION

In a word, the study concludes that the personality of Al-Mu'tadid Ibn Abbad, with its contradictory qualities, was manifested in his poetic choices, which addressed various themes and conveyed different meanings. Considering the poetic purposes for which the poet composed, love poetry occupied the largest space in his collection compared to other poetic genres. Regarding the internal and external rhythm, complete long meters dominated most of his poems and compositions, while short meters had a weak presence. The poet succeeded in using restricted rhyme schemes that suited his harsh and sharp personality, despite the beauty of his poetry and the delicacy of its meanings. He also skillfully spontaneously employed poetic devices, serving the meaning and clarifying the imagery. Repetition plays an important role in reinforcing and clarifying the meaning, especially in the repetition of letters, words, and meanings. Structurally, Al-Mu'tadid chose simple, clear, and straightforward language, with appropriate positioning and postponement following the significance of the desired meaning.

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Effects of Arabic Emphatic Environment on the Perception of Plain Consonants in L1 Arabic and L2 English for Arabic Native Learners

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Abstract—Although some research has examined the influence of emphatic environments on the perception of plain Arabic segments, little is known about whether this influence extends to the perception of English consonants by Arabic learners of English. Accordingly, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the effects of emphatic consonant environments on the perception of plain consonants in Arabic as a first language and in English as a second language. Fourteen second-language learners of English participated in a forced-choice identification task assessing their perception accuracy of Arabic and English consonants. The results showed that the presence of an emphatic environment (i.e., a plain consonant followed by a low back vowel) led learners to perceive the plain consonants /s/ and /ð/ as emphatic in both Arabic and English stimuli. These findings are discussed in light of the Perceptual Assimilation Model (Best, 1993) and the revised Speech Learning Model (Flege & Bohn, 2021).

Index Terms—speech perception, L2 perception, emphatic consonants, plain consonants

I. INTRODUCTION

One salient property of Arabic phonology that has attracted research attention in both speech production and perception is emphatic spread. Emphatic spread refers to the influence of emphatic consonants on neighbouring segments, whereby an emphatic sound (e.g., /t/) might influence the surrounding sounds by changing its quality to assimilate with the articulatory characteristics of the emphatic sound. In Arabic, emphatic consonants are typically produced with a primary coronal constriction accompanied by a secondary retraction of the tongue body toward the pharyngeal or uvular region. Thus, emphatic consonants do not merely contrast locally with their plain counterparts; rather, they cause more global and gradient modifications in the acoustic and perceptual properties of adjacent segments.

Previous research has documented the phonetic consequences of emphatic spread in Arabic, particularly with respect to its effects on vowel realization. Acoustic studies have consistently shown that vowels occurring in emphatic environments tend to exhibit reduced F2, compared to vowels in non-emphatic contexts, reflecting the retracted tongue body gesture associated with emphasis (Al-Masri, 2009; Card, 1983; Hetzron, 1989). These findings indicate that emphatic consonants exert robust and systematic coarticulatory effects on neighboring segments. Beyond production, perceptual studies indicate that listeners are sensitive to these coarticulatory patterns and can exploit them as cues in segment identification and lexical access (e.g., Al-Tamimi, 2017; Hayes-Harb & Durham, 2016). However, the majority of existing research has focused on native speakers' production and perception within Arabic, with comparatively limited attention to how these coarticulatory cues are interpreted by Arabic native speakers in second language (L2) perception.

Despite growing interest in the interaction between phonological systems and speech perception, little is known about how emphatic spread in Arabic influences Arabic speakers' perception of non-native speech contrasts. In particular, it remains unclear whether long-term exposure to emphatic consonants affects Arabic learners' perceptual processing of English consonants that do not exhibit emphasis but may occur in vowel environments that overlap acoustically with the Arabic emphatic environment. The present study addresses this gap by examining the extent to which properties of the Arabic phonological system, specifically emphatic spread, influence Arabic second-language learners' perceptual sensitivity to English consonants.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Arabic emphatic consonants (/t̤, s̤, ð̤/) are produced with a primary coronal constriction combined with a secondary retraction of the tongue body toward the pharyngeal or oropharyngeal region (Bin-Muqbil, 2006). This secondary articulation is a defining feature of emphatic segments that distinguishes them from their non-emphatic counterparts. Emphatic consonants are known to influence the articulatory and acoustic properties of adjacent vowels, creating a gradient effect that extends beyond the segment itself. Understanding these articulatory properties provides a foundation for examining their perceptual consequences, both within Arabic and in L2 contexts.

The secondary articulatory gestures associated with emphatic consonants result in coarticulatory patterns that listeners may use as perceptual cues. For example, vowels adjacent to emphatic consonants are typically lowered and backed,

assimilating toward the posterior articulatory space (Aldamen & Al-Deaibes, 2023; Alkhudidi et al., 2025; Al-Masri, 2009; Card, 1983; Hetzron, 1989; Khattab et al., 2006). Such acoustic modifications can bias listeners to perceive plain consonants as emphatic. This phenomenon, known as emphatic spread, illustrates the interaction between production and perception in speech processing. It is particularly relevant for speech perception studies because it demonstrates how contextual articulatory cues can systematically influence consonant categorization.

Emphatic spread has important implications for second-language (L2) perception, especially for Arabic learners of English. Because emphatic features can influence adjacent segments, Arabic learners may extend emphatic cues to English consonants, potentially leading to mistakenly perceiving plain consonants as emphatic. This pattern is consistent with theoretical frameworks such as the Perceptual Assimilation Model for L2 learners (PAM-L2), which predicts that non-native listeners assimilate unfamiliar sounds to the most perceptually similar native categories (Best & Tyler, 2007). This suggests that the acoustic consequences of emphatic spread may shape how learners encode and categorize English phonemes, biasing perception toward emphatic-like interpretations. Another account is provided by the revised Speech Learning Model (SLM-r), which proposes that L1 and L2 sounds are represented within a shared phonetic space and are evaluated relative to one another, with L2 speech perception shaped by learners' sensitivity to phonetic detail and cue weighting rather than categorical separation alone. Under this view, creating new L2 categories depends on whether learners detect reliable phonetic distinctions between L2 sounds and existing L1 categories (Flege & Bohn, 2021).

The model has been supported by perception studies showing that learners' accuracy in identifying L2 segments is systematically constrained by the phonetic proximity of those segments to existing L1 categories (e.g., Flege, 1995). Within the SLM-r framework, when L2 sounds overlap substantially with L1 categories, learners are less likely to establish autonomous L2 representations and instead rely on existing L1-based phonetic mappings, resulting in persistent perceptual difficulty (Flege & Bohn, 2021). Together, these theoretical frameworks provide a basis for interpreting how language-specific coarticulatory patterns, such as emphatic spread, may bias L2 perceptual encoding and categorization.

Jaber et al. (2023) investigated the acoustic properties of emphasis spread in Jordanian Arabic, focusing on how emphatic articulation affects surrounding vowels. Speech production data were collected from nine native speakers who produced minimal pairs containing the voiceless emphatic fricative /s/ and its plain counterpart /s/ in both word-initial and word-final positions. The analysis showed that emphasis was associated with consistent acoustic effects on adjacent vowels, specifically raised F1 and F3, and lowered F2 in vowels preceding and following emphatic consonants.

Khattab et al. (2006) examined the phonetic and perceptual correlates of emphasis in Arabic, with particular attention to how emphatic consonants influence adjacent vowel quality. Acoustic analysis demonstrated that emphatic consonants are consistently associated with F2 lowering and F1 raising in neighboring vowels. Importantly, the perception task showed that listeners relied heavily on these vocalic spectral cues when identifying emphatic versus plain consonants. The authors argued that emphasis is best characterized as a property extending over the syllable rather than a segmental feature. This study provides strong empirical support for the claim that vowel cues play a central role in emphasis perception.

Al-Masri (2009) investigated the role of emphatic spread in speech perception. Using a cross-splicing paradigm, Al-Masri tested whether listeners could identify consonants as plain or emphatic based solely on coarticulatory information present in the adjacent vowel. In this paradigm, emphatic consonants were placed in non-emphatic vowel environments, and plain consonants were inserted into vowels originally produced in emphatic contexts. The results demonstrated that when a plain /t/ was followed by a vowel originally produced in an emphatic context (e.g., a vowel from /tab/ spliced onto /t/), most participants misidentified the consonant as emphatic (/t/). A similar pattern was observed for /s/, underscoring the importance of vocalic coarticulatory cues for perception.

Despite the theoretical and empirical significance of emphatic spread, research examining its effects on second-language speech perception remains limited. Most studies have focused on Arabic speech perception in L1 contexts, with comparatively little attention to how Arabic emphatic features may affect Arabic learners' perception of English (L2) consonants. Furthermore, previous research has not examined the role of L2 proficiency in modulating perceptual accuracy under conditions of emphatic coarticulation. Addressing these gaps is essential for understanding how language-specific phonetic patterns interact with non-native sound categorization.

The present study addresses these gaps by investigating whether Arabic emphatic spread biases Arabic learners' perception of English non-emphatic consonants (/t, s, ð/). Specifically, the study examines whether these consonants are more likely to be misperceived as their emphatic counterparts (/t, s, ð/) when they occur in phonetic environments that, in Arabic, license emphatic realization. In addition, the study explores whether learners' L2 proficiency is associated with increased perceptual accuracy, thereby exploring the extent to which experience with the L2 may override L1-based perceptual biases. The research questions are as follows:

1. When Arabic /t, s, ð/ occur in environments that motivate emphatic realization, are they more likely to be perceived as /t, s, ð/?
2. When English /t, s, ð/ occur in environments that would license emphasis in Arabic, do Arabic learners of English as an L2 misperceive them as emphatic sounds?
3. Is perceptual accuracy for English /t, s, ð/ associated with learners' L2 proficiency level?

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

In order to address the research questions, fourteen participants were recruited. Participants were native speakers of Saudi Arabic, aged between 25 and 30 years. A language background questionnaire was administered to assess L2 English proficiency. Participants were asked to provide self-reported ratings of their proficiency on a 7-point Likert scale and their length of residence in an English-speaking country. Based on these measures, participants were assigned to a high-proficiency group ($n = 7$) and a lower-proficiency group ($n = 7$). The high-proficiency learning group (HPL) had resided in the United States for more than four years and self-rated their overall English proficiency between 5 and 6. The lower-proficiency learning group (LPL) reported residing in the United States for less than one year and rated their English proficiency between 1 and 3.

Stimuli for the Perceptual Experiment

In order to establish the phonetic realization of the contrast between Arabic plain and emphatic consonants, production data from a single representative native speaker of Arabic were acoustically analyzed. The acoustic baseline and Arabic recordings were derived from a single native speaker to maximize experimental control and ensure consistency in the production of plain and emphatic consonants across vowel environments.

The speaker was asked to produce minimal or near-minimal monosyllabic Arabic word pairs, once with a plain consonant and once with its emphatic counterpart. The target words contained word-initial plain /t, s, ð/ and their emphatic counterparts, followed by different vowel environments.

The acoustic analysis of F1 and F2 values revealed that while emphatic consonants occurred across all vowel environments, plain consonants were produced in all environments except before low back vowels. Specifically, it was only emphatic consonants that were followed by vowels with F1 values higher than 600 Hz and F2 values lower than 1200 Hz. Based on these acoustic properties, low back vowels were grouped into a single vowel class that was used as a defining environment of emphatic consonants. The purpose of this classification was to examine whether introducing a plain consonant before a vowel class that naturally follows emphatic consonants would bias participants toward identifying the plain consonant as emphatic in perception.

To examine whether low back vowels influence the perception of a preceding plain consonant, stimuli consisting of Arabic and English non-words were compiled. Each stimulus contained one of the plain consonants /t, s, ð/ preceding either high front (/i, æ, u/) or low back vowels (/ɔ, ɑ, ʌ/). All vowels selected occur in both Arabic and English, ensuring cross-linguistic comparability. It was expected that placing a plain consonant before a low back vowel, an environment typically restricted to emphatic consonants, might shift listeners' perceptual categorization of the consonant toward an emphatic interpretation. The total number of experimental stimuli was 36 (18 in Arabic and 18 in English). The stimuli represented each of the three plain consonants appearing before the six vowel environments in Arabic and English.

To reduce predictability, emphatic counterparts of /ʃ, d, z/ were included as fillers in both the Arabic and English stimuli. Table 1 presents a sample of the stimuli used for the consonant /t/. All target consonants occurred in initial positions. A complete list of the stimuli is presented in Appendix.

The Arabic stimuli were recorded by a native speaker of Arabic, and the English stimuli were recorded by a native speaker of English, both in a quiet room using a digital recorder. Because Arabic plain consonants do not naturally occur before low vowels, as indicated by the acoustic analysis, the Arabic speaker—a trained linguist—was explicitly instructed to pronounce the non-words as transcribed in IPA. No production difficulties were observed when producing plain consonants before LB vowels.

TABLE 1
A SAMPLE OF THE STIMULI USED FOR /t/

Arabic non-word stimuli in IPA	/tib/	/tæg/	/tuf/	/tɔk/	/tav/	/tæf/
English non-word stimuli in IPA	/tip/	/tæk/	/tuv/	/tɒg/	/taf/	/tʌf/

Procedures

After completing the language background questionnaire, participants were seated in front of a laptop computer. A forced-choice identification task was administered, in which participants were instructed that they would listen to stimuli produced by an English native speaker (for the English stimuli) or by an Arabic native speaker (for the Arabic stimuli), and they needed to identify the most likely initial consonant in each stimulus by selecting one of two response options. One option represented a plain consonant, and the other represented its emphatic counterpart. Arabic orthographic symbols were used as options to select from, as they orthographically capture the plain–emphatic sound contrast. Although one option always corresponded to an emphatic consonant, the experimental trials consisted primarily of stimuli with plain initial consonants. Stimuli with emphatic initials were included only as fillers. Participants were presented with English stimuli first, followed by a short break, after which Arabic stimuli were introduced. This order was intended to minimize potential L1 phonological interference during the perception of non-native stimuli (i.e., cross-linguistic priming effects), as prior exposure to Arabic emphatic contrasts might increase participants' sensitivity to these features and influence subsequent L2 perception. However, as the presentation order was not counterbalanced, potential order effects cannot be entirely ruled out. Following data collection, participants' accuracy rates in identifying plain consonants were calculated. Stimulus presentation and response collection were implemented using Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2023).

IV. RESULTS

The study examined the effects of Condition (a within-subjects factor with four experimental conditions) and L2 Proficiency (a between-subjects factor with two levels) on perceptual accuracy. Participants were presented with the target consonants /t, ð, s/ in four conditions: (1) target consonants occurring in plain environments in Arabic stimuli (before high front-back vowels, H-FB); (2) target consonants occurring in emphatic environments in Arabic stimuli (before low back vowels, LB); (3) target consonants occurring in plain environments in English stimuli (before H-FB); and (4) target consonants occurring in emphatic environments in English stimuli (before LB). A mixed-design analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the effects of Proficiency and Condition on accuracy in perceiving the target consonants. Each consonant was analysed separately.

For the /ð/ sound, the analysis revealed a significant effect of Condition on accuracy, $F(3, 10) = 105.19, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .97$, observed power = 1.00, indicating a large effect. Post hoc comparisons (Bonferroni-adjusted) showed that participants exhibited significantly higher accuracy for Arabic stimuli in the H-FB vowel environment ($M = 95.24, SD = 12.10$) than for Arabic stimuli in the LB vowel environment ($M = 9.52, SD = 15.60$) or English stimuli in the LB vowel environment ($M = 54.76, SD = 24.83$), $p < .05$. There was no significant difference in accuracy between Arabic and English stimuli ($M = 97.62, SD = 8.90$) when they occurred in the H-FB vowel environment, $p > .05$. A similar pattern was observed for English stimuli, with participants exhibiting significantly higher accuracy in the H-FB environment than in the LB environment, $p < .05$. Accuracy was also significantly higher for English stimuli than for Arabic stimuli in the LB environment, $p < .05$. Overall, participants exhibited the highest accuracy for English stimuli in the H-FB environment and the lowest accuracy for Arabic stimuli in the LB environment, $p < .05$. Figure 1 illustrates accuracy rates across the four experimental conditions.

There was no significant effect of Proficiency on accuracy for the /ð/ sound, $F(1, 12) = 3.00, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .20$, observed power = .36. Post hoc comparisons showed that the HPL ($M = 67.85, SD = 11.55$) and LPL ($M = 60.71, SD = 15.50$) groups did not differ significantly, $p > .05$. In addition, there was no significant Proficiency $\times$ Condition interaction, $F(3, 10) = 0.31, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$, observed power = .09.

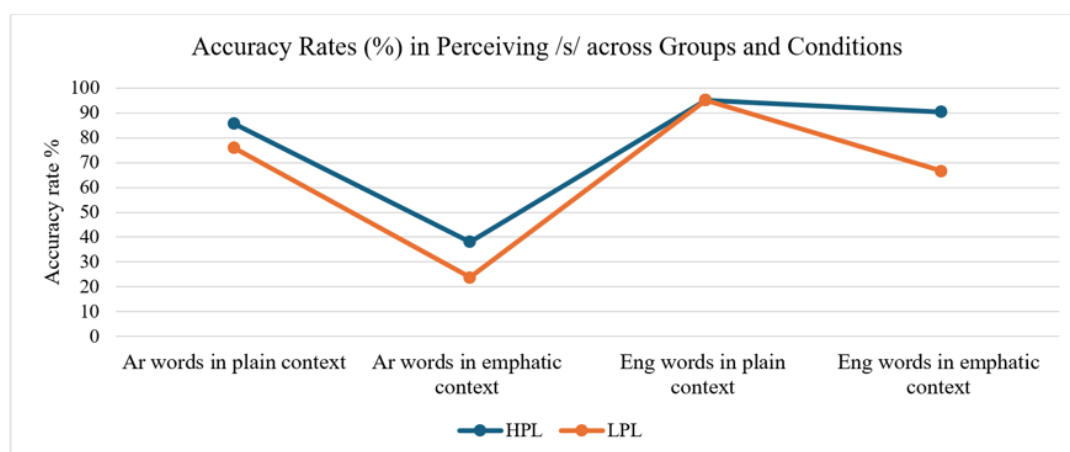


Figure 1.

As for the /t/ sound, the mixed-design ANOVA revealed a significant effect of Condition, $F(3, 10) = 72.91, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .96$, observed power = 1.00, indicating a large effect. Post hoc comparisons (Bonferroni-adjusted) indicated that participants exhibited significantly higher accuracy for Arabic stimuli in the H-FB vowel environment ($M = 92.86, SD = 14.10$) than for Arabic stimuli in the LB vowel environment ($M = 36.01, SD = 15.60$), $p < .05$. There was no significant difference in accuracy between Arabic stimuli in the H-FB environment ($M = 92.86, SD = 14.10$) and English stimuli in the LB environment ($M = 83.33, SD = 21.68$), $p > .05$. Similarly, no significant difference was observed between Arabic and English stimuli in the H-FB environment (Arabic: $M = 92.86, SD = 12.50$; English: $M = 100.00, SD = 0.00$), $p > .05$. The Bonferroni post hoc test further showed no significant difference between English stimuli in the H-FB environment ($M = 100.00, SD = 0.00$) and those in the LB environment ($M = 83.33, SD = 21.68$), $p > .05$. Accuracy was significantly higher for English stimuli in both the H-FB and LB environments than for Arabic stimuli in the LB environment ($M = 36.01, SD = 15.60$), $p < .05$. There was no significant effect of Proficiency on accuracy, $F(1, 12) = 0.84, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.07$, observed power = 0.14, indicating that the HPL ($M = 81.50, SD = 7.15$) and LPL ($M = 77.45, SD = 13.50$) groups did not differ significantly overall, $p > .05$. However, there was a significant Proficiency $\times$ Condition interaction, $F(3, 10) = 4.68, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.58$, observed power = 0.74. Figure 2 illustrate this interaction, showing that the magnitude of the accuracy decline in emphatic contexts differed across proficiency groups. Specifically, the HPL group exhibited lower accuracy than the LPL group for Arabic stimuli in emphatic (BL) environments, whereas the HPL group showed higher accuracy than the LPL group for Arabic stimuli in plain (H-FB) environments and for English stimuli in emphatic environment (BL).

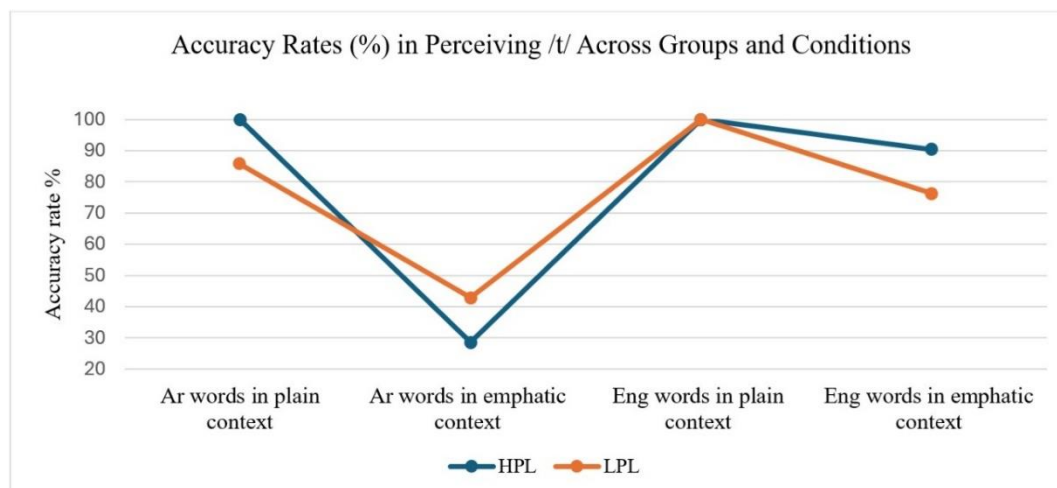


Figure 2.

Finally, the ANOVA was performed on the /s/ sound. The test revealed a significant main effect of Condition, $F(3, 10) = 21.33$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .87$, observed power = 1.00, indicating a large effect. Bonferroni-adjusted post hoc comparisons showed that participants exhibited significantly higher accuracy for Arabic stimuli in the H-FB vowel environment ($M = 81.0$, $SD = 17.1$) than for Arabic stimuli in the LB vowel environment ($M = 30.1$, $SD = 29.7$), $p < .05$. There was no significant difference in accuracy between Arabic stimuli in the H-FB environment ($M = 81.0$, $SD = 17.1$) and English stimuli in the LB environment ($M = 78.5$, $SD = 17.12$), $p > .05$. Likewise, no significant difference was observed between Arabic stimuli in the H-FB environment and English stimuli in the H-FB environment ($M = 95.2$, $SD = 12.11$), $p > .05$. Accuracy was significantly higher for English stimuli in the H-FB environment than for English stimuli in the LB environment, $p < .05$. In addition, accuracy for English stimuli in the LB environment was significantly higher than for Arabic stimuli in the LB environment, $p < .05$. The Bonferroni post hoc test further showed that participants exhibited significantly higher accuracy for English stimuli in the H-FB environment than for Arabic stimuli in the LB environment, $p < .05$. Figure 3 summarizes participants' accuracy rates across the experimental conditions. There was no significant main effect of Proficiency on accuracy for /s/, $F(1, 12) = 0.99$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$, observed power = .15, indicating that the HPL ($M = 77.5$, $SD = 20.05$) and LPL ($M = 65.5$, $SD = 10.7$) groups did not differ significantly, $p > .05$. There was also no significant Proficiency $\times$ Condition interaction, $F(3, 10) = 1.97$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .37$, observed power = .36.

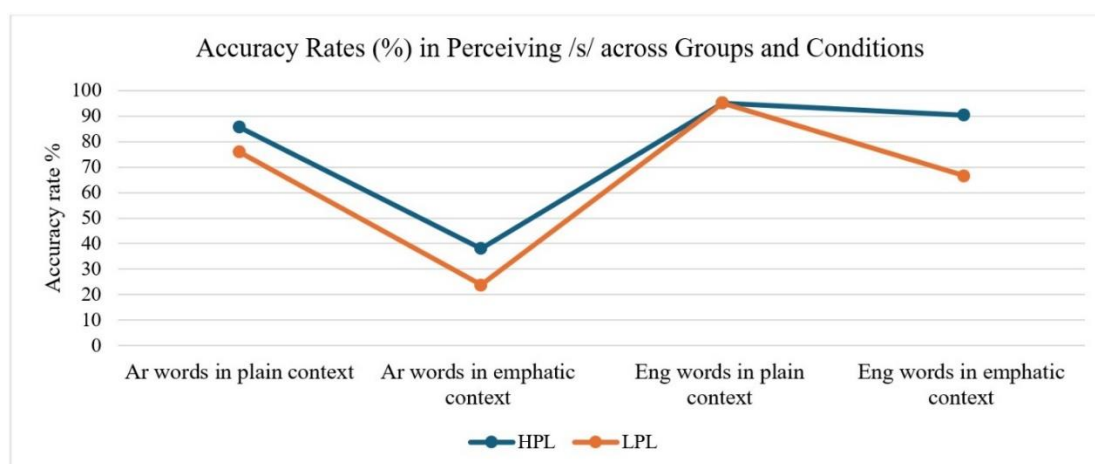


Figure 3.

V. DISCUSSION

The first objective of this study was to examine whether Arabic learners of English accurately perceive the Arabic consonants /t, s, ð/ when these sounds are introduced in phonological environments that, in Arabic, would license emphatic realizations (/t̤, s̤, ð̤/) in production. The second objective was to determine whether perceptual cues derived from Arabic stimuli extend to English stimuli, and whether L2 proficiency modulates the perceptual accuracy for English consonants.

The overall findings indicate that Arabic ESL learners' perception of English consonants is systematically shaped by Arabic phonological constraints. Specifically, Arabic ESL learners accurately perceived Arabic plain initial consonants

(/t, s, ð/) when these sounds occurred in their canonical Arabic phonological environments, namely before high front and high back vowels (H-FB). In contrast, the same plain consonants were frequently misperceived as emphatic (/t̤, s̤, ð̤/) when they were introduced before low vowels (LB). Importantly, this vowel-driven perceptual pattern extended to English stimuli. English initial consonants were more likely to be perceived as emphatic before LB vowels, and as plain before H-FB vowels, mirroring the same perceptual pattern observed in Arabic. An exception emerged for the consonant /t/, which was correctly identified as plain in English stimuli regardless of vowel environment. Finally, the findings indicate that the influence of L1 phonology on L2 perception was not affected by increased L2 experience or proficiency. Although the high-proficiency learner (HPL) group reported longer residence in an English-speaking environment (over four years), they did not significantly outperform the lower-proficiency learner (LPL) group in identifying English plain consonants. These results suggest that prolonged exposure to L2 and higher proficiency alone were insufficient to override L1 influence on perception.

One explanation for the systematic association between the perception of Arabic and English plain consonants as emphatic and the presence of LB vowels is related to the production of emphatic sounds. The production of emphatic sounds is characterized by a tongue-body retraction in the vocal tract. This may have biased listeners to perceive a plain consonant as emphatic when followed by a low back vowel. This is because Arabic speakers strongly associate emphatic consonants with a low back vowel environment, due to shared articulatory and acoustic properties. This tendency is consistent with previous findings demonstrating that emphatic consonants are systematically associated with lowered F2 and raised F1 values in adjacent vowels, reflecting the articulatory retraction characteristic of emphasis (Al-Masri, 2009; Card, 1983; Hetzron, 1989; Khattab et al., 2006).

The overall findings, which suggest that the perception of non-native sounds may be mediated through a native-language phonetic filter, can be most plausibly interpreted within Best's (1993, 1995) Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) and Flege and Bohn's (2021) revised Speech Learning Model (SLM-r). PAM predicts that non-native sounds are perceptually assimilated to the closest native phonetic category, particularly when those sounds are perceived as acceptable exemplars of an existing native phoneme. The model also posits a category-goodness difference, which predicts that when two non-native sounds are assimilated to a single native category but differ in their degree of similarity to that category, listeners will perceive both sounds as belonging to the same native phonemic category, despite differences in their goodness of fit. For example, AlMahmoud (2013) found that American learners of Arabic failed to reliably discriminate between Arabic plain /t/ and emphatic /t̤/, suggesting that these learners assimilated both sounds to the single English phoneme /t/, with differences perceived only in terms of category goodness rather than phonemic contrast. The present study revealed a reversed perceptual pattern, demonstrating that a single non-native English plain consonant (/s/ or /ð/) was mapped onto two native categories (/s, ʃ/ and /ð, ð/, respectively). Given that language learners are predicted to perceive non-native sounds based on their articulatory similarity to native categories, these findings are compatible with PAM, suggesting that participants assimilated the English plain consonants to two native phonemic realizations conditioned by phonological context. This interpretation is consistent with Best and Tyler's (2007) claim that non-native speech perception is systematically biased by perceived similarity between native and non-native phones.

The findings are also compatible with PAM's prediction that L1 allophonic, phonetic, and phonemic patterns may interfere with L2 perception, thereby decreasing perceptual accuracy. Specifically, if participants assimilated English /s/ and /ð/ to their closest native plain counterparts, they may have transferred Arabic-specific phonetic adaptations associated with these sounds to English, resulting in the categorization of emphatic realizations as variants of the corresponding English plain phonemes. In other words, while PAM typically predicts that two non-native sounds may be perceived as instances of a single native category, the present findings suggest that a single non-native plain sound may be perceived as two environment-dependent native realizations (plain vs. emphatic), depending on the environment in which it occurs. That is, when a non-native plain consonant—assimilated to a native plain category—is presented in environments that, in Arabic, are restricted to emphatic consonants, listeners may interpret it as an emphatic native sound.

The findings suggest that the influence of L1 phonology on L1 perception is more robust than its influence on L2 perception. This pattern was evident in the results, which showed that although emphatic environments reduced perceptual accuracy for both Arabic and English stimuli, that effect was greater for Arabic stimuli, suggesting stronger phonological conditioning within the native language system.

In addition to PAM, the revised Speech Learning Model (SLM-r) proposes that the establishment of new L2 phonetic categories depends on the perceived phonetic distance between L1 and L2 sounds, as well as on learners' ability to perceive phonetic contrast between the sounds (Flege & Bohn, 2021). SLM-r predicts that when L1 and L2 sounds are phonetically similar, learners may continue to rely on L1-based cue weighting strategies even with increased experience. Thus, they are less likely to form autonomous L2 categories and instead tend to map L2 sounds onto existing L1 representations. Because Arabic and English share closely overlapping articulatory and acoustic properties for the consonants /s/ and /ð/, participants in the present study may have failed to establish autonomous L2 categories, and they may also have retained Arabic-specific patterns of cue weighting during L2 perception. Consequently, English consonants were processed through an L1 phonetic filter, with vowel-based coarticulatory cues exerting a strong influence on consonant identification. This account explains why the English consonants were perceived in a similar manner to the Arabic consonants, with perception modulated by vowel environment.

The results showed that while the perception of /s/ and /ð/ was conditioned by emphatic environments in both Arabic and English stimuli, the perception of /t/ in English stimuli remained relatively accurate in the emphatic environment (specifically for HPL). That is, subjects' judgment of /t/ was not influenced by emphatic environments. One possible explanation for this pattern relates to differences in the acoustic and articulatory properties of stops versus fricatives. Fricatives such as /s/ and /ð/ are featured by relatively long-duration spectral cues, which are more susceptible to coarticulatory influences from adjacent emphatic environments. In contrast, the stop consonant /t/ is characterized by brief, temporally localized cues, which might make it less affected by emphatic spread. Another account for why perceptual cues associated with Arabic /t/ were not transferred to English /t/ may relate to the magnitude of the articulatory contrast between the plain /t/ and its emphatic counterpart /t̤/ compared with the contrast between /s, ð/ and their emphatic counterparts. The greater articulatory and acoustic contrast between plain /t/ and emphatic /t̤/—notably in tongue-body retraction and voice onset time—has been shown to yield a particularly robust perceptual contrast relative to other emphatic pairs (AlMahmoud, 2013; Hayes-Harb & Durham, 2016; Kulikov & Hazi, 2025). Because Arabic /t̤/ is produced with the tongue tip positioned further back than in /t/, and because it exhibits shorter voice onset time (VOT) than the plain consonant (20–30 ms vs. 40–60 ms) (AlMahmoud, 2013), participants' ability to discriminate /t̤/ from /t/ even in emphatic environments may have been reinforced. Thus, the effect of emphatic vowel environments observed for the Arabic /t̤/ did not generalize to the English /t/, suggesting that the strong segmental cues associated with the sound /t̤/ may have mitigated the influence of contextual coarticulation in L2 perception.

The third research question addressed the effects of proficiency. The results revealed no clear effects of proficiency level on perception; the HPL group was overall as inaccurate in perceiving English plain sounds as the LPL group. This finding contrasts with previous research showing that reaching a highly advanced L2 level usually reflects enhanced perceptual performance (Best & Tyler, 2007; Flege & Bohn, 2021).

The current finding suggests that the LPL group's inaccuracy may not be attributed solely to limited experience in the L2. If the HPL group had outperformed the LPL group, this would indicate that the LPL learners had not yet reached a proficiency threshold enabling them to perceive these sounds accurately. Instead, the finding suggests that speech-perceptual cues may play a stronger role in shaping L2 perception than the level of L2 proficiency. This is consistent with SLM-r's claim that L1 influence can persist even at relatively advanced stages of L2 learning. An alternative explanation is that all subjects were late learners of English. It could be speculated that early learners with greater L2 experience should exhibit reduced interference from L1 phonetic categories. Consistent with this view, learning a second language after puberty may result in reduced accuracy in identifying some non-native sounds due to a loss of neural plasticity essential for establishing L2 phonetic representations (Flege et al., 1995). However, these explanations are merely speculative and should be taken with caution because the study did not administer an objective measure of L2 proficiency.

Limitations of the study and future directions

While the present study provides useful insights into the role of emphatic environments in L2 speech perception, several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. First, the small sample size may limit generalizability and reduce statistical power, particularly for detecting smaller effects and interactions. However, it is important to note that the study employed a repeated-measures design with multiple observations per participant, which enhances statistical sensitivity by reducing between-subject variability. In addition, the large effect sizes observed across conditions suggest that the main findings are robust despite the small sample. Nevertheless, future research should replicate the study with larger sample sizes to increase statistical power and improve the reliability of proficiency-related effects.

Second, L2 proficiency was assessed through self-reported measures and length of residence, without the use of standardized or objective proficiency tests. Although self-ratings are commonly used in L2 research, they may not accurately reflect perceptual competence in the L2. As a result, proficiency-based findings in the present study should be interpreted with caution. Future research should incorporate objective proficiency measures (e.g., standardized proficiency tests) to better assess learners' phonetic knowledge.

Third, another limitation concerns stimulus representativeness. The Arabic and baseline recordings were produced by a single native speaker, which, while ensuring high experimental control and consistency across conditions, may limit generalizability to the broader population of speakers.

Finally, the experimental stimuli consisted of non-words produced in controlled laboratory conditions. Although this design was necessary to isolate the effects of vowel environment on consonant perception, it limits ecological validity. Naturalistic speech contains greater phonetic variability, prosodic structure, and lexical information, all of which may modulate the influence of emphatic spread. Future studies should therefore extend this paradigm to more naturalistic listening conditions.

Taken together, these limitations suggest that the present findings should be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, the study represents an important initial step toward understanding how language-specific phonological patterns—such as emphatic spread—influence L2 speech perception. Addressing these limitations in future research will allow for a more comprehensive account of the interaction between L1 phonological structure and non-native speech perception.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study assessed the interaction between plain and emphatic consonantal environments in speech perception. The findings indicate that participants' L1 Arabic phonetic knowledge shaped the perception of English sounds.

Specifically, the majority of the English plain consonants examined in this study were perceived in a similar manner to their Arabic counterparts, such that they were identified as emphatic when occurring before low back vowels. This pattern can be interpreted within the framework of the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM), which predicts that phonetic similarity between native and non-native sound categories may result in the assimilation of non-native sounds to existing native categories. In the present study, English plain consonants appear to have been assimilated to Arabic plain or emphatic categories depending on the vocalic context, reflecting the influence of language-specific coarticulatory patterns on L2 perception. The findings are also compatible with the revised Speech Learning Model (SLM-r), which proposes that L2 sounds are often perceived through the same phonetic system as L1 sounds, and that learners rely on familiar L1 phonetic cues when there is no evidence for new L2 categories. However, given the study's limited sample size and reliance on self-reported proficiency measures, any conclusions drawn from the findings should be regarded as tentative. Thus, the present findings should be viewed as only preliminary evidence motivating further investigation from future research.

APPENDIX. EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI

Arabic non-word stimuli in IPA	English non-word stimuli in IPA	Arabic non-word stimuli in IPA	English non-word stimuli in IPA	Arabic non-word stimuli in IPA	English non-word stimuli in IPA
/tib/	/tip/	/sik/	/sig/	/ðim/	/ðib/
/tæg/	/tæk/	/sæl/	/sær/	/ðæk/	/ðæg/
/tuf/	/tuv/	/suf/	/suv/	/dib/	/ðun/
/tøk/	/tøg/	/səq/	/səg/	/dib/	/ðɔl/
/tav/	/taf/	/sab/	/sam/	/ðak/	/ðag/
/tax/	/tal/	/sən/	/sad/	/ðat/	/ðan/

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Learners' Perception of and Attitude Toward Pronunciation Accuracy in English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia

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Abstract—If one is skeptical about others' pronunciation, then one might not be motivated to improve one's pronunciation attainment. The major purpose of this study was to examine how learners' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy correlate with their pronunciation accuracy in English. The study adopted quantitative approach. A sample of 100 eighth-grade students were randomly selected from the population of 5 junior high schools. We employed an adapted questionnaire and a pronunciation test utilizing the ELSA Speak technology to collect data. The data was analyzed using the descriptive statistics, the Pearson Product Moment, and the Multiple Linear Regression techniques with the help of SPSS software. All three alternative hypotheses put forward in this study are accepted. Firstly, students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is significantly correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy. Secondly, students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy has a significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy. Thirdly, both students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy together hold a significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy. There is sufficient evidence that students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy are correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy. As an implication of the present study, it is proposed as a reference to future research and pedagogical practices.

Index Terms—perception, attitude, pronunciation, accuracy, English

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication occurs when the message from the communicator is conveyed well to the communicant. In oral communication, pronunciation serves as one of the major components, as it determines whether the listener catches the spoken words or not (Moedjito, 2016; Gilakjani, 2016). When non-native speakers' pronunciation falls below a certain threshold level, even when they have good vocabulary and excellent grammar, communication does not take place (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Levis, 2018). Due to its significance in oral communication, within the context of English as a foreign language, pronunciation skill is essential to be taught to enhance learners' effective communication and overall language proficiency.

In spite of its important role, pronunciation has become the Cinderella in the field of language education, with English teaching-learning being no exception (Darcy, 2018). Concerning this issue, Suwartono (2014) identifies pronunciation as the most marginalized aspect of English teaching-learning. He argues that the apparent complexity of English pronunciation and misconception about what to teach is responsible for the neglect. He adds that there is a confusion in the part of teachers about how to teach it. Nevertheless, teachers of English should be creative and innovative in order to handle this (Suwartono et al., 2022). They are challenged with it as an approach to problem-solving. Successful pronunciation teaching and learning starts from careful preparation and "content packaging" (Gilakjani, 2012).

As a foreign language in Indonesia, English is learnt and used only to a limited extent within the school walls. The situation even becomes very challenging for the learners as they are rarely in touch with English pronunciation practice in the classrooms (Kang, 2015; Suwartono et al., 2024). For this reason, as the classroom facilitator the teachers play a vital role. As per the role, they are expected to be able to cope with the condition where students are struggling with the pronunciation of English. Effective and efficient efforts they can take may involve introducing and training the learners to think and act out in active manners such as reflective learning, learner-centered teaching, student engagement, self-awareness, and learner autonomy and empowerment (Wardani & Suwartono, 2019).

Our curiosity was piqued with a type of students who behave unfavorably while hearing better performers of English just because they may consider that the speakers use an exaggerated way of pronunciation. According to our professional experience in classroom setting, some students negatively reacted to fluent speakers of English by smiling cynically or exhibiting disapproval expression (Suwartono, 2014). Apparently, this refers to perceptual and attitudinal

variables confronting pronunciation skill. We were eager to learn about the link between the perceptual and attitudinal variables and the pronunciation performance in order to provide a contribution to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in Indonesia and beyond. According to a literature search, we still lack research on this topic, particularly regarding the connection of those perceptual and attitudinal variables with pronunciation aspect (Zafary, 2021; Zulkefly & Razali, 2019). Thus, we sought to answer the following questions:

- How is the students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy?
- To what extent is the students' English pronunciation accuracy?
- Is the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy significantly correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy?
- Does the students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy hold a significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy?
- Do the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy both together correlate significantly with their English pronunciation accuracy?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Learner Perception and Attitude in Language Learning

Perception and attitudes are distinct yet interconnected psychological concepts. Perception and sensing represent a unique source of how to experience something at all (Demuth, 2013). Perception is the result of the brain process in understanding or judging a thing that happens in the environment. Meanwhile, attitude refers to the extent to which an individual holds a positive or negative assessment or judgment of a particular behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000).

Perception and attitude are highly influential in education. Positive attitudes and perceptions are thought to be beneficial to learning (Almohtadi & Aldarabah, 2021; Bakoko et al., 2023; Hromova, 2019). Likewise, in the context of English language teaching and learning, perception and attitude affect learners' behaviour. According to a rather classic theory by Zanna et al. (1981), perception shapes how people interpret it and react to it.

In Indonesia, perception and attitude have been investigated extensively in their relation to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Jaliyya and Idrus (2017) found that learners in a boarding school in West Java, Indonesia have positive attitudes and are motivated to learn the language even though the motivation does not refer to intrinsic one. They argued that the research participants and Indonesian learners of English in general still value the status of English as the most international language.

Istiqomah et al. (2021) reported their finding related with language learner attitudes that Indonesian students have positive attitude to phonetics learning although, according to them, it is a challenging course. The research team assumed that the participants view phonetics as essential knowledge and or skill to support their spoken English proficiency.

In neighboring country Malaysia, research by Rayah et al. (2018) found out that the participants' attitude toward spoken English had a strong correlation with motivation in spoken English. The finding implies the importance of different strategies to be implemented by the English language educators to enhance students' motivation in communicative English subjects.

Within all the studies aforementioned, perception and attitude appear closely interconnected. Perception – process of constructing meaning from the environment – even if not made a research topic or variable under investigation, always comes up to provide explanations, clarification, elaboration, or reason behind one's attitude. In the context of language learning, an overwhelming majority of research on perception and attitude reveals a positive tendency. The next section will discuss the track record of these two variables in a narrower focus of attention, i.e. pronunciation as an essential aspect of language, in this case the English language.

B. Perception of and Attitude Toward Pronunciation Accuracy in English

While research on perception and attitude in the areas of learning, teaching, and education has been extensively conducted (Almohtadi & Aldarabah, 2021; Landberg & Partsch, 2023), there is a relatively small number of studies on perception and attitude which are specifically linked to English pronunciation mastery (Bakoko et al., 2023).

In the Middle East region, Almaqrn and Alshabeb (2017) found out that Saudi EFL students have a positive attitude toward the proper pronunciation of English despite low rate of improvement in their pronunciation. The participants seemed to consider the importance of proper pronunciation of English.

Japanese researchers Tsunemoto and McDonough (2020) conducted a survey of learner attitude toward English pronunciation and its relationship to perceived accentedness. Their main finding was that confidence in pronunciation was significantly correlated with accentedness scores. The stronger one's confidence in pronunciation, the farther away one's pronunciation will sound from nativelikeness.

A study by Bakoko et al. (2023) revealed that learners of English from particular religious backgrounds in Thailand, namely Buddhism and Islam, have neutral attitude toward their English pronunciation and perceived indirect influences of their religion on their English pronunciation. Further, the study also found out that learners from some religious backgrounds take an advantage in pronouncing some English sounds, letters, and words. This particularly is interesting.

Similarity in few segmental phonemes that exist in Arabic and English, for example, enables Muslim EFL learners to pronounce some sounds of English effortlessly due to positive transfer from Arabic sounds production (Suwartono, 2008).

Zafary (2021) investigated the Afghan EFL students' perceptions about English pronunciation. His study revealed that Afghan EFL students hold a positive perception about English pronunciation and feel enthusiastic toward their pronunciation related activities. This research finding, again, is compatible with previous studies of similar topics.

Students' attitude toward English pronunciation, which is often based on their perception about it, guides their actions and intentions towards it (Candan & Inal, 2020). Negative perception of British English pronunciation which is rare throughout Asia, for example, can lead learners of English in this region to negative attitude toward it which, in turn, results in unfavorable actions over this type of English pronunciation, such as avoidance, disapproval, or even other stronger negative verbal or nonverbal expressions. With this assumption, it is a simple thing to explain why such a cynical smile in this regard either inside or outside classroom context happens.

As elaborated on above, it can be inferred that research on learner perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation tends to exhibit positive relationship. It is most likely that the current study, with the main purpose being to evaluate the association between perception and attitude both together and pronunciation accuracy in English, will follow this trend. We have come across no study investigating pronunciation accuracy in our literature search, making it justifiable enough for a follow-up. Based on the literature review above, we proposed three hypotheses in regards to the third, fourth, and fifth research questions:

- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is not significantly correlated with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ho)
- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is significantly correlated with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ha)
- Students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy does not hold a significant correlation with their pronunciation in English. (Ho)
- Students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy holds a significant correlation with their pronunciation in English. (Ha)
- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy simultaneously do not correlate significantly with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ho)
- Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy simultaneously both at once correlate significantly with their pronunciation accuracy in English. (Ha)

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This research employed quantitative approach. More specifically, this study belongs to correlational survey (Suwartono, 2014). It aims to figure out whether the three variables under study are related without manipulating any of them and, if so, in what way. It involved perception and attitude as independent variables, while pronunciation accuracy as dependent one.

B. Respondents

Our research population comprised students of eight grade at all 5 junior high schools in Adipala District, Cilacap City, Central Java Province, Indonesia. We randomly recruited a sample of 100 students from the population. Table 1 describes the population and sample size in more detail.

TABLE 1
RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

No.	School names	Population	Sample size
1	State Junior High School 1 of Adipala	256	40
2	State Junior High School 2 of Adipala	256	40
3	Local Government Junior High School of Adipala	42	6
4	Muhammadiyah Junior High School of Adipala	32	5
5	Christian Junior High School of Adipala	64	9
	Total	650	100

C. Data Collection

To gather data on perception of and attitudes toward English pronunciation accuracy, we used a five-point Likert scale ("Strongly Agree" through "Strongly Disagree") questionnaire. The perceptual questionnaires and attitudinal questionnaires were administered successively one after another. A brief oral explanation supporting the points stated in the informed consent was given by the surveyor right before the respondents provided their responses.

In an attempt to consider the quality of instruments, we created the blueprints during the questionnaire preparation and test content coverage. It is an approach to the logic validity (Taherdoost, 2016). The perceptual questionnaire consists of 15 items encompassing the aspects of English pronunciation in general, respondent's own English pronunciation, and motivation to improve pronunciation adapted from Srakaew (2021). Detail is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
PERCEPTUAL QUESTIONNAIRE BLUEPRINT

No	Aspects	Indicators	Distribution of items
1.	English pronunciation in general	Importance of English pronunciation	1, 2, 3, 11, 12
		Opinion of having good pronunciation	4, 5, 6, 13
2.	Respondent's own pronunciation	Self-confidence of the pronunciation mastery	7, 8, 15
3.	Motivation in improving pronunciation	Need to have better pronunciation	9, 10, 14

The attitudinal questionnaire consists of 14 items involving aspects of attitude toward English speakers, attitude toward learning English, and attitude toward English teachers adapted from Gardner (2004) in International AMTB (Attitude Motivation Test Battery) Research Project. More detail is given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
ATTITUDINAL QUESTIONNAIRE BLUEPRINT

No	Aspects	Indicators	Distribution of items
1.	Attitude toward English speakers	Need to practice English with native speakers	1, 2
2.	Attitude toward learning English	Excitement in learning English	3, 4, 5
		Feeling of having English class	6, 7
		Feeling of speaking English	11, 12, 13, 14
3.	Attitude toward English teachers	Satisfaction on the English teachers	8, 9, 10

The English pronunciation accuracy test was conducted utilizing ELSA Speak application, which is currently considered the best (in terms of practicality, efficiency, and efficacy) pronunciation application available in the internet to practice and test pronunciation (Adawiah et al., 2024). With this tool, the users (i.e. respondents) were provided with 13 sentences to read, pronounce, and record on mobile phones. Upon completion, scores instantly appear on the screen. In spite of the fact that the application can measure both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation, we utilized it solely for assessing segmental aspects mastery, as the current study focused on pronunciation accuracy instead of pronunciation properness. See Table 4 for details.

TABLE 4
PRONUNCIATION TEST BLUEPRINT

Aspect	Indicators	Items
Segmental features	Vowels /i/ /ɪ/ /e/ /æ/ /ə/ /ʌ/ /ɑ/ /ɒ/ /ɔ:/ /ʊ/ /u:/	Numbers 1 to 13
	Diphthongs /eɪ/ /aɪ/ /əʊ/ /aʊ/ /ɔɪ/ /ɪə/ /eə/ /ʊə/	
	Consonants /l/ /r/ /w/ /v/ /b/ /s/ /z/ /h/ /ð/ /θ/ /ʃ/	

D. Data Analysis

Data of this study is numeric and was analyzed using statistical techniques (Suwartono, 2014), i.e. the descriptive statistics, the Pearson Product Moment technique, and Multiple Linear Regression technique. The descriptive statistics was used to analyze the students' perception of and attitude toward the English pronunciation accuracy and pronunciation performance (research questions 1 and 2). The Pearson Product Moment technique was used to assess the relationship between students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy, and between students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy (research questions 3 and 4). Last, the Multiple Linear Regression technique was used to examine the relationship of students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude towards English pronunciation accuracy both at once with their English pronunciation accuracy (research question 5). The Pearson Product Moment and the Multiple Linear Regression analyses were performed with the help of SPSS software.

IV. RESULTS

A. Students' Perception of and Attitude Toward Their English Pronunciation

After analyzing the perceptual data, we organized the results in the following summary table.

TABLE 5
STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY

Number of Items	n	Total Scores	M (Avg.)
15	100	60.74	4.05

The table shows that the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy reached an average response of 4.05. When consulted to the levels of the mean scores on 5-point Likert Scale, the rate falls into category "High" (Almohtadi & Aldarabah, 2021). In regard to attitudinal data, we displayed the analysis results as follows.

TABLE 6
STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY

Number of Items	n	Total Scores	M (Avg.)
14	100	52	3.7

As can be seen, the students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy gained an average response of 3.7. It falls within category "High".

B. Students' English Pronunciation Accuracy

After analyzing data on English pronunciation accuracy collected with the help of ELSA Speak software, we found out that the students' pronunciation accuracy attainment was very unsatisfying, with an average score of 44.19 on a 100-point basis. Table 7 summarizes the result.

TABLE 7
ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY TEST RESULT

Number of Items	n	Total Scores	M (Avg.)
13	100	4419	44.19

Dataset of the three variables being investigated was further processed to test the proposed hypotheses.

C. Relationship Between Students' Perception of English Pronunciation Accuracy (X1) and Their English Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)

For this purpose, we applied the Pearson Product Moment analysis technique. In regard to the relationship between students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy (X2) and their pronunciation accuracy in English (Y), we processed both simultaneously. The following table summarizes the results.

TABLE 8
SUMMARY OF PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT ANALYSIS RESULT

		Total Perception (X1)	Total Attitude (X2)	Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)
Total Perception (X1)	Pearson Correlation	1	.699**	.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	n	100	100	100
Total Attitude (X2)	Pearson Correlation	.699**	1	.494**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	n	100	100	100
Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.494**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	n	100	100	100
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)				

The table shows that the students' perception (X1) and English pronunciation accuracy (Y) hold a significant relationship. Sig. (2-tailed) is $0.000 < 0.05$, with the Pearson correlation of 0.472. Therefore, the hypothesis saying "Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is not significantly correlated with their English pronunciation accuracy." (Ho) is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, meaning that there is a positive relationship between the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy.

D. Relationship Between Students' Attitude Toward English Pronunciation Accuracy (X2) and Their English Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)

Table 8 also indicates that the students' attitude (X2) and English pronunciation accuracy (Y) have a significant relationship. Sig. (2-tailed) is $0.000 < 0.05$, with the Pearson correlation of 0.494 (49.4%). Therefore, the hypothesis saying "Students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy holds no significant correlation with their English pronunciation accuracy." (Ho) is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, meaning that there is a

positive association between the students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy and their English pronunciation accuracy.

E. Association Between Students' Perception of and Attitude Toward English Pronunciation Accuracy and Their English Pronunciation Accuracy

To examine the association of students' perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy (X1 and X2 simultaneously) with their English pronunciation accuracy, we applied the Multiple Linear Regression analysis. The result is summarized in Table 9.

TABLE 9
SUMMARY OF MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULT

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.643	7.324		.088	.930
	Total Perception (X1)	.331	.161	.248	2.053	.043
	Total Attitude (X2)	.447	.168	.321	2.658	.009
Dependent Variable: Pronunciation Accuracy (Y)						

The result of the analysis shows that the t-value of the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy is 0.043, while the t-value of their attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy is 0.009. It means there is enough evidence that the students' perception of and attitude toward the pronunciation accuracy concurrently correlate significantly with their English pronunciation accuracy. Hence, the proposed hypothesis saying: "Students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy jointly have no significant correlation with their pronunciation accuracy in English." (Ho) is rejected. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, meaning that a positive correlation exists between students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and students' attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy both together and their English pronunciation accuracy.

V. DISCUSSION

In regards to the major purpose of this study, which was to examine how learners' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy correlate with their English pronunciation accuracy, three main findings are discussed here.

Based on the proposed hypotheses testing results, positive relationships exist between either independent variables individually with dependent variable or independent variables both together with dependent variable. This represents enough evidence that the students' perception of English pronunciation accuracy and attitude towards English pronunciation accuracy hold a significant association with their English pronunciation accuracy. This finding aligns with previous studies by Almaqrn and Alshabeb (2017) and Bakoko et al. (2023).

Finding of the present study is good news for those struggling with English language teaching and learning. It involves pronunciation, which is paramount to oral communication, yet remains neglected in language teaching and learning. We address the findings to offer pedagogical recommendations to teachers and learners of English as the world's most international language thus far by prioritizing students' favorable perception and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy to improve their English oral communication clarity (when speaking) and comprehension (when listening).

As touched on earlier, teachers of English may notice some students exhibiting negative behaviors while hearing peers speaking "differently" due to their ignorance or erroneous belief. English teachers with good command of spoken English and excellent pronunciation will know that those learners with "different" speech manner actually speak English with pronunciation accuracy instead. Lack of exposure and limited access to model English speakers, native-like speakers of English, and native speakers of English in a foreign environment have led to this ignorance and erroneous belief. An earlier study by Mirza (2015) reported a finding that might refer to this situation. The difference in learners' pronunciation achievement in English as a foreign language (EFL) versus English as a second language (ESL) settings could be attributed to this issue. Another possible causal factor is learner confidence (Tsunemoto & McDonough, 2020). In their study, they found out that learner confidence is correlated with accented scores. When learners of a second language feel confident of their accented speech, they tend to preserve their first language pronunciation and disapprove the second language pronunciation. Professional English language educators should know and solve this problem.

Regarding perception of and attitude toward English pronunciation accuracy, we need more in-depth research in order to help provide explanations concerning why and how. In addition, we need research on pronunciation which encompasses not only segmental aspects, but also suprasegmental features as to give more comprehensive information (Wang, 2020; Abdelrahim, 2020; Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021). It is likely that less-motivated students react worse to speakers or users of English with nicest prosodic features, such as stress, intonation, and rhythm which contribute to naturalness, properness, and "melody" of the English language. To competent non-speakers of English, such pronunciation skill with suprasegmental features means nativelikeness (Suwartono, 2008).

It is undeniable that being able to speak English as a foreign language with nativelikeness is a pride in Indonesia. People may be appreciative of being able to sound more like a native speaker than like Indonesian. Such ability increases their status in the community as well gives them an elevated identity (Rini, 2014). That teaching English pronunciation is not to bring the learners to native-like accent, but rather to intelligibility (Gilakjani, 2016) is another matter.

VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, it can be inferred from this study that the students' perception of and attitudes toward English pronunciation accuracy hold a positive correlation with their pronunciation accuracy in English. One good pedagogical implication from this research is that language educators should expose learners to good spoken English and foster positive perceptions and attitudes toward English pronunciation accuracy and pronunciation performance in general. Future research should involve prosodic aspects of English. In addition, deeper data collection techniques, such as participatory observation, need to be employed in future investigations for rich, detailed, and more comprehensive information.

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The Effects of Listening Strategy Instruction on Listening Strategy Use and Listening Self-Efficacy of Chinese Non-English-Major Postgraduate Students

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Abstract—The present study aimed at exploring the effects of listening strategy instruction on listening strategy use (LSU) and listening self-efficacy (LSE) among Chinese non-English-major (NEM) postgraduate students. To this end, a sample of 78 NEM postgraduate students from two intact classes at a public university in China was selected as the research participants. The two classes were randomly allocated to an experimental group (EG, $n=39$) and a control group (CG, $n=39$). The experimental group was instructed with the explicit integrated listening strategy instruction (LSI), while the control group was instructed using the traditional comprehension approach (TCA) without any explicit listening strategy guidance. To assess participants' listening strategy use and listening self-efficacy, the Listening Strategy Questionnaire (LSQ) and the Listening Self-efficacy Questionnaire (LSEQ) were administered before and after the intervention. The study's findings revealed that listening strategy instruction significantly enhanced EG learners' listening strategy use and their listening self-efficacy. The outcomes of this research could provide SL/FL teachers, learners, and curriculum developers with notable insights into teaching listening skills to SL/FL adult learners.

Index Terms—listening strategy instruction, listening strategy use, listening self-efficacy, Chinese non-English-major (NEM) postgraduate students

I. INTRODUCTION

Listening is not only a widespread communicative activity but also a key to language learning (Vandergrift & Goh, 2009). To fully acquire a second language (SL) or foreign language (FL), learners first need to master listening skills. Developing listening comprehension in fact aids learners to gain success in language acquisition through enhancing comprehensible input. Hamouda (2013) also emphasized that listening comprehension offers learners suitable conditions to acquire and develop other language abilities. Despite the vital role of listening comprehension in communication and language learning, SL/FL learners have rarely been taught to listen effectively (Graham, 2017). Listening skills have historically received minimal systematic attention (Emerick, 2019; Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). Over the past few decades, however, there has been a growth in the number of studies conducted in the research field of SL/FL listening comprehension, as evidenced in relevant literature review (e.g., Dalman & Plonsky, 2025; Fathi et al., 2020; Huang & Lin, 2023; Vanderplank, 2013).

In order to prepare learners to grasp the skills of “how to” listen and to improve their listening comprehension, researchers and instructors need to know how listening strategies can be taught actively and systematically. Shannon (2008) stated that listening strategy instruction (LSI) can provide learners with opportunities to explore and apply new listening strategies, helping them become more effective, strategic, and autonomous language learners. Siegel (2015) also argued that many ESL/EFL (English as a second or foreign language) learners have reported increased listening confidence following listening strategy intervention. As such, for ESL/EFL learners, it is crucial to employ effective strategies during English listening activities to enhance their self-efficacy in learning (Carrier, 2003).

Listening in ESL/EFL is a process that involves cognitive, strategic, and affective factors (Liang, 2010). Earlier literature indicates that listening comprehension correlates with listening strategy use (e.g., Bozorgian & Shamsi, 2025; Gu et al., 2009). Additionally, it has been shown that listening self-efficacy, an important affective factor, is significant in listening (Huang et al., 2017; Kassem, 2015; Yabukoshi, 2021). According to the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), affective variables act to impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device. Thus, in

terms of learning to listen, it is worthwhile to explore whether the specific instruction of listening strategies can affect learners' listening strategy use (LSU) and listening self-efficacy (LSE). Besides, in the teaching of EFL in China, there is a lack of listening research aimed at Chinese NEM postgraduate students (Dan, 2015; Lou, 2004). Given the educational background of the fast-expanding enrollment of Chinese NEM postgraduate students and the growing importance of learning English for international communication, there is an urgent need to update knowledge about this target group in the research field of LSI.

As part of a broader project examining various cognitive, strategic, and affective factors in EFL listening, this study examines the effects of LSI on LSU and LSE among Chinese NEM postgraduate students. Two types of listening instructional approaches (listening strategy instruction vs. traditional comprehension approach) were implemented in the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG), respectively. The CG's listening strategy use and listening self-efficacy were measured to provide comparable data against those of the EG. Thus, the present study aims to explore two research questions: 1) Does listening strategy instruction significantly improve Chinese NEM postgraduate students' listening strategy use? 2) Does listening strategy instruction significantly improve Chinese NEM postgraduate students' listening self-efficacy?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. SL/FL Listening and Strategy Use

Listening strategy use among SL/FL learners with different listening ability levels has been a focus of listening strategy research. The empirical findings indicated that successful and unsuccessful listeners can be clearly distinguished by the acquisition of listening strategies, especially metacognitive ones (Vandergrift, 2003). Through such strategy learning, language learners can plan their learning process, implement their actions, monitor their progress, and evaluate their accomplishments (Goh & Hu, 2014; Little, 2022). Listeners can be prompted to reflect on and evaluate their listening strategy use, as well as to enhance their knowledge framework. Some studies have confirmed that the use of listening strategies is closely related to the dynamic development of listening ability (e.g., Episiasi et al., 2023; Goh & Taib, 2006; Tosun, 2021). The choice and use of listening strategies influence learners' listening performance. Meanwhile, changes in the proportions of metacognitive and cognitive strategies reflect learners' development of listening ability. For example, Graham et al. (2011) underlined the highly individual nature of strategy use and strategy development, and highlighted the significance of students cultivating a sense of being "in charge" of the listening process, encompassing the knowledge of when and how to employ appropriate strategies. The effectiveness of strategy application depends not only on learners' second-language knowledge but also on their perception abilities, strategic knowledge, and the ability to coordinate the application of multiple strategies (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Therefore, teachers should make full use of their awareness of various learning situations and give overall consideration to learners' differences that could affect teaching. This will enable learners to master the strategic skills that suit their own learning needs and proficiency level (Roussel et al., 2019).

B. SL/FL Listening and Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as beliefs in individuals' capacities to organize and implement the actions necessary to achieve their desired outcomes. Schunk (2003) stated that academic accomplishment can be predicted by self-efficacy, as it largely determines how much effort learners are willing to put into learning tasks. Paying greater attention to the role of listening self-efficacy, Graham and Macaro (2008) conducted a program of strategy instruction to investigate its effects on learners' listening comprehension and self-efficacy beliefs. The findings revealed that in some aspects of listening self-efficacy, the EG learners who had obtained feedback benefited the most. Still, the benefits were not as significant as predicted when compared with the CG learners. Aiming to examine the relationship among listening strategy use, listening performance, and self-efficacy, Kassem (2015) conducted a study in Egypt with 84 English-major sophomore students. The results revealed that participants' listening strategy use correlated significantly with their listening proficiency and listening self-efficacy.

Meanwhile, a study by Tabrizi and Saeidi (2015) investigated the interrelationships among EFL learners' self-efficacy, autonomy, and listening comprehension. One primary finding of the study showed a positive relationship between learners' listening self-efficacy beliefs and their listening comprehension performance. Later, Huang et al. (2017) surveyed 510 EFL learners from five universities in southwest China and central China on a similar issue. The study indicated that learners' listening self-efficacy was the most significant predictor of listening proficiency, followed by other relevant variables. The findings confirmed a strong linkage between listening self-efficacy and listening proficiency among the Chinese EFL university students. Canaran et al. (2024) also confirmed that learners with a higher level of self-efficacy in SL/FL listening are more likely to attain better performance in listening comprehension.

C. Listening Strategy Instruction

Several scholars (e.g., Chambers, 2007; Field, 2008; Graham, 2006) have noted that in many language classrooms, listening is treated as an activity to be "delivered" rather than a skill to be developed in its own right. Surveys have shown that teachers tend to DO listening activities or tests with their learners rather than TEACH them how to listen (Field, 2008; Graham & Santos, 2015). Thus, listening is regarded primarily as a test usually based on a textbook

exercise. Field (2008) called this practice the “Comprehension Approach” (CA), and he contended that it is of little benefit to the development of listening ability. The CA assumes that as long as learners are exposed maximally to listening material, they can enhance their listening skills. The CA does provide learners with abundant opportunities to practice listening. However, as highlighted by Lynch (2009), the CA attaches too much importance to the testing context and learners’ faculty of memory, thus possibly leading to boredom in the classroom and a less engaging learning atmosphere.

Additionally, the CA cannot offer much help in transferring learning skills from one task to another (Field, 2008). In recent decades, various listening-teaching methods have been under review (Nguyen, 2018). Some scholars (e.g., Graham, 2017; Goh, 2010; Li et al., 2022) have advocated that instruction in listening should receive greater research attention rather than being ignored as something that develops on its own. Specifically, focus should be placed on language learners about how to learn, and language teachers should learn how to facilitate the learning process. As such, in the field of listening pedagogy, listening strategy instruction is especially necessary and can develop learners’ strategic abilities to comprehend spoken SL/FL input, which is the basis of much language learning.

Among the studies to solve the problems in listening instruction, some researchers conducted listening strategy instruction as one approach to the teaching of listening (e.g., Goh, 2002; Graham, 2017; Ngo, 2019; Vandergrift & Baker, 2015; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). It has been found that listening strategy instruction can broaden learners’ repertoire of listening strategies and improve learners’ listening proficiency. Besides, listening strategy instruction can provide learners with opportunities to explore and apply listening strategies, helping them become more effective, strategic, and autonomous language learners (Su, 2003). Therefore, conducting listening strategy instruction in SL/FL listening classes has been recommended by several researchers (e.g., Vandergrift, 2004; Zhang et al., 2022; Huang & Lin, 2023).

According to the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), affective variables can act to impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device. Earlier literature indicates that listening comprehension correlates with affective factors such as listening self-efficacy. However, more explorations are needed especially in the area of systematic classroom intervention, as the studies concerning the impact of LSI on listening self-efficacy have shown varied results. Some studies have reported a positive effect on enhancing listening self-efficacy (e.g., Graham, 2007; Graham & Macaro, 2008; Milliner & Dimoski, 2019), while others have demonstrated no effect or a nonsignificant effect (e.g., Fathi et al., 2020; Khosroshahi & Merç, 2020; Simasangyaporn, 2016).

Carrier (2003) states that it is important for ESL/EFL learners to employ effective strategies during their listening activities. Compared with the progress made in research investigating strategies that listeners use (e.g., Episiasi et al., 2023; Goh, 2002; Goh & Hu, 2014; Graham & Santos, 2013; Tosun, 2021), the number of studies on listening strategy instruction is still relatively small (e.g., Carrier, 2003; Siegel, 2015; Ngo, 2019; Fathi et al., 2020). In the case of China, only a small number of papers have been published in the key academic journals concerning the instruction of listening strategies (e.g., Chang et al., 2016; Dong & Li, 2009; Lou, 2004; Su, 2003). Besides, studies on listening strategy instruction in or outside China have mainly been conducted among middle school students, undergraduates or learners from English language institutes (e.g., Borhany et al., 2015; Lin, 2019; Lotfi et al., 2016; Su, 2003; Yang, 2018). The relevant research on LSI is particularly limited in the context of EFL learning among Chinese NEM postgraduate students (e.g., Dan, 2015; Liu et al., 2009; Lou, 2004). Furthermore, the effects of listening strategy instruction on listening strategy use (LSU) or listening self-efficacy (LSE) are still under researched and existing research has had incongruent results (e.g., Fathi et al., 2020; Graham & Macaro, 2008; Kaivanpanah et al., 2020; Khosroshahi & Merç, 2020; Milliner & Dimoski, 2019; Simasangyaporn, 2016). Thus, the present study aims to identify effective instructional methods to help NEM postgraduate students grasp effective listening strategies and enhance their self-efficacy, thereby developing their autonomy in the EFL listening learning process.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants of this study were 78 non-English-major postgraduate students at a public university in China. The non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to facilitate sampling, given the researcher’s familiarity with the sampling environment. The chosen participants included both female ($n = 62$) and male ($n = 16$) learners. The age group (21-25 years old) included 71 students, and the age group (26-29 years old) included 7 students. On average, the participants have learnt English for about 13 years. None of them reported having received systematic listening strategy instruction before. The two intact classes were randomly assigned as an experimental group ($n = 39$) and a control group ($n = 39$).

B. Instruments

Two questionnaires, namely the Listening Strategy Questionnaire (LSQ) and the Listening Self-efficacy Questionnaire (LSEQ), were used in the present study. The two questionnaires were piloted respectively among two groups of students (71 participants per group) before use. The participants were newly enrolled NEM postgraduates with a similar educational background and were not involved in the experiment. The questionnaires were administered to them for initial data collection, and the reliability indices of the two questionnaires were subsequently checked. The

results of the pilot study showed that the two scales were applicable to the experiment and demonstrated strong reliability. In addition, the content validity of the two scales was assessed and approved by two content experts during the pilot study. All the experts are professors with at least 30 years of EFL teaching and research experience and are academically qualified.

(a). *College English Test Band-4 (CET-4)*

To provide the background information on the English language proficiency level, the CET-4 scores of the participants were reported in the study. CET-4, a large-scale and high-stakes English language proficiency test, has been administered in China for over three decades and taken by over 18 million university students annually (Yu & Jin, 2015). As an English test with the most test-takers in the world, CET-4 has been proven to have high reliability and validity (Jin & Yang, 2018). In the current study, all subjects had passed the CET-4 before enrolling as postgraduate students at the university. Based on their self-reported CET-4 scores in their class profiles, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to assess the homogeneity of the two groups' general English proficiency. The results (see Table 1) showed that no statistically significant difference existed between the mean scores of the EG ($M = 514.05$, $SD = 51.95$) and the CG ($M = 514.95$, $SD = 39.95$); $t(76) = -.86$, $p > .05$. As such, the two classes were at the similar level in the general English proficiency before the intervention.

TABLE 1
GENERAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (CET-4 SCORE) FOR EG AND CG

Groups	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
Experimental	39	514.05	51.95	-.86	.932
Control	39	514.95	39.95		

(b). *Listening Strategy Questionnaire (LSQ)*

The instrument employed in the investigation of listening strategy use was the Listening Strategy Questionnaire (LSQ), which uses a 5-point Likert-type scale developed from other similar listening strategy questionnaires (e.g., Dong, 2016; Harris, 2007; Piamsai, 2014; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010; Zhu, 2010). The researcher's experience in teaching EFL also informed the development of the LSQ. The LSQ included 56 items that explored learners' use of listening strategies within four constructs: *metacognitive strategies* (19 items), *cognitive strategies* (25 items), *social strategies* (6 items), and *affective strategies* (6 items). To ensure that each Likert-type item was understandable to participants, the LSQ was translated into Chinese by the principal researcher of the current study. Two domain experts (in the field of translation and EFL research) verified the translation's accuracy, and subsequent revisions were made where necessary. The LSQ was administered to the participants twice (before and after the listening instruction program). The reliability coefficient of the LSQ, as measured by the Cronbach's alpha formula, was .92 in the current study.

(c). *Listening Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (LSEQ)*

To measure the listening self-efficacy of the subjects, the present study employed the Listening Self-efficacy Questionnaire (LSEQ), which was adapted from a synthesis of the Listening Self-efficacy Questionnaire (LSEQ) developed by Kassem (2015) and the Self-efficacy Questionnaire by Graham and Macaro (2008). The LSEQ consisted of 40 items categorized into six dimensions: (1) *Progress* (9 items), measuring perceptions of improvement in listening performance; (2) *Observational Comparison* (4 items), assessing perceived performance relative to peers; (3) *Physiological States* (8 items), evaluating internal feelings during listening; (4) *Strategic Awareness* (6 items), measuring awareness of listening strategies; (5) *Facing Challenges* (8 items), assessing willingness to tackle challenging tasks; and (6) *Anticipation* (5 items), evaluating confidence in future improvement. To ensure that each Likert-type item is understood by the participants, the LSEQ was translated into Chinese by the principal researcher of the current study. Two domain experts (in the field of translation and EFL research) verified the translation's accuracy and subsequent revisions were made where necessary. The LSEQ was administered to the participants twice (before and after the listening instruction program). The reliability coefficient of the LSEQ, as measured by the Cronbach's alpha formula, was .96 in the current study.

(d). *Research Ethics*

Approval to conduct the research project was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Committee. Before the listening instruction program began, the participants were briefed about the procedures and purposes of the research. Then, they signed the informed consent forms which allowed the researcher to analyze and report the collected data. The participants' cooperation in this research was entirely voluntary at all stages of the study, and their anonymity and personal information were strictly protected throughout the project.

C. *Data Collection*

All participants in the EG and CG of this research project were enrolled in a 17-week EFL listening course (held once a week, with 80 minutes allocated to listening practice) during the first academic year of their postgraduate studies. The

intervention program lasted 13 weeks (from the 3rd to the 15th). The listening materials adopted in this listening course included the designated textbook (Li, 2012), some supplementary audio files based on daily-life listening activities, and some video clips (about 140 words/minute, 1-3 minutes). Other supplementary materials involved model listening practice test papers. Both the EG and the CG were taught using the same textbook and identical supplementary listening materials. Only the EG was subject to the instruction on implicit and integrated listening strategies.

Specifically, the intervention program for the EG was based on a six-stage instructional model. It was adapted from models proposed by Oxford (1990), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Su (2003), and Zhu (2010). The six stages involved preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation, revision, and expansion. In the present study, the 80-minute listening class for the EG was divided into two consecutive sessions (40 minutes per session). Each session encompassed three parts:

The first part involved 10 minutes of pre-listening activities, focused on preparation and presentation. The activities were aimed at raising strategic consciousness. The participants first discussed the topic under the teacher's guidance, and their schema or background knowledge was activated during the discussion. Then the teacher related the conversation to the specific strategies introduced and defined. With a think-aloud method, the teacher modeled the utilization of the strategies and further explained in detail as to how the strategies may help learners comprehend the oral input.

The second part was conducted within the duration of 20 minutes with the while-listening activities covering the practice of listening strategies that are newly taught. Participants were given opportunities to practice the new strategy during the listening tasks. Then, the learners and the teacher continuously summarized the lesson's main points. The learners also discussed with peers some questions that require further thought based on the listening content.

The third part was the 10-minute post-listening activities covering evaluation and revision. The subjects in the experimental group checked their understanding of the listening material, evaluated the effectiveness of the listening strategy used, and exchanged opinions on the topic and the strategy use. Based on the discussion, they would make revisions to the strategies to be deployed in future listening tasks.

It should be noted that when each strategy instructional session began, the previously taught strategies were quickly reviewed and discussed again to refresh the prior learning on strategy use. With increased awareness of listening strategy use, learners were further guided to reinforce and coordinate the use of multiple strategies in the listening comprehension process.

Meanwhile, the CG also attended a similar level listening course for 17 weeks. Both groups underwent 13 weeks of instruction (from the 3rd to the 15th). The difference between the two groups was that the CG received no listening strategy instruction, whether explicit or implicit. Unlike the EG, the CG received only the traditional teaching procedure for listening materials, usually called the Listen-Answer-Check Approach (Vandergrift, 2004) or the Comprehension Approach (Field, 2008). Such an instructional practice (named as the traditional comprehension approach, or TCA in this study) in the CG listening class entailed presenting learners with a recorded passage that lasts around two or three minutes, then using a comprehension exercise to assess their comprehension of the material. As a follow-up, the teacher shared the correct answers with the class. The same procedure was repeated for the different listening texts.

Apart from the listening instruction and practice in class, both groups experienced extensive exposure to out-of-class listening activities. The participants had to complete the same outside-class listening assignments chosen by the instructor and were encouraged to practice the listening materials. At the same time the EG subjects were asked to expand the use of their listening strategies and submit learning journals every two weeks about their learning gains with listening strategy use. The CG subjects just needed to finish the out-of-class listening assignments without having to employ listening strategies or submit learning journals.

D. Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, the gathered data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 26. A one-way between-groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to test whether statistically significant differences existed between the EG and CG on LSU and LSE, respectively. Pituch and Stevens (2016) claimed that in a two-group pretest-posttest design, the pre-test is generally correlated with subjects' post-treatment scores. Pallant (2016) argued that ANCOVA is appropriate for evaluating the impact of an intervention or experimental manipulation while controlling for pre-test scores. For each variable in this study, the pre-test scores were used as a covariate to "control" for pre-existing differences between the experimental and control groups. Besides, paired-samples t-tests were also conducted to show the within-group change from the pre-test to the post-test for each variable, respectively.

IV. RESULTS

A. Result of RQ1

RQ1: Does listening strategy instruction significantly improve Chinese NEM postgraduate students' listening strategy use?

To explore the impact of the two different listening instructional approaches (LSI vs. TCA) on listening strategy use (LSU) for the experimental and control groups, respectively, the results of a paired-samples t-test on listening strategy use (LSU) served as the baseline data (see Table 2). The paired-samples t-test results indicated a statistically significant

increase in the LSU mean score for the EG. Table 2 shows that the EG's LSU mean score increased from 2.98 to 3.21 after the intervention, a difference that was statistically significant ($MD = -.23, t = -4.27, p < .001$). On the other hand, although the CG's LSU mean score also increased from 2.97 to 3.04 after the intervention, this change was not statistically significant ($MD = -.07, t = -1.36, p > .05$).

Additionally, a one-way between-groups ANCOVA was conducted to compare the effects of the two different listening instructional approaches on the LSU of the two groups, respectively. The type of listening instruction (LSI vs. TCA) was the independent variable, and the dependent variable was the post-intervention LSU mean scores. The pre-intervention LSU mean scores were used as a covariate in the ANCOVA. Preliminary analyses indicated that the assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance, reliability of the covariate, linearity, and homogeneity of regression slopes were not violated. The ANCOVA results (see Table 3) showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the EG and CG on the post-intervention LSU scores ($F(1, 75) = 4.83, p = .031$, partial eta squared = .06). Hence, these results suggested that LSI had a more facilitative effect on the LSU in the EG subjects than in the CG subjects who were taught with TCA.

TABLE 2
PAIRED-SAMPLES T-TEST (PRE- AND POST-INTERVENTION LSU DATA)

Groups	Pre-intervention			Post-intervention			MD	t	Sig.
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
Experimental	39	2.98	.42	39	3.21	.43	-.23	-4.27	.000***
Control	39	2.97	.33	39	3.04	.40	-.07	-1.36	.182

*** $p < .001$

TABLE 3
ANCOVA RESULTS FOR POST-INTERVENTION LSU DATA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	5.784 ^a	2	2.892	27.128	.000	.420
Intercept	1.341	1	1.341	12.578	.001	.144
Pre-intervention LSU	5.221	1	5.221	48.977	.000	.395
Listening Instruction	.515	1	.515	4.832	.031	.061
Error	7.995	75	.107			
Total	775.609	78				
Corrected Total	13.778	77				

B. Result of RQ2

RQ2: Does listening strategy instruction significantly improve Chinese NEM postgraduate students' listening self-efficacy?

To explore the impact of the two different listening instructional approaches (LSI vs. TCA) on listening self-efficacy (LSE) for the EG and CG, the results of a paired-samples t-test on listening self-efficacy (LSE) served as the baseline data (see Table 4). The paired-samples t-test results indicated a statistically significant increase in the LSE mean scores for both groups. Table 4 shows that the EG's LSE mean score increased from 2.87 to 3.16 after the intervention, which was statistically significant ($MD = -.29, t = -4.99, p < .001$). Likewise, the CG's LSE mean score increased from 2.76 to 2.85 after the intervention, which was also statistically significant ($MD = -.09, t = -2.55, p < .05$).

Additionally, a one-way between-groups ANCOVA was conducted to compare the impacts of the two different listening instructional approaches on the LSE of the two groups, respectively. The independent variable was the type of listening instruction, and the dependent variable was the post-intervention LSE mean scores. The pre-intervention LSE mean scores were used as a covariate in the ANCOVA. Preliminary analyses indicated that the assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance, reliability of the covariate, linearity, and homogeneity of regression slopes were not violated. The ANCOVA results (see Table 5) showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the EG and CG on the post-intervention LSE scores ($F(1, 75) = 12.69, p = .001$, partial eta squared = .15). Hence, these results suggested that LSI had a more facilitative effect on the LSE in the EG subjects than in the CG subjects who were taught with TCA.

TABLE 4
PAIRED-SAMPLES T-TEST (PRE- AND POST-INTERVENTION LSE DATA FOR EG AND CG)

Group	Pre-intervention			Post-intervention			MD	t	Sig.
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
Experimental	39	2.87	.51	41	3.16	.48	-.29	-4.99	.000***
Control	39	2.76	.56	39	2.85	.51	-.09	-2.55	.015*

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

TABLE 5
ANCOVA RESULTS FOR POST-INTERVENTION LSE DATA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	14.823 ^a	2	7.412	95.573	.000	.718
Intercept	1.808	1	1.808	23.318	.000	.237
Pre-intervention LSE	12.954	1	12.954	167.042	.000	.690
Listening Instruction	.984	1	.984	12.685	.001	.145
Error	5.816	75	.078			
Total	725.192	78				
Corrected Total	20.640	77				

V. DISCUSSION

One research aim in the present study was to investigate whether listening strategy instruction improves listening strategy use (LSU) among Chinese NEM postgraduate students. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in mean scores for LSU between the EG and the CG. It could be inferred that the EG subjects had employed more strategies after receiving listening strategy instruction than those without it. This result aligned with Sotoudeh's (2013) argument that listening strategy instruction expands learners' strategy repertoire. As a result, learners were able to use appropriate strategies in listening task completion more successfully.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of some prior studies on LSU. For instance, Ngo (2019) showed that students reported using strategies more often and more appropriately after 11 weeks of strategy instruction. Irgin and Erten (2020) confirmed that listening strategy instruction encourages young learners to use both cognitive and metacognitive strategies and, at the same time, contributes to the awareness of using suitable listening strategies in related activities. The findings of the present study also aligned with those of other studies conducted in the Chinese EFL context (Dan, 2015; Huang & Lin, 2023), confirming the facilitating effect of listening strategy instruction.

Another aim of the present study was to investigate whether listening strategy instruction helps Chinese NEM postgraduate students to enhance their listening self-efficacy (LSE). This study found a statistically significant difference in the LSE mean scores between the two groups. In other words, the EG subjects significantly enhanced their LSE after receiving LSI, aligning with Graham's (2006) stance that SL/FL learners were able to gainfully apply the strategies learnt in the process of listening comprehension. By employing the strategies taught in LSI, such as Advance Organization, Predicting, and Resourcing, learners' sense of personal control in the listening process was enhanced, which in turn contributed to a higher listening self-efficacy.

The finding also concurs with some other studies. For instance, Graham and Macaro (2008) found that after immersion in a listening strategy instruction program, 68 lower-intermediate learners of French in England improved not only their listening proficiency but also their confidence in learning. Graham (2011) further argued that self-efficacy is essential for the development of proficient listening skills and that LSI can enhance self-efficacy. According to Goh and Taib (2006), strategy instruction that engaged learners in reflecting on and discussing strategy use not only led to improved listening comprehension and strategic knowledge, but also to boosted confidence in listening. The study of Milliner and Dimoski (2024) also reported that lower-proficiency EFL learners experienced a noticeable growth in self-confidence after the listening instructional intervention. The knowledge gained from LSI and its subsequent mastery in listening tasks could serve as key resources for enhancing the EG subjects' listening self-efficacy. However, the findings of the current research were at variance with those of some other studies (e.g., Fathi et al., 2020; Khosroshahi & Merç, 2020; Simasangyaporn, 2016) that found no significant impact of listening strategy instruction on learners' listening self-efficacy. As such, this field of study warrants greater research attention to provide more empirical details on the underlying constructs that may affect EFL listening success across different contexts.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study specifically explored the effects of listening strategy instruction (LSI) on listening strategy use (LSU) and listening self-efficacy (LSE) among Chinese non-English-major (NEM) postgraduate students who had a basic level of English proficiency (as indicated by their CET-4 results). The findings demonstrated statistically significant differences between the EG and CG on the LSU and LSE. The employed strategy instruction model proved effective in developing learners' LSU and enhancing their LSE. The present study enlightens ESL/EFL instructors on how to promote and coordinate learners' development in the strategic and affective domains related to listening more effectively in ESL/EFL situations. It can also contribute to the enhanced awareness among teachers on how they can strategize their roles as listening comprehension instructors to university-level ESL/EFL learners.

Though the research yields valuable insights into matters of listening strategy instruction, it is prudent to note that the present study has several limitations. Firstly, this study was conducted among only 78 NEM postgraduate students in the field of social sciences at a public university in Eastern China, which limits the selection of the research site and the sampling of the population. Generalizing the results of this study to all Chinese NEM postgraduate students should be treated with caution. Secondly, the overall efficacy of LSI was constrained by the time available for program delivery. The participants in the present study attended a listening instruction program that lasted only 13 weeks in a semester,

which may have limited the potential development of more positive outcomes attributable to the strategy instruction.

Considering the limitations presented, some recommendations are offered for future research directions. Firstly, a larger sample size, representing diverse disciplinary populations, is recommended for future comparative studies to achieve better representation. Secondly, an extended period of LSI could prove to be more effective. A longer period of instruction and follow-up in tracing the development of learners' linguistic foundations and strategic knowledge could yield more precise data on learners' internalized listening strategy use and the manifestations of listening self-efficacy in successful ESL/EFL learning.

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Inside the Sentence: An Evaluation of How Thai University EFL Learners Build Academic Sentences

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Abstract—Academic vocabulary is essential for successful university-level writing, yet Thai EFL university learners often struggle to use it productively in context. This study investigates Thai university students' academic vocabulary knowledge through a sentence-writing test that captures three dimensions of productive performance: lexical, semantic, and structural complexity. Thirty English major students enrolled in an English Composition Writing course completed a Sentence Writing Test consisting of 16 Academic Word List verbs, each requiring three sentences. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied, with strong reliability demonstrated through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .747$) and inter-rater Kappa agreement ($\kappa = .821$, $p < .001$). Results revealed low overall performance, with learners achieving only 17% of the total possible score, indicating limited productive academic vocabulary knowledge despite an estimated general vocabulary size of approximately 10,000 word families. ANOVA findings showed significant differences across the three dimensions, $F(2, 478) = 67.263$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .22$, with pairwise comparisons indicating that learners performed significantly best in lexical complexity, followed by semantic, and weakest in structural complexity. These patterns reflect a developmental progression from reliance on lexical form toward meaning and syntactic application. The findings suggest that productive academic vocabulary requires higher-order cognitive skills and is constrained by limited academic language resources. The study highlights the need for pedagogy that integrates sentence-level production, explicit academic vocabulary instruction, and support for deeper semantic and syntactic development.

Index Terms—academic vocabulary, sentence writing, Thai EFL university learners

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic vocabulary plays a central role in successful university-level writing, yet it remains one of the most challenging components of second language development for many learners. In the Thai EFL context, where English is primarily learned through formal instruction and exposure to academic discourse is limited, students often struggle to integrate academic vocabulary appropriately and accurately into sentence-level writing. Studies across EFL contexts show that learners recognize the importance of academic vocabulary but continue to experience difficulties with register awareness, word choice, collocations, and disciplinary variation, all of which affect academic writing quality (Min & Sukying, 2024; Durrant, 2013; Therova, 2022; Coxhead, 2012). These challenges are amplified in Thailand, where instruction often emphasizes receptive knowledge rather than productive use.

Although previous studies have examined vocabulary size and depth among Thai learners (Jingjit, 2015; Namsaeng et al., 2025), far fewer have investigated how learners actually employ academic vocabulary in productive tasks such as sentence writing. Research consistently shows that vocabulary depth often lags behind breadth, especially for low-frequency academic vocabulary, leading to difficulties when learners attempt to incorporate such words into their writing. Importantly, receptive knowledge alone does not guarantee accurate or contextually appropriate productive use. As Zhong (2012) demonstrates, even learners who recognize academic words may struggle to deploy them flexibly and meaningfully in sentence-level writing, highlighting a persistent gap between knowing a word and being able to use it.

The concept of sentence writing as an assessment of productive vocabulary originated from the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) (Paribakht & Wesche, 1996), which measures learners' progression from initial recognition to sentence-level production. Level V, which requires learners to use a target word in a sentence, represents the highest stage of productive knowledge. However, the VKS has been critiqued for its linear and self-reported scoring system. Because the scale treats all stages as sequential and equally spaced, the resulting data are nominal rather than ordinal,

meaning that two learners may receive the same score while demonstrating different underlying lexical abilities (Waring, 2002). To address the limitations of self-reporting, scholars have developed sentence-writing tests evaluated through analytical scoring of the sentences produced. To more accurately capture productive vocabulary knowledge, researchers argue for revising the sentence-writing component by requiring multiple sentences, allowing flexible word forms, and applying analytical scoring to better capture productive academic vocabulary knowledge (Zhong, 2012).

Sentence writing provides a clear window into learners' ability to select, manipulate, and contextualize academic vocabulary in meaningful ways. The sentence writing in this study directly reveals dimensions of lexical, structural, and semantic complexity, features that cannot be fully assessed through vocabulary size or depth tests alone. This study therefore evaluates Thai EFL university learners' use of academic vocabulary in sentence writing, with specific attention to these three dimensions of complexity. Understanding these patterns will not only illuminate learners' lexical strengths and limitations but also offer valuable insights for improving academic writing instruction and vocabulary pedagogy in Thai higher education. Moreover, because current vocabulary assessments rarely capture the multi-dimensional nature of productive academic vocabulary, little is known about how Thai learners actually use academic vocabulary when constructing sentences. Addressing this gap is essential for designing targeted instructional interventions that respond to learners' real lexical needs. Therefore, the two research questions are addressed:

1. To what extent do Thai EFL university learners possess academic vocabulary knowledge in sentence writing?
2. What knowledge do Thai EFL university learners demonstrate in the lexical, structural, and semantic dimensions of sentence writing?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Academic Vocabulary Knowledge

After learners have mastered the 2,000–3,000 most frequent words in English, the acquisition of more specialised vocabulary becomes increasingly important for advanced academic and professional communication (Nation, 2022). Academic vocabulary, however, is not defined uniformly across the literature. Anderson and Freebody (1981) describe academic vocabulary as sub-technical or semi-technical words, referring to items that are not discipline-specific but are nonetheless essential for understanding academic texts. Corson (1985) highlights another dimension, viewing academic vocabulary as carrying a tone of formality and intellectual sophistication, making it central to the language of scholarly discourse. Earlier, Martin (1976) characterised academic vocabulary as the set of words commonly used in the research process, including vocabulary for analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, which supports critical thinking and academic writing.

To facilitate the effective learning of academic vocabulary, Nation (2022) proposed a framework consisting of four complementary strands: meaning-focused input (exposure to vocabulary through reading and listening), meaning-focused output (use of vocabulary in speaking and writing), language-focused learning (direct instruction of form, meaning, and use), and fluency development (practice in using known vocabulary more automatically). Together, these strands emphasise that academic vocabulary learning requires a balanced approach that integrates both explicit instruction and meaningful communication.

Academic vocabulary knowledge can be measured through several complementary approaches. First, it can be assessed in terms of vocabulary size, using instruments such as the Vocabulary Size Test (Nation & Beglar, 2007) and the Vocabulary Levels Test (Webb et al., 2017), in which learners select meanings, match words to definitions, or choose synonyms. Second, academic vocabulary can be evaluated through depth of knowledge using measures such as the Word Associates Test (Read, 1998), as well as through corpus-based analyses that quantify academic vocabulary use in writing. Tools such as AntWordProfiler, LexTutor, and Coh-Metrix help examine lexical sophistication, lexical density, lexical diversity, and academic vocabulary coverage (Nation, 2022; Read, 2000). In addition, contextualized academic tasks, including summarizing texts, describing processes, writing research reports, or giving presentations, provide evidence of learners' ability to use academic vocabulary appropriately in authentic academic contexts (Corson, 1985). Finally, productive academic vocabulary knowledge can be assessed through tasks requiring the accurate use of target words in context, such as controlled productive word use in context, sentence-writing tasks, or writing samples analyzed for lexical features (Zhong, 2018). This study measures the Thai EFL undergraduate students' academic vocabulary by using the sentence writing test.

B. Sentence Writing in Supporting Vocabulary Knowledge and Vice Versa

The relationship between sentence writing and vocabulary growth is significant, as writing tasks play a crucial role in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and long-term retention. Research demonstrates that engaging in sentence-writing activities not only strengthens learners' vocabulary use but also fosters greater motivation and engagement in writing. First and foremost, writing tasks promote the development of lexical quality, including lexical sophistication, diversity, and collocational competence, key components of effective communication (Laufer, 2024). In addition, task effectiveness studies show that sentence-writing tasks are more beneficial for vocabulary learning than gap-filling activities, regardless of learners' proficiency levels (Park, 2018). Research on multimedia integration further indicates

that combining multimedia input with sentence-writing tasks significantly enhances vocabulary learning outcomes, with learners exposed to richer content formats achieving higher scores (Teng & Zhang, 2024).

Sentence-writing activities also contribute to increased motivation, as structured writing tasks, such as those incorporating FrameNet, have been associated with higher learner engagement and more effective vocabulary application in writing (Tuan, 2010). Moreover, the cognitive demand required to generate meaningful sentences encourages deeper processing of vocabulary items, which supports stronger retention and more robust lexical development (Laufer, 2024). Although the benefits of sentence writing for vocabulary growth are well documented, some studies note that improvements in writing quality may not always align with gains in vocabulary knowledge, suggesting the need for continued exploration of instructional strategies that effectively integrate vocabulary learning with writing development (Laufer, 2024).

This study highlights the benefits of sentence writing by examining three dimensions of complexity: lexical, structural, and semantic. Crossley (2020) investigated linguistic features that contribute to writing quality and identified three primary dimensions—lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, and text cohesion. The present study adopts the first two constructs but excludes text cohesion, as the analysis focuses on sentence-level production rather than multi-sentence compositions, as in Crossley's work. Regarding the semantic dimension, text cohesion is reconceptualized as semantic complexity, emphasizing the depth, clarity, and contextual appropriateness of meaning within individual sentences. Semantic complexity reflects learners' ability to produce sentences that demonstrate accurate meaning, logical relations, and contextually relevant ideas, aligning with the notion that meaning-making depends on the interplay of lexical choices, semantic relations, and argumentative structures within a text (Halliday & Hasan, 2014).

To conclude, academic vocabulary is essential for advanced academic communication and is generally understood as semi-technical language used across disciplines, vocabulary that conveys formality, and words central to academic reasoning. Effective learning requires balanced exposure, explicit instruction, productive use, and fluency practice, and it can be assessed through vocabulary size tests, depth measures, corpus-based analyses, and productive tasks such as sentence writing. Sentence writing, in particular, enhances vocabulary growth by promoting lexical sophistication, diversity, and collocational accuracy, encouraging deeper cognitive processing, and supporting long-term retention. This study employs sentence writing to measure productive academic vocabulary by examining lexical, structural, and semantic complexity, adapting Crossley's (2020) framework to suit sentence-level performance.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Research Design

This research employed a cross-sectional study design, collecting data at a single point in time (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted to investigate Thai EFL university learners' academic vocabulary knowledge through sentence-writing tasks. This design was suitable for examining learners' performance across multiple dimensions of complexity, lexical, structural, and semantic, and for generating statistical evidence regarding their productive academic vocabulary use. Overall, the research design allowed for a systematic and rigorous examination of participants' sentence-writing abilities, providing meaningful insights into their linguistic strengths and developmental needs.

B. Participants and Setting

The participants consisted of 30 English major students enrolled in an English Composition Writing course at a university in northeastern Thailand. Sentence writing was integrated into the initial stages of the course as part of the developmental process aimed at preparing students to compose various types of essays. The general vocabulary size of the students was approximately 10,000 word families, as estimated by the Vocabulary Size Test (Nation & Beglar, 2007), calculated using the percentage score (50.97%) multiplied by 200.

C. Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was the Sentence Writing Test, designed to elicit students' productive use of academic vocabulary. Sixteen academic words were selected based on three criteria: (1) inclusion in the Academic Word List (AWL), (2) verb forms classified at the B2 level of the CEFR, and (3) the ability to be derived into at least three additional parts of speech, adjectives, adverbs, and nouns. The final words include *demonstrate*, *restrict*, *emphasize*, *select*, *vary*, *interact*, *structure*, *integrate*, *construct*, *perceive*, *function*, *specify*, *justify*, *evolve*, *shift*, and *exclude*.

The participants were required to write three sentences for each target word. Each sentence was evaluated according to three criteria: lexical complexity (0–2 marks), structural complexity (0–3 marks), and semantic complexity (0–2 marks) (Crossley, 2020; Halliday & Hasan, 2014). For lexical complexity, participants who produced a more sophisticated or derived form of the target word, such as nominalizations or abstract nouns, received 2 marks. Use of the base form without modification received 1 mark, while blank responses or misspelled forms were assigned 0 marks. For structural complexity, sentences categorized as complex or compound–complex were awarded 3 marks. Compound sentences received 2 marks, simple sentences received 1 mark, and responses that did not constitute a complete sentence (e.g., fragments, phrases, incomplete clauses) were given 0 marks. For semantic complexity, sentences that

demonstrated depth of meaning and contextually appropriate use received 2 marks. Sentences conveying only basic or literal meaning received 1 mark, whereas blank responses or semantically inappropriate sentences received 0 marks. Each sentence was therefore scored out of 7 marks, and with three sentences per target word, the maximum possible score for each word was 21 marks.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers sought permission from the institutional gatekeeper to access one intact classroom at the university. The objectives of the study were clearly explained, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were provided with clear instructions in Thai to minimize any potential misunderstanding or language-related burden. After the participants completed the test, the data were double-checked by an interrater to ensure rater consistency. Descriptive statistics, including mean, percentage, and standard deviation, were then employed, followed by additional inferential statistical analyses.

IV. RESULTS

A. Modest Academic Vocabulary Proficiency in Thai EFL University Learners' Sentence Writing

TABLE 1
THAI EFL UNIVERSITY LEARNERS' ACADEMIC VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE IN SENTENCE WRITING

Word No.	Min	Max	Mean (%)	S.D.	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	.00	100.00	25.24	27.03	.750
2	.00	85.71	15.24	25.46	.733
3	.00	71.43	11.91	17.94	.727
4	.00	76.19	38.41	19.73	.760
5	.00	76.19	17.62	18.85	.718
6	.00	76.19	23.02	23.40	.693
7	.00	61.90	26.20	19.12	.727
8	.00	33.33	2.70	8.45	.744
9	.00	71.43	18.41	22.22	.734
10	.00	23.81	1.90	5.39	.745
11	.00	71.43	30.64	17.63	.741
12	.00	66.67	18.73	17.81	.721
13	.00	38.10	3.33	8.12	.729
14	.00	66.67	19.37	21.37	.743
15	.00	71.43	11.75	16.72	.727
16	.00	38.10	7.14	12.86	.743
Total			16.98	135.97	.747

*Note: N=30

Table 1 presents Thai EFL university learners' academic vocabulary knowledge in sentence writing across 16 academic words. In order to support the statistical analysis, the raw scores (out of 21) were converted into percentages. The overall results indicate that Thai EFL university learners demonstrated limited academic vocabulary knowledge in sentence writing. The total percent score was 17% of the full score, showing generally low performance across lexical, structural, and semantic dimensions. Most items received low means, with several words scoring close to zero. The consistently low minimum scores and wide score ranges further suggest substantial variation among learners. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the sentence writing is .747 indicating good reliability. Overall, the findings indicate that learners struggled to use most academic words accurately at the lexical, structural, and semantic dimensions in their sentence writing.

Moreover, the inter-rater reliability analysis shows that the inter-rater reliability for the scoring was high, with a Kappa value of .821 based on 480 valid cases. The small standard error (.020) and large test statistic ($T = 43.658$) indicate that the estimate is stable, and the agreement between raters is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Overall, the results demonstrate strong and reliable agreement in the ratings (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
KAPPA INTER-RATER RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Measure of Agreement	Value	Std. Error	Approx. T	Sig.
Kappa	.821	.020	43.658	0.000

*Note: Valid N = 480

B. Academic Vocabulary Knowledge Across Lexical, Structural, and Semantic Complexities in Sentence Writing

The results also indicated that the Thai EFL university learners exhibited differing levels of academic vocabulary knowledge across the lexical, structural, and semantic dimensions of sentence-writing complexity. The ANOVA was conducted to examine whether lexical, structural, and semantic complexities differed significantly in sentence writing. The results revealed a highly significant main effect, $F(2, 478) = 67.263$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .220$;

Cohen, 1988), indicating that approximately 22% of the variance in participants' scores was accounted for by differences among the three dimensions of academic vocabulary complexity (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
ANOVA RESULTS FOR ACADEMIC VOCABULARY COMPLEXITY IN SENTENCE WRITING

Academic Vocabulary Knowledge	df	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Aspects of Academic Vocabulary Complexity	(2, 478)	67.263	.000*	0.22

The pairwise comparisons further revealed clear differences across the three aspects of academic vocabulary complexity. Learners performed significantly better on lexical than on semantic complexity ($t = 9.001$, $p < .001$), with a small-to-medium effect size ($d = 0.41$). An even larger difference was observed between lexical and structural complexity ($t = 11.510$, $p < .001$), with a medium effect size ($d = 0.53$). Finally, learners also scored significantly higher on semantic than on structural complexity ($t = 6.230$, $p < .001$), although this comparison showed the smallest effect ($d = 0.28$). These findings indicate that learners demonstrated the highest performance in lexical complexity, followed by semantic and then structural complexity. Overall, all three comparisons were statistically significant, suggesting that Thai EFL university learners display uneven proficiency across the lexical, structural, and semantic dimensions of academic vocabulary use in sentence writing (see Table 4).

TABLE 4
PAIRWISE COMPARISONS OF ACADEMIC VOCABULARY COMPLEXITY ASPECTS

Pair Comparison	Mean difference	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Effect size	95% confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Lexical vs Semantic	5.208*	.579	9.001	.000	0.41	3.818	6.598
Lexical vs Structural	8.635*	.750	11.510	.000	0.53	6.833	10.437
Semantic vs Structural	3.427*	.550	6.230	.000	0.28	4.748	2.105

To conclude, the Thai EFL university learners performed significant differences among the three dimensions of sentence-writing performance (see Table 5): lexical, structural, and semantic. Learners scored highest on the lexical dimension ($M = 22.29$), followed by semantic ($M = 17.08$), and lowest on the structural dimension ($M = 13.66$).

TABLE 5
ACADEMIC VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE ACROSS THREE ASPECTS OF COMPLEXITY

Complexity Aspects	Mean (%)	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Lexical	22.29	27.43	1.053	0.123
Semantic	17.08	21.37	1.128	0.499
Structural	13.66	18.91	1.470	1.704

V. DISCUSSION

A. Academic Vocabulary Acquisition Order

The finding that lexical complexity achieved the highest mean scores, significantly surpassing semantic and syntactic complexity, aligns with established research on the developmental progression of second language vocabulary acquisition. Early in acquisition, learners tend to rely on lexical form, as the most salient connection between languages is based on word-level associations that mediate L2 performance (Talamas et al., 1999). Less proficient learners experience greater interference with form-related items, while more proficient learners shift toward meaning-based processing, supporting a developmental movement from form to meaning (Talamas et al., 1999). This progression is further reinforced by evidence that direct access to meaning emerges later with increased proficiency, and that fluent use represents an additional stage beyond meaning retrieval (Kroll & Tokowicz, 2001). Vocabulary scholarship similarly notes that acquisition begins with establishing a form–meaning link, yet productive use requires far more extensive lexical knowledge (Schmitt, 2008). Moreover, vocabulary knowledge develops incrementally, with form, meaning, and use unfolding along a continuum rather than being acquired simultaneously (Schmitt, 2007). Taken together, these perspectives corroborate the observed pattern in this study, suggesting that participants were most capable of demonstrating vocabulary form, less able to convey meaning, and least proficient in using vocabulary accurately within syntactic structures.

B. Reflecting Higher-Order Thinking Skills Through Academic Vocabulary Knowledge

The overall mean percentage score (17%) indicates that learners struggled substantially with producing academic vocabulary in sentence writing, despite having an estimated general vocabulary size of approximately 10,000 word families. This discrepancy suggests that academic vocabulary requires higher order thinking skills beyond basic lexical recognition or general word knowledge. Recent research shows that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to students' ability to engage in cognitively demanding tasks, including leading class discussions and formulating abstract meanings (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020; Namsaeng & Phusawisot, 2025). Academic vocabulary has been described as essential for abstract, technical, and disciplinary thinking, functioning as a linguistic tool that enables learners to

articulate nuanced concepts and engage with academic content (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). When students lack proficiency in such vocabulary, their capacity to participate in higher-order reasoning becomes constrained.

Evidence across multiple studies reinforces this association between vocabulary knowledge and higher-order cognitive skills. As such, vocabulary size has been shown to correlate significantly with critical-thinking subskills such as inquisitiveness, confidence in reasoning, and evaluative judgment, suggesting that lexical development supports cognitive sophistication (Ünaldı & Yüce, 2021). Similarly, limited vocabulary knowledge has been found to impede students' ability to comprehend academic texts and progress through higher stages of Bloom's critical reading hierarchy, demonstrating that lexical insufficiency restricts analytical engagement (Lee & Wong, 2020). Instructional research further highlights that approaches integrating semantic reasoning explicitly pair vocabulary learning with critical-thinking development, particularly as learners encounter more abstract and conceptually dense academic words (Fallon et al., 2021). Correspondingly, academic language proficiency has been linked to students' abilities to make inferences and solve problems, indicating that difficulties with academic vocabulary may directly contribute to weaker critical-thinking performance (Grosser & Nel, 2013). Taken together, these findings suggest that learners' low performance in sentence-level academic vocabulary production reflects not only lexical limitations but also insufficient development of higher-order thinking skills, underscoring the intertwined nature of academic language and cognitive complexity.

C. Improper Academic Vocabulary Resources

A range of external factors appear to contribute to learners' limited development of academic vocabulary, particularly the scarcity and inadequacy of learning resources. Studies report that insufficient access to books, technology, and supportive learning tools poses a substantial barrier to vocabulary growth, especially in less-resourced educational contexts (Mediena et al., 2025). Additional challenges stem from motivational and material limitations, including students' lack of interest, vocabulary overload, difficult textbooks, and the absence of authentic input, all of which hinder sustained academic vocabulary acquisition (Tariku, 2024). Research further indicates that learners' linguistic background can influence academic performance, with non-monolingual students demonstrating lower achievement in writing and content subjects, suggesting that language exposure and proficiency shape academic vocabulary development (Schuth et al., 2017). Compounding these issues, the measurement of academic vocabulary itself remains problematic due to the overlap between academic word lists and general vocabulary, making it difficult to isolate academic vocabulary growth and its effects on academic success (Masrai & Milton, 2021). This overlap suggests that low academic vocabulary scores may reflect limited general vocabulary, reinforcing claims that broader lexical development may be more critical for academic attainment than narrow focus on academic word lists.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study aims to assess academic vocabulary knowledge by using sentence writing to measure productive academic vocabulary across the dimensions of lexical, structural, and semantic complexity. Although learners demonstrated a relatively large general vocabulary size, their low mean score (17%) in producing academic vocabulary indicates that academic vocabulary requires higher-order thinking and the ability to express abstract and discipline-specific meanings. Within this performance pattern, lexical complexity achieved the highest mean scores and was significantly higher than both semantic and syntactic complexity, suggesting that learners found vocabulary form easier to access than meaning or use. This progression reflects a developmental sequence in which learners first recognize lexical form, then construct meaning, and only later apply vocabulary accurately within syntactic structures. The challenges observed in academic vocabulary production may be further explained by external factors, including limited access to books, technology, authentic materials, and supportive learning tools, as well as low motivation, vocabulary overload, difficult textbooks, and language-background influences that hinder academic engagement. Together, these findings highlight the combined impact of cognitive demands, developmental sequencing, and contextual constraints on learners' academic vocabulary performance.

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Evaluative Voice and Interpersonal Shifts in ChatGPT-Translated Feedback for EFL Writing

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Abstract—This study investigates how ChatGPT’s machine translation from English to Arabic affects the realization of interpersonal meaning and learner engagement in academic feedback for EFL learners. The main aim is to compare evaluative features in original and machine-translated feedback, addressing a significant gap in understanding the implications of AI-assisted translation for EFL writing pedagogy. Adopting qualitative comparative analysis, ChatGPT-generated English feedback and its Arabic translations were examined through the lenses of Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005) and Hyland’s (2006) Reader Engagement Model. The findings reveal that in the Arabic translations the authorial voice shifts to be more distant and directive, often resulting in more instructional but less empathetic feedback. The study concludes that while ChatGPT feedback has potential, human oversight is essential to maintain interpersonal depth, learner engagement, supportive and personalized characteristics crucial for effective feedback in EFL contexts. Future research is recommended to explore EFL learner perceptions of translated feedback and to develop strategies for achieving the full pedagogical potential of AI-assisted feedback translation.

Index Terms—ChatGPT feedback, English-Arabic translation, interpersonal meaning, learner engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

The integration of generative artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, into translation and language instruction has recently been discussed in education. ChatGPT is increasingly used to generate formative feedback in EFL academic writing contexts. Effective feedback positively impacts EFL learners’ cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement (Hyland & Jiang, 2016). The affective dimension is essential to language learning since the students’ emotional reactions and attitudinal responses to the feedback they receive are of great importance (Carless, 2022; Hwang, 2025; Sun, 2021).

Due to recent developments and the integration of AI in writing pedagogy, some studies explored the effectiveness of AI tools in providing feedback (Alshehri, 2025; Rad et al., 2024), reporting promising findings. Other studies compared traditional teacher feedback to AI-generated feedback. They found that teacher feedback cannot be replaced by AI-generated feedback, but supplemented by it (Awidi, 2024; Dai et al., 2024; Sardinha, 2024; Steiss et al., 2024). Additionally, they argued that teacher individualized praise, empathy and expressions of encouragement remain unique qualities and are not yet fully available in Large Language Models (LLMs). Therefore, questions arise about the interpersonal elements and the preservation of dialogic tone in feedback translated by ChatGPT into Arabic compared to that originally generated in English. Understanding the evaluative linguistic choices and the emotional framing of AI translated feedback into Arabic is essential for making pedagogical decisions in EFL contexts.

Despite growing interest in AI-generated feedback and the role of AI in translation, little is known about how the dialogic nature and evaluative features of feedback are transformed and maintained when ChatGPT-generated English feedback is translated into Arabic. To this end, the present study adopts a dual-framework approach, it draws on the Appraisal Theory Framework by Martin and White (2005) and Hyland’s (2006) Reader Engagement Framework to systematically analyze shifts in interpersonal meaning and learner engagement positioning strategies in feedback generated in English and then translated into Arabic by ChatGPT for intermediate proficiency level EFL learners. This study sets to explore the extent to which ChatGPT can generate feedback with the same qualities of authorial stance and functions of supportive, and empathetic tone, in both original (i.e., English) translated (i.e., Arabic) ChatGPT-generated feedback, foregrounding the implications for Arabic-speaking learners in EFL academic contexts. Therefore, the current study aims to address this gap by answering the following research questions:

1. How does ChatGPT’s machine translation from English to Arabic affect the realization of appraisal and engagement resources in academic feedback?
2. What challenges and patterns emerge in maintaining authorial tone and learner positioning in AI translated feedback?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

ChatGPT-generated feedback, translation systems, and the use of Appraisal Theory in translation evaluation, have recently become important topics in linguistic research. The following review synthesizes findings from key studies on these topics, aligned with the objectives and questions of the present study aiming to explore interpersonal meaning, evaluative resources, and learner positioning in ChatGPT-generated feedback in English and Arabic for EFL learners.

A. ChatGPT-Generated Feedback Studies

Research comparing the efficacy of ChatGPT-generated feedback to traditional feedback in writing instruction has produced slightly similar results. For instance, Banihashem et al. (2024) compared automated feedback to peer feedback in argumentative writing. They found that ChatGPT provided descriptive comments, while peer feedback excelled at identifying writing problems. Alsofyani and Barzanji (2024) found that ChatGPT's feedback was as effective as teacher feedback in improving learner writing. In another study by Cao and Zhong (2023), they evaluated ChatGPT's performance as a feedback provider in Chinese and English translation tasks. They found that teacher feedback outperformed ChatGPT-generated feedback. However, ChatGPT excelled at enhancing lexical choice and cohesion. Also, Lin and Crosthwaite (2024) compared feedback in academic writing courses by ChatGPT to human teachers' feedback. The findings revealed that unlike teacher feedback, ChatGPT failed to provide individualized learner responses based on their proficiency levels. In addition, Steiss et al. (2024) noted that while teachers gave higher quality feedback in most domains, the consistency and quick accessibility of ChatGPT suggest a valuable supporting role of AI in academic writing assessment. Zou et al. (2025) explored learner perceptions of feedback generated by ChatGPT. They found that teacher praise, encouragement and empathy motivate learners and highly impact their engagement with feedback. In addition, Awidi (2024) compared teachers to ChatGPT in providing personalized feedback on reflective texts. The findings revealed that human oversight is essential when ChatGPT feedback is integrated into language learning educational contexts. In summary, the studies in the literature highlight the complementary potential of ChatGPT to teacher-led feedback in writing instruction.

B. Evaluative Meaning in Translation Research

Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005) offers a powerful lens for exploring evaluative meaning across source and target texts. Appraisal theory is concerned with how writers take a stance, voice their opinions, and position their readers. It provides writers with linguistic resources that allow them to be critical, to reject, to accept, to appreciate, and to challenge other positions. Appraisal theory has three subsystems: (1) attitude that refers to the resources used to positively or negatively evaluate phenomena; (2) engagement attends to the linguistics resources used to take a stance towards the positions and values in the text with consideration of their readers; (3) graduation is concerned with how writers decrease or increase the interpersonal impact of their feelings, judgements and assessments (i.e., toning-down or toning-up). In the context of academic feedback, teachers engage with EFL learners based on previous knowledge of their learners. As a result, the teacher's knowledge of the learners, shapes feedback and defines the rhetorical strategies employed. Martin and White (2005) argue that appraisal theory not only explores the writer's values and attitudes but also highlights the relations of rapport and solidarity between the teachers/ ChatGPT (i.e., producer of the text) and EFL learners (i.e., the receivers). Qian (2017) applied appraisal theory framework to bilingual public notices in English and Chinese and found that translations often showed reduced attitudinal resources and less dialogic engagement. Findings also revealed some shifts in sentence structure from declarative to imperative structures. Such functional adaptation suggests that some loss of interpersonal meaning in translation is expected. In addition, Li et al. (2025) drew on the appraisal framework to investigate how undergraduate students translated evaluative meanings in news articles from English to Chinese. The findings showed frequent misrepresentations and omissions of source text interpersonal meaning, such as shifting positive attitudes to be more neutral or negative. They argued that integrating appraisal-based analysis into translator training may raise awareness of evaluative expression and authorial stance. Moreover, Tajvidi and Arjani (2017) reviewed appraisal-driven translation studies across various genres and languages. They highlighted key trends such as tendencies for translated texts to exhibit frequent shifts in attitude, engagement and graduation. Typical trends included reduction or loss of attitudinal markers, adaptation of authorial stance, and alteration of reader positioning and rhetorical purpose in target texts. These tendencies can be due to processing constraints, target culture conventions, and institutional or personal ideological agendas. Abbamonte and Cavaliere (2006) found that translated news texts became less emotional and more distant. Munday (2009) reported changes in writer-reader relationships leading to less authorial presence in the translated political texts. Rosa (2013) found that translated literary texts exhibited less narrative power and more solidarity with readers. Zhang (2013) reported increased intensifications of negative judgments in the translated texts of news headlines. Al-Shunnag (2014) found that in translated news texts, authorial stance was realized more through value-laden lexis and frequent omissions of intensification resources. In summary, the existing literature suggests that some translations intensify attitudinal markers, while others downplay or omit evaluative and dialogic features, often shifting the overall interpersonal tenor of the original text.

C. ChatGPT Translation for English to Arabic Texts

Recent studies in the literature explored the quality of LLM translation for English-Arabic academic texts. Mohsen (2024) compared ChatGPT-4 to Google Translate and found that ChatGPT-4 outperformed traditional machine translation of academic texts in terms of accuracy and clarity. Similarly, Alkhawaja (2024) reported similar findings when he compared ChatGPT-generated translation to other machine translations. However, Khondaker et al. (2023) argued that ChatGPT and Google fail to translate cultural and aesthetic aspects of texts, such as proverbs. These findings may suggest challenges in preserving affective and evaluative features central to interpersonal and dialogic tone in ChatGPT feedback translation.

The present literature review highlights that ChatGPT provides effective feedback and improved translation performance compared to traditional systems in academic contexts. However, limitations persist in evaluative-based

research in AI-generated translation. The field calls for further investigation of evaluative shifts in translated texts produced by AI systems like ChatGPT, which are increasingly integrated into academic and educational contexts.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative comparative analysis to investigate the transformation of evaluative and interpersonal meanings in AI-generated academic feedback. The focus is on feedback produced by ChatGPT in English and its translation into Arabic. The analysis draws on Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory and Hyland's (2006) Categories of Reader Engagement to capture shifts in interpersonal meaning and learner positioning within feedback for B1-level EFL Arabic-speaking learners.

B. Data

For the present study, twenty academic texts were selected. The texts were in English and written by B1-level Arabic-speaking EFL learners. For each text, feedback was generated using ChatGPT-4 in English, then subsequently translated into Arabic by ChatGPT's own translation function. The resulting corpus consists of twenty pairs of English and Arabic feedback texts, enabling direct comparative analysis of original and translated feedback at both the utterance and discourse levels.

C. Analytical Frameworks

Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005)

All feedback texts in English and Arabic were coded for Attitude (Affect, Judgment, Appreciation), Engagement (contractive/expansive), and Graduation (force/focus). Appraisal's three subsystems provide writers with the means to value, to accept, to reject, and to challenge other points of view. The first subsystem is attitude, and it refers to the resources used by writers to make negative or positive evaluations. Attitude includes three categories; affect, judgement and appreciation. Affect deals with how writers express their feelings (e.g., feeling sad, bored, happy, worried, or interested), judgment attends to the moral judgments of human behavior (e.g., admiring, criticizing, or praising) and appreciation refers to the evaluation of phenomena but not people's behaviors. Second, engagement refers to the linguistic resources that writers use to take a stance towards the propositions in the text and with consideration of their reader audience. Third, graduation deals with how writers increase or decrease (i.e., toning-down or toning-up) the interpersonal impact of their feelings, judgements and assessments. The Appraisal Theory framework was selected because it reveals how feedback conveys approval, criticism, encouragement, and alignment which are all crucial factors in shaping student motivation. The three subsystems allow for a detailed examination of how evaluative meanings are constructed in academic feedback and how these meanings may be preserved, transformed or lost through ChatGPT translation. Therefore, this framework directly addresses the study's focus on evaluative and dialogic meanings across languages.

Hyland's (2006) Categories of Reader Engagement

This framework was used to locate and identify instances of reader engagement in the feedback generated by ChatGPT in English and in the translated version into Arabic. The instances were categorized according to Hyland's model, including reader mentions, questions, appeals to shared knowledge, directives, and personal asides. Hyland's engagement model specifically focuses on how writers interact with and involve their audience readers through strategic linguistics choices. Therefore, this framework complements appraisal theory in capturing evaluative stance and dialogic and participatory qualities of feedback. Its categories identify key linguistic elements that play an essential role in establishing rapport, guiding learner action, and encouraging active engagement with feedback.

Together, the two frameworks offer a robust tool for revealing evaluative stance and interactive engagement qualities of feedback before and after translation by ChatGPT. Their combined use accounts for what meaning is conveyed (appraisal theory) and how students are drawn into a dialogic and interactive process (Hyland's engagement model). This provides a holistic overview of how interpersonal meaning in feedback is effectively shaped, reshaped or transformed by AI across languages in EFL contexts.

D. Data Analysis

First, all feedback texts in English and Arabic were automatically coded for appraisal using the Appraisal Theory Tagger Tool for coding. The Appraisal Theory Tagger is free and automatically annotates texts based on the three subsystems of appraisal (Alshehri et al., 2025). Then, the two sets of texts (i.e., English and Arabic) were manually coded for reader engagement resources based on Hyland's five categories of reader engagement. Second, the coded English and Arabic feedback were compared to identify patterns of loss, transformation, or amplification of evaluative and reader engagement meanings during translation. Finally, recurring patterns and translation-specific challenges were identified and classified. This allowed the researcher to address how evaluative and dialogic meanings are affected and to identify implications for EFL learner perceptions and pedagogical effectiveness. For coding reliability purposes, the data was coded twice. First, it was imported into the Appraisal Theory Tagger Tool for coding and manually for Hyland's engagement model. Then, the researcher recoded 20% of the data to guarantee consistency. For ethical considerations,

informed consent was ensured for the use of anonymized EFL learner texts. The study also observes appropriate ethical guidelines for the use of AI-generated data.

IV. RESULTS

The present study aimed to explore the extent to which ChatGPT can generate feedback with the same qualities of authorial stance and functions of supportive, and empathetic tone, in both feedback produced by ChatGPT in English and in Arabic (i.e., translated by ChatGPT). Therefore, the study had two objectives. The first was to explore how ChatGPT's machine translation from English to Arabic affects the realization of appraisal and engagement resources in academic feedback. The second was to identify challenges that emerge in maintaining the authorial tone and learner positioning strategies when feedback is translated by AI into Arabic.

To achieve the research objectives and answer the research questions, evaluative resources and learner engagement strategies were explored and compared in the two sets of texts. The three subsystems of appraisal were explored, and the findings are illustrated in Figure 1.

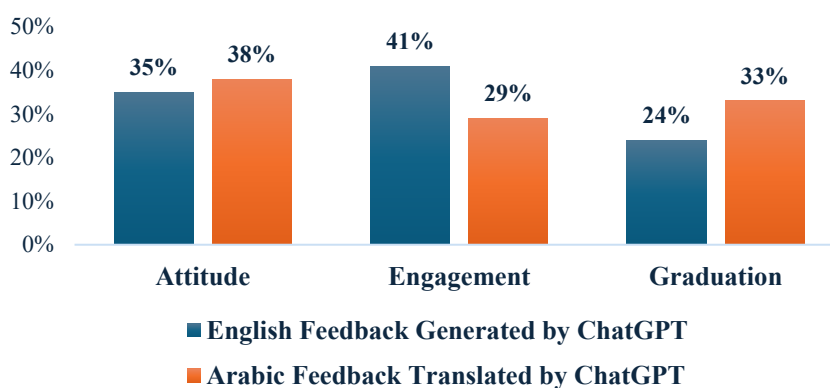


Figure 1. Distribution of Appraisal Systems in the Data

The findings illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrate some variation in the distribution of appraisal systems across the two datasets. The figure shows that the resources of engagement were the most frequent in the English feedback accounting for 41%, while the most frequent appraisal system in the Arabic Feedback was attitude accounting for 38%. The least frequent appraisal system in both sets of feedback was graduation accounting for 24% in the English feedback and for 33% in the Arabic feedback. In the feedback in Arabic, the prevalence of attitude resources indicates an emphasis on expressing feelings, judgments, and appreciations of the students writing in the texts. Graduation resources were the least frequently employed in both sets of data indicating similar tendencies in scaling or intensifying the evaluative meanings.

Each subsystem was explored in detail. First, the subsystem of attitude was observed in both sets of feedback as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDE RESOURCES IN THE DATA

	Affect		Judgement		Appreciation		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
English Feedback Generated by ChatGPT	1	0.5%	25	14%	157	85.5%	183	100%
Arabic Feedback Translated by ChatGPT	0	0%	15	11%	119	89%	134	

The findings in Table 1, show similar distribution of affect, judgment, and appreciation resources when learner feedback is generated in English and then translated into Arabic by ChatGPT. In the original English feedback, appreciation overwhelmingly dominates (85.5%) of the resources, with judgment accounting for 14% and affect being infrequent at only 0.5%. After translation into Arabic, appreciation increases further to 89%, while judgment decreases to 11% and affect drops to 0%, indicating a complete absence of authorial feelings or emotional language. These shifts may suggest that translating feedback into Arabic by ChatGPT highlights descriptive and evaluative language about qualities and processes (i.e., appreciation) but diminishes explicit evaluations of behavior (i.e., judgments) and authorial emotional engagement (i.e., affect). The results suggest a tendency for AI translated feedback to become more impersonal and objective. Example excerpts illustrating attitudinal resources:

Feedback in English		Feedback translated into Arabic	
1.	The text has a clear [Attitude; appreciation; positive] introduction that sets the stage for the main points.	لدي النص مقدمة واضحة [Attitude; appreciation; positive] تضع الأساس للنقاط الرئيسية.	
2.	Overall, this is a solid effort [Attitude; judgement; positive].	بشكل عام، هذا جهد جيد [Attitude; judgement; positive]	
3.	The phrase "and another way to make your advertisement effective" is used repeatedly, which makes the text feel redundant [attitude; affect; negative].	عبارة "and another way to make your advertisement effective" تُستخدم بشكل متكرر، مما قد يجعل النص يشعر بالتكرار.	
4.	Certain phrases are unclear or awkwardly [Attitude; judgement; negative (criticize)] constructed.	بعض العبارات غير واضحة أو مبنية بشكل غير مناسب [attitude; appreciation; negative]	

In examples 1 and 2, the attitudinal expressions were preserved in Arabic translations. However, in example 3, the authorial affect was mistranslated and consequently omitted. In example 4, the sentence contained criticism and judgment, but during translation into Arabic, the judgmental aspect was canceled and was shifted to an evaluation of objects instead of judgment of human behavior. Second, the polarity of the attitudinal resources was explored in both sets of feedback as presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
POLARITY IN ATTITUDE RESOURCES

	Positive Attitude		Negative Attitude		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
English Feedback Generated by ChatGPT	123	67%	60	33%	183	100%
Arabic Feedback Translated by ChatGPT	82	61%	52	39%	134	

The findings in Table 2 reveal similar frequencies in the polarity of attitude resources when feedback is generated in English and subsequently translated into Arabic by ChatGPT. In the English feedback, most of the attitude resources are positively encoded accounting for 67%, while negatively encoded attitudes account for 33% of the instances. When the feedback was translated into Arabic, the frequency of positive attitudes decreased to 61%, whereas negative attitudes increased to 39% of the total. These results indicate that the translation process led to a slight shift toward more negative evaluative language in the Arabic feedback compared to the original English. Examples from the data are as follows:

Feedback in English		Feedback translated into Arabic	
5.	Some sentences are quite long [Attitude; appreciation; negative] and can be broken down for clarity.	بعض الجمل طويلة [Attitude; appreciation; negative] جدًا ويمكن تقسيمها لزيادة الوضوح.	
6.	The text contains punctuation errors [Attitude; appreciation; negative], such as the incorrect [Attitude; appreciation; negative] use of commas and missing conjunctions.	النص يحتوي على أخطاء [Attitude; appreciation; negative] في الترقيم، مثل الاستخدام غير الصحيح [Attitude; appreciation; negative] للفواصل وغياب أدوات الربط.	
7.	Some phrases are unclear [Attitude; appreciation; negative] or poorly [Attitude; appreciation; negative] structured.	بعض العبارات غير واضحة [Attitude; appreciation; negative] أو غير منظمة [Attitude; appreciation; negative] جيدًا.	

As indicated in examples 5-7, there were both positive and negative evaluative expressions, mostly in the form of appreciation. Next, the system of engagement provides a systematic analysis of how writers can linguistically voice their views and how they position their audience readers. Engagement in the context of this study refers to the linguistics resources employed by the authorial voice in both sets of data to engage with the EFL learners in the feedback. According to Martin and White (2005) there are two types of engagement, contractive and expansive. When an utterance is dialogic and allows for alternative voices and positions, it is considered expansive, but when it restricts or challenges alternative positions, it is contractive. The dialogic strategies in both sets of feedback are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

			English Feedback Generated by ChatGPT		Arabic Feedback Translated by ChatGPT	
			No	%	No	%
Contractive	Disclaim	Deny	3	1%	0	0%
		Counter	36	17%	12	11%
	Proclaim	Concur	0	0%	0	0%
		Pronounce	5	2%	1	1%
		Endorse	38	18%	6	6%
Total			82	38%	19	18%
Expansive	Entertain		125	58%	86	82%
	Attribute	Acknowledge	10	4%	0	0%
		Distance	0	0%	0	0%
Total			135	62%	86	82%

As presented in Table 3, clear differences in the use of engagement resources between English feedback produced by ChatGPT and its Arabic translation were found. In the English feedback, expansive engagement resources were dominant, accounting for 62%, while contractive resources accounted for 38%. However, after translation into Arabic, the frequency of expansive resources increased to 82%, and contractive resources decreased markedly to only 18%. This shift suggests

that the authorial tone in translated Arabic feedback is more dialogic and opens up space allowing for alternative viewpoints. However, contractive engagement strategies that limit alternatives and assert stronger authorial tone are reduced. In summary, the contractive engagement strategies were higher in the English feedback than in Arabic and expansive engagement strategies increased after translating feedback into Arabic. Examples (8) and (10) are illustrations of expansive engagement where the authorial voice allows for dialogic openness, while in example (9) the authorial voice contracts the dialogic space.

	Feedback in English	Feedback translated into Arabic
8.	Some sentences are quite long and can [Engagement; expand; entertain] be broken down for clarity.	يمكن [Engagement; expand; entertain] تقسيمها لزيادة الوضوح.
9.	The essay demonstrates [Engagement; contract; proclaim; endorse] a good understanding of the topic.	يُظهر [Engagement; contract; proclaim; endorse] المقال فهماً جيداً للموضوع.
10.	You've clearly [Engagement; contract; proclaim; pronounce] put thought into identifying several key factors that contribute to effective advertising.	ومن الواضح [Engagement; contract; proclaim; pronounce] أنك فكرت جيداً في تحديد عدة عوامل رئيسية تساهم في الإعلان الفعال.

Graduation is a subsystem of appraisal, and it refers to how the authorial voice grades feelings, judgements and evaluations. It is how meanings are either toned down or toned up. For example, the word mistake can be toned down by saying a small mistake or it can be toned up by saying a huge mistake. Martin and White (2005) noted that force refers to the grading of meaning from low to high intensity, while focus refers to the sharpening (e.g., the sentence structure was really weak) or softening meanings (e.g., the sentence structure was sort of weak). The graduation resources employed in both sets of data is illustrated in Table 4.

TABLE 4
DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATION RESOURCES

Distribution of Graduation Resources										
	Force				Focus				Total	
	Upscale		Downscale		Sharpen		Soften			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
English Feedback Generated by ChatGPT	96	74%	33	26%	0	0%	0	0%	129	100
Arabic Feedback Translated by ChatGPT	77	65%	34	29%	7	6%	0	0%	118	100

The findings in Table 4 reveal some differences in the use of graduation resources between English feedback generated by ChatGPT and its Arabic translation. In the English feedback, graduation is realized through force exclusively with no presence of focus resources (sharpen or soften). Resources of upscaling (intensifying meanings) were more dominant at 74%, and downscaling (softening meanings) at 26%. When the feedback was translated into Arabic, force resources remained prevalent but decreased slightly. The upscaling of meanings decreased to 65% and downscaling increased to 29%. Notably, instances of focus-sharpen emerged in the Arabic translation accounting for 6%, whereas focus-soften remained unused. The following are excerpts from the data:

	Feedback in English	Feedback translated into Arabic
11.	There are several [Graduation; force; upscale] grammatical errors that can distract the reader.	هناك العديد [Graduation; force; upscale] من الأخطاء النحوية التي قد تشتت انتباه القارئ.
12.	With a few [Graduation; force; downscale] adjustments for clarity, punctuation, and sentence structure, your insights will come across even more [Graduation; force; upscale] effectively.	مع بعض [Graduation; force; downscale] التعديلات من حيث الوضوح، الترقيم، وتركيب الجمل، ستظهر رؤاك بشكل أكثر [Graduation; force; upscale] فعالية.
13.	Some [Graduation; force; downscale] sentences are a bit [Graduation; force; downscale] fragmented.	بعض [Graduation; force; downscale] الجمل يُمكن أن تكون مجزأة قليلاً [Graduation; force; downscale].
14.	No instances of sharpen in the English data.	بعض [Graduation; force; downscale] الجمل معقدة جداً [Graduation; force; downscale] أو مجزأة. [focus; sharpen]

To analyze how feedback generated by ChatGPT in English and its Arabic translation engages learners, Hyland's engagement framework was applied to both datasets. According to Hyland (2006), instances of reader engagement are categorized into five types: reader mentions, questions, appeals to shared knowledge, directives, and personal asides. This framework focuses on the strategic linguistic choices that the authorial voice employs to interact with and involve its learners, highlighting dialogic and participatory qualities in the feedback. In the present study, Hyland's model provides insights into how linguistic elements, such as learner direct address, instructional directives can establish rapport and encourage learner engagement with feedback. The distribution of Hyland's engagement features in the English and Arabic datasets is presented in Table 5, enabling a comparative overview of how ChatGPT's reader engagement strategies shift from English to Arabic.

TABLE 5
HYLAND'S CATEGORIES OF READER ENGAGEMENT IN THE DATA

	English Feedback Generated by ChatGPT		Arabic Feedback Translated by ChatGPT	
	No	%	No	%
Reader mentions	98	72%	108	57%
Questions	0	0%	0	0%
Appeals to shared knowledge	0	0%	0	0%
Directives	38	28%	80	43%
Personal asides	0	0%	0	0%
Total	136	100%	188	100%

The findings in Table 5 show interesting shifts in Hyland's reader engagement categories when learner feedback is generated in English by ChatGPT and then translated into Arabic. There were more instances of reader engagement in the Arabic data compared to the English dataset. In the English feedback, reader mentions (addressing the learner directly and the readers) were the most frequent accounting for 72%, while directives (explicit instructions or suggestions to the learner) accounted for 28%. However, in Arabic translations, the engagement instances were split between reader mentions and directives, accounting for 57% and 43%, respectively. Engagement categories such as questions, appeals to shared knowledge, and personal asides were entirely absent in both English and Arabic outputs. Examples from both sets of data are illustrated below: Examples 15 - 20 provide concrete illustrations of how Hyland's reader engagement categories particularly reader mentions and directives are realized in both English feedback and their Arabic translations.

Feedback in English		Feedback translated into Arabic	
15.	This helps structure <u>your</u> [Learner Mention] argument effectively.	لقد أدرجت [Learner Mention] مجموعة غنية من الأفكار الجيدة ومن الواضح أنك فكرت [Learner Mention] جيداً في تحديد عدة عوامل رئيسية تساهم في الإعلان الفعال.	
16.	By focusing on clarity, coherence, and precision in <u>your</u> [Learner Mention] writing, <u>you</u> [Learner Mention] can enhance <u>your</u> [Learner Mention] message even further.	لقد أبرزت [Learner Mention] بشكل فعال عدة أساليب مهمة.	
17.	<u>Ensure</u> [Directives] that <u>you</u> [Learner Mention] use the correct form of words consistently.	تأكد من استخدام الترتيم بشكل موحد عند سرد الأفكار	
18.	<u>Keep working</u> [Directives] on <u>your</u> [Learner Mention] writing	استمر [Directives] في تطوير كتابتك، وواصل [Learner Mention] مشاركة رواك القيمة!	
19.	<u>Pay attention</u> [Directives] to plural forms and proper punctuation throughout the text to enhance professionalism.	الأفضل أن تقول [Directives]"إنشاء إعلانات فعالة هو أحد الطرق للتميز."	

Examples 15 and 16 demonstrate the use of reader mentions, where learners are directly addressed through personal pronouns such as "your" and "you" in English, and their marked equivalents in Arabic (e.g., "لقد أدرجت", "أنك فكرت", "أبرزت"). The use of reader mentions helps establish a dialogic relationship with the learners and positions them as active participants. Examples 17, 18, and 19 illustrate how directives are used as explicit instructions and encouragement (e.g., "Ensure that you use...", "Keep working on your writing", "Pay attention to plural forms"). In the Arabic feedback, these are presented as imperatives such as "استمر", "تأكد", maintaining a direct and instructional tone. In both sets of feedback, directives served to guide learners toward improvement.

V. DISCUSSION

The first research objective was to explore how ChatGPT's machine translation from English to Arabic affects the realization of appraisal and learner engagement resources in academic feedback. The findings revealed that ChatGPT's machine translation from English to Arabic introduces shifts in appraisal and engagement in academic writing feedback. In both English and Arabic feedback, instances of appreciation overwhelmingly dominated the attitude subsystems. Affect and judgment occurred less frequently especially after ChatGPT translation into Arabic, where instances of affect disappeared and judgment decreased further. This aligns with findings reported by Qian (2017), Tajvidi and Arjani (2017), and Abbamonte and Cavaliere (2006), who found that translation often leads to decreased affect, resulting in a more distanced tone. Additionally, the present data revealed that the translated feedback expressed a more objective authorial tone. This finding mirrors Munday's (2009) observations, who found reduced authorial presence in translated political texts.

Polarity analysis revealed that the frequency of negative attitude tokens increased in Arabic feedback (from 33% to 39%), and positive evaluations slightly decreased (from 67% to 61%). These results indicate that the translation process led to a slight shift toward more negative evaluative language in the Arabic feedback compared to the original English. This aligns with Li et al. (2025) and Zhang (2013), who found that translation can increase the frequency of negativity polarity or shift source text evaluations to be more neutral or critical. The findings suggest implications for how translated feedback may be perceived by EFL learners. This is a potential concern for EFL contexts where praise and encouragement in writing feedback are pedagogically valued (Sun, 2021; Zou et al., 2025).

In English and Arabic feedback, engagement resources, central to establishing dialogic space, are similarly transformed. In English feedback, expansive markers were dominate, and the frequency of contractive instances (38%) reflected an authorial tone that is assertive and guiding. After translation, expansive resources increased to 82%, while contractive

markers decreased to 18%. This suggested that feedback in Arabic shifted to be perceived as more dialogic, less authoritative, and more open to interpretation. The results indicated that the Arabic translations produced by ChatGPT may present feedback in a more dialogically open manner compared to the original English versions, with a notable decrease in authoritative tone. Tajvidi and Arjani (2017) noted similar shifts in engagement markers for translated texts leading to increased dialogic space and decreased authorial alignment. However, Cao and Zhong (2023) raised concerns about decreased contractiveness. They noted that a less directive and less personalized feedback may not align with EFL learners' needs for individualized support. Regarding graduation, English feedback highly relied on force (upscaling and downscaling) with no use of focus resources. Arabic translations introduce some focus-sharpen markers (6%) of evaluative meaning with a slight decrease in instances of upscale. This suggests that the translation process led to more subtle evaluative scaling and a decrease in upscaling the force of evaluative meaning. This is consistent with Al-Shunnag's (2014) findings, who reported that translations may impact the persuasive power of feedback by decreasing the frequency of intensification resources.

Hyland's engagement model analysis revealed that reader engagement increased in translation, but the balance altered. In English feedback, the frequency of reader mentions (72%) enhanced rapport and signaled individualized attention, as reported by teacher feedback studies (Zou et al., 2025; Carless, 2022). However, Arabic translations featured more directives (43%) leading to changes in the balance between directly addressing the learners and instructing them. This signals a tendency toward providing explicit instruction and guidance to learners in the Arabic translation of feedback. While increased directives may offer learners clear actionable steps, the decreased frequency of reader mentions (57%) may weaken the supportive and relational tone. This is parallel to findings reported by Abbamonte and Cavaliere (2006) and Rosa (2013) who cautioned that increased shifts to directives may negatively affect learner motivation. No new engagement strategies (questions, appeals to shared knowledge, asides) emerged after translation. This mirrors Steiss et al.'s (2024) concern that AI-generated feedback lacks the engaging diversity of teacher input.

The second research objective was to identify the challenges and patterns that emerge in maintaining authorial tone and learner positioning in AI translated feedback. Maintaining authorial tone and effective learner positioning in ChatGPT-translated feedback from English to Arabic, presents a few challenges. One is the increased reliance on appreciation (object-focused evaluation) and the decline in judgment and affect which may be interpreted by learners as impersonal. After translation, the feedback becomes more descriptive about processes and less evaluative of learners' performance, a pattern documented in several translation studies cited in the literature (Li et al., 2025; Tajvidi & Arjani, 2017; Munday, 2009). Another emerging pattern is the increase in negative evaluative language in Arabic outputs from 33% to 39%. This pattern may be challenging as the feedback may feel less supportive and risk learner discouragement, especially in contexts where positive reinforcement is highly recommended (Rad et al., 2024; Sun, 2021; Zou et al., 2025). Additionally, the absence of affective and empathetic tone in translation might lead to feedback sounding more detached and less warm. This aligns with findings by Qian (2017) and Abbamonte and Cavaliere (2006), suggesting that emotions are difficult to preserve in translation, resulting in a more detached authorial voice.

In terms of learner positioning, in Arabic feedback the use of directives rises from 28% to 43%, while reader mentions decrease from 72% to 57%. This demonstrates a clear shift in learner positioning in the feedback dialogue. The learners are repositioned as passive recipients of directive advice, rather than dialogically involving them in the process. This emerging pattern contradicts effective EFL feedback practices (Hyland & Jiang, 2016; Carless, 2022). A further emerging pattern is the expansion of dialogic openness in the translated feedback. In the Arabic set, expansive engagement is increased from 62% to 82% and contractiveness is decreased from 38% in English to 18% in Arabic which theoretically promotes learner agency and critical thinking but may also lead to ambiguity and loss of pedagogical clarity (Tajvidi & Arjani, 2017). Additionally, it may risk the loss of the authoritative guidance that learners with an intermediate proficiency level may need or require. Such trade-offs between learner agency, clarity, motivation, and rapport mirror concerns raised in the literature on both the translation of evaluative meaning (Tajvidi & Arjani, 2017; Munday, 2009) and AI-assisted feedback (Lin & Crosthwaite, 2024; Steiss et al., 2024).

In summary, ChatGPT's translation from English to Arabic alters both the distribution and function of appraisal and engagement resources. The emerging patterns show that ChatGPT-mediated translation tends to decrease authorial voice, interpersonal depth, relational warmth, and learner engagement. Although the feedback produced is more expansive and dialogically open, it may flatten interpersonal meaning and challenge the creation of personalized supportive effective feedback for EFL learners.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study offer important implications for EFL translation and writing instruction as AI-generated feedback becomes more common in language education. The results suggest that ChatGPT's translation of feedback from English to Arabic results in feedback that is less individualized. This shift may affect the quality of learner engagement, as empathy and individualized encouragement characteristic of effective teacher feedback decrease in machine translation. Such emerging patterns and changes should prompt educators to approach AI translations with caution in EFL feedback contexts, especially when it is intended to foster rapport and guide learners' affective responses. Educators can address these challenges by adopting a hybrid approach to feedback and combining AI-generated translations with teacher review to preserve supportive tone, encouragement, and personalized engagement. In addition, professional development and

EFL teacher and translator training programs should focus on continuous evaluations of LLM outputs. In addition to AI-generated or translated feedback, teachers' own context-sensitive comments remain crucial.

Despite this study's insights, it also presents some limitations. The sample size was relatively small and focused exclusively on B1-level Arabic-speaking EFL learners. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other L1 backgrounds and proficiency levels. Additionally, the exclusive use of ChatGPT-4 for translation may not reflect the full range of possible outcomes from other LLMs. Also, the study did not address the learners' perspectives of the translated feedback, which is critical for evaluating the real impact of these shifts on EFL learners.

In conclusion, while ChatGPT shows significant potential for increasing the efficiency of feedback in EFL writing instruction, educators must ensure that the interpersonal qualities essential for learner engagement are not lost in translation. Therefore, to achieve the full pedagogical benefits of AI-assisted feedback in EFL classrooms, human oversight remains essential.

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Improving Thai High School Learners' Writing Ability: A Comparative Study of Anonymous and Non-Anonymous Peer Review

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Abstract—This research investigated the effects of anonymous and non-anonymous peer review on writing performance among Thai high school students, and their attitudes towards anonymity when providing and receiving feedback in a blended learning environment. One hundred and thirty Thai EFL learners in a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design were assigned to one of two groups, receiving either anonymous or non-anonymous peer review. The students wrote their opinion paragraphs and peer feedback in two closed FB groups created to support blended instruction. Data were obtained via a writing pretest and posttest, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data revealed a significant increase in all aspects of writing (content, organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics) for both groups after they performed peer review tasks. The difference between the two groups, however, was not statistically significant, suggesting that both types of feedback contributed to improving writing. Attitudinal findings indicated that, in general, students felt positively toward the utility and engagement inherent to peer reviewing, as reflected in perception-based factor items on motivation and attitudinal measures. The non-anonymised group yielded significantly higher scores in trustworthiness, responsibility for learning, and confidence. Qualitative findings also indicated that anonymous feedback encouraged objectivity and critical introspection, whereas non-anonymous feedback generated social bonding and emotional investment. Overall, empirical confirmation of this essential pedagogical implication of peer review not only sheds light on how linguistic ability, learner autonomy, and motivation can be enhanced in blended EFL writing courses but also supports the predominant use of the non-anonymous peer-review format.

Index Terms—writing ability, peer review, anonymous feedback, blended learning, Thai high school EFL students

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing has been claimed to be one of the most difficult skills among EFL students, especially in Thailand. It is evident that Thai students still have problems in reading and writing across various educational levels, both secondary and tertiary (Rachawong & Phusawisot, 2025). A significant challenge stems from negative transfer from L1, with students transferring Thai syntactic patterns into English writing (Bennui, 2008). This leads to systematic errors such as subject omission, adjectives used as verbs, serial verb constructions, misplaced modifiers, compound nouns in the wrong order, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and literal word-for-word translations. At a discourse level, higher proficiency learners will produce essays with little organisation or central focus, and will paraphrase rather than develop (Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong, 2008). The gravity of these problems notwithstanding, writing instruction in Thai EFL settings is not yet fully developed. One structural factor is that writing quality is not included in the national high school test, which means that, for many schools, reading and vocabulary have become more important, as they expect their students to write once they learn to read. However, writing is a productive skill that needs to be taught explicitly, with scaffolding and in context.

A great deal of effort has therefore been invested in the quest to find successful and realistic writing pedagogies (Badger & White, 2000; Steele, 2015; Tribble, 2009). Among the various possibilities, feedback has gained considerable attention as a potent pedagogical method. Feedback informs performance, makes revisions, rewards successful writing behaviours, and helps writers construct internalised criteria for quality. Recent research has broadened the concept of feedback from mere error correction to engagement, feedback literacy, modality, and metacognitive regulation. Zhang et al. (2023), in a longitudinal mixed-methods study, found that high-level (and active) engagement (giving peer feedback rather than being

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passive) positively affected the course of EFL learners' self-efficacy and writing quality throughout various writing cycles. In the Thai context, Prompan and Piamsai (2024) found that the combined use of peer feedback and self-regulated learning strategies increased writing proficiency and self-regulation among university students in a 12-week online course. Moreover, based on the work of Waluyo and Panmei (2024), using social media platforms to provide or share peer feedback can offer potential benefits, increasing students' motivation and involvement in writing projects. Studies have also demonstrated that feedback is conducive to motivation and confidence (Jiang & Sukying, 2024), and they have added that learners appreciate feedback across learning contexts (Park, 2018). Digital peer review, social-networking feedback, and collaborative writing have been shown to increase accuracy, attitude, and participation (Bailey & Judd, 2018; Barrot, 2021; Ciftci & Kocoglu, 2012; Rodliyah, 2016).

At the policy level, the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2560 (Ministry of Education, 2017) stipulates that grade 12 students be able to express their feelings and opinions in writing, using reasoning statements. Regardless, the majority of writing feedback research in Thailand has been conducted with university students, while research in high school contexts has not been as widely investigated (Tan & Manochphinyo, 2017). Cultural dimensions also influence the effectiveness of peer review: Thai students avoid publicly criticising their peers out of a desire for social harmony and face-saving (Hyland, 2000). Peer interaction in the classroom is naturally restricted by time limitations as well (Ho & Savignon, 2007). Competition and the facilitation of social relations may be counteracted in a blended learning environment that reduces interaction and offers greater flexibility in participation.

Given these deficiencies, this study has urgent significance for investigating Thai EFL high school students' anonymous and non-anonymous feedback, as well as their ways of receiving English-language feedback. Two research questions thus inform the present study:

1. Are there any significant differences in Thai high school students' writing ability after receiving feedback from anonymous and non-anonymous peer reviewers in a blended learning environment?
2. What are Thai high school students' attitudes toward anonymous and non-anonymous peer review in writing?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. L2 Writing

Writing is a cognitively and linguistically complex activity, requiring idea generation, organisation, lexical encoding, grammatical encoding, and revision (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Because of its recursiveness and sociocognitive nature, writing tends to be recognised as the most challenging of the four language skills for L2 writers (Hyland, 2019; Manchón, 2020). In a Thai setting, where students in general may have only classroom-based exposure to English, as discussed above, EFL writers at all levels of education face ongoing writing difficulties (Rachawong & Phusawisot, 2025). L1 interference also plays a significant role. Thai students tend to apply their language's syntax, sentence structure, and grammatical constructions into English, leading them to make errors in verb tense, articles, prepositions, word form, draft, and word order (Bennui, 2008; Matwangsang et al., 2025). University research also points to struggles with idea generation, organisation, and task identification, as well as ongoing mechanical errors (Rachawong & Phusawisot, 2025).

In addition to linguistic considerations, pedagogical and sociocultural factors influence writing development. Teaching to the exam and minimal feedback, alongside inadequate process-oriented teaching, are barriers (Waluyo & Panmei, 2024), and cultural norms of deference may constrain peer feedback and collaboration (Hyland, 2000). While research on the teaching of EFL writing in the Thai context is increasing, most studies have been conducted at the university level, with secondary education contexts relatively understudied. Because writing is so crucial for both academic and post-secondary success, there is a gap in the literature regarding research-based instructional practices that might benefit high school students. This gap is addressed through an investigation of writing development mediated by feedback in blended high school English classes.

B. Writing Instruction Approaches

As one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, writing is generally recognised. It has linguistic accuracy and a conceptual foundation, but it is also about making sense of an exchange for particular communicative purposes. Thus, the choice of appropriate teaching strategies is crucial for learners to develop strong writing competencies. Four major theoretical bases of writing instruction: (1) product, (2) process, (3) genre, (4) process-genre models are reviewed in this section, along with peer review and blended learning as pedagogies supporting the practices.

(a). Product Approach

The product approach views writing as the result of a student's linguistic competence, focusing on accuracy, grammatical control, and the use of cohesive devices. Writing supported by this model often consists of four steps: (1) readership of mentor texts, (2) parsing the linguistic registers present, (3) attention to idea organisation with support and feedback as needed, and (4) composing a wholly own text (Steele, 2015).

It is argued that a focus on linguistic form enables learners to internalise grammatical and lexical patterns, leading to fewer writing errors over time (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This is consistent with behaviourist theory, which values learning through imitation and repetition. However, critics highlight several limitations. The focus on accuracy and

imitation may stifle learners' creativity and communicative intent. What is more, the product approach seems to underestimate the recursive and process-oriented dimension of writing, leaving little space for planning, revising, and the effectiveness of a writer's voice (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2019).

(b). Process Approach

The process model also diverts our attention from texts to the composing processes that produce them. Writing is regarded as a cycle of four processing stages: pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing (Seow, 2002). Teachers serve as facilitators, helping students learn to ideate, negotiate, and give feedback to one another. This can lead to reflection and revision (Brown & Lee, 2015; Hyland, 2019). The goal of this method is to help students see writing as a process rather than a product. Feedback and iteration are key, fostering metacognitive awareness and self-regulation (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Repeated rehearsal of these stages encourages learners to build confidence and develop fluent writing (Badger & White, 2000).

Still, the process approach has not been free from criticism. Such a model is criticised for sometimes treating a single process of composing or writing (e.g., planning) as if it were universally relevant across genres, while ignoring context-dependent variation in purpose (Badger & White, 2000; Manchón, 2020). Besides, some students may not receive sufficient linguistic input to produce language accurately, particularly in EFL environments and with limited exposure to authentic language.

(c). Genre Approach

The genre perspective (see Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)/English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and New Rhetoric traditions) is based on the notion that writing is situated, social and driven by communicative purpose and audience (Flowerdew, 1993; Hyland, 2004). This, therefore, means that writing instruction includes the analysis of model texts to ascertain the structure and language of a genre, guided processes, and independent basic writing.

Three primary traditions inform the pedagogy of genre. The new rhetoric looks at social context and the norms of discourse communities. The ESP highlights different genres as potential tools for fulfilling academic or professional communication demands. Lastly, SFL is based on the interaction among language, meaning, and context (Piriyasilpa, 2016).

In the EFL context, such as Thailand, SFL works well because it scaffolds learners' understanding of 'what language does in social life' (Piriyasilpa, 2016). Genre instruction can help writers see writing as purposive communication processes (Hyland, 2019) and be more attentive to recognising and producing different kinds of text. Yet, critics suggest that topical learning may foster excessive reliance on models and limit learners' creativity (Badger & White, 2000). If used in a constraining way, learners can be turned into followers rather than creators.

(d). Process-Genre Approach

To overcome the limitations of both models, Badger and White (2000) proposed a process-genre approach that integrates the advantages of product, process, and genre models. Such a hybrid model acknowledges that writing results from knowledge of language (product), understanding of the situation and communicative purposes (genre), and the effective deployment of writing processes (process). Learners model, draft, receive feedback, and revise in cycles while taking the audience and purpose into account. The process-genre method enhances accuracy and fluency by combining a commitment to explicit language instruction with recursive writing practice (Hyland, 2019). It is also inclusive enough for learners of varying proficiency levels to engage in analytics, guided by outside teacher or peer collaboration.

The process-genre approach is utilised in the current study to develop the writing skills of Thai EFL students. They begin by reading sample opinion paragraphs to become familiar with the genre. Next, focus on process-based activities, including brainstorming, drafting, revising, and peer review. Peer review is proposed as a scaffold for accuracy and metacognitive awareness, in line with the integrated process-genre perspective.

C. Peer Review

Peer review, also known as peer feedback, peer response, or peer assessment, is the process in which students give and receive evaluative feedback on writing produced by their peers (Barrot, 2021; Zhu, 2001; Zhang et al., 2023). Studies have shown that peer feedback can improve linguistic accuracy, writing quality, and self-regulated learning (Ellis, 2009; Jiang & Sukying, 2024). Providing feedback also encourages more thorough language processing and critical thinking (Zhang et al., 2023).

Feedback could also be positive or corrective. Although potentially face-threatening, corrective feedback is central to noticing and recasting language forms (Tatawy, 2002). Positive or negative feedback is primarily based on how well it supports learners' goals and self-efficacy (Hyland, 2019). Recent studies (Prompan & Piamsai, 2024) found that incorporating peer feedback in digital or blended environments enhanced engagement, as well as self-efficacy and autonomy, among EFL writers.

D. Blended Learning

Language learning has evolved rapidly with technological advances, enabling learners to learn flexibly beyond the classroom. Blended learning, an instructional approach that combines online and face-to-face instruction, has become

increasingly popular in general education and language teaching (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Mahmud, 2018; Sharma & Barret, 2008). It promotes flexibility, convenience, and self-paced learning (Obiedat et al., 2014).

In the school context, blended learning is a planned mixture of face-to-face teaching and computer-mediated activities (Barrot, 2021; Obiedat et al., 2014). These models range from rotation, flex, self-blend, to enriched-virtual designs. In EFL settings, blended learning enables multimodal feedback, peer cooperation, and reflective practice (Barrot, 2021; Waluyo & Panmei, 2024). Combined, infusing blended learning into peer review and process-genre writing pedagogy enables teachers to construct interactive environments in which writers write iteratively, receive multimodal feedback, and develop linguistic accuracy and communicative competence.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Participants and Context

This study included 130 Thai EFL students from a public school in northeastern Thailand. They were all from grade 11 classes and were enrolled in the English Writing Subject as an elective course of the school curriculum. The students were divided into two treatment groups: The anonymous group and the non-anonymous group.

To ensure that the participants in both groups were homogeneous, an English proficiency test was used to assess their overall English competency. The Cambridge English Assessment, based on the CEFR rating, was used to develop the English proficiency exam. The test consisted of 25 question items, each with four choices. Before the intervention, the English proficiency exam was administered in the first period of the course on the same day to all three classes. The results showed that the anonymous group achieved a mean of 15 out of 25 (64.88%, SD=1.41), while the non-anonymous group had a mean of 16.19 (64.76%, SD=1.45). The independent-samples *t*-test revealed no significant difference in English proficiency between the groups ($t=0.12$). These scores also indicate that the average English proficiency of participants in both groups is comparable to CEFR levels A2 Key for Schools and B1 Preliminary for Schools (B1). The grade point average (GPA) from six English courses students took in the previous three semesters was also retrieved from the e-school system to corroborate their English proficiency test scores. Participants in the anonymous group had a grade point average (GPA) of 3.92 (SD=0.15), and participants in the non-anonymous group had a GPA of 3.91 (SD=0.16). This result indicates that the two treatment groups have similar levels of English proficiency.

B. Research Instruments

(a). Writing Tasks

There were five writing tasks in this research. The writing topics were selected based on the requirements of the Basic Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (Ministry of Education of Thailand, 2008), stipulating that Grade 12 students should be able to "...write to describe their own feelings and express opinions about various matters, activities, experiences and news/incidents with proper reasoning" (p. 264). The writing topics included Task 1 (favourite television show), Task 2 (favourite sport), Task 3 (favourite hero), Task 4 (dream job) and Task 5 (favourite movie). To counter bias, the pretest (Task 1) and posttest (Task 5) were conducted in highly similar environments. For example, the writing topics were identical (e.g., favourite television shows and favourite movies). Each test lasted 50 minutes, and participants were asked to write on paper. For Tasks 2-4, students were asked to write the assigned paragraph in their assigned Facebook Groups.

(b). Questionnaire

The five-point Likert scale questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part collected demographic information from participants, including age, gender, and prior English experience. The second part investigated the participants' attitudes toward anonymous and non-anonymous peer review. The questionnaire comprised five levels of agreement: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) neutral; (4) agree; and (5) strongly agree. After the posttest, the questionnaire was delivered to the students and administered in a face-to-face class session. Each participant served as both a peer reviewer and a feedback recipient to complete the questionnaire.

Five experts validated the questionnaire. The Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) was used to summarise the experts' decisions. The analysis revealed that the IOC was 0.50 or higher for 34 of 35 items. The items that failed were revised in accordance with the experts' suggestions.

(c). Semi-Structured Interview

The interview protocol was designed to elicit students' attitudes toward anonymous and non-anonymous peer review. Twelve participants were selected for the stimulus recall and the semi-structured interview. The twelve participants were purposively selected based on their posttest scores: two with high scores, two with average scores, and two with low scores from each treatment group. The same experts evaluated the semi-structured interview questions as they did the questionnaire. The reliability of the questions was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha for the interview questions was 0.938.

C. Data Collection

A consent form was given to each participant before their participation. Pre-instruction, participants completed Writing Task 1 and the In-class Pretest, both administered in paper mode. Next, participants were instructed in writing opinion

paragraphs using a process-genre approach. Instruction featured model texts and explicit instruction on how to organise a paragraph, use a topic sentence, employ logical reasoning, use connectors, and write a conclusion. Students were encouraged to know that opinion writing demands support for points of view, not just fixed “correct” responses.

The scoring rubric was presented at the onset of Writing Task 2 as a reference for writing and peer review. Students were trained to provide feedback on five rubric-related criteria: content, organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Writing tasks 2-4 were peer-reviewed in a blended setting via closed Facebook groups. There were two subgroups for each class, namely anonymous and non-anonymous. Those in the anonymous condition received 10 shared pseudonym accounts, and those in the non-anonymous condition logged on with individual accounts and received a list of teacher-assigned partners. Students were given three days to write for each task, two days to provide feedback, and two additional days to revise. Task 5, written in class and not peer-reviewed, was administered as the posttest and examined against Task 1 to determine improvement. Two raters, a Thai English teacher and a native-English teacher with more than 10 years’ experience, scored all tasks using Hyland’s (2019) rubric.

D. Data Analysis

The anonymous and non-anonymous groups’ writing pretest and posttest mean scores were compared using a *t*-test to assess the students’ development in writing ability. The numerical data gathered from the questionnaire were also examined to investigate how students responded to different forms of peer review, namely, anonymous and non-anonymous peer review. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and *t*-test, were used to analyse this data. The quantitative results from the questionnaire were triangulated using the qualitative data from the interview. Deductive thematic analysis was conducted to identify themes for presenting the findings. Two experienced coders individually coded and cross-checked the findings for trustworthiness and credibility.

IV. RESULTS

A. The Effects of Anonymous and Non-Anonymous Peer Review on Writing Ability

Table 1 presents a summary of the results from both groups of high school students’ writing abilities. The anonymous group scored an average of 16.05 (SD = 1.41) on the pretest and 21.66 (SD = 1.30) on the posttest out of 25. This difference was statistically significant ($t = 2.737$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the non-anonymous group had an average score of 16.20 (SD = 1.43) for the pretest and 21.66 (SD = 1.30) for the posttest, and this difference was also statistically significant ($t = 2.379$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that both treatments significantly enhance learners’ writing ability.

TABLE 1
A SUMMARY OF THE OVERALL PARTICIPANTS’ WRITING ABILITY

Groups	Test	Mean	SD	Percentage	Mean Dif.	<i>t</i> -value	Effect size
Anonymous	Pretest	16.05	1.41	64.20	22.44	2.737*	4.15
	Posttest	21.66	1.30	86.64			
Non-anonymous	Pretest	16.20	1.43	64.80	22.64	2.379*	4.13
	Posttest	21.86	1.31	87.44			

*Note: $p < 0.001$ for *t*-value

As shown in Table 2, the results also revealed no difference between the anonymous and non-anonymous peer review groups. Specifically, groups did not differ on their pretest scores ($t = 0.611$, $p = 0.543$) or on their posttest scores ($t = 0.815$, $p = 0.815$).

TABLE 2
A COMPARISON OF WRITING ABILITY BETWEEN THE ANONYMOUS AND NON-ANONYMOUS GROUPS

Test	Anonymous			Non-anonymous			<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	%	SD	Mean	%	SD		
Pretest	16.05	64.20	1.41	16.19	64.78	1.43	.611	.543
Posttest	21.66	86.64	1.30	21.86	87.45	1.31	.815	.418

B. Results From the Post-Intervention Questionnaire

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation of students’ overall attitudes toward anonymous and non-anonymous peer review. Results showed that the mean scores of participants’ overall attitudes in the anonymous and non-anonymous groups were 3.91 (78.23%, SD = 0.96) and 3.98 (79.69%, SD = 0.88), respectively. Thus, the findings suggest that the participants in both groups reported positive attitudes toward peer review. However, overall, attitudes were significantly more positive in the non-anonymous group compared to the anonymous peer review group.

TABLE 3
OVERALL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ANONYMOUS AND NON-ANONYMOUS PEER REVIEW

Writing components	Attitude	Anonymous			Non-anonymous		
		Mean	%	SD	Mean	%	SD
Content	Peer reviewer	3.86	77.19	0.96	3.89	77.81	0.88
	Feedback receiver	3.96	79.26	0.90	4.13	82.50	0.79
Organisation	Peer reviewer	3.73	74.69	0.95	3.77	75.31	0.89
	Feedback receiver	3.99	79.79	0.93	4.14	82.81	0.82
Grammar	Peer reviewer	3.80	76.09	0.96	3.96	79.22	0.92
	Feedback receiver	3.95	78.96	0.98	4.17	83.33	0.82
Vocabulary	Peer reviewer	3.82	76.33	1.01	3.74	74.84	0.94
	Feedback receiver	4.04	80.73	0.92	4.12	82.40	0.89
Mechanics	Peer reviewer	3.96	79.22	1.02	3.97	79.30	0.98
	Feedback receiver	4.11	82.29	0.92	4.16	83.23	0.86
	Overall attitude	3.91	78.23	0.96	3.98	79.69	0.88

C. Qualitative Results

To students' attitudes toward peer review of writing, both anonymously and non-anonymously, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 12 students (6 from each group). The interviews were all in Thai, digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English by the investigators. A deductive thematic analysis was undertaken based on the first five analytic categories of the L2 writing rubric: content, organisation, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Those in the anonymous group are assigned to A1-A6, and those in the non-anonymous group to N1-N6.

Analysis of qualitative findings indicated that all of the survey participants reported positive attitudes toward peers' reviews as supportive. The findings also showed that both gained more confidence and made fewer mistakes through each other's feedback. But they observed unique characteristics of both. Anonymous conditions facilitated objectivity and honest critique; non-anonymous conditions encouraged comfort, collaboration, and emotional support.

(a). Content: Developing Logical and Coherent Ideas

The qualitative interviews indicated that students in both the anonymous and non-anonymous groups were strongly positive about peer review as a tool for developing ideas and improving the logical coherence of their writing. Peer feedback was an occasion to consider the quality, coherence, and relevance of the content. Respondents in the anonymous group reported that receiving feedback highlighted suboptimal aspects of their papers and prompted them to make substantive changes. Participants in the non-anonymous condition, however, emphasised the motivating element of being encouraged and supported by known peers. The following excerpts reveal these developments:

A1: "I think I know how to write good content after reading the examples from other students' work."

A2: "I was fortunate to have been guided well on content by my peer reviewer. Now, I feel my writing has logic, that it's not written like before."

A4: "The encouragement I received about my content gave me confidence in the fact that I could write."

A5: "The way I put my content together was nonsensical at first, but it got better from peer review in my first assignment."

N1: "I don't have any problems with content after the first assignment. It is very easy. My interesting content was praised."

N4: "One thing I learned about making more interesting content came from a friend."

N5: "My reviewer presented a sensible suggestion for amending my writing."

N6: "My friend said that she liked my interesting story."

(b). Organisation: Structuring and Sequencing Ideas

The qualitative data indicated that peer review was highly effective in focusing students' attention on paragraph structure, coherence, and overall text organisation. Both groups also reported that engaging in peer review and being reviewed by peers made them more attentive to how ideas were organised in their writing. Most anonymous comments focused on text coherence and structural clarity, as reviewers aimed to offer constructive advice on ways to enhance organisation without personal preconceptions. By contrast, non-anonymous feedback seemed to feature cooperative dialogue, with peers engaging in mutual help from both perspectives, thereby co-constructing better-organised texts. The excerpts below indicate these patterns:

A2: "A friend told me I was a good writer. It made me more confident."

A3: "Either my peer thought that I was good at writing and did not make any comments on the organisation or whatever."

A4: "My writing was well-organised by my peer review."

A6: "My friend said that my elements of writing were good. It made me happy."

N2: "The reviewer helped me improve punctuation, such as a comma. In some cases, I forget to put a comma after connectives. I am more circumspect now."

N5: "My classmate helped me organise my thoughts more logically."

N6: "My organisation wasn't good, but peer review made me rethink it."

(c). *Grammar: Accuracy and Awareness*

Analyses of the interview data further indicated that grammar was a primary focus in both groups' oral discussions. Many participants appreciated the role of peer review in enabling them to identify and correct grammatical errors, improve language precision, and develop high-quality writing. It should be noted that the feedback differed in character between the two conditions. Students in the unknown group said they received more specific and direct grammatical corrections, which motivated them to transform independently and engage in critical self-evaluation of their language. In comparison, feedback was generally seen as sympathetic and comforting among the non-anonymous students, but at times less necessary, because peers did not want to give strong negative comments to stay on good terms. These discoveries suggest that anonymous peer review can improve grammar by providing objective, constructive feedback. In contrast, non-anonymous peer review can improve grammatical awareness through trustful collaboration and emotional support. The following excerpts sustain these findings:

A1: "I modified almost all according to the comments."

A2: "I have trouble writing and using grammar. I was fortunate to have a reviewer who was good with grammar. He highlighted some of my flaws and directed me on how to fix them, hands-off. After a few assignments, I stopped making the same mistakes. And on top of this, because my grammar was better, I got a higher writing score."

A3: "My grammar is poor. The feedback was mostly about my grammar. This draft is much better than that first one."

A6: "Firstly, my grammar was not good. But once my peer taught me, it improved so much."

N2: "Good eyes for grammar (e.g., subject-verb agreement, verb tenses) from my reviewers."

N3: "The grammar my reviewer didn't say anything about. Perhaps she does not want to hurt my feelings because she is my friend."

N5: "My work was well enhanced with the help of my friend's advice on grammar."

(d). *Vocabulary: Word Selection and Vocabulary Development*

The examination of the qualitative data showed that participants in both groups perceived that their vocabulary learning and word use had improved after the peer review tasks. Participants said that the process of reviewing and receiving peer feedback helped them learn new words, find the right words for their essays, and expand their vocabulary. Two distinct patterns were evident in the two groups. Students in the anonymous group reported that their reviewers' feedback made them more lexically accurate and appropriate, as reviewers provided objective, detailed comments on word choice and use. In contrast, the non-anonymous group students mentioned that peers could aid them in shared vocabulary learning through social collaboration and exposure to peers' writing styles and expressions. The following excerpts reflect this pattern:

A1: "My classmate helped teach me how to use vocab effectively."

A4: "My reviewer said a few of my word choices were odd. So, I checked and found out that synonyms are not necessarily substitutable."

A6: "I would copy down the words that I liked from my peer's work while reading it."

N2: "My friend's recommendation teaches me more words."

N5: "Assisting my friends makes...[um]...learn a lot of new vocabulary."

N6: "After my friend showed me, my writing was way better."

(e). *Mechanics: Spelling, Capitalisation, and Punctuation*

Students from both groups reported improvements in their mechanical accuracy, especially in spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation. Participants repeatedly reported that their peer review had helped them identify and correct surface problems in their writing that they hadn't noticed. The feedback in both conditions was different. The students in the anonymous group repeatedly referred to their reviewers as "proofreaders," determining right from wrong answers and pointing out typographical or mechanical errors. By contrast, students in the non-anonymous condition indicated that their reviewers not only corrected but also explained and engaged in dialogue, which helped them learn the rules of writing mechanics. The following excerpts support such claims:

A1: "Capitalisation and punctuation, as my reviewer pointed out to me. After that, I did not repeat those same errors."

A3: "My spelling was terrible...my reviewer helped proofread it."

A6: "It's like having a proofreader."

N2: "Reviewer corrected punctuations like commas (,) for me."

N3: "Initially, I could not perceive the rule of capitalisation, but my friend made me realise it."

N5: "I'm glad that my reviewer has good eyes for spelling errors."

V. DISCUSSION

A. *The Effects of Anonymous and Non-Anonymous Peer Review on Writing Ability in a Blended Learning Environment*

Both anonymous and non-anonymous peer review effectively improved students' writing performance in a blended

classroom, according to this study's results. Both treatment groups obtained posttest scores that were significantly higher than their pretest scores on the opinion writing task, indicating significant improvement in their writing skills. More importantly, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups, suggesting that both types of feedback could improve writing proficiency with a proportional effect. These results are consistent with many other studies that argue that peer review, regardless of anonymity, can be an effective pedagogical tool for improving writing performance among EFL learners (Ciftci & Kocoglu, 2012; Maarof et al., 2011; Plutsky & Wilson, 2004).

The increase in writing performance observed in the current study can be explained within the framework of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, specifically within the ZPD. Peer review enables students to scaffold performance through social interaction, including negotiation and collaborative feedback exchange (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). This interaction was made possible in the present study through a closed Facebook group that provided a space for students to communicate asynchronously, give each other feedback, and collectively redraft their work. This type of interaction supported some learners in co-constructing meaning, reflecting on their writing, and revising texts with peers' feedback. This is consistent with Hu (2005) and Min (2005), who both stress that writing development is a social process in which learners improve at one level by giving and receiving feedback. This finding also supports the idea that blended peer feedback could improve engagement, writing quality, and cognitive interaction among EFL learners (Wang & Kew, 2025).

The study's qualitative results provide additional evidence for these theoretical explanations. Students said that peer feedback enabled them to make substantive changes at macro- and micro-cohesion levels. They showed an increase in content and organisation, as well as in grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Participants reported that peer review prompted them to pay closer attention to coherence, logical structure, and word choice. These findings align with those of Diab (2010), who reported that peer feedback promotes higher-order revision. The current findings have also demonstrated that peer feedback in blended environments fosters sustained participation and encourages learners to enact meaningful change, suggesting that socialised writing is a reflective and dynamic experience.

In addition to advances in writing, this study's results have also shed light on peer review as a means of fostering self-awareness, becoming autonomous learners, and thinking critically. For many students, analysing and responding to peer feedback helped them identify their own linguistic problems and prompted greater self-monitoring during revision. This result provides evidence for Jiang and Sukying's (2024) assertion that feedback establishes independence, and for Hyland's (2000) claim that it fosters more active learning by reducing reliance on the teacher.

The blended learning approach used in the present study has also proved to be beneficial in promoting students' writing development. Blended learning is the use of both face-to-face and online instruction, in which students control the time, place, path, and pace of their interaction with content, peers, and instructors (Obiedat et al., 2014). Facebook enabled students to see their peers' drafts, provide and receive feedback, and make revisions at any time, from anywhere. This level of access was probably a motivator to listen and participate. By the same token, Tananuraksakul (2014) in Thailand also found similar results, as later supported by newer studies that blended peer feedback selections and demonstrated increased user participation, writing quality, and satisfaction based on learner input (Wang & Kew, 2025). The integration of digital tools and peer sharing created an interactive, supportive context that prompted greater reflection and more sustained writing.

B. Students' Attitudes Toward Anonymous and Non-Anonymous Peer Review on Writing Ability

The results of this study showed that participants in both groups had positive attitudes toward peer review and described it as an interactive learning experience, albeit demanding. These results agree with previous and recent studies demonstrating that peer feedback (in socially connected or partially blended contexts) promotes student motivation, confidence, and commitment (Barrot, 2021; Choi, 2013; Wang & Kew, 2025). Similarly, Saito and Fujita (2004) suggested that students are more likely to offer supportive feedback and higher-order features of writing (content and organisation) when they know their feedback partners, as this promotes an affective, safe learning environment.

Qualitative data from this study support these findings. Non-anonymous group students repeatedly reported that they were not anxious around strangers and that being friends with or knowing someone else led to feedback being given and received in a supportive manner. One participant remarked, for example, "My classmate helped me organise my thoughts more logically" (N5), and another stated, "My organisation wasn't good, but peer review made me rethink it" (N6). By sharing their identities, students create an environment of trust and mutual respect, which should make it easier for them to offer and receive constructive feedback on one another's drafts. These excerpts exemplify how two parties who know each other are more likely to trust one another than anonymous writers, and they can engage in a dialogue based on positive face, as noted above. N3 stated, "My reviewer did not say anything about grammar; perhaps she does not want to hurt my feelings." This conforms with Wu and Schunn's (2021) conclusion that relational closeness may lead to more supportive, yet less critical, peer feedback. However, such affective comfort managed their motivation and alleviated the fear of negative evaluation, which proved to be a strong aspect in EFL contexts when writing anxiety is prevalent.

The anonymous group, however, stated that their experiences had helped promote objectivity, honesty, and self-reflection. For instance, A2 said, "I was fortunate to have been guided well on content by my peer reviewer." Meanwhile, A4 said, "The encouragement I received about my content gave me confidence in the fact that I could write." Presumably, anonymity curbs social pressure, enabling reviewers to give frank and constructive feedback without concern that it will negatively impact relationships. Therefore, non-anonymous review supports emotional security, while anonymous review

encourages cognitive depth and critical thinking, illustrating the distinct merits of both modes. Peer review was found to promote a safe emotional environment, objectivity, motivation, confidence, and engagement in learning. By evaluating others' work, students in both groups stated that it provoked them to consider their own strengths and weaknesses. For example, A6 reported that her grammar improved after her peer taught her. This aligns with claims that feedback fosters learner autonomy and self-regulated learning by moving away from teacher-centred correction toward learner-motivated improvement (Hyland, 2000; Jiang & Sukying, 2024). N6 also said, "After my friend showed me, my writing was way better." This positive affective response reflects how experienced peer support can build confidence, maintain effort, and decrease apprehension about writing.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings for RQ1 reveal that peer review, whether anonymous or non-anonymous, enhanced students' writing in terms of content, organisation, language use, and mechanics. No differences were found between the two modes of feedback; therefore, it could be assumed that they are equally helpful at this stage of writing development. These results suggest that the value of peer review lies not in its anonymity but in the opportunities for reflection, revision, and reciprocal learning. Therefore, multiple cycles of peer review in a mixed mode seem to be an effective pedagogical technique for improving the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of EFL writing.

Regarding RQ2, in both groups, students showed favourable attitudes towards peer review as helpful, motivating, and a means to improve their writing. But non-anonymous participants experienced significantly higher levels of affective engagement, trust, and collaborative comfort. These patterns are further evident in the qualitative analysis: feedback with facial expressions and names encouraged empathy and support, while anonymous judgements fostered objectification and criticism. Overall, the results indicate that each approach offers unique advantages: anonymity for reflection or judgment, and non-anonymity for connectedness, self-confidence, and emotional engagement.

The pedagogical implications are clear. Firstly, both forms of peer review can and should be incorporated into EFL writing instruction to facilitate language development, learner awareness, and revision skills. Second, as non-anonymous reviews promote trust and motivation, teachers may privilege public peer interactions. However, an anonymous review could be applied to elicit more objective feedback, particularly from advanced participants. A hybrid model of the two could, as such, hold the emotional cushion and depth together. Third, dedicated training is necessary: students, and particularly low-proficiency students, need scaffolding, suggested comments, and guided checklists to provide thoughtful, high-quality feedback. The use of digital resources, such as closed online groups or learning management systems, can also facilitate flexible participation and continued engagement.

However, the study has several limitations. It only trained on opinion paragraph writing, rendering generalisation to other genres, such as argumentative or narrative texts, unfeasible. Yet more research is needed to compare peer review across a variety of writing tasks. Moreover, despite guidance for students to address each of the five writing aspects in their feedback, many focused only on grammar and vocabulary; further research is needed to foster well-rounded, thorough feedback. The study was further limited to an online peer-review environment. It would be interesting to compare with a face-to-face environment and with different digital platforms, such as AI-based tools. Lastly, future studies could recruit diverse groups of learners at various proficiency levels, ages, and cultural contexts in their design, to better capture long-term effects on writing development as well as learners' autonomy and confidence.

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The ESKAMI Method: A Multisensory Approach to Enhancing Early Reading Skills

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Abstract—Early reading competence serves as a critical foundation for literacy development in the early years of schooling. This study explores the effectiveness of the ESKAMI approach—an instructional model encompassing spelling, syllables, words, sentences, and singing—in fostering initial reading proficiency among first-grade learners in Gowa Regency, Indonesia. The ESKAMI framework incorporates phonological and multisensory strategies that synergize cognitive, emotional, and musical dimensions to reinforce literacy acquisition. Employing a one-group pretest/posttest design, the intervention was implemented across six learning sessions involving 21 participants. Assessment procedures were adapted from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), focusing on five key domains: phonological awareness, letter recognition, letter–sound correspondence, word reading, and oral reading fluency. Data analysis included normality testing, paired-samples t-tests, and effect size estimation using Cohen's *d*. Findings revealed a marked improvement in students' reading performance, with the mean score increasing from 79.76 (*SD* = 7.98) to 95.62 (*SD* = 4.50), $t(20) = 13.59$, $p < 0.001$, mean difference = 15.86, 95% CI [13.43, 18.29], and a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.97$). These outcomes confirm the efficacy of the ESKAMI method in strengthening early literacy through sound-based and rhythm-integrated learning activities. Although constrained by a limited sample size and the absence of a control group, this study contributes valuable empirical insights into the implementation of the ESKAMI model as a promising phonological–affective literacy framework for early primary education in Indonesia.

Index Terms—early reading, ESKAMI method, phonological awareness, early literacy, multisensory learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Language skills are fundamental abilities that enable individuals to communicate effectively, express their ideas, and access information. Among the four language skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing, reading plays a central role, as it forms the foundation for developing critical thinking and learning across disciplines. However, early reading is a complex process involving the recognition of sound–symbol relationships, letter sequences, and word meanings, which collectively build the foundation for advanced literacy (Annika & Johanna, 2025). As a result, reading instruction should begin early, particularly in elementary school, when children start to recognize language symbols and associate them with sounds and meanings.

Despite its importance, many children in Indonesia continue to experience difficulties in acquiring early reading skills (Ain & Ain, 2024; Aryani et al., 2024; Bersky & Alwi, 2024; Meo et al., 2021; Nikmah & Harsiwi, 2024; Soleha et al., 2022). Prior studies have identified two leading causes of these difficulties. First, learners often struggle to distinguish letters with similar shapes and sounds (Clayton et al., 2020; Istiqoma et al., 2023; Miciak & Fletcher, 2020; Nurani et al., 2021). Second, external factors such as inadequate learning environments, curriculum limitations, and the absence of developmentally appropriate instructional methods contribute to poor reading outcomes (Aryani et al., 2024; Bersky & Alwi, 2024; Catts & Petscher, 2022; Fadhillah et al., 2025; Snow, 2010).

These findings highlight a fundamental gap in early reading instruction—namely, the absence of an integrative approach that connects phonological awareness, letter–sound correspondence, and contextual meaning. Effective early reading instruction should go beyond mere letter recognition and emphasize understanding through meaningful and

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engaging contexts (Annika & Johanna, 2025). Consequently, there is a need for a method that integrates phonological, linguistic, and cognitive skills in ways appropriate to children's developmental stages. Approaches that help learners recognize letters, link sounds to written symbols, and strengthen vocabulary are believed to enhance foundational literacy (Ehri, 1987; Langenberg, 2000; Ningtiyas et al., 2022).

The ESKAMI method (spelling–syllables–words–sentences–singing) presents a promising approach. It combines phonetic and musical strategies through five sequential stages—spelling letters, recognizing syllables, forming words, composing sentences, and reinforcing mastery through singing. Singing-based activities make learning enjoyable, strengthen memory, and foster sound–symbol association. As noted by Dussling (2020), spelling and reading develop in parallel, and song-based phonological exercises can accelerate reading fluency. What sets this study apart is its systematic and evidence-based application of the ESKAMI method, operationalized through the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) indicators that comprehensively measure phonological awareness, letter and sound recognition, word reading accuracy, and oral fluency.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of phonics, Montessori, and global methods in improving early reading skills (Lestari, 2022; Rikmasari & Savitri, 2019; Saputra et al., 2023). However, most of these approaches pay limited attention to affective and motivational dimensions that influence learners' engagement in reading. The ESKAMI method distinguishes itself by integrating cognitive and emotional aspects through music and movement, enabling children to learn both effectively and joyfully.

Drawing on the above rationale, this study investigates the extent to which the ESKAMI approach contributes to the development of early reading proficiency among first-grade students in Gowa Regency, Indonesia. Specifically, it examines whether the method has a significant impact on early reading performance and promotes equitable literacy outcomes among learners. This study contributes empirical evidence for contextual, enjoyable, and developmentally relevant literacy instruction in early elementary education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Early Reading Development and Phonological Awareness

According to Ehri (1987), children acquire reading skills through a gradual developmental sequence consisting of four distinct phases: pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic, and consolidated alphabetic. At the initial stage, learners begin to grasp the systematic connections between written symbols and their corresponding sounds, where phonemic awareness serves as a crucial foundation for reading acquisition. Similarly, Langenberg (2000) empirically underscores that phonics-based instruction—when implemented in an explicit, structured, and progressive manner—effectively supports young learners in developing word recognition skills and early text comprehension.

This idea aligns with Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory, which posits that reading does not emerge suddenly but develops continuously from sound and symbol recognition toward meaning construction. Early literacy encompasses the child's entire experience with written language—listening, speaking, symbol recognition, and contextual understanding—therefore integrating linguistic, cognitive, and social dimensions.

The Phonological Processing Theory also highlights phonological awareness as a key determinant of early reading success. Within the ESKAMI framework, the *Spelling* and *Word* stages specifically strengthen phonological processing. Students are trained to identify letters and sounds, blend them into syllables and words, and progressively transition from decoding to fluent reading. Prior research by Kholilah et al. (2023), Islamy (2023), and Gading et al. (2019) supports that systematic practice in spelling and syllables significantly improves children's phonological and decoding skills.

Each stage of the ESKAMI method (spelling–syllables–words–sentences–singing) reflects a multilevel cognitive progression from sound recognition to meaning comprehension. The spelling and syllables stages reinforce phonological awareness; the words and sentences stages develop structural understanding; and the singing stage enhances fluency and memory through rhythmic repetition. This developmental sequence reflects Ehri's (1987) and Wagner and Torgesen's (1987) models, where learners evolve from symbolic recognition to automatic and meaningful reading.

The ESKAMI method draws its theoretical grounding from the simple view of reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Scarborough, 2001), which emphasizes that practical reading ability develops through the combined processes of word recognition and language comprehension. In practice, the early stages of ESKAMI focus on building learners' decoding accuracy through systematic phonological and spelling activities. The later phases build on this foundation by nurturing comprehension and memory through the construction of meaningful sentences and song-based reinforcement.

Finally, the approach aligns with the engagement theory of reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), which stresses the role of motivation and emotional engagement in sustaining literacy development. The inclusion of singing and rhythmic activities makes learning enjoyable and meaningful, transforming reading instruction from purely technical training into a holistic, effective, and socially engaging process.

B. Multisensory Learning and Emotional Engagement

The multiple intelligences theory proposed by Gardner (2013) asserts that human learning is shaped by the interaction of diverse forms of intelligence rather than a single cognitive ability. These include linguistic, musical, kinesthetic, spatial, and interpersonal intelligence, all of which operate together to support meaningful learning experiences. Within the context of early literacy development, this theory emphasizes the importance of engaging multiple sensory channels—

sight, hearing, and movement—to reinforce the connection between symbols and sounds. In early reading instruction, such as the ESKAMI method, activating these intelligences enables children to process linguistic input holistically, thereby enhancing their ability to recognize patterns, associate sounds with letters, and derive meaning from text.

In early literacy settings, multisensory engagement plays a crucial role in helping children transition from auditory recognition of sounds to visual decoding of written symbols. Activities such as identifying letters, forming syllables, and decoding words require coordination among sensory modalities. When children combine listening, seeing, and physical movement—such as clapping or singing to syllable rhythms—they form stronger neural associations between what they hear, see, and speak. Studies by Nkurunziza (2024), Utami and Musthafa (2023), and Arianto et al. (2023) show that rhythmic and interactive learning experiences increase children's ability to retain phonological information and apply it in decoding unfamiliar words. This integration of sensory experiences supports both linguistic accuracy and memory consolidation.

Dussling's (2020) research reinforces this perspective, demonstrating that rhythm and melody serve as cognitive scaffolds that enhance phonological awareness and memory retention. The structured repetition found in songs provides the brain with predictable patterns that make it easier for children to identify and recall phonemes. Moreover, rhythm and melody stimulate emotional responses that engage multiple brain regions simultaneously, fostering a deeper focus and enjoyment during learning. This finding aligns with neuroscientific evidence suggesting that music activates the left hemisphere for linguistic and logical processing and the right hemisphere for creative and emotional functions—creating an optimal neurological condition for literacy development.

The singing stage of the ESKAMI method operationalizes these principles by merging melody, rhythm, and movement into literacy instruction. Through singing, learners naturally repeat letter and syllable patterns without perceiving the activity as a demanding cognitive task. This repetition, embedded within a pleasurable musical context, strengthens phonological awareness and supports the transfer of linguistic patterns into long-term memory. The rhythmic flow of songs helps students internalize word stress, pronunciation, and intonation, which are vital for reading fluency. In essence, the musical component functions as a mnemonic device that embeds language learning within emotional and sensory experiences.

Additionally, singing activities within ESKAMI contribute to the affective domain of learning by fostering a sense of enjoyment and reducing anxiety associated with reading. Music has been widely recognized as a natural motivator that can transform learning into an emotionally satisfying experience. When children sing together, they experience a sense of community and shared accomplishment, which in turn increases their willingness to participate and take risks in reading aloud. This emotional engagement is particularly beneficial for students who may otherwise struggle with reading tasks, as it builds self-efficacy and positive associations with literacy activities.

The interplay between cognitive and emotional dimensions in ESKAMI illustrates how multisensory learning not only enhances skill acquisition but also motivates and fosters persistence. By stimulating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic pathways simultaneously, the method caters to diverse learning styles and supports students' natural inclinations to explore language through movement and sound. The enjoyment derived from rhythmic reading activities contributes to sustained engagement—a vital component in nurturing early literacy habits. Over time, this positive reinforcement fosters an intrinsic love for reading, turning it from a mechanical task into a meaningful and enjoyable experience.

Ultimately, the integration of music, movement, and language within the ESKAMI method reflects the holistic essence of Gardner's (1983, 2013) theory of multiple intelligences. It recognizes that learning to read is not solely a linguistic process but a multisensory and emotional journey. By uniting cognitive, sensory, and affective elements in a single instructional design, ESKAMI enables young learners to establish a solid foundation for literacy that is both effective and enjoyable. Such an approach has broader implications for early childhood education, suggesting that reading instruction should not only aim at technical proficiency but also at cultivating curiosity, confidence, and lifelong enthusiasm for literacy.

C. Sociocultural Scaffolding in Early Literacy

Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the ESKAMI framework is theoretically grounded in the idea that learning is a socially mediated process that unfolds through interaction and guided participation within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). From this perspective, teachers assume the role of facilitators who provide contingent and gradually withdrawn support, enabling learners to achieve tasks that would otherwise lie beyond their independent performance.

In the context of ESKAMI, teachers model syllable patterns through songs, then gradually reduce assistance as students gain mastery. This process enhances both linguistic competence and learner confidence. Collaborative learning during group singing also fosters peer support and imitation, consistent with Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, where observation and repetition play key roles in skill acquisition.

Empirical evidence (Syamsudin et al., 2023) suggests that song-based collaborative learning promotes active participation and strengthens social connections, ultimately contributing to literacy gains. Hence, sociocultural interaction and emotional engagement are integral—not supplementary—to the cognitive process of reading development within the ESKAMI approach.

Rooted in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, the ESKAMI method conceptualizes literacy acquisition as a socially mediated endeavor shaped by interaction, language use, and shared cultural practices. Within classroom dynamics, singing,

peer modeling, and teacher scaffolding foster collaborative meaning-making that bridges individual competence and collective engagement, enabling learners to internalize linguistic forms and develop reading autonomy through socially embedded learning experiences.

Moreover, this social dimension situates the ESKAMI approach within the broader context of culturally responsive pedagogy. By incorporating rhythm, local language nuances, and musical expressions familiar to children's cultural environments, the method validates students' linguistic identities while promoting inclusivity in literacy instruction. Such contextualization resonates with current educational paradigms that view literacy as a socially situated practice rather than a purely technical skill. Therefore, ESKAMI not only supports reading fluency and comprehension but also cultivates a learning environment that values cooperation, cultural relevance, and emotional well-being—key components for sustaining literacy engagement in early education.

D. Evidence-Based Literacy Assessment: The EGRA Model

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), formulated by RTI International (2015), serves as an empirically validated tool for assessing the fundamental elements of reading in early-grade students. It encompasses five core dimensions—phonological awareness, letter identification, sound-symbol association, word decoding, and oral reading fluency—providing a comprehensive framework for examining learners' literacy progress. Due to its proven reliability and adaptability across various educational contexts, EGRA has been widely applied in assessing literacy outcomes, including within the Indonesian education system. In this study, the EGRA indicators were systematically aligned with the stages of the ESKAMI method to establish a coherent connection between assessment and instruction. Specifically, the *Spelling* stage corresponds to letter recognition and sound association; the *Syllables* and *Words* stages relate to decoding simple linguistic units, while the *Sentences* and *Singing* stages reflect the development of oral reading fluency and intonation.

This integration ensures that learning and assessment operate as an interconnected, reflective, and iterative cycle—aligned with Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory, which emphasizes that literacy development should be evaluated continuously and contextually within the learner's environment. Building upon this foundation, the K–3 *Literacy Guidance Framework* (Foorman et al., 2016) reinforces the need for holistic and adaptive assessments that encompass phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension as key dimensions of literacy growth. Within the ESKAMI framework, these principles are operationalized through differentiated instruction, allowing teachers to tailor learning experiences to each student's unique developmental trajectory and learning needs. When combined with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as reflected in the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), it enables teachers to identify learners' current levels and provide targeted scaffolding to bridge gaps in understanding. Through this synergy, assessment in the ESKAMI model transcends its traditional evaluative role. It becomes an integral component of the instructional process—one that continuously informs, guides, and reinforces pedagogical decisions to optimize student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the integration of EGRA within the ESKAMI framework contributes to the advancement of data-informed pedagogy in early literacy education. By using EGRA results as a diagnostic and formative feedback mechanism, teachers can identify specific areas of strength and weakness—such as limited phonological awareness or slow reading fluency—and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. This approach transforms assessment from a summative evaluation into a pedagogical feedback loop, enabling continuous improvement in teaching practices. It also supports the development of evidence-based interventions that are sensitive to students' linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, particularly in multilingual contexts such as Indonesia. Hence, the EGRA–ESKAMI integration not only validates the method's effectiveness through measurable outcomes but also promotes reflective, responsive, and equitable literacy instruction that aligns with contemporary educational standards.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study employed a pre-experimental research framework characterized by a one-group pretest/posttest design. This design was chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of applying the ESKAMI method (spelling, syllables, words, sentences, singing) in enhancing the initial reading skills of elementary school students. Measurements were conducted twice, namely before treatment (pre-test) and after treatment (post-test), with the free variable being the application of the ESKAMI method and the bound variable being the student's initial reading ability. This design was considered appropriate for the context of early classroom learning because it allowed researchers to directly observe changes in learning outcomes that occurred after the method was applied, even without a control group.

B. Population and Samples

The research population comprises all Grade 1 students at State Elementary School X, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year. From this population, 21 students were selected as a research sample using purposive sampling techniques. This selection was made based on the results of classroom teachers' observations and basic literacy diagnostic assessments, which showed that the group of students still had difficulty reading at the beginning. The study involved a total of 21 students, comprising 10 males and 11 females, whose ages ranged from

6 to 7 years. All participants have a Bugis–Makassar mother tongue background and use Indonesian as a second language in the school environment. This bilingual condition is a significant context in research, as it can impact the process of acquiring early literacy, particularly in associating language sounds with letter symbols in the Indonesian language. Consequently, the demographic and linguistic characteristics of the participants provide a relevant foundation for examining how the ESKAMI method supports early literacy development in the sociolinguistic context of South Sulawesi.

C. Research Instruments

The instrument employed in this study was an early reading proficiency test designed with reference to the indicators of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). It covered five core components: phonological awareness, letter-name recognition, letter–sound association, word reading, and oral reading fluency. Each component was rated using a 0–4-point rubric, and the cumulative score represented the learner's overall reading proficiency. The reliability analysis, using Cronbach's Alpha, produced a coefficient of 0.89, indicating a high level of internal consistency. In addition, content validity was established through expert judgment by three specialists in early literacy, who confirmed the alignment of the instrument's indicators with the intended assessment objectives.

The application of the ESKAMI method was conducted in six meetings over a three-week period, with each meeting lasting 70 minutes. Each meeting was designed in the order of stages in the ESKAMI method, starting with spelling, syllables, words, and sentences, and concluding with singing. In the spelling stage, students practiced recognizing letters and sounds through spelling activities that use letter cards, accompanied by pronunciation guidance from the teacher. The syllable stage emphasizes the merging of two letters into sound units such as *ba*, *bi*, and *bo*, which are reinforced through phonics play to build phonological awareness. The word stage involved forming meaningful words from a combination of syllables, aided by images or concrete objects, such as *ba–lu* becoming *balu*, meaning “sell.” Furthermore, at the sentence stage, students learned to arrange two to three words into simple sentences, such as “Mother eats rice,” while also practicing intonation and comprehension. The last stage, singing, integrated musical elements with reading activities; students sang simple songs that contained newly learned words or sentences. Through these singing activities, students strengthened their phonemic memory, improved their pronunciation, and fostered their interest and motivation in reading.

D. Procedure for Collecting Data

Data obtained through an early reading test was administered both before and after the implementation of the ESKAMI method. The instrument was adapted from the five indicators of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), modified to align with the developmental characteristics of lower elementary school students. To maintain objectivity, the assessment was conducted individually by two evaluators. The five principal components assessed included (1) phonological awareness—the capacity to identify and manipulate sounds within language; (2) letter recognition—the ability to name letters accurately and swiftly; (3) letter–sound correspondence—the skill of associating written symbols with their corresponding sounds; (4) word reading—the ability to decode familiar words with precision; and (5) oral reading fluency—the capacity to read aloud with appropriate speed, rhythm, and intonation. Given that the participants were beginning readers, the reading comprehension component was intentionally excluded from the instrument.

E. Procedure for Analyzing Data

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the mean, distribution, and category levels of students' early reading proficiency according to Ginanto et al.'s (2024) standards, which include four categories: excellent (88–100), good (75–87), satisfactory (60–74), and poor (<60). A paired-samples *t*-test was then applied to determine the statistical significance of differences between pretest and posttest scores. Given the sample size of fewer than 50 participants, data normality was verified using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The descriptive analysis further identified shifts in performance levels following the ESKAMI intervention based on the same classification framework.

TABLE 1
CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS' INITIAL READING ABILITY

Category	Value
Excellent	88-100
Good	75-87
Satisfactory	60-74
Poor	< 60

F. Data Validity and Reliability

To establish data reliability, 20% of the participants were randomly selected for inter-rater reliability testing. The analysis yielded a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.91, indicating an extreme level of agreement between the two independent assessors. All data analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 25, which included stages such as normality tests, paired *t*-tests, effect size calculations (Cohen's *d*), and determination of standard errors and 95% confidence intervals. If the normality assumption is not satisfied, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test is conducted as a supplementary nonparametric procedure. The analysis adopts a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

IV. RESULTS

A. Descriptive Analysis of Students' Early Reading Ability

The pretest and posttest of students' early reading ability were administered to measure the impact of the ESKAMI method. The descriptive results show a notable upward shift in performance across all statistical indicators after the intervention.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' INITIAL READING ABILITY

Statistics	Pretest	Posttest
Number of Samples	21	21
Minimum Value	60	85
Maximum Value	90	100
Average	79.76	95.62
Standard Deviation	7.98	4.5
Variants	63.69	20.28

The data in Table 2 demonstrate consistent improvement in students' reading performance following the implementation of the ESKAMI method. The mean score increased by 15.86 points, accompanied by an increase in both minimum and maximum scores, indicating a shift of the entire score distribution toward higher performance levels. Beyond score elevation, the reduction in standard deviation (from 7.98 to 4.50) and variance (from 63.69 to 20.28) signifies greater uniformity in learning outcomes. This pattern reflects not only progress among high-performing students but also the ability of lower-performing learners to catch up, leading to a more equitable achievement of literacy within the group.

These results suggest that the ESKAMI approach—combining phonological sequencing with rhythmic and multisensory learning—supports students' mastery of letter-sound relationships, decoding accuracy, and reading fluency. The more homogeneous score distribution indicates that the method provides structured support that accommodates varying levels of ability, fostering collective improvement rather than isolated gains.

TABLE 3
CATEGORIES: STUDENTS' INITIAL READING ABILITY

Interval	Category	Pretest		Posttest	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
88-100	Excellent	3	14.29	16	79.19
75-87	Good	15	71.42	4	19.05
60-74	Satisfactory	3	14.29	1	4.76
< 60	Poor	0	0	0	0
Total		21	100	21	100

As shown in Table 3, the distribution of reading ability categories shifted markedly toward the Excellent level after the intervention. Before the application of ESKAMI, most students fell into the Good category (71.42%), while only a few achieved an Excellent performance. Afterward, over three-quarters (76.19%) reached the Excellent category, and none remained in the Poor range. This redistribution highlights a collective enhancement in reading proficiency, particularly in decoding and fluency. The results indicate that the ESKAMI stages—spelling, syllable formation, and rhythmic repetition—helped internalize sound-symbol patterns and improved automaticity in reading.

Overall, the descriptive findings reveal a clear trend of upward mobility and a reduction in learning disparities. The ESKAMI method appears to facilitate structured literacy growth by integrating phonological awareness with affective engagement through song and rhythm, making early reading instruction both practical and inclusive.

B. Inferential Analysis: Differences in Early Reading Ability Before and After the ESKAMI Method

A normality test was first conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis.

TABLE 4
NORMAL TEST RESULTS

Data	Sig	Information
Pretest	0.079	Normal
Posttest	0.097	Normal

The outcomes of the normality test, as displayed in Table 4, reveal significance levels of 0.079 for the pretest and 0.097 for the posttest, both of which exceed the 0.05 criterion. These figures indicate that the distribution of students' reading scores before and after the ESKAMI intervention follows a regular pattern, without irregular deviations or extreme values. In other words, students' performances are distributed evenly across the sample, suggesting that the variations in their reading outcomes reflect natural learning differences rather than data inconsistencies. Establishing data normality at this point is essential, as it confirms that the dataset meets the assumptions required for parametric analysis and ensures the validity and reliability of subsequent statistical procedures. This step enhances the overall credibility of the research findings by demonstrating that the data accurately reflect the students' actual learning progress.

The confirmation of normal distribution provides a reliable statistical basis for implementing the paired-samples t-test, which is used to assess whether there is a meaningful difference in students' reading achievement between the pretest and posttest. Since both sets of data meet the assumption of normality, any observed increase in mean scores can be attributed with confidence to the effects of the ESKAMI learning intervention, rather than to random chance or data distortion. Moreover, the balanced pattern of distribution across both tests suggests that the method benefited all students relatively consistently, rather than only a specific group. This consistency reinforces the interpretation that the improvement in early reading ability stems from the structured, multisensory, and rhythm-based learning design of ESKAMI, which effectively enhances phonological sensitivity, decoding ability, and reading fluency among young learners.

TABLE 5
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS

Data	T – Value	Sig
Pretest/Posttest	13.593	0,0001

The results of the t-test show a t-value of 13.593 with a p-value of 0.0001 ($p < 0.05$), as indicated in Table 5, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. This confirms that students' reading abilities improved substantially after applying the ESKAMI method.

Rather than representing random variation, this significant difference suggests that the structured and multisensory design of ESKAMI effectively strengthened students' decoding, phonological awareness, and oral reading fluency. The large magnitude of difference implies that repeated engagement with rhythmic and linguistic elements reinforced memory and enhanced automaticity in reading.

Taken together, the inferential results substantiate the descriptive findings, demonstrating that the ESKAMI method fosters measurable improvement in early reading performance while promoting balanced progress among learners. Beyond statistical significance, these outcomes underscore the pedagogical value of integrating phonological, affective, and rhythmic components to cultivate foundational literacy competence in early-grade students.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a statistically significant enhancement in students' early reading abilities following the implementation of the ESKAMI method. Statistical analysis indicated that the mean score increased from 79.76 on the pretest to 95.62 on the posttest, with a p-value of 0.0001 (< 0.05), signifying a highly significant improvement. Furthermore, the decrease in standard deviation—from 7.98 to 4.5—suggested a more uniform distribution of reading proficiency among participants after the intervention. The categorization results demonstrated a notable rise in the proportion of students achieving the Excellent category, from 14.29% to 79.19%. These outcomes, consistent with Clay's (1991) emergent literacy theory and Ehri's (1987) phonological processing, illustrate that literacy skills evolve progressively—from recognizing sounds and letters to comprehending meaning. The ESKAMI method, through its sequential stages of spelling, syllables, words, sentences, and singing, facilitates a contextualized and developmentally aligned progression of reading acquisition in young learners.

The enhancement of early reading skills is also strongly associated with Ehri's (1987) and Wagner and Torgesen's (1987) phonological processing theory. Both frameworks highlight that the development of foundational reading proficiency is contingent upon children's capacity to recognize, discriminate, and manipulate the sound structures of language, commonly referred to as phonological awareness. In the context of the ESKAMI method, the spelling and syllables stages strengthen phonological awareness through systematic practice in recognizing, distinguishing, and combining letter sounds into meaningful units. The upward trend in mean scores, together with the reduced dispersion of learning outcomes, demonstrates a more consistent development of phonological skills among the students. These findings align with the results of research by Kholilah et al. (2023), Islamy (2023), and Gading et al. (2019), which have affirmed the effectiveness of spelling and syllable exercises in fostering the development of early literacy competencies among elementary students.

The stages of words, sentences, and singing in the ESKAMI method form an integrated process that fosters students' reading fluency, language comprehension, and learning motivation. The learning sequence begins with word recognition, where students are trained to identify and pronounce words accurately, laying the essential foundation for fluent reading. As learners progress, they are guided to compose these words into meaningful sentences, a stage that reinforces their understanding of linguistic structure and semantic relationships (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). According to Gough and Tunmer's (1986) model, satisfactory reading proficiency arises from the integration of lexical processing and comprehension of language structures that evolve synergistically rather than separately. Within this framework, the initial phase of the ESKAMI method strengthens students' phonological and lexical awareness, while the subsequent stages deepen comprehension through contextual and semantic construction. Collectively, these interconnected stages form a coherent instructional pathway that develops both decoding skills and meaning-making abilities, ultimately promoting a more comprehensive and holistic growth in reading competence.

The singing element in the ESKAMI method is also a key factor in building students' motivation and confidence. Through singing, children learn to recognize sound patterns and language rhythms in a fun and engaging way, making the learning experience more meaningful and emotional. This is in accordance with the social cognitive theory, proposed

by Bandura (1986), which states that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and meaningful social interaction. Singing together fosters a collaborative atmosphere that encourages student participation and enhances social engagement during the reading process. Research by Arianto et al. (2023), Utami and Musthafa (2023), and Nkurunziza (2024) also supports the notion that the use of songs in reading learning enhances the ability to recognize letter sounds and accelerates the transition from the introductory stage to reading fluency.

Furthermore, the empirical evidence from this study demonstrates that the success of the ESKAMI method extends beyond the cognitive aspect to encompass the integration of linguistic and affective aspects. This approach aligns with the engagement theory of reading, as proposed by Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), which emphasizes that students' intrinsic motivation and active involvement are crucial factors in developing sustainable reading habits. With fun activities such as singing, students not only learn to recognize letters and sounds but also foster interest and a positive attitude towards reading activities.

Integration between theories of early literacy (Clay, 1991), phonological processing (Ehri, 1987; Wagner & Torgesen, 1987), and reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Scarborough, 2001), as well as motivational and social-cognitive factors (Bandura, 1986; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), support the comprehensive application of these theories in the ESKAMI method. Through systematic stages, this method successfully integrates sound-based learning, fosters understanding of meaning, and harmoniously strengthens intrinsic motivation.

However, this research acknowledges certain limitations. It was implemented within a single class involving a relatively small sample size and the absence of a control group, thereby restricting the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Social factors and the background of students' mother tongues have also not been explored in depth, despite both having the potential to affect the development of early literacy. The relatively short duration of the study limits the assessment of the long-term effects of the ESKAMI method on advanced literacy ability. Nevertheless, this study makes a paramount theoretical and practical contribution—theoretically reinforcing the linkages between early literacy theory, phonological processing, and social-cognitive, and practically offering a fun, adaptive, and effective approach to reading learning for elementary school students.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research demonstrate that the ESKAMI method (spelling–syllables–words–sentences–singing) plays a pivotal role in enhancing the early reading proficiency of elementary school learners through its structured and multisensory approach, which combines phonological, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Starting from the recognition of letters and sounds and advancing toward rhythm- and song-based activities, this method enhances decoding accuracy, word recognition, and comprehension while simultaneously building learners' confidence, enthusiasm, and intrinsic drive to read. From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the formulation of an integrated literacy learning framework that is consistent with key perspectives on early reading development, phonological awareness, and learner engagement. It emphasizes that literacy growth emerges through a gradual, holistic, and developmentally aligned process. Practically, the ESKAMI method provides educators with a flexible, empirically grounded model that supports inclusive literacy instruction by accommodating variations in students' abilities and learning needs. To broaden its scope and sustainability, subsequent studies are encouraged to include larger and more diverse samples, more extended implementation periods, and additional variables—such as learner motivation, creativity, and the integration of digital tools—so that the long-term and multidimensional effects of the ESKAMI approach on literacy acquisition can be explored more comprehensively.

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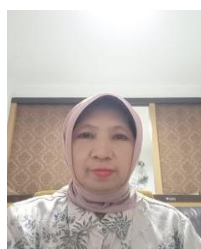
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Negotiating Identity Through Culinary Signage: A Linguistic Landscape Study in Hail, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract—This study explores the linguistic landscape (LL) of culinary signage in Hail, Saudi Arabia, focusing on how language and visual semiotics construct identity and mediate local–global dynamics. Drawing on 332 storefront signs analysed through both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study identifies three dominant identity orientations: local Saudi, pan-Arab, and global cosmopolitan. These identities emerge through strategic language choices (Arabic, English, and others) and multimodal elements such as imagery, colour, and typography. While Arabic remains dominant, the growing presence of English and hybrid forms reflects increasing linguistic flexibility among businesses targeting youth and international consumers. Culinary signage in Hail operates as more than functional communication; it embodies sociolinguistic transformation and contributes to the visible negotiation of cultural identity in public space. Situating the Saudi context within broader linguistic landscape scholarship, the study underscores the need for multimodal, regionally diverse, and context-sensitive analyses of language use in commercial environments.

Index Terms—linguistic landscape, culinary, identity, multilingualism

I. INTRODUCTION

Culinary establishments offer a valuable lens for examining the interplay of language, culture, and identity in contemporary urban settings (Liu, 2025). Restaurants, cafes, and bakeries are not only places of consumption but also semiotic spaces where language and visual symbols reflect cultural affiliations, commercial aspirations, and broader social transformations (Hazaea & Qassem, 2025). As visible components of the linguistic landscape (LL), culinary signboards provide insight into how local, regional, and global identities are negotiated in public space.

In Saudi Arabia, these dynamics gain significance amid Vision 2030—an ambitious national plan to diversify the economy, enhance quality of life, and preserve cultural heritage (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). Vision 2030 understands the importance of building a strong, fulfilling society as the foundation for sustainable prosperity. It emphasises preserving Saudi identity and heritage while simultaneously promoting economic diversification and global integration (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). This multidimensional agenda situates the public linguistic landscape—culinary signage included—at the heart of debates around national identity, modernization, and global cultural flows. Culinary signage thus emerges as a key medium through which local traditions and global consumer culture interact (Hazaea & Qassem, 2025). This study examines the languages, scripts, and semiotic strategies used in Hail City’s storefronts to explore how signage contributes to constructing local Saudi identity.

Located in northern Saudi Arabia, Hail is known for its rich cultural heritage and strong regional identity, shaped by figures like the poet Hatem al-Ta’i and Bedouin traditions (Noaime et al., 2022). Its heritage, which dates back to the pre-Islamic period, has shaped Hail’s reputation as one of Saudi Arabia’s notable cultural and tourist centres (Noaime et al., 2022). In the first half of 2024 alone, over 1.1 million tourists visited the region, underscoring its growing appeal to visitors (Saudi Press Agency, 2025). This rise in tourism has paralleled the growth of Hail’s culinary sector, making signage a key site where local identity and global influence converge. By analysing these signboards, this study explores how Hail’s regional character is expressed, adapted, and negotiated through public signage. Culinary signboards serve as a microcosm of the broader transformations under Vision 2030, offering a rich site for investigating how identity is constructed at the intersection of local belonging, regional pride, and global aspirations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. LL Research: Origins and Developments

The field of LL research emerged at the intersection of sociolinguistics, semiotics, and discourse analysis, with an emphasis on the visibility of language in public spaces. Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 23) define the LL as “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region,” showing that signage both reflects and shapes language vitality and identity boundaries. They argue that exposure to public signage can influence language attitudes and behaviour, reinforcing in-group and out-group distinctions.

Scollon and Scollon-Wong (2003) extended this perspective through their concept of geosemiotics, which examines how signs derive meaning from their placement in social and physical space. They emphasise that interpretation must include not only linguistic content but also spatial, cultural, and material context. For example, the use of English on a sign in a non-English-speaking region may signal cosmopolitan appeal rather than linguistic function. Their contribution highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of LL research, linking language, space, and cultural symbolism in ways that continue to inform contemporary analyses.

A major methodological advance came from Backhaus (2006), whose large-scale study analysed 11,834 signs in Tokyo. He introduced systematic coding of language number, order, size, and script. By distinguishing official (government) from non-official (private) signs, Backhaus revealed how policy and practice interact in public space, highlighting power, multilingual realities, and sociopolitical tensions. His later works (Backhaus, 2008, 2009) mapped urban multilingualism and examined how signage regulations are negotiated or resisted, combining micro-level textual analysis with macro-level sociopolitical frameworks. This approach remains foundational for both quantitative and interpretive LL studies.

Alongside methodological advances, scholars have also highlighted ideological dimensions. Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), made a seminal contribution to the field of linguistic landscape studies by foregrounding the complex interplay between language, ideology, and identity in public signage. Drawing on data from multilingual cities like Jerusalem, their work emphasised how signs serve not only communicative purposes but also symbolic and ideological functions, reflecting power relations, community boundaries, and sociopolitical tensions. By introducing a sociological lens, they positioned LL as a rich field spanning sociolinguistics, anthropology, and cultural studies.

Over the past two decades, LL research has flourished globally, covering contexts from postcolonial African cities (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2014) to Southeast Asian metropolises (Coluzzi, 2016)—demonstrating how public signage mediates identity, power, and globalisation. Methodologies have expanded beyond documentation to include ethnographic, multimodal, and critical discourse approaches, interrogating how public signage mediates identity, power, and globalisation (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009).

B. Language and Identity in the LL

Language visibility in public space is more than communicative—it plays a crucial role in constructing and negotiating identity. Gorter and Cenoz (2024) argue that the linguistic landscape reflects cultural values, social hierarchies, and power relations, offering insight into how space is symbolically organised. Public signage thus becomes a site where social groups assert presence, signal affiliations, and position themselves within broader sociopolitical structures.

This relationship between language and identity has been explored in diverse multilingual contexts. Shohamy (2006), for example, emphasises the ideological nature of public signage, noting that language choices are often governed by underlying power dynamics, policies, and identity politics. In multilingual settings, the selection, omission, or hierarchy of languages on signage can index dominance, resistance, inclusion, or marginalization. Similarly, Blommaert (2013) argues that language in the public space must be read not only in terms of linguistic content but also in relation to who controls the space, whose voice is legitimized, and which identities are being projected or suppressed.

Adding to this perspective, Leeman and Modan (2009) argue that LLs are sites where material and symbolic aspects of identity intersect, revealing underlying tensions between commodification, authenticity, and spatial control. Their study of Chinatown in Washington, D.C., reveals that Chinese script is often used less for communication and more as a visual aesthetic aligned with urban branding. Such examples illustrate how language choices in signage shape imagined cultural alignments and serve strategic purposes—whether signalling authenticity, appealing to tourists, or differentiating a brand (Benu et al., 2025). Signage thus becomes both reflective and performative of identity.

Within today's global signage economy, English carries symbolic capital that extends beyond native-speaking contexts. It is often mobilised as an economic resource and marker of modernity, even where its functional use is minimal (Li, 2015; Nenotek et al., 2025; Vivas-Peraza, 2020). This instrumental use of language reflects a broader logic of visibility, where the presence of global languages—particularly English—signals modernity, sophistication, and cultural capital, even in the absence of functional necessity (Li, 2015; Vivas-Peraza, 2020). This symbolic use aligns with broader visibility strategies, where global languages signal sophistication and international relevance.

These dynamics are especially evident in transitional contexts like Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030. As the Kingdom navigates heritage and globalisation, signage reflects broader identity negotiations. LL research in such settings provides critical insights into how linguistic choices mediate between tradition and modernity, and between local rootedness and global orientation.

C. Culinary LL in Global Contexts

The culinary sector has become a compelling focus in LL research, offering insights into how food-related signage reflects identity, globalisation, and sociocultural negotiation. Liu (2025) explores how signage at a Cantonese restaurant navigates tensions between heritage expression and commercial appeal. The restaurant's signboard incorporates Cantonese script, English labels, and culturally evocative visual motifs to create a hybrid identity that addresses both local Chinese diaspora customers and a wider non-Chinese audiences. Similarly, Yuan (2024) highlights how coffee shop signage in Shantou used multilingual and multimodal features during Chinese New Year to reimagine the festival in youthful, international terms.

Benu et al. (2025) report a comparable pattern in Kupang City, Indonesia, where culinary signage incorporates both Indonesian and foreign languages, reflecting pluralistic identity and global openness. Here, signage serves not only commercial goals but also cultural preservation. In Bali's Ubud region, Artawa et al. (2023) observe that restaurant signs often pair English with Balinese and Indonesian. English dominates the communicative function, while local languages reinforce cultural presence—offering a balance between global appeal and linguistic rootedness.

Beyond exterior signage, interior semiotics contribute to cosmopolitan identity. Abas (2019), in her geosemiotic analysis of ethnic restaurants in Bloomington, Indiana, highlights how menus, decor, and staff–customer interactions construct transnational foodscapes. These elements go beyond aesthetics, performing cultural negotiations that bridge local authenticity and global modernity. Blommaert and Maly (2016) add a technological dimension by analysing how a small online delivery sticker at a Bulgarian restaurant indexed participation in digital infrastructures. Such minor elements reveal how signage adapts to evolving norms of convenience and connectivity, signalling modern consumer alignment.

Collectively, these studies underscore that culinary signage is not just a promotional tool, but a semiotic resource for negotiating identity, heritage, and market positioning. Through scripts, visuals, and digital markers, culinary LLs reflect efforts to blend tradition with innovation, local belonging with global visibility.

D. Culinary LL in the Arab and Saudi Context

Research on culinary linguistic landscapes in the Arab world is still emerging, though recent studies highlight how signage negotiates identity amid tensions between Arabisation policies and the growing presence of English (Al-Athwary, 2022; Alotaibi & Alamri, 2022). In Oman, Buckingham (2015) found that while Arabic ensures local legitimacy, English is often used to convey modernity and international appeal—demonstrating how signage serves not only communicative but also symbolic functions. Karam et al. (2020) examined private storefronts in Beirut. They showed that the spatial distribution of scripts—sometimes excluding Arabic or Armenian—reflects processes of urban redevelopment and cultural negotiation. Here, signage becomes a tool for visually scripting urban identity under globalising pressures.

In Saudi Arabia, empirical research on culinary signage remains limited. Hazaea and Qassem (2025) examined 88 coffee shop signs between Najran and Mecca, identifying branding discourses (Arabic local, English global, and bilingual glocal) that reflect tensions between national identity and global consumerism. Strategic use of transliteration (e.g., kufi) emerged as a hybrid practice aligning cultural values with branding goals. Another study by Hazaea et al. (2024) in Abha assessed critical examination of whether outdoor restaurant signs accurately reflect menu content. The researchers whether restaurant signage aligned with menu language. While bilingual Arabic–English signage was common, internal menus often lacked linguistic diversity, revealing a symbolic use of multilingual signage more than practical communication.

Despite these insights, Saudi-focused studies remain narrow in scope—often centred on specific sectors (e.g., coffee shops) or issues (e.g., signage–menu mismatches), with less attention to the broader semiotic dimensions of storefront design. The visual, spatial, and multimodal strategies that shape branding and identity remain underexplored. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates a diverse sample of culinary signage across Hail City to understand how language and semiotics reflect identity construction and global–local negotiation. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What languages and scripts are used on culinary storefront signs in Hail City?
2. How do these multilingual patterns reflect or construct ethnic, cultural, or national identities?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by key perspectives in LL research that highlight the interconnections between language, space, and identity (Gorter, 2013; Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). The linguistic landscape is viewed not simply as a reflection of language use but as a semiotic and ideological space where identities and sociocultural meanings are negotiated. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) concept of language as symbolic capital, the study recognises that choices in script, language, and naming convey indexical meanings—such as prestige, authenticity, or local rootedness. These signs help construct imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), where a shared sense of belonging is created through public symbols, even among individuals who never meet.

This study approaches the linguistic landscape as a dynamic semiotic space where language, typography, and design function not merely as conveyors of information, but as tools for constructing identity and signalling cultural values (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Culinary signage in Hail is understood within this dynamic, where global consumer aesthetics and local cultural references intersect. Framing the study within sociolinguistics, semiotics, and discourse analysis allows for an exploration of how visual and textual choices in signage function as everyday identity work in public space.

B. Data Collection

This study focused on outdoor commercial signage from restaurants, cafes, bakeries, and other food-related businesses in Hail. These signs offer a valuable lens for examining language use, cultural affiliation, and identity construction in

public space. A purposive sampling strategy was used to capture geographic diversity, business types, and linguistic variation. A total of 332 signs were collected for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Photographic documentation was the primary method. Fieldwork took place between November 2024 and July 2025 across key commercial zones, including major streets, shopping areas, and food plazas. The focus was on permanent storefront signage; however, some temporary signs—such as banners for upcoming openings—were included when they provided relevant linguistic content. Promotional materials, menu boards, and mobile ads were excluded. Photos captured full signage context, including brand names, script types, typographic features, and visual symbols. All signs were publicly visible and photographed without entering private property, ensuring adherence to ethical standards for visual data collection.

C. Coding and Analytical Procedures

This study followed a structured coding approach informed by established LL methodologies, particularly Backhaus (2007) and Cenoz and Gorter (2006). the goal was to categorise signage data based on language use, visual features, and identity markers. Adopting Backhaus's (2007, p. 66) definition, a sign was defined as “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame,” including brand names, slogans, or descriptors on a storefront. In line with Cenoz and Gorter (2006), each culinary establishment was treated as one unit of analysis, even when multiple texts or panels were present, to reflect business-level branding strategies.

The analysis proceeded through a two-tiered process that integrated both quantitative coding and qualitative interpretation. Each sign was manually examined and coded for language presence—Arabic, English, or other foreign languages—based on script, phrasing, and lexical content. Signs were classified as monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual based on language origin, not script. For example, a sign written entirely in Arabic script could still be classified as multilingual if it contained transliterated elements from different languages. This follows Backhaus's (2007) framework and enabled a nuanced structural view of linguistic diversity. Semantic domains were also identified—local, religious, regional, global, or hybrid—along with visual elements such as colour, typography, and icons, treated as meaningful semiotic resources aligned with language choice. Brand names and lexical items were preserved in their original form and enclosed in single quotation marks (e.g., ‘رواية’), with transliterations in parentheses (e.g., Rewaiah) to assist English readers without altering script authenticity.

IV. RESULTS

A. Patterns of Monolingual and Multilingual Signages

This section addresses the research question concerning what languages and scripts are used on culinary storefront signs in Hail. It examines how languages are used—either individually or in combination—on culinary signs in Hail. As shown in Table 1, monolingual signs are the most common (67.77%), followed by bilingual signs (28.01%) and multilingual signs (4.21%).

TABLE 1
LANGUAGE COMBINATIONS ON CULINARY SIGNAGE IN HAIL CITY

Language combination	Number of storefronts	Percentage
Monolinguals		
Arabic only	129	38.85 %
English only	78	23.49 %
Other monolingual foreign languages	18	5.42 %
Total of monolinguals	225	67.77%
Bilinguals		
Arabic + English	67	20.18 %
English + other foreign languages	13	3.91 %
Arabic + foreign languages other than English	12	3.61 %
Chinese + Korean	1	0.30 %
Total of bilinguals	93	28.01%
Multilinguals		
Arabic + English + another foreign language	14	4.21%
Total (all signage types)	332	100 %

Among monolingual signs, Arabic-only signage is the most prevalent (38.85%), reflecting a strong local linguistic orientation and cultural centrality (see Figure 1). English-only signs (23.49%) are also common which indicates the significant role of English as a global language, particularly in branding and consumer appeal (see Figure 2). A smaller portion (5.42%,) of signage uses other foreign languages monolingually, such as Italian, Indian, Turkish, or East Asian languages. For example, the Indian restaurant ‘راجو’ (Raju) uses an Indian name rendered in Arabic script. Another instance is ‘Sparita’ ‘سباريتا’, an Italian name presented in both Latin and Arabic scripts, meaning ‘disappeared’. These names index the identity of the culinary establishments, where the use of the Indian or Italian elements reinforces the authenticity of the culinary experience. These examples illustrate how foreign linguistic resources can appear as stand-alone identifiers. Although rendered in Arabic script, these signs remain monolingual, as they do not include any accompanying translation or parallel language. Their function is purely nominal, signalling brand identity without

engaging in bilingual or multilingual communication. Such names are typically associated with ethnically themed culinary venues and serve to construct a cultural or exotic identity.



Figure 1. Samples of Arabic Use on the Name Boards



Figure 2. Samples of English Use on the Name Boards

Bilingual signage constitutes over a quarter of the dataset (28.01%). The most frequent pairing involves Arabic and English, which appear together on 20.18% of the signs. For instance, the restaurant 'B1' combines its English brand name with the Arabic slogan 'برجر ناكله...وبرجر ياكله!!!' (A burger, you eat...and a burger that eats you), as illustrated in Figure 3. This pairing reflects a hybrid communicative strategy that accommodates both local and international audiences — a pattern often observed in commercial signage in urban multilingual contexts. Other bilingual combinations include English and other foreign languages (3.91%), as in 'ToTikka,' which combines English branding with the South Asian culinary term *tikka*. Arabic and foreign languages other than English are also represented in 3.61% of the dataset, as in 'شاورما اسكندر' (Iskandar Shawarma). This name combines the Arabic culinary term *shawarma* with *Iskandar*, derived from the Turkish dish *iskander kebab*. Although it appears monolingual in Arabic script, it actually incorporates a Turkish-origin culinary term, demonstrating that bilingualism is not always tied to different scripts but can also occur within a single script through the borrowing of lexical items. Such choices may be used by owners to evoke culinary authenticity and cultural prestige, associating their business with the well-known Turkish dish *iskander kebab* while ensuring accessibility for an Arabic-reading audience. In addition, there is a single case (0.30%) of Chinese and Korean, a rare East Asian pairing without the inclusion of Arabic or English. Overall, while Arabic–English pairings dominate bilingual signage, other combinations — including English with South Asian terms, Arabic with Turkish references, and the single Chinese–Korean case — remain relatively rare, collectively reflecting selective strategies to target specific linguistic groups and cultural niches.



Figure 3. The use of English and Arabic

Multilingual signage — combining Arabic, English, and another foreign language — is the least common, accounting for just 4.21% of the sample. These signs reflect globalised branding and a cosmopolitan ethos. As illustrated in Figure 4, one example combines English, Arabic, and the Japanese-origin word *sushi* (rendered in both Latin and Arabic scripts), producing a layered linguistic display that enhances accessibility while indexing culinary authenticity. Though limited in number, such signs point to a selective use of multilingualism to convey identity and inclusivity.

Overall, while Arabic remains dominant, the presence of English and other languages — especially in combination — highlights the growing multilingual character of Hail's commercial signage. These patterns suggest a clear hierarchy: Arabic serves as the primary linguistic resource, while English and other foreign languages are selectively employed to add global prestige, signal culinary authenticity, or target niche audiences. The limited frequency of such combinations underscores that multilingualism, while emerging, remains a supplementary rather than an equal force in the linguistic landscape.

B. Identity in the Culinary LL



Figure 4. Multilingual Signage

Building on the patterns identified in the previous section, this part of the analysis shifts its focus from languages presence to their symbolic and identity-related implications. While Arabic remains the dominant linguistic resource in Hail's culinary signage, the selective incorporation of English and other foreign languages introduces additional layers of meaning that extend beyond utilitarian communication. To unpack these dynamics, the discussion is organised around three interrelated dimensions of identity: the assertion of local identity, the evocation of a broader pan-Arab identity, and the projection of a global cosmopolitan identity.

(a). Local Saudi Identity

Hail's culinary LL strongly foregrounds local identity, with Arabic functioning as the dominant and unmarked linguistic code across signage. Arabic-only signs—which constitute the largest share of the dataset—not only ensure accessibility for the local population but also affirm belonging, tradition, and cultural continuity. Through the interplay of names, scripts, and visual cues, many businesses emphasise their rootedness in the local Saudi context by drawing on references such as regional geography, religious symbolism, historical and moral figures, personal names, dialectal expressions, local culinary traditions, traditional architecture, and collective cultural values. These layered references work together to produce a rich semiotic environment that affirms local identity and shared cultural knowledge.

1. Geographic and Regional References

Many business names draw directly on geographic affiliations to evoke regional pride and spatial familiarity. The name 'درر الشمال' (Durr al-Shamal) (Pearls of the North) situates the restaurant within the broader northern region of Saudi Arabia, elevating the locale through the imagery of precious pearls. Similarly, 'زوايا برزان' (Zawaya Barzan) (Corners of Barzan) makes explicit reference to Barzan, a well-known neighbourhood in Hail, embedding the restaurant within the cultural geography of the city.

Likewise, 'غنى حائل' (Hail's Richness) further reinforces this spatial rooting by linking the establishment directly to Hail itself, creating a sense of pride and ownership. The name 'ديرتنا' (Our Town) deepens this regional anchoring through the collective suffix 'نا' (our), invoking a sense of communal identity and solidarity while visually referencing the traditional architecture and values of Hail's historical settlements. Names like 'زاوية البوادي' (The Bedouin's Corner) and 'الزاد السعودي' (Saudi Supplies) all contribute to pride in Saudi identity.

2. Religious Symbolism

Local identity is also constructed through the integration of religious themes and values in signage. For example, 'الوادي' (The Blessed Valley) draws together spiritual and natural imagery, with 'المبارك' (Blessed) evoking divine favour in Islamic thought and 'الوادي' (Valley) grounding the name in the landscape of Arabia. Similarly, 'المن', transliterated into Latin script on signage as 'Alman', references the Qur'anic term for divine manna—a miraculous food sent from heaven. The use of such sacred terms not only aligns the businesses with Islamic heritage but also signals purity, trustworthiness, and spiritual resonance for consumers.

3. Historical and Moral Figures

Signage also draws from well-known cultural and historical icons to reinforce values such as generosity and hospitality. The restaurant 'حاتم جريل', transliterated on signage as 'HATEM GRILL', and 'نار حاتم' (Hatem's Fire) both evoke the figure of Hatem al-Ta'i, a legendary pre-Islamic poet renowned for his generosity and strongly associated with the region of Hail. By invoking this cultural symbol, the businesses align themselves with ideals of abundance, welcome, and moral virtue, extending a symbolic continuity between ancient hospitality and modern dining.

4. Personal Names and Dialectal Expressions

Another way local identity is reinforced is through the use of Saudi personal names in signage, establishing familiarity and cultural recognition. Examples such as 'مطعم منيرة للرز البخاري' (Munira Restaurant for Bukhari Rice), 'شاورما عواد' (Awad Shawarma), and 'عساف' (Assaf) rely on widely recognized Saudi names to create a sense of trust and cultural intimacy. In addition, many restaurants incorporate regional dialects and terms specific to Hail or the Gulf. The restaurant 'خوش حوف' (Perfect Cooking) features a Haili phrase with strong local resonance, while 'زلفة' (Salad), a term still used by elders in Hail and some nearby cities, evokes nostalgia and continuity with regional linguistic heritage. The name 'بو معروف' employs the Gulf kunyah form—literally "Father of Maarouf"—a traditional naming convention that indexes familiarity, age-based respect, and social ties.

5. Culinary Traditions and Local Dishes

Several names draw explicitly on well-known Saudi dishes, further grounding the establishments in regional culinary identity. For instance, 'حاشيكم' (Your Hashee) and 'حاشي الجبل' (Mountain Hashee) reference حاشي, or young camel meat—a cherished Saudi delicacy. Similarly, 'مطبيكم' plays on مطبي, a dish prepared by roasting meat on stones or coals, closely linked to traditional Saudi cooking methods. These names assert a kind of culinary authenticity that appeals to local customers' sense of taste, memory, and tradition.

6. Traditional Architecture and Aesthetics

Some establishments go beyond language by invoking material and architectural symbols of Saudi heritage. For instance, 'مطعم التراثي' (The Heritage Restaurant) not only refers to tradition in name but is often constructed or decorated in the style of old Gulf houses, using earth tones, mud brick, and wooden décor to suggest historical continuity. Similarly, 'شاي وحصير' (Tea and Straw Mat) references two elements central to traditional Saudi gatherings: the sharing of tea and sitting on woven mats 'حصير'. In these cases, the visual, spatial, and linguistic elements of the signage all collaborate to embed the business in a deeply local aesthetic.

7. Cultural Values and Collective Identity

Some naming practices reflect broader cultural values embedded in Haili and Gulf society. The restaurant 'مطعم اخوان' (Brothers of Bukhari Restaurant) emphasises the kinship bond of brotherhood, which is a core social value in Gulf society. The name suggests familial warmth and trustworthiness, much like home-cooked food. Likewise, the use of phrases such as 'اصبروا ابتلشنا' (Wait, we're stuck)—used humorously as an apology for a delay in opening—written in the Haili dialect above a photo of a Saudi actor in traditional attire, reflects humour, resilience, and cultural relatability, particularly for younger audiences. Even names like 'نمد', which refers to a shallow water basin or spring commonly found in desert regions, accompanied by an image of a camel, emphasise deep historical ties to desert life and Bedouin values, with the camel symbolising endurance, heritage, and the rhythm of nomadic life. Together, these signs show how Arabic language and symbolism are deployed not merely for communication, but as tools for asserting authenticity, tradition, and cultural belonging in the culinary landscape of Hail.

(b). Pan-Arab Identity

While many restaurants assert Saudi or Hail-specific belonging, another notable trend in the LL is the invocation of a broader Pan-Arab identity. These establishments use names that resonate across the Arab world, drawing on shared

geography, cultural references, and dialectal variations to foster a sense of regional affiliation that extends beyond the local.

1. Arab National, Regional, and Cultural References

One major strategy through which pan-Arab identity is constructed involves the explicit naming of Arab cities, nationalities, and regional references. These names evoke widely recognisable places with rich cultural and culinary legacies, creating a sense of regional familiarity and prestige. For example, restaurants like 'تميز الدمشقي' (The Damascene Distinction) and 'ماسة الدمشقي' (The Damascene Diamond) associate themselves with Damascus, a city often considered a historical city in the Arab world. Likewise, 'المذاق المغربي' (The Moroccan Taste) signals North African influence, drawing on the unique culinary and cultural cachet of Moroccan cuisine. Also, 'دجاج صيدا' (Sidon Chicken) references Sidon, a well-known coastal city in Lebanon, while 'صحارى الرافدين' (Mesopotamian Deserts) invokes the ancient region of Mesopotamia, corresponding to present-day Iraq.

Another example is 'مطاعم ذوق النشامي' (Al-Nashama Taste Restaurants), which anchors its branding in cultural archetypes rooted in Jordanian identity. The term 'النشامي' (Al-Nashama) is a culturally loaded expression often associated with Jordanian heritage. It conveys qualities such as bravery, pride, and traditional hospitality—attributes deeply admired in Arab societies. This word resonates across Arab societies as a symbol of nobility and collective pride. Through such references, businesses infuse their identities with rich national symbolism while appealing to a regional Arab clientele. These names function not only as geographic anchors but also as semiotic resources for constructing pride, quality, and trust. These examples project a sense of Arab unity and cultural heritage that transcends national borders, presenting each restaurant as a representative of a broader Arab civilization.

2. Arab Dishes and Shared Culinary Heritage

Beyond place-based references, some signs in Hail draw on a shared Arab culinary repertoire to articulate pan-Arab identity. Dishes such as 'ورق عنب' (Stuffed Vine Leaves), 'لقيمات' (Fried Dough Balls), 'حلوم' (Halloumi Cheese), 'رغيف' (Bread and Ghee), and 'كرك' (Karak Tea) are widely recognised across the Arab world. Though now common in Saudi Arabia, many originate from other Arab regions, and their presence on signage appeals to a collective culinary memory that transcends borders. The act of naming these dishes highlights not only their culinary familiarity but also the transnational cultural networks that have enabled their circulation across the Arab world. These choices subtly encode hospitality, regional sophistication, and a cosmopolitan openness to diverse Arab and neighbouring cultural influences.

3. Dialectal Diversity and Cross-Arab Appeal

Pan-Arab identity is further manifested through dialectal variation—particularly the incorporation of non-Saudi Arabic dialects into shop names. A notable example is 'قهوة الست' (The Lady's Café), where the term 'الست' (al-sett) is drawn from Egyptian Arabic, commonly used to denote a respected woman. Its use in a Haili context conjures associations with Egyptian cultural sophistication and nostalgia, especially through its cinematic and musical legacy. This kind of inter-dialectal borrowing is both strategic and affective: it enables businesses to appeal to Arab expatriates and culturally savvy locals, while simultaneously enriching the linguistic landscape with multi-regional connotations. These dialectal features operate alongside national references and culinary items to solidify an Arab regional voice within the signage, suggesting that pan-Arab identity in Hail is as much about language and social imagination as it is about food.

(c). Global Cosmopolitan Identity

This section explores how culinary signage in Hail constructs a sense of global affiliation, modernity, and hybridity. It focuses on the symbolic use of English, hybrid naming strategies, transcultural food references and personal names, and visual elements like national colours. Together, these practices contribute to a cosmopolitan culinary landscape where global influences intersect with local sensibilities.

1. English as a Symbol of Global Prestige

The use of English in Hail's culinary signage symbolises global prestige, modernity, and cosmopolitan aspiration. Often appearing as the primary branding language or alongside Arabic, English operates less as a practical tool and more as a marker of trendiness, international quality, and youth-oriented identity. A number of businesses adopt fully English brand names—such as 'Key', 'ROAD BURGER', 'DIET NATION', 'START Speciality Coffee', and 'Shine'—paired with minimalist logos and Latin scripts. These aesthetic choices echo Western fast-casual branding and frame the establishment as modern and globally fluent. Their meanings—'ROAD BURGER' (mobility), 'DIET NATION' (health), 'START' (ambition), 'Shine' (confidence), 'Key' (opportunity)—are semantically aspirational, even if not fully comprehended by all.

Invented brand names such as 'Infesto' (transliterated into Arabic as 'انفيسستو') and 'لافقور' 'Lavior' further demonstrate how English morphological structures and sound aesthetics are strategically utilised to construct upscale, modern brand personas—even when the terms lack meaning in standard English. These coined names are selected for their phonetic appeal, memorability, and international tonality, rather than for semantic transparency. This effect is heightened when paired with sleek logos and lifestyle-oriented taglines. For instance, 'Infesto' is accompanied by the Arabic phrase 'بيكري' ('Bakery and More'). Although written in Arabic script, the word 'بيكري' (Bakery) is an English loanword that may

be unfamiliar to Arabic-only speakers, while 'أكثر' (More), despite being an Arabic word, is semantically vague in isolation. Together, the phrase clarifies the shop's offerings while reinforcing its cosmopolitan branding strategy. This example illustrates how even Arabic-scripted elements can contribute to an English-dominated aesthetic and ideological orientation.

In these cases, Arabic plays a secondary role—transliterating English terms or providing minimal clarification. This functional asymmetry reveals the elevated symbolic status of English as the language of global belonging, prestige, and forward-looking identity. Ultimately, English in Hail's culinary landscape serves as a semiotic resource that aligns local entrepreneurship with international branding norms, projecting an image of modernity that is aspirational, youthful, and globally connected.

2. Transcultural Food References and Personal Names

In addition to English, another strategy for projecting cosmopolitan identity in Hail's culinary signage is the use of transcultural food references and internationally recognisable personal names. These draw from global culinary traditions—Asian, Mediterranean, South Asian—while blending with local linguistic forms, positioning eateries as globally aware yet locally ground. Several businesses incorporate South Asian and East Asian food elements into their brand identities, reflecting both the popularity and perceived prestige of these culinary traditions. For example, names featuring the word 'Tikka' evoke South Asian grilled meat culture, rooted in Indian and Pakistani cuisines, yet globally understood. Similarly, brands such as 'سكورا' ('Sakura') the Japanese word for cherry blossom symbolises beauty and delicacy. Despite appearing in Arabic script, these names retain strong foreign associations, using Arabic as a medium for conveying international flavour.

Italian and Mediterranean cuisines also feature prominently. The name 'CasaPasta' transliterated to 'كازاباستا' fuses the Italian words casa (home) and pasta, invoking both comfort and European refinement. Also, 'ماسا باستا' (Masa Pasta), another pasta-focused eatery, uses Arabic script for its name but enhances its Italian identity through visual cues, as discussed in the next subsection. These visual and linguistic strategies work together to signal authenticity, elegance, and international quality—hallmarks of Italian culinary branding. Such signage positions these establishments as globally aware while still accessible to Arabic-speaking consumers.

Personal names are also employed to enhance global appeal. For instance, 'Mama Somy Sushi & Noodles' mixes the Arabic term Mama with English references to East Asian cuisine, while 'Somy' likely references East Asian naming conventions. Likewise, 'كومار' 'KUMAR' and 'راجو' (Raju) are common South Asian names used to infuse branding with cultural specificity and personality. Written in Arabic, English, or both, these names humanise the brand and index foreign culinary traditions.

These hybrid naming strategies—whether referencing food types or personal names—demonstrate how culinary signage in Hail strategically blends cultural codes to construct brand identities that are at once familiar and globally trendy. The layering of Arabic, English, and other linguistic elements, alongside visual symbols reflects a broader practice of linguistic and cultural fusion. Businesses employ these signs not simply to inform but to perform cosmopolitanism, inviting consumers into a world of diverse and border-crossing culinary experiences.

3. Visual Symbolism and National Colours

While direct representations of national flags are largely absent in Hail's culinary signage, the strategic use of national colour schemes plays an important semiotic role in communicating global cultural affiliations. For instance, the restaurant 'ماسا باستا' (Masa Pasta) features a bold Latin 'M' in its logo stylised with the colours of the Italian flag—green, white, and red—alongside a graphic of penne pasta. Though the actual flag is not depicted, this colour arrangement subtly evokes Italy's culinary identity and contributes to the restaurant's cosmopolitan branding. The combination of linguistic, visual, and gastronomic elements helps to construct an international image rooted in global food culture.

Building on this pattern, other establishments also use colour-coded cues to evoke national identity. One such example is 'Keen Mexican Grill', which features a vibrant combination of red, green, and yellow—colours closely associated with the Mexican flag—without showing the flag explicitly. The visual design includes a traditional Mexican sombrero and a stylized red chili pepper integrated into the signage, elements that together symbolise Mexican cultural identity and cuisine. The name appears in English 'Keen Mexican Grill' and in Arabic 'كين للمأكولات المكسيكية', with the explicit mention of 'Mexican' reinforcing the brand's cultural orientation. These examples illustrate how businesses deploy a blend of visual symbols, colour schemes, and multilingual text to signal national affiliations and insert themselves into globally circulating food imaginaries—without relying on formal national emblems.

V. DISCUSSION

This study examined the linguistic and semiotic strategies used in culinary signage across Hail City, focusing on how identity is constructed through language presence and visual symbolism. The findings revealed a complex LL shaped by overlapping orientations toward local rootedness, pan-Arab affiliation, and global cosmopolitanism. These findings resonate with, extend, and in some cases nuance previous LL research, especially within culinary domains.

Hail's culinary signage does more than communicate the name of a business—it acts as a dynamic site of identity construction. The dominant presence of Arabic across monolingual and bilingual signs affirms its role in anchoring local

Saudi identity. Names referencing regional geography, religious language, and cultural icons highlight Arabic's symbolic and communicative significance. This supports earlier LL research (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006) showing how language visibility in public space expresses cultural continuity and in-group belonging.

Signage invoking pan-Arab identity through shared dishes, Arab cities, and dialectal markers reflects a broader strategy of cultural alignment. This positioning frames Hail not only as a Saudi city but also part of a wider Arab cultural network. Such findings align with Leeman and Modan's (2009) argument that signage performs both symbolic and spatial roles, here demonstrating alignment with collective Arab values and cuisines.

An increasing number of signs adopting English, invented brand names, and foreign visual motifs reflect a cosmopolitan orientation. These include businesses using aspirational terms (e.g., START) or culinary references like Sushi, and personal non-Arabic names. These strategies mirror global trends noted by Pennycook and Otsuji (2015), where English and global scripts act as resources for modernity, prestige, and youth identity—often independent of functional communication.

Visual semiotics also contribute to identity work. Some signs use culturally loaded imagery (e.g., camels), while others employ flag-based colour schemes (e.g., Italian red-green-white) without showing actual flags. These elements reinforce the idea that signage is a multimodal ensemble (Scollon & Scollon-Wong, 2003) where text, visuals, and layout co-construct meaning.

Hail culinary signage reflects a localised version of globalisation. Businesses blend local values with global references, creating identities that are neither purely traditional nor wholly global. English complements rather than replaces Arabic, symbolising modern consumer culture. The use of foreign personal names and dishes suggests a flexible approach to multicultural branding. This echoes global findings (e.g., Liu, 2025; Yuan, 2024; Benu et al., 2025; Abas, 2019) where signage negotiates authenticity, marketability, and symbolic capital.

This study fills a gap in Saudi LL literature by offering a broad, data-rich account of culinary signage in an urban context. Unlike earlier studies focused on coffee shops or signage-menu mismatches (e.g., Hazaea & Qassem, 2025), it captures a wider range of businesses and semiotic practices. It also illustrates how Vision 2030 reforms—emphasising tourism, openness, and diversification—are shaping urban visual culture. Signage emerges as a site where these reforms are not only reflected but also actively negotiated.

The findings have policy implications. The prominent yet uneven use of English, often in hybrid or transliterated forms, raises questions about the enforcement of Arabisation. While these policies aim to preserve linguistic identity, businesses continue to use global scripts for branding and appeal. This calls for more context-sensitive guidelines recognising signage's multifunctional role in hospitality and tourism.

Some limitations exit. First, the study is limited to Hail, and findings may not generalise to other Saudi cities. Second, it focused only on outward-facing signs, not menus or interior signage. Lastly, consumer perspectives were not explored, so interpretations remain speculative.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study explored how culinary signage in Hail City functions as a linguistic and semiotic resource for constructing identity. By analysing language choices and visual elements, the research highlighted the interplay between local rootedness, pan-Arab cultural affiliation, and global cosmopolitanism. Arabic, as the dominant language, affirms local identity and cultural heritage, while selective uses of English and other languages signal modernity, prestige, or authenticity.

Multimodal designs—including colour schemes, imagery, and layout—emerged as central tools in negotiating audience reach and cultural meaning. The findings position signage as more than a communicative device: it is a site of symbolic and spatial performance, reflecting broader social, economic, and political transformations under initiatives like Saudi Vision 2030.

Given its focus on one Saudi city, this study highlights avenues for future research. Comparative studies with larger metropolitan areas (e.g., Riyadh) or culturally distinct regions could reveal broader patterns. Examining consumer perspectives—such as how locals versus tourists or Arabic versus non-Arabic speakers interpret signage—would deepen understanding of audience reception. Together, these directions invite more nuanced, multimodal investigations of how everyday culinary spaces reflect and shape Saudi Arabia's evolving linguistic and cultural landscapes.

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Reproducing Cultural Imagery in Allusions in Political Texts: A Transitivity Perspective

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Abstract—Transitivity is a lexico-grammatical system for construing experiential meaning through both grammatical structure and lexical choice. This study investigates how the experiential meaning is reproduced in translating cultural imagery in allusions in Chinese political texts, with particular attention given to its structural realization. Drawing on a parallel corpus of 449 instances from *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volumes I to IV)*, it examines how imagery, in translation, is grammatically realized as participant or circumstance through different processes, together with lexical choices. A strong preference is observed for structural equivalence, especially when the imagery conveys universal or ideological significance. Shifts in structural role or process type are employed to clarify abstract reasoning, foreground general principles, or facilitate intercultural understanding. Material and relational processes are predominant, and shifts often signal rhetorical movement between action and evaluation. As to lexical choices, a strong preference is also observed for retaining the original image rather than rendering its sense or omitting it. These results indicate that the selection of imagery reflects the diplomatic principle of proximity, and its retention in translation aligns with harmony-oriented institutional norms. This study offers a replicable model for analysing cultural imagery in political translation from a transitivity perspective.

Index Terms—cultural imagery, allusions, political text, experiential meaning, transitivity

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Chinese political leaders have frequently employed figurative allusions in diplomatic discourse to articulate foreign policy positions and comment on internationally sensitive issues. These allusions have drawn significant attention, primarily owing to their rich cultural imagery, which refers to the figurative language employed in texts, especially metaphors and similes (Baldick, 2001). Such metaphorical expressions transcend mere rhetorical devices; they function to convey ideological stances, serve ideological purposes, and project political attitudes and national identity (Akrivoulis, 2015; Musolf, 2020; Song & Zhang, 2024). Therefore, as Schäffner (2004) points out, they pose significant challenges in translation, as linguistic and cultural differences can impede their effective transfer across languages and cultures. Recent research has concentrated on the translation choices of imagery or metaphors with Chinese characteristics (Lin & Lin, 2016; Gao & Wang, 2024; Yang et al., 2025), mostly atypical diplomatic expressions or newly coined terms. Translation choices are primarily discussed in terms of how to deal with the imagery itself (Wang & Tu, 2025), i.e., whether to preserve it, interpret its underlying sense, shift its position, or adopt a hybrid strategy such as literal translation with an additional explanatory image. However, attention is limited to how to effectively reproduce the experiential meaning of the culturally-bound imagery in allusions; when translators preserve the image or interpret its sense, how is the experiential meaning realized at the lexico-grammatical level? And further, should the structural roles of imagery be retained?

According to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the experiential meaning relates to human experiences; it is our interpretation of all that goes on around us and within us (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 511). As imagery (metaphor) comes in clusters (Lakoff & Johnson, 2002) and creates meanings and organizes our perception of the world by highlighting some aspects and hiding others (Guldin, 2016), the meaning created by imagery, in essence, is the experiential meaning, which needs to be reproduced in translation. In SFL, experiential meaning is lexicogrammatically realized through the transitivity system, which construes the world experience through different types of processes (actions or events), with associated participants (entities involved) and circumstances (background details) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). As experiential meaning is the innate meaning of all types of texts, transitivity system has been widely applied in the analysis of both literary and political texts. Existing studies primarily focus on the choices of process, the central element of the transitivity system, including choices of structural equivalence or shift and choices of process types. For example, Liu and Li (2022) examined the use of ancient Chinese poetry and prose in political texts and concluded that structural shifts, such as the compression or expansion of process types, can lead to changes in information density, while the shifts in process types are often motivated by textual features and different language habits. And Cabrejas-Peñuelas (2023) found that the choice of process type illustrates the politicians' ideological

positions, i.e., mental desiderative processes can be used for expressing desires and showing the active role of ‘us’ to bring about positive changes, while relational, verbal and existential processes can be employed to construct a particular picture of reality.

This study therefore aims to investigate how to reproduce the experiential meanings of cultural imagery in allusions in political texts from a transitivity perspective. It examines the structural roles of such imagery (as participant or circumstance), the processes involving the imagery, and the translation choices of equivalence or shift adopted in rendering them. For the research material, *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volumes I to IV)* (hereinafter *Governance*) is selected, as it stands as a paradigmatic example of Chinese political texts, characterized by its broad international circulation and frequent use of allusions. This study focuses on how the translators handle the cultural imagery in allusions in *Governance*, which serve both expressive and informative functions. The following research questions guide the study:

1. In *Governance*, what translation choices are adopted for cultural imagery in terms of their structural roles, structural equivalence or shift?
2. In *Governance*, what translation choices are adopted for the processes involving cultural imagery, equivalence of process types or shift?

II. STUDIES ON TRANSLATING CULTURAL IMAGERY

Imagery, or cultural imagery, which is widely found in both political and literary texts, refers to figurative or sensory language that conveys experience and a political stance. In this study, the term “imagery” is used to describe culturally loaded figures, especially in allusions, that combine a perceptible image and its underlying sense (Hou, 1996). While literary studies often define imagery as an aesthetic device (Baldick, 2001), rhetorical and cognitive approaches focus more on metaphor, a key mechanism for constructing imagery.

Metaphor theories provide critical insights into how imagery conveys meaning. Black (1955) challenges the classical view of metaphor as simple comparison or substitution, proposing instead an interaction theory where meaning emerges from the interplay between metaphorical “focus” and contextual “frame”. Building on this, cognitive linguists such as Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that metaphors are conceptual mappings from a source to a target domain. These mappings are grounded in bodily experience but vary in their cultural salience, ranging from universal to culture-specific (Lakoff, 2003). In Chinese political discourse, many allusions rely on culturally embedded images drawn from the natural world, which makes their translation particularly complex.

Translation studies on imagery, often grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) or Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT), typically focus on metaphor types or strategy classification. Researchers have proposed strategies such as image retention, sense conversion, or hybrid solutions such as metaphor replacement or annotation (Liang & Chen, 2020; Qiu, 2023; Yin & Li, 2024). However, these strategies rarely account for how imagery is realized in lexico-grammatical structure. More importantly, embodied approaches tend to emphasize cognitive universals while underestimating the variability of metaphor across cultures (Allan, 1995), which limits their explanatory power for allusions grounded in Chinese classical wisdom.

Therefore, this study views imagery as both a cultural and structural phenomenon. Beyond the choice between image and sense, the realization of imagery through structural roles and process types plays a central role in conveying experiential meaning. In SFL, experiential meaning is realized through the transitivity system, which encodes experience via processes, participants, and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Given that metaphor often reorganizes clause structure and that imagery is frequently embedded as participants or circumstances, transitivity analysis offers a complementary lens for examining how cultural imagery is rendered in political texts.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Corpus Building

Data were retrieved from *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volumes I to IV)* to ensure institutional authoritativeness, which are compiled by the State Council Information Office of China, the CCCPC Party Literature Research Office, and the China International Publishing Group (Standard and Norms Drafting Group, 2023). The translation team consists of senior political officials (Chinese final reviewers), native English-speaking experts, intermediate translators, and junior assistants, and the translation follows a set of guiding principles and fundamental strategies to ensure linguistic accuracy and political fidelity.

To address the above-mentioned research questions, we first constructed a parallel corpus of figurative allusions, identifying 172 instances by searching double quotation marks in e-books, verified against print versions. It should be noted that in this study, only figurative allusions that have imagery in them were considered, while maxims which are memorable statements of general principles (Baldick, 2001, pp. 148–149) were excluded. Here is an example of maxim in the *Governance*:

Example 1:

ST: 非知之难，行之惟难。(Xi, 2018, p. 220)

Gloss: Not knowing it is difficult; only carrying it out is truly difficult.

TT: It is not knowledge but action that is difficult to acquire. (Xi, 2017, p. 243)

In order to extract cultural imagery embedded in culturally-loaded expressions, we compiled a corpus of culturally-loaded words and identified 442 cases. From this basis, the corpus of cultural imagery was built, comprising 449 cultural images. Table 1 presents the three-step extraction process of cultural imagery.

TABLE 1
EXAMPLES OF THE EXTRACTION OF CULTURAL IMAGERY

Extraction	ST	TT
Allusion	山重水复疑无路， 柳暗花明又一村。	When one doubts whether there is a way out from the endless mountains and rivers, one suddenly finds a village shaded by soft willows and bright flowers.
Cultural-loaded words	山重水复 柳暗花明 路 村	the endless mountains and rivers soft willows and bright flowers a way a village
Cultural imagery	重山 复水 暗柳 明花 路 村	the endless mountains the endless rivers soft willows bright flowers a way a village

B. Data Annotation

The cultural imagery was coded manually following three procedures. First, imagery in both ST and TT was annotated for transitivity (participant, process, circumstance). Second, image/sense choices in TT were coded. Finally, process types were identified. Assisted by Excel, the manual coding of cultural imagery in ST and TT was conducted by two trained coders. In cases of disagreement, a third expert was consulted to resolve the inconsistency through discussion. The inter-coder reliability reached an acceptable level ($r = 0.92 > 0.80$). Based on the annotation results, we calculated the frequency of each translation choice and conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the translation choices of cultural imagery and their realization through transitivity patterns.

C. Data Analysis

The analysis of cultural imagery and the processes involving it is grounded in Catford's (1965) theory of translation equivalence and shift. In this study, equivalence refers specifically to formal correspondence rather than textual equivalence. That is, a target language (TL) category (unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc.) is considered equivalent if it occupies, as closely as possible, the same position within the 'economy' of the corresponding source language (SL) category (Catford, 1965, p. 27). Conversely, translation shifts are defined as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of transferring from the SL to the TL" (Catford, 1965, p. 73).

Based on the annotation, the analysis of cultural imagery itself started from a transitivity perspective, where equivalence refers to the equivalence of structural roles, either as participant or circumstance, and shift includes shift between participant and circumstance, shift from participant and circumstance to process, and omission of participant and circumstance. And for each case of structural equivalence or shift, it is further broken down into three subtypes: image (preserving the ST image or replacement of another image), sense (rendering the sense), and null (omission of the image). And since it is the type of process that makes major contributions to the construal of experience in texts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 219), here the equivalence of process refers to the equivalence of process type, and shift refers to the shift among different process types. Tables 2 and 3 show the analytical schemes for the lexico-grammatical choice of imagery and process involving imagery.

TABLE 2
ANALYTICAL SCHEME FOR IMAGERY AS PARTICIPANT/CIRCUMSTANCE

Equivalence/shift		Image/sense/null
Equivalence	(P)→P	image
		sense
	(C)→C	image
		sense
Shift	(P)→C	image
		sense
	(P)→Pr	sense
	(P)→0	null
	(C)→P	image
		sense
	(C)→Pr	sense
	(C)→0	null

Note: P: Participant; C: Circumstance; Pr: Process; Brackets () mean in ST

TABLE 3
ANALYTICAL SCHEME FOR PROCESS INVOLVING IMAGERY

Equivalence/shift		
Equivalence	Equivalence of process types	(Material)→Material
		(Relational)→Relational
		(Mental)→Mental
		...
Shift	Shift among different process types	(Material)→Relational
		(Relational)→Material
		(Mental)→Relational
		...

Note: Brackets () mean in ST

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Overall Distribution of Choices in Transitivity

Table 4 displays the choices of participant and circumstance in TT with respect to imagery in allusions. Structurally, with a few of them as circumstance (9.13%), most of the images in ST (90.87%) function as participant, the central element of the clause, confirming that they are the vehicles for thought. It can also be observed that the translators of the *Governance* tend to maintain the original structural role as participant or circumstance ((P)→P + (C)→C = 80.62%). Notably, the shift between participant and circumstance constitutes a significant proportion in structural shift, including shift from participant to circumstance (10.92%) and circumstance to participant (1.56%). As for choosing image or sense as participant or circumstance in TT, preserving the image (72.61%) is prioritized over rendering the sense (22.05%) or removing the image (5.35%).

TABLE 4
CHOICES OF PARTICIPANT/CIRCUMSTANCE IN TT

Transitivity		Image	Sense	Null	Total
(Participant)	(P)→P	266 (59.24%)	68 (15.14%)	0 (0%)	408 (90.87%)
	(P)→C	35 (7.80%)	14 (3.12%)	0 (0%)	
	(P)→Pr	0 (0%)	7 (1.56%)	0 (0%)	
	(P)→0	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (4.01%)	
(Circumstance)	(C)→C	21 (4.68%)	7 (1.56%)	0 (0%)	41 (9.13%)
	(C)→P	4 (0.89%)	3 (0.67%)	0 (0%)	
	(C)→0	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (1.34%)	
Total		326 (72.61%)	99 (22.05%)	24 (5.35%)	449 (100%)

Note: P: participant; C: circumstance; Pr: process; Brackets () mean in ST

Table 5 shows the process types involved in ST and more importantly, the choices of process equivalence or shift in TT. Among the six process types, only four process types involve the imagery in ST, with material process used the most (68.28%), relational the second (21.84%) and mental the third (7.36%), which correlates with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) contention that material, mental, and relational clauses constitute the three principal types that occur more often in many discourses.

As to process equivalence or shift in TT, translators are more likely to choose process equivalence (68.04%) rather than process shift (31.96%). The degree of process equivalence, however, varies across process types; equivalence of material process is the highest (51.26%), while no equivalent case is identified in existential process. And process shift (31.96%) occurs more frequently in material (17.01%) and relational processes (9.20%).

TABLE 5
CHOICES OF PROCESS EQUIVALENCE/SHIFT IN TT

Process type	Equivalence	Shift	Total
Material	223 (51.26%)	74 (17.01%)	297 (68.28%)
Relational	55 (12.64%)	40 (9.20%)	95 (21.84%)
Mental	18 (4.14%)	14 (3.22%)	32 (7.36%)
Existential	0 (0%)	11 (2.53%)	11 (2.53%)
Total	296 (68.04%)	139 (31.96%)	435 (100%)

B. Imagery as Participant

When imagery occurs as a participant, translators tend to preserve its structural role (74.38%), whereas a smaller portion involves shifts, mainly to circumstance (10.92%) and occasionally to process (1.56%) (Table 4). Image retention is favoured over sense conversion, even for culturally specific imagery. Converting image to sense appears only as a last resort in our corpus.

(a). Participant Equivalence

Images involved in allusions come mostly from nature, including plants, heavenly body, waters, and animals, which

constitute the traditional Chinese political philosophy of the Water-Boat relation between people and governors, the Root-Leave relation, etc. Therefore, when imagery occurs as participant, this structural role tends to be maintained in the target text. As for the choices of image or sense, it is presumable that shared images that would invoke a similar effect in TT can be preserved, while for cultural-specific images, a compromise solution should be employed, such as converting image to sense (Newmark, 1981). However, some cultural-specific images that may invoke negative emotions are still retained in TT. Take the WATER/LIQUID image as an example:

Example 2:

ST: 水能载舟，亦能覆舟。(Xi, 2018, p. 53)

Gloss: The water can carry the boat, and it can also sink the boat.

TT: **The same water** that keeps **a ship** afloat can also sink **it**. (Xi, 2017, p. 55)

In the ST culture, “水” (water) and “舟” (boat) represent the governor and the public respectively, while in the TT political context, the WATER/LIQUID image is conventionally associated with “immigrants”, and is shown to have been more unfavourable (Taylor, 2021). Specifically, as WATER is dangerous if not controlled (Santa Ana, 2002, p. 76), it is frequently used to signal control and release of control (Taylor, 2022). But as shown in Example 2, this image of water is retained in TT.

This unconventional choice can be explained from a cultural perspective and the institutional behavior. Culturally, the TT should be “the site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other” (Venuti, 1995, p. 306). Considering the institutional features (Song & Zhang, 2024) of Chinese political translation, it is reasonable that translators often consciously or unconsciously present a high degree of faithfulness to ensure the authority of the ST (Hu & Zhao, 2023).

As for culturally-bond imagery, rendering the sense directly is a common strategy. Typical representatives are the FISHING NET imagery, the TREE imagery and the SKY imagery.

Example 3:

ST: 秉纲而目自张，执本而末自从。(Xi, 2018, p. 402; Xi, 2020, p. 517)

Gloss: Grasp the main line of a fishing net, then the net’s meshes open; hold the root, then the twigs follow.

TT1: Once **the key link** is grasped, **everything else** falls into place; once the horse is before the cart, the cart will follow. (Xi, 2017, p. 436)

TT2: When the line of a fishing net is held up, all the meshes will be open. When **the fundamental principles** are upheld, **all work** will fall in place. (Xi, 2020, p. 599)

The four images in the ST are typical concepts in traditional Chinese philosophy: “纲” (the main line of a fishing net), “目” (meshes), “本” (root of a tree), “末” (treetop). “纲” and “本” symbolize the central parts, while “目” and “末” the subordinate ones. Then “纲” and “目” can be handled as “the key link” and “everything else” in TT1, and “本” and “末” as “the fundamental principles” and “all work” in TT2. It is worth emphasizing that images, be them the original or the replaced in TT, are preferred for vividness in both of the versions. For example, in TT1 the translators choose to replace the images in ST; two images “the horse” and “the cart” are borrowed from the English idiom “put the cart before the horse” to convey the primary-subordinate relationship.

Another strategy to maintain participant equivalence is recontextualization when handling imagery with multiple senses. For instance, a nuanced imagery SKY, including “天” (the sky) and “天下” (under the sky), is more tricky to handle for its multiple senses when situated in different political contexts, and the preferred strategy is recontextualization. Recontextualization allows meanings to shift discursively across contexts (Fairclough, 2003). Reflections from Yu (2024), an institutional translator, also justify this choice: “The defining feature that differentiates the translation of classical allusions in political texts from literary translation is the balancing historical-literary contexts with contemporary realities and the political connotation is of more importance”. For example:

Example 4:

ST: 天下之势不盛则衰，天下之治不进则退。(Xi, 2020, p. 112; Xi, 2022, p. 483)

Gloss: The momentum under the sky either flourishes or declines; the governance under the sky either advances or regresses.

TT1: If **a dynasty** cannot continue to rise, it will fall; if **a country** cannot improve its governance, the state of order will deteriorate. (Xi, 2020, p. 138)

TT2: The momentum of **the world** either flourishes or declines; the governance of **the world** either progresses or regresses. (Xi, 2022, p. 561)

Although the image “sky” is removed in both of the versions, the political connotation of the SKY imagery is retained through recontextualizing it into “a dynasty”, “a country” and “the world”. The different choices lie in the tenor, as TT1 comes from the 4th Plenary Session of the 19th CPC central Committee and TT2 is employed in the speech at a virtual session of the 2022 World Economic Forum. As Table 6 shows, eight versions of the SKY imagery are identified in our corpus. When it occurs in domestic speeches, SKY represents national governance (the country/the people), whereas internationally, it takes on a global perspective (the world/across the land), thereby demonstrating the world or bilateral relationship (across the land).

TABLE 6
CHOICES OF THE SKY IMAGERY IN TT

CHOICES OF THE SKY IMAGERY IN TT				
Imagery	Political connotation	Translation	Number	
SKY	national governance	the country	11	
		(all/ land) under heaven	10	
		the people	4	
		on earth/ on the earth	2	
		the dynasty	1	
			/	4
	global outlook	the (whole/just) world	5	
		across the land	2	
		the whole land	1	
		the land under heaven	1	
Total			41	

(b). Participant Shift

Participant shift includes shift from participant to circumstance, participant to process, and omission of participant. Among them, shift from participant to circumstance is the most frequently used strategy while reserving or replacing the original image, as seen in Example 5.

Example 5:

ST: 志之所趋，无远勿届，**穷山距海**，不能限也。志之所向，无坚不入，**锐兵精甲**，不能御也。(Xi, 2018, p. 413)

Gloss: Where ambition leads, no distance is too far to reach; even remote mountains and distant seas cannot hinder its pursuit. Where ambition is directed, no hardness is too solid to penetrate; even sharp weapons and fine armor cannot resist its advance.

TT: Aspirations can reach any place however far it is, even over **mountains and seas**; and it can break through any defense however tough it is, even as strong as **the best armor and shield**. (Xi, 2018, p. 463)

In this example, the four participants “穷山” (remote mountains), “距海” (distant seas), “锐兵” (sharp weapons) and “精甲” (fine armor) are shifted into circumstances, from direct participants into indirect participants. The contrast between them is that the latter refers to the status of a nominal group that is inside a prepositional phrase (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 312). Functionally, they are shifted from the Actor into concession circumstantials construing frustrated cause, with the sense of “although” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 323). Such shift emphasizes the notion that “aspirations are capable of overcoming any form of hindrance, be it natural or human-made”. Another notable point is the replacement of “锐兵” (sharp weapons) with “shield”. A possible reason could be maintaining consistency in logic. As the ST emphasizes that no defense can stop aspirations and the image of “weapon” in TT is more associated with attack instead of defense, it is reasonable to replace “sharp weapon” with a typical weapon used for defense.

As for the shift from participant to process, only seven instances are identified in our corpus. Such strategy is used mainly for changing the focus and explicating the logic, as shown in Example 6.

Example 6:

ST: 物有甘苦，**尝之者**识；道有夷险，**履之者**知。(Xi, 2022, p. 101)

Gloss: Things have sweetness and bitterness, and those who taste them know this; ways have smoothness and danger, and those who walk on them know this.

TT: To know a flavor of a thing, one must **taste** it; to know what lies ahead on a path, one must **walk** it. (Xi, 2022, p. 115)

The shift from participant to process is employed when the Participant is inherently associated with input of energy, which can be interpreted as either a compressed clause (尝之者: someone tastes it, 履之者: someone walks it) or a conscious Actor (尝之者: a taster/ one who tastes it, 履之者: a walker/ one who walks on it). ST emphasizes the importance of action, that is, cognition must be realized through practice; therefore, TT shifts the focus from “someone” (Participant), an element close to the centre, to “the necessity of action” through the Material Process like “taste” and “walk” which is the most central element. In this way, the hypotactic relation of cause is created in TT to reproduce the relation of projection in ST.

C. Imagery as Circumstance

Similarly, when imagery occurs as circumstance, as is shown in Table 4, structural equivalence (6.24%) is favoured over shift (2.89%). Shifts include conversion to participant (1.56%) and omission (1.34%). In terms of image or sense, the original images are generally retained, especially for circumstantials of Location, which indicate time or space, such as “淮南” (south of the Huaihe River) and “孟夏之日” (early summer). In contrast, circumstantials of Role are often translated by replacing the image or rendering its sense.

(a). Circumstance Equivalence

The structural role of circumstantials of Location are usually retained in TT with their images preserved. Possibly because most of the images are indefinite and relative Location which rely on shared experience to convey meanings rather than regional characteristics. Here is an example of Space:

Example 7:

ST: 山重水复疑无路, 柳暗花明又一村。(Xi, 2018, p. 344)

Gloss: Where mountains layered and waters serpentine, one doubts no path exists; where willows dim and flowers bright, one finds a village.

TT: When one doubts whether there is a way out from *the endless mountains and rivers*, one suddenly finds a village shaded by *soft willows and bright flowers*. (Xi, 2018, p. 379)

In this example, the ST employs “重山” (layered mountains) and “复水” (serpentine waters) to symbolize the formidable challenges that confront the Asia-Pacific region, whereas “暗柳” (dim willows) and “明花” (bright flowers) metaphorically represent the region’s promising economic prospects. The translation faithfully preserves these imagery while implementing adjectival compensation: “重” and “复” (endless) compensate for the implied difficulties, while the “暗” (soft) and “明” (bright) convey the symbolic meaning of a ray of hope in a desperate situation.

In contrast, circumstantials of Role are either replaced with another image or converted into sense. Such shift is reasonable considering their inherent Location feature, as demonstrated in Example 8.

Example 8:

ST: 处江湖之远则忧其君。(Xi, 2018, p. 318)

Gloss: When dwelling in the distant rivers and lakes, one then worries about one’s sovereign.

TT: Though living at *grassroots level*, one is concerned for his state. (Xi, 2018, p. 347)

Seemingly, the image “江湖” (rivers and lakes) functions as the circumstantial of Location as it involves the place where the process unfolds. However, it actually serves as the circumstantial of Role and construes the meaning of “be”, since in Chinese political texts, it represents people at grassroots level, the opposite of “庙堂” (the halls of power).

Another common case of circumstantials of Role is thematic circumstantial of Role which may indicate a period of time in a person’s life (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 326). It is typically associated with the HAIR imagery in the traditional Chinese culture, such as “垂髫” (early childhood, literally hanging hair), “白首” (old age, literally white hair) and “黄发” (old age, literally yellow hair). This tendency is reflected in Example 9.

Example 9:

ST: 青春虚度无所成, 白首衔悲亦何及。(Xi, 2020, p. 336)

Gloss: When youth is spent in vain, nothing is achieved; when one is white-haired, lamenting is of no use.

TT: If you idle away your youth and achieve nothing, it’s no good lamenting in *old age*. (Xi, 2020, p. 390)

Instead of retaining the image “白首”, converting the image into sense is employed in TT. “白首”, the circumstantial of Role in ST, is reproduced through the circumstantial of Location, specifically, the Time (“in old age”). In this way, the image is shifted into a more direct and universally comprehensible temporal reference. This strategy is particularly suitable in the context of political discourse, where the emphasis lies in delivering a clear and audience-oriented message.

(b). Circumstance Shift

Circumstance shift includes shift from circumstance to participant and omission of circumstance. The former is usually employed to align the linguistic structure with the communicative goal of emphasizing certain element. Such shift is often observed in circumstantials of Location, as illustrated in Example 10.

Example 10:

ST: 浩浩行无极, 扬帆但信风。(Xi, 2018, p. 349)

Gloss: On the endless sea we sail afar, we hoist the sails and follow the wind.

TT: Boundless is *the ocean* where we sail with the wind. (Xi, 2018, p. 385)

The shift of “浩浩” (the ocean) from circumstance to participant is employed to change the focus. “浩浩” in ST serves as the circumstantials of Location, the background information, while it becomes the carrier with image retained in a relational clause, thus construing “the ocean” as an active, central entity rather than a mere setting. In the keynote speech at the APEC CEO Summit, Xi Jinping compared the Asia-Pacific region to the boundless sea and emphasized that the Asia-Pacific region offers enough space for every APEC member to make progress together (Xi, 2018, p. 385).

Conversely, circumstantials of Role are converted into sense, and a corresponding shift occurs in their structural roles. This shift is reasonable because in Chinese the spatial nature is inherently embedded in role-related expressions. For example:

Example 11:

ST: 朱门酒肉臭, 路有冻死骨。(Xi, 2018, p. 317)

Gloss: At red doors, wine and meat rot with stench; on the roads, there are bones of those frozen to death.

TT: *The rich* wine and dine, *the poor* starve and die. (Xi, 2017, p. 346)

Functionally, “朱门” (red doors) and “路” (the roads) serve as circumstantials of Role. Just as the image “江湖” (grassroots level) in Chinese political discourse seems to be a spatial location but actually functions as the

circumstantial of Role, “朱门” and “路” stand for social categories rather than literal spaces. In order to highlight the contrast between the rich and the poor, the circumstantial of Role is shifted into the participant. Meanwhile, converting image into sense is reasonable considering that “朱门” is the symbol of aristocracy, wealth, and elite power in traditional Chinese culture, whereas in Western cultures, “red doors” may carry positive or religious connotations. Historically, they also denoted a place of sanctuary, offering legal and divine protection to those seeking refuge, as can be seen in the Red Door Family Shelter in Toronto (Siemiatycki, 2021).

D. Process Involving Imagery

Process is the most central element in the configuration, and it is different types of processes that make distinctive contributions to the construal of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 219), which is directly or indirectly related to imagery as participant or circumstance; therefore, the choices of process equivalence or shift deserve discussion. Generally, process equivalence is preferred over process shift in translation (Table 5). Process equivalence is observed to decrease progressively from material to relational, mental, and finally existential processes. This indicates that the closer a process type is to concrete experiential representation, the more likely it is to be retained in translation without a shift. Process shift, however, is more functional-driven, which aims to foreground general truths through shifts from material to relational process, simplify overly abstract reasoning through shifts from relational to material process, and explicate implicit ideas.

(a). Process Equivalence

Among the four types of processes found in our corpus, material processes are generally retained in translation. A possible reason is that most of the processes involved are transformative, which means the participant exists prior to the onset of the unfolding of the process and is changed in some way through the unfolding of the process (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 232). For example:

Example 12:

ST: 合抱之木，生于毫末；九层之台，起于累土。(Xi, 2018, p. 294)

Gloss: A tree that requires multiple people to embrace grows from a sprout; a nine-layered terrace begins with the accumulation of soil.

TT: A tall tree **grows** from a small seedling; and the building of a nine-story tower starts with the first shovel of earth. (Xi, 2018, p. 322)

“生” (grow), a transformative process, is generally retained in the TT with the images of its participants “合抱之木” (a tall tree) and “毫末” (a small seedling) being preserved. Since various categories of participants are involved, different types of verbs are used and most of them are transformative, expressing size, operation, make-up and so on, as is shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7
EXAMPLES OF TRANSFORMATIVE VERBS IN MATERIAL CLAUSE

Type of verb	Example
Transformative: size	ST: 新松恨不 高 千尺，恶竹应须斩万竿。 TT: Young pines should grow a thousand feet high, while poisoning bamboos should be cut down one by one.
Transformative: operation	ST: 治 天下也，必先公，公则天下平矣。 TT: To govern the country, the priority is to realize equality, and then stability will follow.
Transformative: make-up	ST: 积羽 沉 舟，群轻 折 轴。 TT: Falling feathers submerge a boat and an excess load breaks a cart axle.

Like material processes, relational processes, especially those in intensive clauses, are generally preserved. Intensive clauses are realized by the structure of ‘x is y’, and in Chinese they are realized by ‘x 是 y’, ‘x, y’ and ‘x 若 y’. For example:

Example 13:

ST: 治大国 **若** 烹小鲜。(Xi, 2018, p. 409)

Gloss: To govern a big country is like cooking a small fish.

TT: Governing a big country **is** as delicate as frying a small fish. (Xi, 2018, p. 457)

Both of the ST and TT are intensive-attributive clauses, with “治大国” (governing a big country) functioning as the carrier, “烹小鲜” (as delicate as frying a small fish) the attribute, and “若” (is) the relational process. Notably, through the use of Qualitative Attribute, realized by the nominal group with Epithet (delicate) as the head and submodified by the comparative adverb (as), the phrase “as delicate as frying a small fish” maintains the comparative logic of the ST, while overtly stating the implicit quality (delicate) that the ST suggests. Verbs frequently employed in this case are to express identity, attribute or time, as is shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8
EXAMPLES OF VERBS REALISING PROCESS IN INTENSIVE CLAUSES

Type of verb	Example
Neutral: identifying	ST: 尚贤者, (~~是~~)政之本也。 TT: Exaltation of the virtuous <i>is</i> fundamental to governance.
Neutral: attributive	ST: 君子之过也, ~~如~~ 日月之食焉。 TT: When a gentle man errs, his mistake <i>is</i> as visible as a solar or lunar eclipse.
Phase: time	ST: 人间正道 ~~是~~ 沧桑 TT: Seas <i>become</i> mulberry fields.

As to mental processes, they are usually retained despite of their subjective feature. Unlike material processes that construe the experience of the material world, mental processes are concerned with experience of our own conscious world. Among the four types of mental process, only perceptive and cognitive mental processes are involved in our corpus. The following is an example of cognitive mental process:

Example 14:

ST:

吾心~~信~~其可行, 则移山填海之难, 终有成功之日; 吾心~~信~~其不可行, 则反掌折枝之易, 亦无收效之期也。(Xi, 2020, p. 268)

Gloss: If my heart believes it can be done, then even the difficulty of moving mountains and filling seas will one day see success; if my heart believes it cannot be done, then even the ease of turning over a hand or snapping a branch will never see achievement.

TT: If I *believe* I can do it, then I am able to complete any difficult task - even moving a mountain or filling up a sea; if I don't *think* I can do it, then I may not succeed in even the easiest tasks like flipping over my hands or breaking off a twig. (Xi, 2020, p. 290)

The mental processes “信” (believe) and “信” (think) are both retained because they are used to express how inner conviction shapes outcomes. This choice preserves the ST's emphasis on subjective evaluation as the driving force behind success or failure. More examples of verbs realizing mental processes are given in Table 9, including verbs realizing perceptive mental processes.

TABLE 9
EXAMPLES OF VERBS REALISING MENTAL PROCESS

Type of verb	Example
Perceptive	ST: 以天下之目 ~~视~~ , 则无不 ~~见~~ 也; 以天下之耳 ~~听~~ , 则无不 ~~闻~~ 也。 TT: If you use the eyes of all those under Heaven to <i>see</i> , there is nothing you cannot <i>see</i> . If you use the ears of all those under Heaven to <i>hear</i> , there is nothing you cannot <i>hear</i> .
Cognitive	ST: 亲 ~~望~~ 亲好, 邻 ~~望~~ 邻好。 TT: Neighbors <i>wish</i> each other well, just as family members <i>do</i> .

(b). Process Shift

Process shift may also occur even though there is no shift in the imagery, and the shift from material process to relational process is the most common case. Material processes reflect external actions and events, whereas relational processes generalize or link fragments of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Therefore, the shift from material to relational process means the shift from subjective action (a quantum of change) to objective attribute (static features), as seen in Example 15.

Example 15:

ST: 求木之长者, 必~~固~~其根本; 欲流之远者, 必~~浚~~其泉源。(Xi, 2018, p. 356)

Gloss: If one wants the tree to grow tall, one must secure its roots; if one wants the stream to flow far, one must dredge its source.

TT: For a tree to grow tall, a strong and solid root *is* essential; for a river to reach far, an unimpeded source *is* necessary. (Xi, 2018, p. 393)

“固” (secure) and “浚” (dredge) are both material processes, but they are shifted into relational processes “be” in the TT. Such shift reveals a corresponding shift in experiential focus: from emphasizing concrete and goal-directed actions enacted by human agency, to highlighting inherent qualities or necessary conditions that define the nature of a phenomenon. Functionally, this process shift backgrounds the cause-effect relationship and foregrounds the logical necessity between the participants. It transforms the exhortation into a more neutral and objective statement of principle, which may enhance its universality and formal tone.

Shift from relational process to material process is also observed in our corpus. Such shift is often used to simplify highly abstract reasoning through concrete and observable actions. For example:

Example 16:

ST: 从善~~如~~登, 从恶~~如~~崩。(Xi, 2018, p. 53)

Gloss: Progress towards good is like climbing a mountain; decline towards bad is like a landslide.

TT: Virtue *uplifts*, while vice *debases*. (Xi, 2018, p. 57)

The ST is a relational-intensive-attributive clause where the carriers are “从善” (progress towards good) and “从恶” (decline towards bad), the attributes are “登” (climbing a mountain) and “崩” (a landslide), and the process “如” (is like) creates a comparative effect. The shift from relational process to material process reflects a shift from being to doing, then the comparative meaning is replaced with causality: virtue causes uplifting and vice causes decline.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the translation of cultural imagery in Chinese political texts through the transitivity system, focusing on how imagery is realized structurally as participants or circumstances and what processes are involved. A parallel corpus from *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volumes I to IV)* revealed a strong tendency to preserve both the structural roles and lexical choices.

Most imagery in the source texts serves as participants, and this role is usually maintained in translation. This reflects the function of imagery in Chinese political philosophy as vehicles of thought. Structural shifts are infrequent and typically used to clarify abstract logic or highlight rhetorical focus. In terms of process types, material and relational processes dominate and are largely retained, supporting causal and evaluative structures. Mental processes are also preserved, emphasizing stance and internal reasoning. When shifts occur, they typically simplify abstract logic or clarify agency.

At the lexical level, translators generally favour retaining the image rather than rendering its sense or omitting it. This preference is linked to multiple factors. Many allusions are built on images with universal resonance, aligning with the diplomatic principle of proximity, which favours perceptible and accessible expressions (Zhao & Yang, 2022). Even culturally specific images are often retained, reflecting the harmony-oriented philosophy of Chinese discourse, which values indirectness and rhetorical balance (Song & Zhang, 2024). In such contexts, image preservation serves not only linguistic but also ideological purposes, reinforcing cultural identity and avoiding direct confrontation. Institutional norms further contribute to this tendency. Political texts are produced under official oversight, and translators are expected to ensure both linguistic accuracy and ideological fidelity. Retaining imagery helps maintain the authority of the original discourse.

Overall, transitivity analysis offers a useful framework for examining how imagery is recontextualized in political translation. By considering grammatical structure and lexical choices, this approach reveals how experiential meaning is preserved, adjusted, or reinterpreted in line with ideological goals.

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Ethnopharmacology in BIPA Teaching Materials: A Study of the Vocabulary Acquisition of Indonesian Herbal Medicine and Drink

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Abstract—Indonesia has a rich heritage of ethnopharmacology, which is reflected in its traditional medicines and herbal drinks. This study aimed to analyze the characteristics of vocabularies related to herbal medicine and drinks and to test the feasibility of integrating them into *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing* (BIPA) teaching materials. This study implemented mixed methods with a sequential exploratory design that involved qualitative and quantitative data collections. Qualitative data were obtained using in-depth interviews with traditional herbal practitioners and observations. Quantitative data were obtained using a feasibility assessment by experts of BIPA. Results of the study revealed that herbal vocabularies were organized in four main dimensions, namely herbal ingredients, preparation methods, health benefits, and cultural values. Quantitative analysis showed that BIPA teaching materials containing ethnopharmacology received a very high feasibility assessment in all aspects, including suitability of vocabulary, clarity of cultural context, accuracy of terminology and ethnopharmacology content, language readability, and feasibility of pedagogical and supporting media. The findings of this study showed that the integration of ethnopharmacology into BIPA learning was effective for vocabulary enrichment and authentic media for cross-cultural understanding. It also served to preserve Indonesian local wisdom. This study concluded that the ethnopharmacology-based approach is an innovative model to teach BIPA by combining language learning and cultural values.

Index Terms—ethnopharmacology, BIPA, vocabulary, medicine, herbal drinks

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I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known for being rich in diversity, including ethnopharmacology, or the utilization of plants as traditional medicines and herbal drinks (Susanti et al., 2021). Ethnopharmacology is the study of plants, minerals, and other natural ingredients used in traditional healing practices (Süntar, 2020). Ethnopharmacology has become part of Indonesian society through various herbal concoctions, such as *jamu kunyit asam* (turmeric and tamarind), *beras kencur* (aromatic ginger), *wedang jahe* (ginger drink), and *wedang secang* (sappanwood drink), among others, that are consumed to maintain health and linked to national identity (Adriani & Pritasari, 2024). Therefore, ethnopharmacology is regarded as a manifestation of local wisdom, which is valuable when introduced in a learning context.

After all, the names of Indonesian traditional medicines and herbal drinks are a part of local knowledge. These names refer to the type of concoction that reflects traditions, life philosophies, and community interaction with nature (Nissen, 2015). Moreover, it provides a better understanding of the role of Indonesia's important biodiversity in shaping national identity (Purwanto et al., 2020). Therefore, integrating ethnopharmacology into the learning process is relevant for BIPA teaching.

Learning the Indonesian language for non-native speakers is known as the BIPA (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing*) program (Suyitno et al., 2017). The speakers do not use the Indonesian language as their mother tongue but are nevertheless interested in the Indonesian language (Kusmiatun et al., 2017). Most have different first languages and cultural backgrounds apart from Indonesian (Putri et al., 2023). In other words, although coming from a different cultural background than Indonesians, they are studying the language. This makes ethnopharmacology crucial for BIPA learning.

Teaching materials refer to printed and non-printed devices that can assist the teaching and learning process (Hasanudin et al., 2024). It can facilitate teachers in conveying materials (Sasminto et al., 2021) and developing students' expected skills (Hasanudin et al., 2022). However, BIPA learning has not provided much in the way of supporting media that integrates local knowledge with the teaching and learning process (Yuniatin & Asteria, 2022), and it faces numerous difficulties and barriers due to insufficient supporting media (Tiawati et al., 2024). Moreover, according to Arisnawati et al. (2022), boring teaching materials reduce the non-native speakers' interest, so the BIPA learning process is less optimal. As a result, innovation is needed to integrate teaching materials and Indonesian local knowledge about the names of herbal medicines and drinks to increase non-native speakers' interest, enrich their vocabularies, and optimize their learning.

Teachers can ensure maximum learning acceptability by utilizing appropriate teaching materials so the students can achieve learning easily (Zulaeha et al., 2023). Furthermore, it can overcome the decline of student achievement (Hasanudin et al., 2024). It also facilitates students in increasing their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills and develops their perspectives on various issues (Sentürk & Simsek, 2021).

Researchers have carried out several studies on the role of teaching materials in BIPA learning. A study conducted by Tiawati et al. (2022) discussed the readiness of BIPA teaching materials in West Sumatra that contain local wisdom. However, that research shows that most BIPA teaching materials containing local wisdom have not been well understood by BIPA learners. Furthermore, the integration of local knowledge is still low, so it is unable to highlight Indonesian culture effectively.

In line with Ardiyanti and Septiana (2023), integrating local knowledge creates qualified BIPA teaching materials. They focus on materials in the form of videos about daily routines at Indonesian traditional markets. However, its limited duration causes less optimal results, such as BIPA learners having errors in pronunciation.

Moreover, Saddhono et al. (2024) have examined BIPA teaching materials containing Indonesian diversity, such as Indonesian traditional foods and drinks, which are effective for introducing Indonesian cultures to BIPA learners. Based on previous research, the present study aimed to explore the forms of vocabulary for Indonesian herbal medicine and drinks. Furthermore, it also investigated the appropriate BIPA teaching materials containing ethnopharmacology.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies served as the basis for the development of ethnopharmacology in BIPA teaching materials. Research conducted by Darmuki et al. (2022) explored the importance of teaching materials in BIPA learning. They utilized teaching materials that integrated a scientific approach into the learning process to increase students' cognitive, psychomotor, and affective aspects. The study's results showed that the teaching materials had a significant influence on students' learning outcomes, especially in the psychomotor and affective aspects. Students' vocabulary acquisition was not discussed in detail because its focus was on local vocabulary forms.

Nugraheni et al. (2022) conducted a study on the urgency of teaching materials on local wisdom for BIPA learning that was adjusted to the needs of international students. Its results showed that teaching materials containing local Indonesian wisdom increased students' understanding of the Indonesian language and culture. However, it did not define the form of local wisdom for BIPA learners; therefore, the concepts of local wisdom were broad and differed from ethnopharmacology terminology.

In 2023, Gunawan et al. (2023) continued to integrate local wisdom into BIPA teaching materials. They focused on students' understanding of the Indonesian language and culture, in which gastronomy was used as an interesting and

relevant learning medium. Its results showed that detailed local wisdom can be used as effective teaching material in enhancing students' understanding of the Indonesian language and culture. However, it was limited to the use of the single culinary dish *nasi goreng*, which did not cover the broader aspect of local wisdom, such as ethnopharmacology.

In addition, Syah et al. (2023) explored the importance of BIPA teaching materials containing local wisdom. They showed that the innovation of integrating local wisdom into teaching materials was able to develop students' language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and their linguistic knowledge related to food, health, and tourism. However, it did not introduce traditional Indonesian medicines and herbal drinks.

Saddhono et al. (2024) highlighted the integration of local cuisine in BIPA teaching materials. They showed that BIPA learners were interested in Indonesian cultures, where local cuisine was utilized to introduce Indonesian language and cultural values. This integration was effective in enhancing students' motivation and Indonesian language skills. However, its focus was on gastronomy, and it did not introduce traditional Indonesian medicines and herbal drinks.

Marsevani et al. (2024) developed BIPA teaching materials by emphasizing the cultural context of the Riau Islands. The research was motivated by students' needs for relevant and interesting teaching materials. Its results showed that this integration improved the participation and interest of BIPA learners. However, the research focused on the local culture of the Riau Islands. It did not discuss ethnopharmacology or other elements of Indonesian culture.

Furthermore, Marsevani and Febria (2025) continued the innovation of using BIPA teaching materials containing the local wisdom of the Riau Islands. Its results showed that the teaching materials could enhance students' motivation and participation. Moreover, it also provided more contextual learning. However, it did not explore the vocabulary of ethnopharmacology related to traditional Indonesian medicine and herbal drinks.

While previous studies underscore the importance of integrating local wisdom into BIPA teaching, a specific gap remains in the inclusion of ethnopharmacology—the vocabulary of Indonesian herbal medicine and drinks. This study introduces a novel idea by using ethnopharmacology as a context for local wisdom to facilitate vocabulary acquisition, addressing the absence of such content in existing materials. Consequently, it provides innovative BIPA teaching resources that simultaneously enrich learners' understanding of Indonesian language, culture, and health practices. The novelty of this study can be viewed in Figure 1.

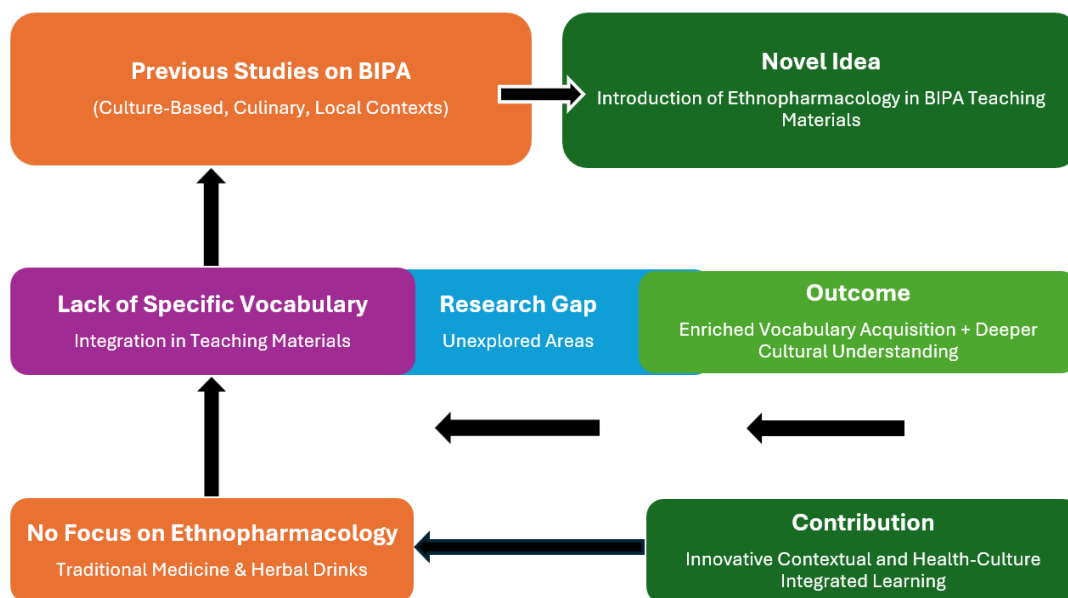


Figure 1. Research Gap and Novel Idea of This Study

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, which combined qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate research problems comprehensively. Qualitative data were utilized to determine depth and contextualization. Quantitative data were used for generalization and objectivity. This study implemented a sequential exploratory design that consisted of a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase. The qualitative phase was conducted first to explore the representation of vocabulary about ethnopharmacology in BIPA teaching materials, Indonesian herbal medicine, herbal drinks, and the teaching media used. Its results were used to identify the theme, pattern, or hypotheses that were tested in the quantitative phase. The quantitative phase developed research instruments and evaluated ethnopharmacology in BIPA teaching materials. In this phase, the data was obtained through a questionnaire of material assessment.

B. Participants

This study involved two participant groups: sellers of *jamu*—Indonesia's traditional herbal medicine based on natural ingredients like turmeric, ginger, and tamarind—in the qualitative phase, who provided authentic ethnopharmacological knowledge on terminology, efficacy, and cultural context to inform the teaching materials; and BIPA lecturers in the quantitative phase, who evaluated the material's suitability, terminology accuracy, and readability through structured feedback, ensuring the content was both culturally accurate and pedagogically appropriate.

C. Data, Data Sources, and Data Collection Technique

In the qualitative phase, the data were in the form of terminology, usage, and context of herbal medicine and drinks. These data were obtained from 27 sellers of *jamu* and 30 herbal drink makers. They provided authentic knowledge with supporting documents of traditional recipes and promotional materials. The data was obtained from structured interviews, observations of the production process, seller-buyer interactions, and documents of recipes, labels, or traditional records.

In the quantitative phase, the data were feasibility materials such as material assessment scores, suggestions for improvement, and lecturer responses. The data were obtained from 25 lecturers of BIPA as experts in language pedagogy and ethnopharmacology. A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire. The data was integrated from the qualitative and quantitative phases.

D. Research Instruments

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, beginning with a qualitative phase where data were collected using interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document analysis. Interviews with herbal medicine makers explored local vocabulary, production methods, efficacy, and cultural values, while observations recorded the actual production process and use of local terms. Document analysis of traditional recipes and labels supplemented this data. The results from this phase were used to compile a comprehensive glossary and contextual examples for developing BIPA teaching materials.

In the quantitative phase, the instrument used was a closed questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale addressed to lecturers of BIPA. This instrument was used to assess material feasibility in ethnopharmacology, which was developed based on qualitative explorations. The questionnaire contained the suitability of vocabulary, clarity of cultural context, accuracy of terminology and ethnopharmacology content, language readability, and feasibility of pedagogical and supporting media. The instrument can be viewed in Table 1.

TABLE 1
FEASIBILITY INSTRUMENTS OF ETHNOPHARMACOLOGY TEACHING MATERIALS

Aspects	Statements	Score (1 – 5)	Comment / Suggestion
Suitability of vocabulary to learners' proficiency level	The vocabulary is appropriate to the proficiency level of BIPA learners (beginner, intermediate, and advanced).		
	The selected vocabulary supports mastery of daily terms and ethnopharmacology.		
Clarity of cultural context	Teaching materials clearly display the cultural context of Indonesian herbal medicine and drinks.		
	The cultural context presentation is easily understood by BIPA learners.		
Accuracy of terminology and ethnopharmacology content	Terminology of ethnopharmacology in teaching material is appropriate with scientific sources.		
	Content of ethnopharmacology is appropriately presented with traditional practices and avoids misunderstanding.		
Language readability	The language used is clear, communicative, and easily understood by BIPA learners.		
	The sentence structures in teaching materials are simple and in line with Indonesian language rules.		
Feasibility of pedagogical and supporting media	Teaching materials are equipped with activities that are appropriate for BIPA learning objectives.		
	Supporting media (pictures, audio, videos, and digital) are used to clarify and reinforce material understanding.		
	Teaching materials are in the form of an interactive website.		

The instrument also provided open responses to accommodate comments, suggestions, or recommendations for material enrichment. The quantitative assessment was processed as an average score in determining the feasibility level of materials (very feasible, feasible, sufficient, or infeasible). Therefore, the research instruments of this study were designed to complement each other. The qualitative data provided basic vocabulary and cultural context, while the quantitative data provided objective validation of material quality and feasibility based on the ethnopharmacology context.

E. Analysis Technique, Data Validation, and Data Integration

Data analysis in the qualitative phase was conducted using the thematic coding technique by identifying terms, concepts, and cultural narratives that were relevant to teaching materials. Its stages were (1) transcribing interview and

observation notes, (2) reading data repeatedly to understand context, (3) coding the cultural terms, practices, and values, and (4) grouping codes into themes for developing teaching material. The results of this analysis were a list of vocabulary, terms, and cultural contexts for BIPA teaching materials.

Data analysis in the quantitative phase was conducted using the quantitative descriptive technique, namely (1) calculating the average score of each item and instrument aspect (suitability of vocabulary, clarity of cultural context, accuracy of terminology and ethnopharmacology content, language readability, pedagogical feasibility, and supporting media), (2) determining the category of feasibility of BIPA teaching materials based on the average score (4.21–5.00 = very feasible, 3.41–4.20 = feasible, 2.61–3.40 = sufficient, 1.81–2.60 = less feasible, and 1.00–1.80 = infeasible), and (3) analyzing comments to obtain suggestions from lecturers.

Validation was carried out through two procedures, namely (1) content validity, which was implemented for each item of the questionnaire; the teaching materials were examined by experts of BIPA and ethnopharmacology to ensure their relevance, representativeness, and suitability with learning objectives, and (2) a reliability test to measure the internal questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha with a value ≥ 0.70 being considered reliable.

IV. RESULTS

A. Vocabulary of Indonesian Herbal Medicine and Drinks

Based on the data collection's results, there are various terms and vocabularies related to herbal medicines and drinks. Those vocabularies are the names of products that reflect their efficacy, usage, and cultural values. Traditional medicines are known as *jamu*. It is part of the Indonesian cultural heritage that has been used to maintain health, treat various illnesses, and increase and maintain stamina. Its existence symbolizes Indonesian local wisdom that utilizes medicinal plants and spices as a part of a healthy lifestyle.

One popular traditional medicine is *Jamu Bandrek Jahe*, made from ginger, palm sugar, and various spices that are boiled to produce a warming herbal drink. In making this drink, common terms such as *direbus* ("boiled"), *penghangat tubuh* ("body warmer"), and *rempah* ("spices") appear as vocabulary indicating its production process, efficacy, and local ingredients used. These vocabularies represent people's understanding of its functions. For instance, ginger is known to warm the body and increase blood circulation, and palm sugar provides natural sweetness as a source of energy.

Moreover, *jamu diet* is a type of herbal drink used to maintain weight. The vocabularies of "diet," *menurunkan berat badan* ("lose weight"), and *ramuan herbal* ("herbal potion") are used to identify its advantage. *Jamu diet* can speed up the body's metabolism, reduce fat, and balance digestion. In this case, the vocabulary has medical and cultural meanings because Indonesian people drink it for a healthy life.

Additionally, *jamu penurun panas* ("fever-reducing herbal drink") utilizes boiled herbal ingredients to reduce fever. Its vocabularies include *penurun panas* ("fever reducer"), *direbus* ("boiled"), and "herbal," which show their efficacy and the process in which it is made. The vocabulary helps people describe the drink's specific function and shows local tradition in daily medical practices.

Jamu Rematik is an anti-inflammatory herbal drink made from ginger and turmeric that reduces muscle pain. The vocabularies *rematik* ("rheumatism"), *nyeri sendi* ("joint pain"), and *obat tradisional* ("traditional medicine") reflect its health benefits and familiar medical terms. These vocabularies demonstrate how Indonesian people associate pain with certain plants to relieve it.

Jamu Asam Urat dan Kolesterol is intended to maintain healthy joints and control blood cholesterol levels. The vocabularies are *asam urat* ("gout"), *kolesterol* ("cholesterol"), and *mengontrol kesehatan tubuh* ("control health") that emphasize the efficacy of the herbal concoction of bitter leaves, fingerroot, and turmeric to relieve pain for people suffering from gout and cholesterol problems. The vocabulary demonstrates how Indonesian people balance their conditions with natural ingredients.

Several herbal medicines utilize leaves as the main ingredients, such as *Jamu Daun Sirih* and *Jamu Daun Jambu*. The vocabularies are *daun sirih* ("betel leaf"), *daun jambu* ("guava leaf"), *antiseptik* ("antiseptic"), and *mengatasi diare* ("to treat diarrhea"). Betel leaf contains a natural antiseptic. Guava leaves can be used to treat digestive disorders. This vocabulary explains the function of ingredients and demonstrates local knowledge related to the use of medicinal plants.

Jamu Gula Asem is an herbal drink that combines palm sugar and tamarind, giving it a sweet and sour flavor. It also has a refreshing effect and is drunk daily as part of a healthy lifestyle. The vocabularies are *manis dan asam* ("sweet and sour"), *menyegarkan tubuh* ("refreshing"), and *ramuan tradisional* ("traditional medicine").

Other herbal drinks are *Jamu Kunir Asem*, *Jamu Cabe Puyang*, and *Jamu Pahitan*, which have unique vocabularies that explain their efficacy and ingredients. The word *kunir* refers to turmeric, *puyang* refers to a traditional spice, and *pahit* refers to a bitter-tasting and detoxifying drink. These vocabularies demonstrate people's understanding of the tastes, the functions, and the natural ingredients that are used in traditional medicines.

In addition, *Jamu Kudu Laos*, *Jamu Temu Kunci*, *Jamu Temulawak*, and *Jamu Daun Pepaya* emphasize local herbal ingredients, such as *kudu laos* ("galangal"), *temu kunci* ("fingerroot"), *temulawak* ("Javanese turmeric"), and *daun pepaya* ("papaya leaves"). Each ingredient has a specific function, such as increasing stamina, detoxifying, or maintaining liver function. These vocabularies emphasize the ingredients, methods, and efficacy. The terms *direbus*

(“boiled”), *ditumbuk* (“ground”), and *diseduh* (“brewed”) describe the process of making herbal drinks. The terms “stamina,” *detoksifikasi* (“detoxification”), and *fungsi hati* (“liver function”) emphasize health benefits.

The data on 15 types of herbal medicines produce vocabularies related to four main dimensions. The first dimension is the herbal ingredients, including various spices, leaves, and local plants. The second dimension is the processing method, such as boiling, pounding, brewing, or other traditional processing methods. The third dimension is its benefits in warming and detoxifying the body, increasing stamina, healing pain, and maintaining health. Finally, the fourth dimension is cultural value that emphasizes traditions, health symbols, local rituals, and healing practices.

The vocabularies of herbal medicines represent the Indonesian local language and tradition. These vocabularies reflect people’s relationship with nature, their mindset, and healthy living. The term *pahit* (“bitter”) in *Jamu Pahitan* denotes its taste and natural detoxification process. Furthermore, the term *penghangat tubuh* (“body warmer”) in *Jamu Bandrek Jahe* shows the traditional understanding of physical conditions, so it is consumed to stay warm.

The words *temulawak* (“Javanese turmeric”), *kudu laos* (“galangal”), and *temu kunci* (“fingerroot”) contain cultural value and local identity. They are medicines, part of social life, and part of traditional rituals. Therefore, these vocabularies combine the linguistic, medical, and cultural aspects.

The vocabulary of Indonesian herbal medicine demonstrates linguistic flexibility, with regional variations in terms like *Jamu Beras Kencur* that refer to similar functions, reflecting the nation’s cultural diversity. This lexicon, encompassing ingredients, preparation methods, efficacy, and cultural roles, is crucial for language education and health literacy. Ultimately, it provides profound insight into how natural resources are utilized to build cultural identity and maintain health traditions. The terms for these popular *wedang*, or traditional teas, carry both practical and symbolic meanings, illustrating the deep connection between language, community health, and local wisdom.

A popular herbal drink is *beras kencur*. It is made from *beras* (“rice”), *kencur* (“galangal”), and brown sugar that are brewed to create a refreshing beverage. Vocabularies related to *beras kencur* are *ditumbuk* (“ground”), *diseduh* (“brewed”), and *menyegarkan tubuh* (“refreshing”). It emphasizes the drink’s processing method and efficacy. *Beras kencur* can boost energy, refresh the body, and facilitate digestion. This vocabulary shows people’s understanding of herbal ingredients and the process to obtain their efficacy.

Wedang Madu is another immunity-boosting herbal drink. The main ingredients are honey, ginger, and lemongrass steeped in hot water. The vocabularies of *diseduh* (“brewed”), *meningkatkan stamina* (“increase stamina”), and “herbal” emphasize the drink’s efficacy. *Wedang madu* is mostly consumed to maintain health, but its role in Indonesian hospitality is also important.

Wedang Jahe is a popular body-warming herbal drink made of ginger, palm sugar, and other spices that are boiled to warm the body. The vocabularies of *direbus* (“boiled”), *penghangat tubuh* (“body warmer”), and *rempah* (“spices”) describe its traditional processing method and efficacy. It can be consumed during winter or when the body feels unhealthy. It shows how Indonesian people connect this herbal drink to their body condition and the environment.

Wedang Jeruk is an herbal drink that combines orange and traditional spices, boiled to obtain its taste. Its vocabulary includes *direbus* (“boiled”), *menyegarkan* (“refreshing”), and *mencegah masuk angin* (“preventing cold”), which highlight its efficacy and the way to make it. Furthermore, *Wedang jeruk* is consumed in a casual setting.

Teh Telang is made from brewing the butterfly pea, which produces a blue-colored herbal drink. Its vocabulary includes *diseduh* (“brewed”), *antioksidan* (“antioxidant”), and *menyehatkan mata* (“eye-healthy”), focusing on its health benefits and the traditional methods used to make it. *Teh telang* can be consumed daily or on special occasions.

Wedang sereh is made of lemongrass, which is boiled with honey or sugar. Its vocabulary includes *direbus* (“boiled”), *menenangkan perut* (“stomach-soothing”), and “antibacterial,” emphasizing the benefits of consuming this herbal drink. *Wedang sereh* is a traditional method of preserving health and can be used to alleviate digestive issues or bloating.

Wedang ronde is an herbal drink made of sticky rice balls served in a sweet ginger sauce. Its vocabulary includes “ginger,” “sticky rice balls,” “body warmer,” and “social drink,” emphasizing the drink’s preparation and social functions. This herbal drink is served at social events to show cultural value and social interaction.

Wedang Kunyit Madu combines turmeric and honey, which are boiled to make an herbal tonic. Its vocabulary includes *diseduh* (“brewed”), “antioxidant,” and “immune booster,” highlighting the drink’s efficacy and preparation. This herbal drink is consumed as a ritual to maintain health and prevent disease.

Wedang Uwuh is a Yogyakarta herbal drink made of spices and dried leaves that are brewed to create a warm and aromatic beverage. Its vocabulary includes “brewed,” “body warmer,” and “traditional drink,” highlighting the drink’s processing method, efficacy, and cultural values. This herbal drink is mostly associated with the hospitality of the Yogyakarta people, as it is served to the guests as part of local tradition.

Sinom is an herbal drink made of boiled tamarind leaves and brown sugar. The vocabularies of “boiled,” “refreshing,” and “smoothing digestion” reflect the benefits of herbal drinks and the traditional process to make them. *Sinom* is consumed in local ceremonies to emphasize the connection between vocabulary and tradition.

Teh Daun Salam is a healthy beverage made by brewing bay leaves. The vocabularies of “brewed,” “blood sugar control,” and “local healing tradition” describe the herbal drink’s function and cultural value.

Based on the 11 types of herbal drinks, the vocabulary encompasses four main dimensions: the names of their herbal ingredients, their processing methods (boiled, ground, brewed), their efficacy (body warmer, increasing stamina,

refreshing, antioxidant, antibacterial), and their cultural values (custom rituals, hospitality symbols, social drinks, family traditions). Thus, the vocabulary represents the Indonesian local language and its traditions of consuming herbal drinks.

Furthermore, herbal drinks show how Indonesians connect their language to their health and culture. Their vocabulary associated with these drinks describes the efficacy of these herbal remedies, reflects their healthy lifestyles, and shows the natural resources and social practices they use to concoct them. For instance, the term *penghangat tubuh* (“body warmer”) in *Wedang Jahe* or *Wedang Uwuh* shows their traditional understanding of weather and health. The term *menyegarkan tubuh* (“body refreshing”) in *Beras Kencur* or *Sinom* describes the benefits of the herbal drink for maintaining health. Those vocabularies connect practical, medical, and symbolic aspects, so each vocabulary word has a dual use of being functional and cultural.

Thus, Indonesian herbal drinks are both health tonics and learning media for local vocabulary that represents the culture. As a result, the vocabulary of herbal drinks in Indonesia bridges traditional knowledge, health practices, and cultural preservation. Results of analysis on Indonesian herbal medicine and drink reveal the pattern of vocabulary. It consists of four main dimensions, namely (1) vocabulary trends based on frequency of occurrence, (2) vocabulary mapping based on four main dimensions, (3) comparison of vocabulary trends between herbal medicine and drink, and (4) trend conclusion. Table 2 shows vocabulary patterns based on the frequency of occurrence of the terms that are most frequently used.

TABLE 2
VOCABULARY TRENDS BASED ON FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE

Vocabulary Category	Kosakata Kunci	Frequency of Occurrence	Importance Level
Preparation Method	boiled, brewed, ground	●●●●●	Very High
General Benefits	refreshing, body warmer	●●●●●	Very High
Main Ingredients	ginger, honey, turmeric, palm sugar	●●●●○	High
Specific Benefits	increasing stamina/immunity, smoothing digestion, antioxidant	●●●●○	High
Cultural Values	traditions, social drinks, family	●●●○	Medium

The vocabulary mapping of herbal medicine and drinks reveals four interconnected dimensions: ingredients, processing methods, health benefits, and cultural values. Specific ingredients like ginger or turmeric are processed through distinct techniques such as boiling or brewing, which directly influence their health effects, from providing warmth to boosting immunity. These benefits are deeply tied to cultural practices, making herbal drinks a symbol of hospitality in social interactions and a staple in customary events, demonstrating how the dimensions are intrinsically linked. The dimensions of herbal vocabulary can be viewed in Figure 2.

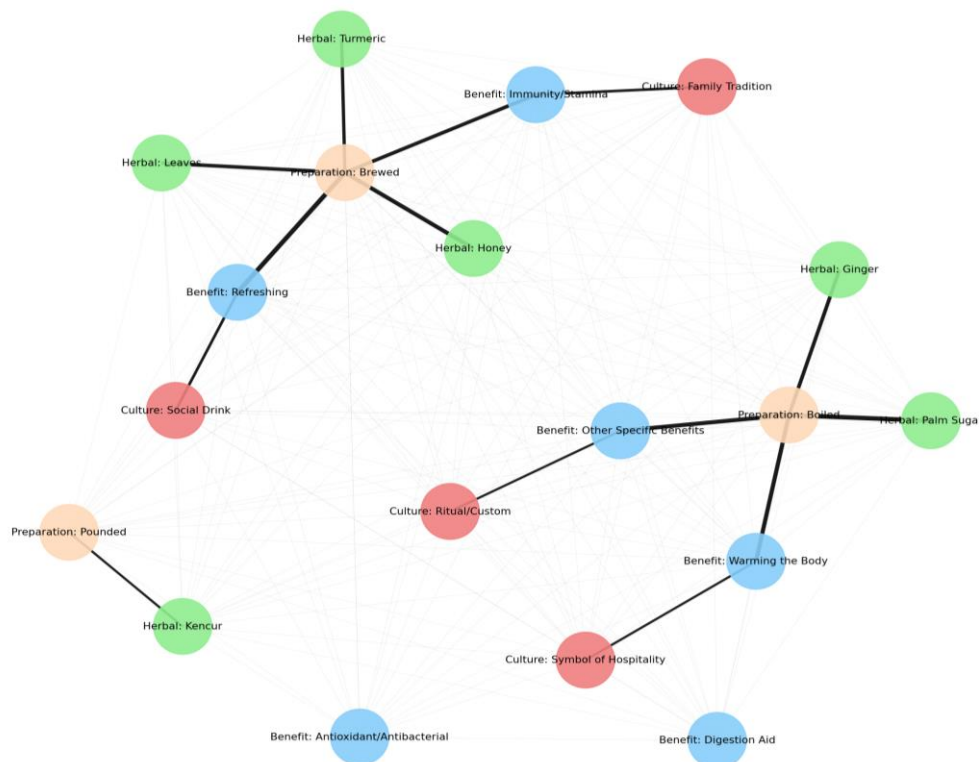


Figure 2. Vocabulary Mapping Based on Four Main Dimensions

Comparison of vocabulary trends between herbal medicine and drink provides nuances that can be viewed in Table 3.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF VOCABULARY TRENDS BETWEEN HERBAL MEDICINE AND DRINKS

Aspects	Herbal Medicine (Focus on Treatment)	Herbal Drink (Focus on Well-being)
Vocabulary of Benefits	Fever reducer, Rheumatism medicine, Gout, Cholesterol, Bitter, Detoxification	Body warmer, Refreshing, Preventing cold
Cultural Vocabulary	Traditional heritage, Hereditary medicine, Healthy lifestyle	Social drink, Hospitality, Family ritual, Symbol of local tradition
Taste Connotation	Bitter is said as its efficacy	Emphasizing more on sweetness, warmth, and deliciousness

Several significant patterns in the vocabulary analysis of Indonesian herbal medicine and beverages are revealed in the conclusion. First, functionality is the key point, as demonstrated by the predominance of the words *direbus* (“boiled”) and *diseduh* (“brewed”). These words emphasize the practical actions of traditional knowledge that can be applied in daily life. Second, the vocabulary is contextual. It provides the name and explains its efficacy, processing method, and cultural value. The word *penghangat tubuh* (“body warmer”) in *Wedang Jahe* describes its function.

This vocabulary system connects nature and culture by integrating natural resources with health and social practices, creating a distinct functional differentiation. It distinguishes “herbal medicine” for curative purposes (e.g., fever reducer) from “herbal drink” for preventative and social functions (e.g., refreshing social drink). Ultimately, this lexicon is more than just words; it is a knowledge system that records Indonesian local wisdom for maintaining health and preserving culture.

B. Ethnopharmacology in BIPA Teaching Materials

There are two procedures to ensure the validity and reliability of research instruments, namely content validity and reliability tests. Content validity is conducted qualitatively through focus group discussion (FGD). Inappropriate items are revised based on experts’ suggestions. When the instruments are said to be valid, they can be examined for their reliability. The reliability test is conducted using a questionnaire. The collected data are analyzed using Cronbach’s alpha technique with statistical software. Based on the results of data processing, the value of Cronbach’s alpha is 0.87. This is higher than 0.70. Therefore, the questionnaire exhibits excellent internal consistency and is dependable for data collection. Thus, it can be concluded that research instruments are valid and reliable. Moreover, the instruments are used to examine the feasibility of BIPA teaching materials containing ethnopharmacology. The feasibility results can be viewed in Table 4.

TABLE 4
FEASIBILITY RESULTS OF BIPA TEACHING MATERIALS

Aspect	Average	Dominant Category	Note
Suitability of Vocabulary	4.54	Very Feasible	Two respondents provided a score of 4. (Feasible)
Clarity of Cultural Context	4.46	Very Feasible	Three respondents provided a score of 3. (Sufficient)
Accuracy of Terminology and Content	4.50	Very Feasible	Almost all respondents provided a score of 4–5.
Language Readability	4.46	Very Feasible	One respondent provided a score of 3.
Feasibility of Pedagogical and Media	4.50	Very Feasible	Two respondents provided a score of 4. (Feasible)
Average Score	4.49	Very Feasible	-

The visualization of respondents’ assessments can be viewed in Figure 3.

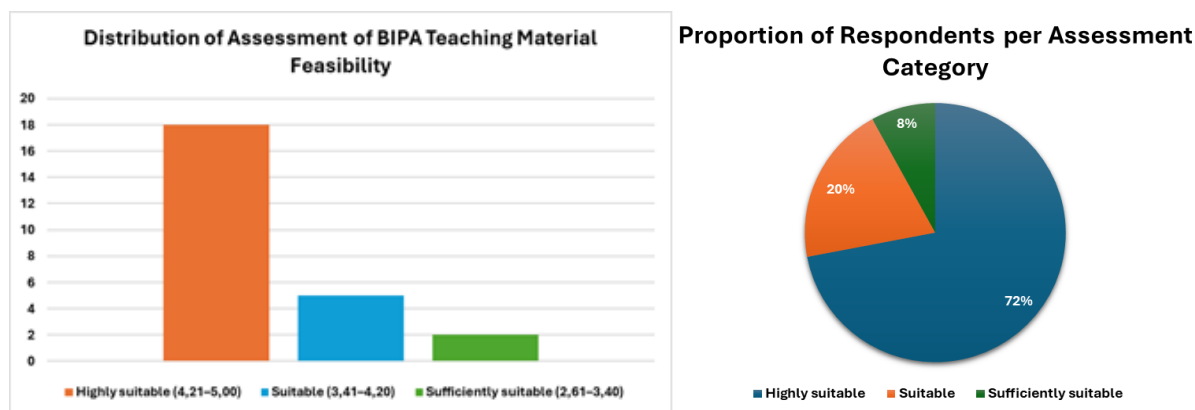


Figure 3. Visualizations of Respondents’ Assessments

The results indicate that most respondents believe instructional materials incorporating terminology associated with Indonesian herbal medicine and beverages should be utilized. It contains two observations, namely (1) teaching materials have fulfilled the BIPA pedagogical standard (seen in the high majority score), and (2) respondents who

achieve a low score suggest developing supporting digital media and cultural context. In other words, the teaching materials are feasible, but they need continuous improvement to be more adaptive to BIPA learners.

Based on previous results, integration of qualitative and quantitative data can be viewed in Table 5.

TABLE 5
FEASIBILITY RESULTS OF BIPA TEACHING MATERIAL

Dimension	Qualitative Findings	Quantitative Findings	Integration / Insight
Herbal Vocabulary	Identification of ingredients, processing method, efficacy, and cultural value	The score for the suitability of vocabulary was 4.54 (very feasible)	Local knowledge is verified and suitable to be BIPA teaching materials.
Processing Method	boiled, brewed, ground, mashed	Presented in the questionnaire of pedagogical validation (4.50)	Traditional technique is changed into learning context which can be understood easily.
Efficacy	General: body warmer, refreshing; Specific: detoxification, antioxidant	Aspect of accuracy of terminology (4.50)	Traditional efficacy can be scientific and contextual conveyed in BIPA.
Cultural Value	Custom, ritual, social drink, family tradition	Clear cultural context (4.46)	Local cultural values can be intercultural learning material.
Overall	Integrated knowledge (ingredients, method, efficacy, culture)	The average score was 4.49 (very feasible)	BIPA teaching materials can be implemented.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data can be viewed in Figure 4.

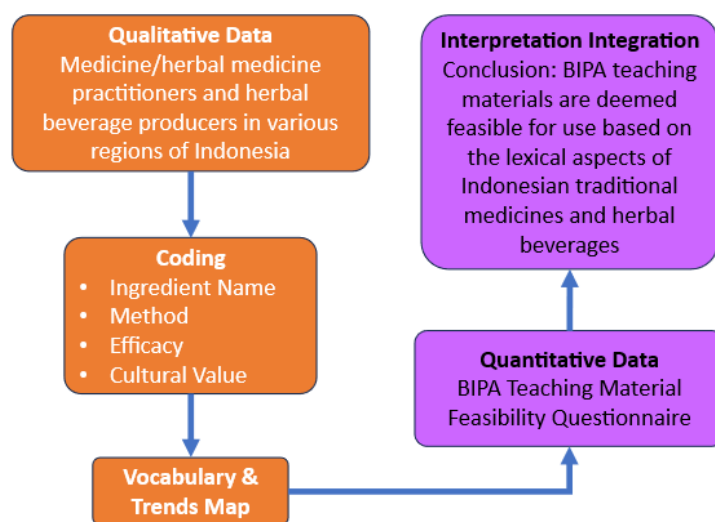


Figure 4. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Figure 4 describes the convergent mixed-method flow in which qualitative and quantitative results can produce a final conclusion.

V. DISCUSSION

Indonesian herbal medicine and drinks are used as health products without considering the rich vocabulary found within them. Each herbal medicine or drink has vocabulary that reflects local knowledge and a traditional healing culture (Rashid et al., 2018). The vocabulary contains the aspects of ingredients, processing methods, efficacy, and cultural values that are highlighted as ethnopharmacology (Vigor et al., 2025).

The vocabulary in ethnopharmacology has great potential to be integrated into BIPA learning. The problem is the limited vocabulary related to herbal medicine and drinks in BIPA teaching materials (Indrariyani & Khusniyah, 2025). The existing materials are more focused on general vocabulary, while learning about local culture, including the vocabulary of herbal medicine and drinks, has not systematically been included (Laksono & Ismiatun, 2023). This indicates that there is an opportunity to promote the vocabulary of Indonesian culture to BIPA learners.

This study involves the vocabulary of herbal medicine and drinks in BIPA teaching materials. It facilitates the learners' understanding of the language and its connection to cultural traditions (Aini et al., 2025). The integration of culture (herbal vocabulary) into BIPA teaching materials can enrich the learning experience and the understanding of Indonesian cultural heritage (Taufik et al., 2025).

Furthermore, including ethnopharmacology as a topic in BIPA teaching material enables learners to understand a broader cultural context. The vocabulary of herbal medicine and drinks introduces functional and effective cultural aspects. Indirectly, the learners obtain learning opportunities to achieve logistic understanding (Nambiar & Anawar, 2017).

Moreover, the integration of vocabulary related to herbal medicine and drinks connects traditional knowledge to language learning. By using the terms *temulawak* ("Javanese turmeric") or *kencur* ("galangal"), for example, the students learn about language and the way to utilize natural resources (Andajani et al., 2023). It also provides a new dimension in teaching language in that it not only teaches words but also teaches culture (Darmadi, 2018).

The implementation of ethnopharmacology in BIPA teaching materials can increase the appreciation of Indonesian natural resources and health traditions. In this case, the learners can broaden their perspectives about the Indonesian lifestyle, especially concerning traditional health methods (Nugraheni & Riyanto, 2023). In addition, the implementation of local wisdom through herbal vocabulary and BIPA learning facilitates learners' understanding of Indonesian cultural heritage (Andriyanto et al., 2025).

Thus, this study reveals that ethnopharmacology is crucial for BIPA teaching materials. The vocabulary of Indonesian herbal medicine and drinks has a role in enriching BIPA learning experiences. Moreover, this integration is a solution for the problems of limited teaching material and vocabulary problems faced by BIPA learners.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The vocabulary of Indonesian herbal medicine and drinks encapsulates the complex relationship between language, traditional health practices, and cultural values. These terms hold functional, symbolic, and social meanings, serving to organize knowledge about nature, affirm cultural identity, and promote a holistic health philosophy. As such, integrating this ethnopharmacological lexicon into BIPA teaching is an effective method for introducing learners to Indonesian local wisdom and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

To implement this, BIPA teaching materials should employ interactive digital media, such as videos and illustrations, and incorporate hands-on activities like brewing simulations. The content must enrich the cultural context by explaining social rituals and values while also presenting varied vocabulary. Developing dynamic and sustainable materials that allow for content updates and learner feedback is crucial to ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness in teaching language, culture, and traditional health practices.

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Bringing Suffering Closer: A Proximization and Affect Analysis of Vegan Digital Activism

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Abstract—This study explores how Earthling Ed, a prominent vegan activist, uses language on Instagram to construct emotional urgency and moral responsibility regarding animal rights. Combining Proximization Theory (Cap, 2013a) with Affect Theory (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2012), the research analyzes how three core emotions — guilt, fear, and compassion — are discursively constructed and proximized in Ed's posts. Drawing on a sample of Instagram posts published over the past two years, the study applies a qualitative framework to identify linguistic carriers of emotion (e.g., deictics, modality, narrative framing) and their proximization across spatial, temporal, and axiological axes. Findings indicate that Earthling Ed consistently uses second-person address, emotive storytelling, and moral appeals to collapse symbolic distance between the audience and the suffering of animals. Guilt is proximized through ethical contradiction, fear through vivid representations of harm, and compassion through personalization of animals.

Index Terms—Proximization Theory, affect theory, vegan activism, emotional framing, animal rights

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, animal rights advocacy has become an increasingly visible component of digital activism, with social media serving as a powerful tool for disseminating ethical messages and mobilizing public engagement. Online platforms allow activists to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, reaching global audiences directly with messages that foreground the suffering of nonhuman animals and call for transformative change in human behavior (Gruen, 2011; Hancox, 2020). Through emotionally charged narratives, visual storytelling, and direct moral appeals, animal rights activists work to shift public perception and draw attention to systemic cruelty in industries such as factory farming, vivisection, and fashion (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Laestadius, 2016).

Animal advocacy has emerged as a powerful subfield within digital activism, especially through social media platforms like Instagram. Scholars such as Freeman (2010) and Cole and Morgan (2011) argue that the visual and linguistic strategies employed by activists are central to how animal suffering is made visible and morally urgent. Platforms like Instagram offer users the ability to construct emotionally charged, visually evocative narratives that aim to disrupt normative ideologies around human-animal relationships.

Among the most influential digital voices in this space is Earthling Ed (Ed Winters), a British animal rights educator and vegan advocate whose online presence, particularly on Instagram, has garnered widespread attention. His posts are designed not only to inform but also to provoke emotional responses, foster ethical reflection, and encourage lifestyle change. Like many digital activists, Earthling Ed employs a combination of storytelling, moral questioning, and rhetorical strategies to challenge normalized practices of animal use and consumption.

Accordingly, this research aims to investigate how Earthling Ed's Instagram posts construct emotional and moral urgency through language, focusing on the emotions of guilt, fear, and compassion. Drawing on Affect Theory, the study explores how these emotions are discursively produced and circulated as part of activist messaging. Simultaneously, it applies Proximization Theory to examine how symbolic distance is compressed—spatially, temporally, and axiologically—so that distant animal suffering is made to feel immediate and personally relevant to the audience. The overarching objective is to analyze how these two frameworks interact to create compelling moral appeals in digital animal rights advocacy.

In order to fulfill the previous objectives, the research seeks to answer several key questions concerning the emotional and discursive strategies used in Earthling Ed's animal rights posts on Instagram. First, how are the emotions of guilt, fear, and compassion constructed and conveyed through linguistic choices, and what role do these emotions play in shaping the ethical stance of the audience? Second, what specific linguistic features—such as pronouns, evaluative language, narrative framing, or modality—function as carriers of affect and contribute to the circulation of moral sentiment? Third, in what ways are spatial, temporal, and axiological proximization strategies employed to symbolically reduce the distance between the audience and the suffering of animals, thereby increasing the sense of urgency and moral relevance? Finally, how do these affective and proximizing strategies interact to produce persuasive moral discourse within the broader context of digital vegan activism?

Therefore, this study contributes to multiple intersecting fields, including discourse studies, critical animal studies, digital activism, and emotion research in linguistics. By applying Proximity Theory (Cap, 2013a) and Affect Theory (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2012) to the context of animal rights advocacy on social media, the research offers an original analytical framework for understanding how emotional and moral appeals are constructed in digital discourse. While Proximity Theory has traditionally been used in political or conflict-related narratives, this project expands its scope to include ethical and interspecies activism, showing how ideological, spatial, and temporal proximity can be discursively manufactured to position animal suffering as an urgent, personal, and morally relevant threat.

From a broader social perspective, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to understand how activist narratives influence public perception and behavior, particularly in relation to nonhuman animal rights. As platforms like Instagram continue to shape public discourse, analyzing how influencers like Earthling Ed frame ethical issues becomes essential for understanding the emotional strategies that motivate change. Ultimately, the findings of this research may inform not only scholarly discussions in discourse and affect studies but also the strategic communication practices of social justice movements seeking to generate empathy, challenge normative ideologies, and promote compassionate action.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

While most existing literature on proximity theory has focused on political discourse, scholars have increasingly explored its application in social fields such as environmental activism, and pandemic discourse. Below are selected studies reflecting this shift.

Abdel Meguid Abdel Kader (2024) examines a TED Talk on plastic pollution, where both spatial and temporal proximity are used to evoke urgency. The speaker frames plastic waste as something infiltrating “our beaches” and harming “our water,” using immediacy markers like “today” and “right now” to press for action. The axiological dimension is conveyed through moral contrasts, positioning pollution against values like health and ecological duty.

Liu and Cheng (2023) apply Cap’s three-axis model to TED Talks on the environment, identifying how speakers use spatial metaphors and axiological binaries—such as “protect vs. destroy”—to symbolically collapse the distance between environmental issues and the audience. The frequent use of personal deixis (“our future”) increases proximity and moral relevance.

Cap and Zhang (2022) analyze speeches from the European Parliament, focusing on how climate change is spatially proximized through expressions like “fires on our doorstep.” They also highlight axiological proximization, showing how threats are aligned against European values like solidarity and environmental stewardship.

Hegyaljai (2021) investigates bushfire coverage in Australian media, where wildfires are metaphorically described as “invading” and “creeping” toward homes, collapsing the spatial distance and evoking urgency. This language fosters solidarity while also othering nature as a dangerous external force.

Chovanec (2021) studies early COVID-19 communication in Czech government briefings, identifying how temporal proximization was used to compress future risk into present urgency. High-modality language and second-person deixis framed the audience as direct targets of the virus, mobilizing emotional response.

Demata (2020) focuses on Italian Prime Minister Conte’s pandemic discourse, showing how COVID-19 was proximized both spatially and axiologically. Descriptions like “invisible enemy” and time-sensitive calls to action (“now is the time”) worked to unite the public emotionally and morally under a shared threat.

Mando and Stack (2018) explore how Asian carp were discursively constructed as a threat in U.S. media. The use of spatial metaphors and axiological contrasts framed the carp as both physically and morally threatening, shifting public sentiment from curiosity to moral panic.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Emotions and Digital Activism

In the contemporary landscape of social media, emotions have become essential tools for digital activism, shaping not only the content of advocacy but also the ways in which audiences respond to and interact with ethical campaigns. Online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok serve as powerful vehicles for affective expression, allowing activists to craft emotionally resonant narratives that connect with users in immediate and often visceral ways. As Papacharissi (2015) argues, social media fosters the emergence of “affective publics”—networked groups organized not just around shared political views, but around shared emotional experiences such as outrage, grief, or compassion. These affective publics are vital for sustaining attention, encouraging participation, and spreading activist messages beyond traditional organizational boundaries.

In digital animal rights activism, emotion is not simply an expressive outlet—it is central to the strategic communication of injustice. Animal suffering is often physically and psychologically distant from the everyday experiences of most people. Thus, emotional discourse functions as a bridge between abstract knowledge and moral engagement. According to Jasper and Nelkin (1992), successful animal advocacy relies on evoking moral shock—the emotional jolt that challenges a person’s habitual worldview and compels ethical reflection. These emotional appeals

often operate through images, videos, and especially language that personalizes animals, highlights their victimhood, and frames the audience as morally implicated.

Compassion, for example, is evoked by presenting animals as sentient beings with desires and emotions, while guilt is induced through rhetorical contrast between the audience's values and their consumer behaviors (Gruen, 2011). Fear may be mobilized by portraying the scale and brutality of animal agriculture as a moral emergency requiring immediate action. Such emotional strategies are not accidental; they are part of what Hutchinson (2016) calls "affective practices"—deliberate, patterned uses of emotion that build solidarity and provoke ethical transformation.

Importantly, digital platforms intensify the visibility, repetition, and immediacy of these affective messages. Content algorithms favor emotionally charged posts, and users are more likely to engage with material that elicits strong reactions (Papacharissi, 2015). Thus, emotional discourse becomes both the medium and the message: it spreads because it moves people, and it moves people because it spreads. Within this ecosystem, figures like Earthling Ed have mastered the affective affordances of platforms like Instagram, using emotive posts and captions, moral appeals, and direct language to construct powerful emotional narratives around animal suffering and human responsibility. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to analyzing how moral persuasion and ethical proximity are discursively produced in digital animal rights campaigns.

B. Proximization Theory: Framing Moral Urgency

Proximization Theory (PT), developed extensively by Piotr Cap (2006, 2008, 2009, 2013a, 2013b, 2016), is a discourse-analytical and cognitive-linguistic model that explains how speakers represent external threats as progressively approaching the audience's personal, temporal, or ideological space. This symbolic "closing in" of threat actors, identified as ODCs (Outside Deictic Centers), toward the speaker and audience—IDCs (Inside Deictic Centers)—enables the legitimization of defensive actions. Originally developed in the analysis of political and war discourse, PT offers a flexible tool for investigating how different types of threats (physical, temporal, or ideological) are linguistically constructed and emotionally charged (Cap, 2013a).

Cap (2007) defines proximization as a discourse strategy aimed at depicting external events and actors as increasingly affecting the addressee, effectively placing them at the center of unfolding negative developments. The theory identifies three major axes of threat construction: spatial, temporal, and axiological proximization. In spatial proximization, the speaker constructs the ODC as physically advancing toward the IDC space (e.g., "they are coming into our communities"). Temporal proximization refers to representing threats as no longer distant in time but imminent or already active—compressing the timeline of danger. Axiological proximization, by contrast, centers on moral and ideological conflict, framing the ODC's values as fundamentally opposed to those of the in-group and potentially infiltrating or corrupting them (Cap, 2013a, 2013b).

The origins of this triadic structure trace back to Chilton's (2004) cognitive model of discourse, which proposed that language encodes meaning along three intersecting axes: space (s), time (t), and modality (m). These axes revolve around a deictic center—the perspective of the speaker—linguistically signaled through first-person pronouns ("I," "we"), spatial adverbs ("here"), and temporal markers ("now"). According to Chilton, participants positioned further from this center—through second or third-person reference or spatial and temporal distance—are perceived as symbolically "other," laying the foundation for proximization strategies.

Each axis contributes distinct discursive functions. Spatial proximization manipulates locative language to suggest encroachment (e.g., "they are crossing into our space"), whereas temporal proximization relies on framing future dangers as imminent, often by shifting reference from the past or future into the present. Cap (2013b) describes two specific types of temporal compression: a past-to-present shift, where previous harmful actions are reframed as still operative or repeating, and a future-to-present shift, where near-future threats are treated as unfolding consequences of current behaviors. Both mechanisms aim to heighten urgency and justify immediate action.

Modality, as proposed by Chilton (2004), complements these proximization processes by signaling certainty (epistemic modality) and necessity (deontic modality). High modality use (e.g., "must stop," "will happen") contributes to the perceived inevitability and severity of the threat, reinforcing legitimization of action.

Among the three axes, axiological proximization plays a particularly critical role in constructing moral urgency. It involves the symbolic representation of value-based antagonism, where the ODC's ideology is depicted as violating the ethical framework of the in-group. Cap (2013a) outlines four linguistic structures that indicate this type of proximization: (1) noun phrases reflecting the IDC's values (e.g., "justice," "compassion"), (2) noun phrases denoting ODC ideologies (e.g., "violence," "cruelty"), (3) discursive sequences showing the movement from ideological threat to conflict, and (4) lexical expressions indicating the outcomes of ideological clashes (e.g., "loss of empathy," "moral collapse"). This model becomes especially powerful in legitimization discourse, where perceived value erosion by ODCs warrants a moral or ideological realignment—from an initial state of stability (Phase One) to a reactive ethical stance (Phase Two).

In sum, Proximization Theory offers a multidimensional framework for understanding how symbolic distance is narrowed through discourse. It enables analysts to explore how speakers create urgency and legitimization by constructing threats as spatially close, temporally immediate, and morally unacceptable. This approach has proven effective in the analysis of political, media, and activist discourses—and is particularly suitable for contexts where the goal is to mobilize emotional responses and ethical action, such as digital animal rights campaigns.

C. *Affect Theory and the Circulation of Emotion*

Affect Theory is an interdisciplinary framework that examines how feelings, emotions, and bodily intensities shape human experience, social relationships, and political structures. Rather than treating emotions as merely internal or psychological, affect theory highlights their social, cultural, and discursive nature. It explores how emotions circulate between individuals and texts, become attached to ideas or bodies, and ultimately participate in the construction of power and identity.

Affect theory draws a distinction between emotion (often personal, named, and socially recognized) and affect (pre-conscious, bodily, and processual). As Massumi (1995) argues, affect refers to “intensity” — a bodily response that occurs prior to cognition or linguistic labeling. Affect exists between bodies, not solely within them, and precedes conscious emotional interpretation. For example, the flinch before fear, or the warmth before joy, are bodily intensities that constitute affect.

This pre-cognitive and relational model of affect contrasts with traditional psychological models that locate emotion within the individual mind. Massumi (1995) suggests that affect is “autonomous,” meaning it is not wholly reducible to rational thought or language. However, in applied discourse analysis, scholars often treat affect and emotion interchangeably when they become textually mediated or socially constructed, especially in the work of Ahmed (2004).

Ahmed’s (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* is central to affect theory’s social turn. Ahmed argues that emotions are not private feelings that arise from within a person; rather, they are produced in social interactions and become meaningful through repetition and circulation. She introduces the concept of “affective economies,” where emotions “stick” to signs, bodies, and ideas over time. For instance, national pride may become attached to flags, while fear may stick to racialized or foreign bodies.

According to Ahmed, emotions are performative: they do not merely describe a state of being but actually do something — they align individuals with groups, orient them toward or away from others, and help create boundaries between “us” and “them” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12). Affect theory places strong emphasis on orientation — a concept Ahmed develops through phenomenology. Emotions direct our attention, shape our bodily posture, and position us socially. She explains that emotions “move us” in particular ways: we might lean away from what disgusts us or move toward what we desire. This directional quality of affect creates patterns of belonging, inclusion, and exclusion in both everyday life and ideological structures (Ahmed, 2006).

While early affect theorists emphasized the non-discursive aspects of affect (e.g., bodily intensities, visual stimuli), later scholars such as Wetherell (2012) argue that affect is deeply embedded in language and discourse. From this view, emotions are performed through speech acts, images, narratives, and gestures, making them highly analyzable in discourse studies. Thus, affect theory has become a valuable tool in analyzing media, politics, protest, advertising, and activism.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Design*

This study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytical approach, combining insights from Proximity Theory (Cap, 2013a) and Affect Theory (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2012) to examine how emotional and moral appeals are constructed in digital animal rights advocacy. The focus is on the linguistic strategies used in Instagram posts by the prominent vegan activist Earthling Ed, particularly how language is mobilized to evoke guilt, fear, and compassion. This methodology is suitable for uncovering the symbolic, affective, and ideological mechanisms embedded in short-form social media texts.

B. *Subjects*

The “subjects” in this research are 13 **Instagram posts by the prominent vegan activist Earthling Ed**. These posts are published between 2023 and 2024. A close reading process was employed to identify and select the most suitable posts that contain multiple linguistic devices related to proximity theory, emotional appeals and affective language. Only the **linguistic content** of the posts was analyzed; images, captions, emojis, and hashtags were excluded.

C. *Instruments*

Although the study does not rely on physical instruments, it uses two interrelated analytical tools. The first tool is the affective discourse analysis theory by Ahmed (2004) which enables the researcher to identify linguistic carriers of emotion, including expressive vocabulary, evaluative or judgmental phrases, and personal pronouns that directly address the reader. The second tool is Cap’s (2013a) that elaborates how threats were constructed and brought closer to the audience through three axes: spatial (suggestions of physical or symbolic intrusion), temporal (collapsing past or future threats into the present to create urgency), and axiological (lexical patterns signaling a clash between the moral values of the in-group and the out-group).

D. *Procedures*

All data were collected manually from the official public Instagram account of the vegan activist Earthling Ed (@earthlinged). Each post was read multiple times and annotated for proximization elements and affective carriers. Excerpts were grouped thematically to allow a nuanced interpretation of recurring patterns. Throughout the process, the analysis remained interpretive, seeking to understand how language positions the reader emotionally and constructs a sense of moral urgency around animal suffering. Key examples were selected for in-depth discourse analysis to demonstrate the interplay between affect and proximization.

V. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The findings of the study show that through strategic deictics, metaphorical framings, and emotionally charged lexicon, the Instagram posts depict animal suffering as a proximate, ethically loaded crisis. The findings show that affect is not merely a product of persuasion but a device that positions the viewer within a shared moral framework. Thirteen posts have been selected and thematically grouped under three dominant affective frames: **Theme 1: compassion and empathy**, **Theme 2: guilt and moral complicity** and **Theme 3: cognitive dissonance and ethical discomfort**.

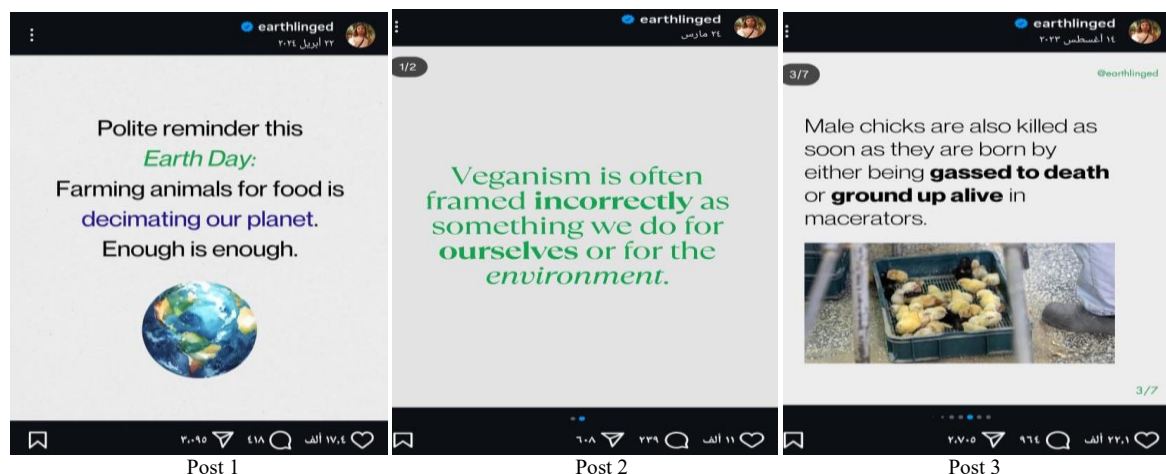
A. Theme 1. Compassion and Empathy

This theme captures how Earthling Ed's posts use emotionally charged language to foster affective alignment with animals, emphasizing shared vulnerability, and the moral imperative of care. Through personalization and inclusive appeals, these posts encourage viewers to adopt empathetic identification with nonhuman others.

Post 1 constructs an urgent ideological threat through *axiological proximization*. The noun phrase "farming animals for food" is positioned as an ODC (Outside Deictic Center) practice that symbolizes ecological destruction. The verb "decimating" serves as a metaphorical construction encoding violence and imminent damage, indicating not just a distant, abstract harm, but one intruding on the moral and spatial boundaries of the IDC (Inside Deictic Center)—presumably the environmentally conscious audience. The modal construction "Enough is enough" introduces deontic modality, demanding immediate action and framing the threat as no longer tolerable. The affective positioning relies on collective guilt and moral urgency, subtly implicating readers in systemic harm. Earth Day—normally a symbol of environmental solidarity—is recontextualized here as a scene of accountability, with emotional resonance intensified through the juxtaposition of celebration and destruction. The phrase "our planet" places the environmental threat within the Immediate Discourse Space (IDS) — it's not a distant, abstract concept but shared, local, and personal. This deictic construction collapses the spatial distance between individual behavior and planetary consequences. The word "farming" (often imagined as rural and distant) is juxtaposed with "our planet," bringing the consequence of a distant action into the physical and ethical space of the audience. The use of present progressive ("is decimating") implies an ongoing, immediate crisis. The crisis is not projected — it's unfolding *now*. The final sentence "Enough is enough" functions as a temporal threshold — marking a shift, suggesting that we've passed the limit of tolerance.

Post 2 repositions the moral center of veganism by challenging normative identity narratives. It introduces *affective dissonance*—a core concept in Affect Theory—by subverting the audience's assumed moral stance. The use of "incorrectly" critiques the dominant framing, and the repetition of "for ourselves" and "for the environment" taps into familiar ethical justifications, only to unsettle them. The underlying affective force here is *shame or discomfort* tied to misaligned moral reasoning. This scene evokes affective alignment by suggesting that true moral engagement lies beyond selfish or instrumental motives, thereby reconfiguring emotional norms around vegan identity as justice-oriented.

Besides, this post subtly refers to mis framing in the public discourse. While it doesn't use overt spatial markers, it critiques a distancing strategy — one where veganism is pushed outward into abstract or self-interested ideological spaces ("ourselves," "the environment"), rather than being seen as an immediate moral necessity involving animals. The implied spatial aspect is ideological distancing: the shift in framing detaches veganism from its moral proximity to animal suffering. The adverb "often" suggests a recurring but ongoing issue — a habitual misframing happening in the current discourse. The present tense "is" anchors the statement in contemporary time, reinforcing that this misconception is currently influencing how people view ethical choices.



Post 1

Post 2

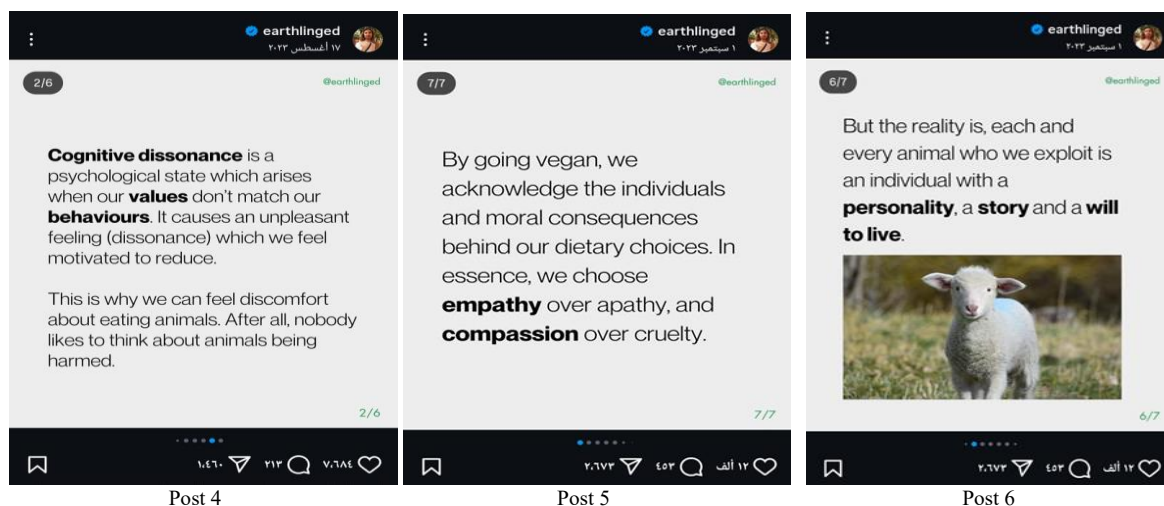
Post 3

In post 3, the concept of proximal threat is vividly conveyed through a series of violent and specific lexical choices such as “gassed,” “ground up alive,” “macerators,” and “killed.” These terms exemplify nominative violence—grammatical constructions that frame brutal actions as routine industrial procedures, thereby normalizing cruelty. From a proximization perspective, these practices expose how systemic violence is not distant or abstract but embedded within everyday systems. They break into the Inner Deictic Center (IDC)—the perceived safe moral space of the audience—by showing that these acts are not remote but standard operations within the industry.

The use of concrete, immediate language intensifies this effect. These are not vague references but graphic, tangible depictions that collapse the psychological and moral distance between consumer behavior and slaughterhouse reality. Visual elements further this proximity. The background image of yellow crates and chicks evokes recognizable industrial environments, signaling that such practices occur not in faraway places but in familiar, local systems supported by consumer demand. The temporal phrase “as soon as they are born” underscores both immediacy and inevitability, suggesting that violence begins at the earliest point of life. The absence of future or past tense markers like “used to” or “will be” indicates that this cruelty is not a historical issue or future risk—but a current, systemic reality.

The post also uses modality implicitly—these are not rare atrocities but legal norms. Affectively, the post aims to elicit horror, shock, and moral disgust, deliberately triggering empathic activation by referencing baby animals. Wetherell’s (2012) view of affect as practice is evident here, as the viewer’s likely response is shaped by emotional norms that value innocence and vulnerability.

Post 4 functions as a cognitive-affective diagnostic. The term “cognitive dissonance” is introduced to explain internal conflict when “values don’t match our behaviours.” From the perspective of Proximization Theory, this is an *inward axiological proximization*, where the threat is not external (ODCs) but internal: within the reader’s own ethical misalignment. The modal clause “nobody likes to think about animals being harmed” reinforces the ideological denial mechanism, subtly accusing the reader of emotional avoidance. Affect Theory is central here, as the post explicitly describes how emotions like *discomfort* and *denial* are sociopsychological practices shaped by cultural norms of meat consumption. The call is not merely to act differently but to feel differently. There are no geographical markers here, but the ideological distance is narrowed between beliefs (values) and daily actions (behaviors). This constructs an internal conflict within the individual’s moral space. Proximization here is inward and personal — the threat is not external but part of the individual’s identity, creating internal proximity between conflicting self-images. The use of present tense verbs (“don’t match,” “feels,” “likes”) signals that the emotional and ethical tension is current and ongoing. It doesn’t describe a past problem or a future solution — the reader is placed in the active moment of ethical discomfort.



Post 4

Post 5

Post 6

The audience in post 5 is positioned affectively as ethical agents capable of choice. The paired phrases—“empathy over apathy,” “compassion over cruelty”—use *parallelism and repetition* as emotional amplifiers. These lexical contrasts encode ideological differences between IDC values (empathy, compassion) and ODC ideologies (apathy, cruelty). The structure also performs *ideological movement*: the speaker invites the reader to cross over from one value system to another. From a Proximization standpoint, this is a shift from symbolic distance to moral closeness with the Other (animals). It makes affect visible as both a cause and consequence of moral transformation. The phrase “by going vegan” suggests a current and ongoing decision with future implications, drawing the audience into a temporally charged call to moral realignment. The use of present tense verbs (“acknowledge,” “choose”) emphasizes the immediacy of agency and the moral stakes of the present moment (Cap, 2013b). Here, spatial distance is dissolved through the personal “we,” which includes both speaker and audience in the IDC. By using inclusive pronouns and referring to “our dietary choices,” the post reduces symbolic distance between audience action and its consequences. It makes the issue close, personal, and morally relevant. Emotion is performed explicitly through evaluative and emotive lexis like “empathy,” “compassion,” and “cruelty.” The repetition of binaries frames the scene morally, shaping the audience’s affective positioning by invoking guilt, compassion, and the desire to belong to the ‘moral’ side of the conflict.

Post 6 humanizes animals via *discursive anthropomorphism*, invoking Affect Theory’s central interest in how subjects are emotionally constructed. The nouns “personality,” “story,” and “will” are loaded affective terms that reposition animals not as commodities (ODC framing) but as subjects deserving empathy (IDC values). This lexical structure dramatizes the value conflict central to axiological proximization. The affective work lies in reconstituting animals as moral beings, inviting the reader to emotionally identify with the exploited subject. It also performs *proximal intimacy*, reducing the ideological and emotional distance between humans and animals. The phrase “we exploit” performs collective guilt, implicating both speaker and audience and inviting transformation through recognition. The use of the present tense—“the reality is,” “we exploit”—frames animal suffering as ongoing and immediate, not relegated to a distant past or hypothetical future. This compresses the time axis (Cap, 2013a), compelling the reader to recognize the urgency of the issue. The temporal immediacy activates moral discomfort and invites reflection on current practices. The language bridges the emotional and moral distance between the audience (IDC) and the animals (ODC). By humanizing the animals (“personality,” “a story,” “a will to live”), the speaker symbolically collapses the distance between humans and non-humans, encouraging the audience to recognize shared traits and moral status. This collapse of distance is a spatial strategy (Cap, 2008), moving the ODC closer to the IDC’s ethical concern.

B. Theme 2. Guilt and Moral Complicity

This theme focuses on how the posts invoke self-reflection and ethical discomfort by highlighting contradictions between professed values and consumer behavior. Through strategic use of proximity, emotional cues, and accusatory structures, the discourse mobilizes guilt to prompt moral accountability and lifestyle change.

Post7 exemplifies a discursive defense and reframing of ideological identity (IDC). The speaker performs emotion through calm assertion and direct eye contact, while simultaneously countering ODC framings (oppositional discourse constructions) that label veganism as “classist.” The use of first-person plural pronoun “we” is a clear spatial deictic that constructs a collective identity (IDC) and delineates in-group values. While the emotional intensity is controlled, the sentence invokes social exclusion, which frames the vegan subject as unjustly marginalized. This is a move of *proximal victimhood*—a common strategy in proximization theory—where the ideological threat (ODC) (i.e., mainstream discourse that criticizes veganism) is symbolically brought close to the speaker’s in-group. The affective goal here is to evoke empathy and solidarity, not guilt or fear, shifting the emotional terrain to one of defensive compassion. The present-tense “get labelled” implies a current, ongoing ideological conflict, suggesting that the threat (i.e., social misrepresentation) is actively occurring and must be addressed now. Moreover, the passive construction

“get labelled” implies a lack of control or agency over public narratives, intensifying emotional stakes. Vegan audiences are positioned as victims of misjudgment, creating a shared emotional experience of being *unfairly targeted*. Non-vegan viewers may feel invited to reconsider their judgments.

Post 8 features a moral appeal that invites the audience to evaluate the consistency between their professed values and their actions regarding animals. The post opens with a rhetorical question: “*What are our values and do our actions actually contradict them?*” This framing uses the inclusive deictic pronoun “our” to draw the audience into the Inside Deictic Center (IDC), aligning the speaker and reader in a shared moral community. The spatial dimension of proximization is therefore internalized rather than externalized—the conflict is not with a foreign outgroup but within the self, between one’s ethical ideals and one’s lived behavior. Unlike traditional proximization which often locates danger externally (e.g., immigrants, terrorists, outsiders), this post reorients the threat inward, portraying cognitive dissonance as a destabilizing ideological force encroaching on the self’s integrity.

Temporally, the post is rooted in the present, as seen in phrases like “do our actions contradict” and “do we say one thing while practicing another.” These real-time inquiries elicit immediate introspection and convey urgency. The conditional phrase “if the answer is yes...” marks a critical moment of ideological reckoning, leading to the imperative conclusion: “*be vegan*.” This future-directed resolution constructs a moral timeline in which the present contradiction must give way to future consistency through lifestyle change. Thus, the temporal axis functions to compress the gap between reflection and ethical action.

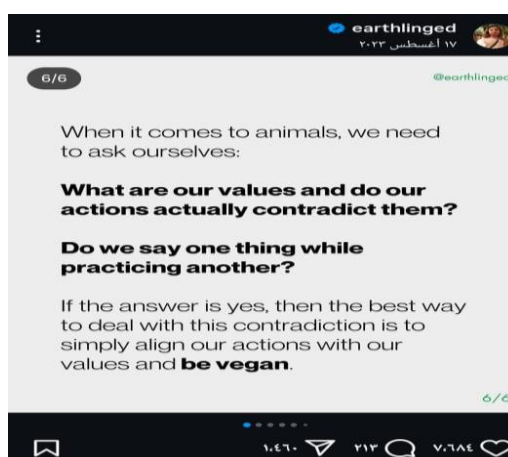
The axiological axis of the post is sharply delineated. On one side are values like honesty, compassion, and ethical coherence (associated with the IDC). On the other side lies hypocrisy, contradiction, and moral compromise (implicitly attributed to the current state of non-veganism). Veganism is framed not merely as a diet but as the only ideologically coherent position—a necessary action to bridge the gap between values and practice. By anchoring the “correct” action in a set of desirable and widely accepted values, the post constructs a moral binary in which failing to act (i.e., not going vegan) becomes an ethical failing.

From the perspective of Affect Theory, the emotional performance is subtle but potent. Rather than expressing anger or shame explicitly, the speaker adopts a tone of moral seriousness and rational appeal. The use of rhetorical questions functions to provoke internal discomfort, a form of emotional labor that the audience is invited to perform themselves. The discomfort is not imposed but *elicited* through identification with the speaker’s values. The affective positioning of the audience is therefore one of moral responsibility—they are not accused, but they are held accountable.

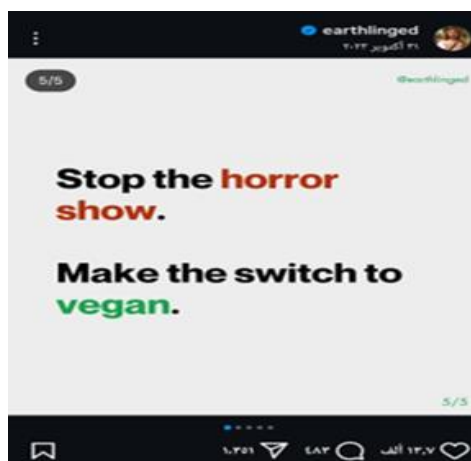
The post’s use of modality and framing devices—such as the repeated use of second-person plural deictics (“we,” “our”), the rhetorical format, and the assertive solution (“be vegan”)—serves to mobilize emotion while maintaining a veneer of logical neutrality. The emotional consequence is a gentle, yet firm push toward ethical transformation. In this way, Post 8 exemplifies how digital vegan activism leverages proximization and affective framing not through alarmism, but through rational moral alignment that demands both emotional and ideological self-reckoning.



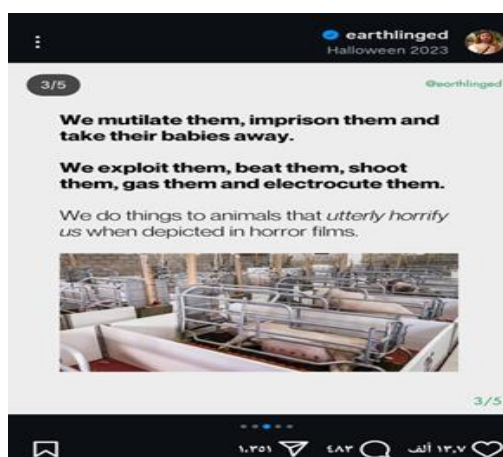
Post 7



Post 8



Post 9



post 10

Post 9 utilizes a strong metaphorical frame through the phrase “*horror show*,” which is not just a vivid image but a powerful rhetorical device drawing from the cultural semantics of terror and emotional repulsion. The use of the metaphor places the viewer in an emotionally heightened scene of violence, aligning with the affective framing strategies in Affect Theory. By invoking “horror,” the speaker positions the audience to experience disgust, fear, and urgency. Axiologically, this post sets up a clear moral contrast: “horror” (negative, morally reprehensible) vs. “vegan” (positive, morally aligned). The noun phrase “the horror show” functions as a nominalization that compresses complex systemic violence into a compact, affect-laden image. “Make the switch to vegan” offers a resolution, positioning veganism as a moral and emotionally responsible choice, reinforcing in-group (IDC) values of compassion and non-violence, while the *horror* signifies the ODC threat (those complicit in cruelty).

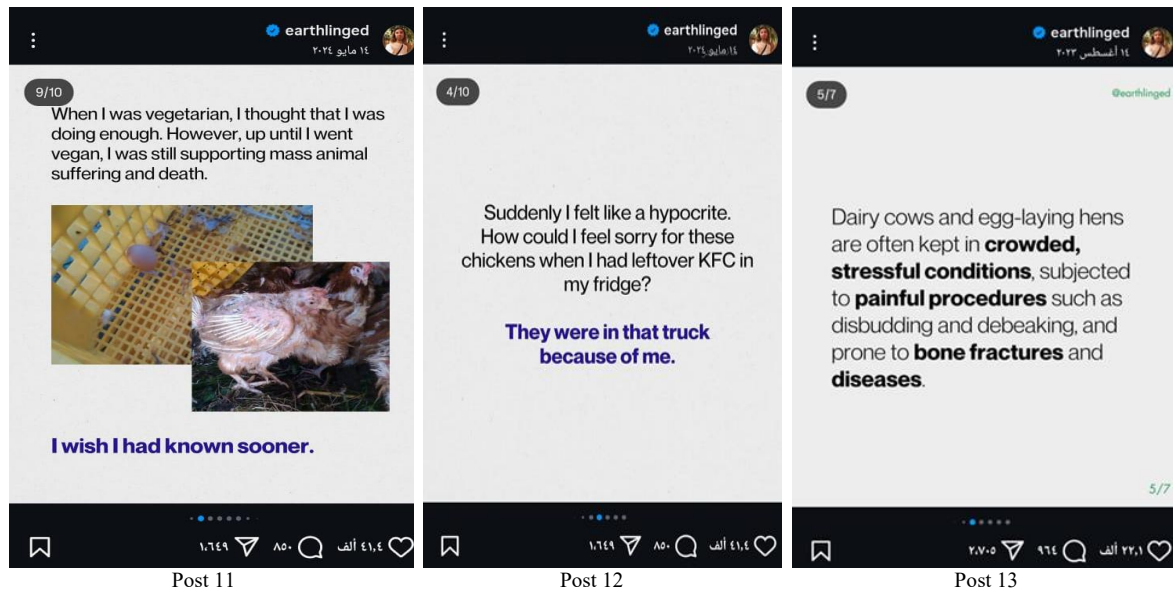
This post uses graphic enumeration and violent action verbs—“mutilate,” “imprison,” “beat,” “electrocute”—to construct a scene of intense brutality, grounding it in specific, repeated present-tense actions that communicate both immediacy and normativity. The verbs are high-agency, with “we” as subject, which not only signals accountability but also directly implicates the audience. The spatial axis brings the violence “here”—it’s not distant or abstract; it is happening in legal, normalized spaces, such as farms or factories, metaphorically “next door.” This evokes a moral shock, aligning with Affect Theory’s focus on how emotions structure attention and response.

Temporally, the use of present simple tense (“We mutilate...”) suggests ongoing, systemic violence, not something in the past or a distant future—further collapsing the temporal gap between act and consequence. The axiological axis is starkly divided: the actors (consumers and producers) are the agents of violence, while the victims are animals who suffer in ways that would be horrifying “when depicted in horror films.” This comparison positions the events within a moral contradiction—the cognitive dissonance that something we accept in real life would be intolerable as fiction. Here, metaphor and normative inversion drive the affective force: cruelty becomes normalized, and the moral standard is compared against fictional thresholds of tolerance, which paradoxically seem higher than for real-life treatment of animals.

The emotional appeal is deepened through horror, guilt, and complicity, framing veganism as not just an ethical alternative but a necessary escape from participating in what is framed as cultural psychopathy. The juxtaposition of “we do things to animals...” with the emotional intensity of “utterly horrify us” triggers self-reflection and moral urgency, fulfilling the affective aim of repositioning the audience emotionally. Affectively, this scene positions the audience in a state of shock, intended to provoke moral outrage and emotional rupture. The use of “utterly horrify us” transforms the private experience of horror into a shared emotional standard, which is key in Affect Theory’s focus on collective emotions (Wetherell, 2012).

C. Theme 3. Cognitive Dissonance and Ethical Discomfort

This theme explores how posts expose the internal conflict between individuals’ values and their actions, foregrounding emotional tension as a catalyst for change. By dramatizing moments of realization and discomfort, the discourse constructs a moral rupture that invites the audience to resolve dissonance through ethical transformation.



Post 11

Post 12

Post 13

Post 11 exemplifies temporal deictics ("up until I went vegan"), which mark a movement from past ignorance to present moral awareness—shifting the ideological conflict from distance (ODC – passive complicity) to proximity (IDC – moral realization). The verb phrase "was still supporting" nominalizes harm, embedding the speaker's indirect involvement as structurally passive yet ideologically complicit. This indicates proximal ideological danger, moving the ODC ("passive vegetarians") closer to the threat zone of mass suffering. There is a verb of motion implied in the ideological shift ("went vegan") showing mental/spatial transition away from complicity. Noun phrases like "mass animal suffering and death" construct the ideological threat, while "I wish I had known sooner" places the speaker as a remorseful, reformed IDC voice.

Emotion here is performed through personal regret and remorse, framing veganism as a moral epiphany. The affective language "I thought I was doing enough" evokes dissonance, while "I wish I had known sooner" performs mourning for past ignorance. This aligns with norms of ethical self-awareness, expecting moral consistency. The audience is positioned to feel guilt and moral urgency—not merely empathy for animals but a deep reflection on their own misaligned values and complicity. The speaker reflects on a past moment of perceived moral adequacy—being vegetarian—juxtaposed with a later realization in the present that even this "lesser evil" contributed to animal suffering and death. This use of reflective temporal framing (from "thought" to "was still supporting") shifts the viewer's moral awareness from the past to the imperative of present action. While the spatial setting is not explicitly marked, the imagery of chickens in crates and the mention of mass suffering conjures a distant yet accessible space where industrialized violence is concealed from daily life. Yet, this spatial boundary collapses as the speaker's personal journey bridges the distant slaughterhouses and their own plate.

Post 12 uses an immediate present ("suddenly I felt") that suggests a jarring confrontation between the speaker's past apathy and an emerging moral clarity. The temporal marker "suddenly" implies a rupture in habitual thinking. The "truck" becomes a loaded metaphor for the unseen spaces of animal suffering. The speaker spatially aligns themselves with the perpetrators through the phrase "because of me", collapsing any comforting distance between consumer and victim. It is also a case of ideological proximization. The pronoun "they" (ODC = the chickens) and the spatial phrase "in that truck" uses spatial deictics to bring distant suffering into the speaker's moral and physical world. The modal past "could" in "How could I feel sorry..." reveals cognitive dissonance, suggesting an internal ideological conflict. The explicit self-blame in "because of me" erases the distance between the action and its consequence, collapsing the ODC-constructed "normal consumption" into an IDC recognition of causality. This shift from *observer* to *cause* moves the ideological threat from an external to internal agent. Emotion is performed as self-directed guilt. The narrative creates a strong affective arc—from dissonance to emotional collapse. The audience is expected to identify with this discomfort, producing a shared moral responsibility. The use of "I felt like a hypocrite" primes viewers to examine their own behaviors under the light of ethical alignment, encouraging norm-driven emotional reevaluation. This post aligns affectively with guilt, regret, and moral self-interrogation.

Post 13 constructs nominalizations of violence—"painful procedures," "crowded conditions," "bone fractures"—to background human agency and foreground the resultant suffering. This indirectness paradoxically amplifies ideological threat by framing systemic abuse as normalized. There's no direct perpetrator, which intensifies the horror through passive proximization—it's happening now, widely, and invisibly. Adjectives like "stressful" and "painful" invoke an embodied experience, aligning with verbal proximization of the other's suffering. The lack of spatial or temporal distancing implies immediacy and normalization of cruelty. Emotion here is not overtly performed but elicited through graphic lexical choice. The repetition of distressing adjectives aims to trigger disgust, shock, and sorrow in the audience. By emphasizing conditions over direct violence, the post appeals to ethical sensibilities about care, vulnerability, and

systemic neglect—evoking compassion as well as moral urgency. The linguistic strategy is one of factual affect, using impersonal structures to enhance the emotional weight of the content. The suffering described—“are often kept,” “subjected to,” “prone to”—is framed as ongoing and habitual, not incidental. This constant present makes the crisis urgent and unresolved, pressing upon the reader’s current ethical position. Though farms are not physically visible to most readers, the post’s descriptive intensity brings these sites of violence metaphorically “closer”. The affective weight of “crowded,” “painful procedures,” and “bone fractures” creates a sensory landscape that overcomes the physical distance.

VI. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates how digital vegan activism on Instagram mobilizes affective discourse and proximization strategies to construct moral urgency and emotional engagement. Drawing on Cap’s (2013a) tri-axial proximization model and Affect Theory (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2012), the analysis shows how ideological, spatial, and temporal distances are collapsed to reposition audiences as morally implicated rather than passive observers.

Spatial proximization emerges prominently through deictic expressions such as “our planet” and “in that truck,” which symbolically bring distant suffering into the audience’s moral and perceptual space. By framing systemic violence as present and familiar, the captions dissolve physical and ideological distance. Posts like 3, 6, and 13 make strategic use of nominalizations (“mutilation,” “painful procedures”) that conceal agency yet heighten threat perception by normalizing cruelty, thereby reinforcing the urgency of ethical re-evaluation.

Temporal proximization functions by compressing past and future harm into the immediate present. Verbs such as “is decimating” or “we exploit” suggest ongoing harm requiring immediate redress. Reflective expressions in Posts 11 and 12—like “I wish I had known sooner”—create affective timelines that frame veganism as the endpoint of moral evolution. These devices amplify a sense of ethical urgency by aligning present inaction with complicity.

Axiological proximization is particularly central. The use of moral binaries such as “compassion vs. cruelty” or “vegan vs. horror” dramatizes ideological conflict between in-group values (IDC) and out-group norms (ODC). These binaries are affectively loaded and strategically employed to guide emotional alignment. The audience is prompted to adopt a morally coherent identity by aligning with IDC values and rejecting normalized cruelty.

Affect is not just represented but circulated. Emotions such as guilt, shame, empathy, and horror function as organizing forces within the discourse, shaping how readers relate to animals and their own actions. The posts foster emotional investment through linguistic carriers like second-person address, metaphors, and inclusive pronouns. Moreover, the emotional mapping of themes shows that affective registers are purposefully distributed. Posts under *compassion* and *empathy* promote affiliative identification with animals. Those addressing *guilt* and *moral complicity* elicit discomfort and moral reflection. Posts themed around *cognitive dissonance* invoke introspection and challenge perceived moral coherence. This progression from affective engagement to ethical transformation highlights how digital vegan activism uses proximization and affect to move audiences from awareness to accountability.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored how affect and proximization are co-articulated in digital vegan activism, offering new insights into how ideological persuasion operates in visual-social media contexts. The integration of Proximization Theory with Affect Theory enabled a nuanced examination of how spatial, temporal, and axiological elements interact with emotional discourse to produce moral urgency and encourage behavioral change.

Through strategic deictics, metaphorical framings, and emotionally charged lexicon, Instagram posts reconfigure animal suffering from a distant or abstract phenomenon into a proximate, ethically loaded crisis. The data shows that affect is not only a byproduct of persuasion but a structuring force—carefully curated to reposition the viewer within a shared moral framework. This affective positioning often blurs the lines between information and emotion, amplifying the ethical imperative toward veganism.

This study contributes to existing literature by applying Cap’s Proximization Theory outside of political or health discourse, demonstrating its utility in examining environmental, ethical, and social justice communication. It also shows how emotion is deployed as a tool of ideological realignment. Future research could expand this analysis by examining how audience responses (likes, comments, shares) reflect or resist these affective proximizations, offering a fuller picture of discursive influence in digital activism.

Future research may expand the scope of this study in multiple ways. One important aspect involves examining audience responses—such as comments, shares, and engagement patterns—to determine how viewers accept, negotiate, or resist affective proximizations. Another direction is to compare proximization axes across different activists, or platforms (e.g., climate justice, public health, feminist activism) to identify whether similar emotional and proximization strategies recur or whether they are confined to specific context.

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The Impact of Linguistic Challenges on Cross-Cultural Adjustment of International Students in a Thai University Studying Context

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Abstract—This study examines the linguistic challenges encountered by international students in Thai higher education, with a particular focus on how these challenges impact their academic success and psychological well-being. A survey of 204 international students revealed that 72% experience significant anxiety during English interactions, which leads to social isolation and a diminished sense of belonging, as 68% struggle to connect with peers. The research identifies that language barriers hinder participation in extracurricular activities, contributing to feelings of alienation. Conversely, effective language support systems were found to enhance academic outcomes and reduce anxiety among students, with 78% reporting improved comprehension and 70% feeling more secure in communication. This study emphasizes the importance of comprehensive language support in facilitating the integration process, mitigating psychological distress, and fostering social connections, ultimately enhancing the overall experience of international students in Thailand. Recommendations for targeted interventions and support mechanisms are proposed to enhance linguistic competence and foster a more inclusive academic environment.

Index Terms—linguistic challenges, cross-cultural adjustment, international students, Thai university

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the linguistic challenges faced by international students—an essential yet often neglected aspect of cross-cultural adaptation, particularly within Thai higher education contexts. The rising number of international students in Thailand, driven by comparatively affordable tuition and living costs, highlights the growing need to better understand their acculturation experiences (Chaiyasat, 2020). While student mobility research has traditionally emphasized East-to-West migration patterns, the increasing presence of American students in Thailand signals a shift that requires deeper examination of cultural adjustment processes in non-Western academic environments (Rybo-LoPresti & Rhein, 2021). This study investigates the academic difficulties international students encounter due to cultural differences, particularly those related to English language proficiency, which remains central to both academic engagement and social participation (Lugman, 2022; Andrade, 2009). Proficiency in the host language or in the lingua franca of instruction is widely recognized as a key determinant of academic success and smooth adaptation (Wilczewski & Alon, 2022). Yet, despite strong motivation and effort, many international students continue to face linguistic barriers that hinder their academic development and affect their overall well-being (Diaz & Iqbal, 2024). These barriers may include difficulties in understanding academic texts, participating in class discussions, or engaging socially—tasks that are critical for successful transition and integration into a new academic culture (Zakaria et al., 2024). As such, linguistic challenges can substantially influence international students' acculturation process and academic outcomes, reinforcing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences in diverse educational settings (Alshenqeeti, 2016). More specifically, this study explores how linguistic barriers contribute to psychological distress and restrict social integration among international students in Thai universities (Gatwiri, 2015). Beyond academic contexts, these challenges often extend into daily life, where unfamiliar cultural and linguistic norms can intensify stress and foster feelings of isolation (Wu et al., 2015; Gatwiri, 2015). Over time, these difficulties may impede successful adaptation, potentially undermining academic performance and overall well-being (Lai et al., 2023).

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For example, feelings of homesickness, culture shock, and financial strain are often intensified by communication barriers, which in turn heighten acculturative stress and contribute to social exclusion among international students (Mutongoza & Olawale, 2023; Parray et al., 2020). Language and communication challenges are consistently identified as some of the most significant obstacles during international students' adjustment process—often outweighing academic concerns (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016). Limited proficiency in the host language and difficulties communicating with local students can impede academic progress and negatively affect well-being (Wilczewski & Alon, 2022).

Difficulties in expressing ideas clearly due to linguistic barriers can lead to a range of academic and social challenges, ultimately affecting students' performance and interpersonal engagement (Ennin & Manariyo, 2023). These experiences may also erode self-confidence and amplify feelings of loneliness, particularly when students find it difficult to build meaningful relationships with domestic peers (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2022). Such barriers are especially critical, as inadequate language proficiency has been linked to academic disengagement and reduced overall life satisfaction among international students (Oduwaye et al., 2023).

Low proficiency in English has been consistently linked to increased cultural stress, academic challenges, and negative emotional responses among international students, largely due to the language's central role in information processing and cognitive regulation (Gatwiri, 2015). As a result, students may experience heightened anxiety and social withdrawal, which can impede their integration into new academic and social settings (Lim & Vighnarajah, 2018). Language and cultural adjustment difficulties also contribute significantly to psychological distress, sometimes manifesting in obsessive-compulsive tendencies marked by persistent worry, rumination, and perfectionism (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2007).

The combined effects of linguistic and cultural barriers can influence many aspects of daily life, including housing, administrative processes, and academic responsibilities, progressively diminishing students' confidence—especially in cases where peer or institutional support is limited (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2022). These interconnected challenges highlight the need for targeted support initiatives that address both linguistic competencies and the broader psychosocial dimensions of international student adjustment (Dombou et al., 2023).

This study aims to examine in depth the linguistic challenges experienced by international students in Thai higher education and to assess how these challenges influence both academic integration and psychological well-being. Specifically, it explores how language barriers may contribute to anxiety, isolation, and a diminished sense of belonging among international students (Lari et al., 2025; Qian & Yu, 2023). The study also seeks to identify effective strategies and institutional interventions that can help reduce these challenges and promote a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. A secondary goal is to evaluate whether strengthened language support mechanisms can improve academic performance while also enhancing mental health resilience and overall adjustment among international students (Elkhodr et al., 2024). The findings of this research are expected to inform targeted policy development and intervention design aimed at improving international student experiences in non-Western academic contexts. In doing so, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on how to better support international students' holistic development, well-being, and academic success (Hofhuis et al., 2023; Wilczewski & Alon, 2022).

Globally, the growing mobility of students pursuing higher education has positioned internationalization as a defining feature of the modern academic landscape, with millions of students seeking educational opportunities abroad each year (Razgulin et al., 2023). By 2020, more than 6.3 million international students were enrolled in universities worldwide, reflecting a substantial expansion of global higher education mobility since the late 1980s (Maharaj et al., 2024). This rapid growth highlights the need for universities to better address the unique challenges encountered by international students, particularly those affecting academic engagement and social integration (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2022).

As this trend continues, host institutions carry increasing responsibility to cultivate environments that support international students' learning and well-being while facilitating navigation of cultural and linguistic differences (Ashton-Hay et al., 2016). Nevertheless, although international academic exchange offers numerous benefits, language barriers remain a persistent challenge that can hinder successful integration and limit opportunities for forming multicultural friendships and collaborative networks (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2022).

This research examines the influence of foreign language anxiety on the academic success of international students in Thai higher education and aims to identify strategies that enhance language proficiency while reducing communication barriers (Han et al., 2022). The study hypothesizes that higher levels of foreign language anxiety are negatively associated with academic performance and social integration among international students in Thailand, and that targeted interventions can lessen these effects. The paper begins with a review of existing literature on foreign language anxiety and its implications for academic achievement and social adjustment. This is followed by an analysis of empirical data collected from international students enrolled in Thai universities to evaluate the proposed hypothesis. Based on the findings, the paper proposes evidence-based recommendations for pedagogical practices and institutional support structures designed to reduce language-related anxiety and promote a more inclusive academic environment for international learners. Additionally, this study distinguishes foreign language anxiety from general anxiety, emphasizing its unique characteristics within the language learning context (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Cross-Cultural Adjustment: The U-Shaped Curve Model

Research on stress, coping strategies, and the psychological adjustment of international students gained considerable scholarly attention during the 1950s and 1960s (Chaiyasat, 2020). Within the framework of acculturation theory, the adaptation process experienced by individuals is commonly divided into four sequential stages: honeymoon, crisis or culture shock, recovery, and adjustment. Drawing upon this framework, Lysgaard (1955) introduced the well-known U-shaped curve model of cross-cultural adjustment. In this model, time is represented on the horizontal axis, whereas levels of happiness or satisfaction are positioned on the vertical axis. The process begins with a period of excitement and optimism as individuals encounter a new cultural environment, often referred to as the honeymoon stage. This initial enthusiasm is typically followed by a decline in emotional well-being during the crisis or culture shock stage, characterized by both psychological and physical difficulties. Over time, individuals gradually regain emotional stability during the recovery stage and ultimately achieve a higher degree of integration and adaptation within the host society during the adjustment or mastery stage. Despite its significant influence, Lysgaard's model has been criticized for its limited empirical support, particularly the absence of substantial qualitative evidence underpinning the framework.

Several years later, anthropologist Kalvero Oberg (1960) proposed a comparable model of cross-cultural adaptation that further developed the concept of culture shock through psychological and intercultural perspectives. This framework was later elaborated upon by Rhein (2018), who provided a more comprehensive interpretation and justification for each stage of the adaptation process. According to Rhein, the honeymoon stage is marked by enthusiasm, fascination, and feelings of excitement toward the host culture. In contrast, the disenchantment stage involves various psychological challenges, including anxiety, fear, anger, homesickness, and helplessness, accompanied by physical symptoms such as insomnia, overeating, excessive drinking, and weight gain (Chaiyasat, 2020).

The recovery stage emerges when individuals begin to feel more comfortable with the new cultural environment, including its language, values, and social practices. Eventually, during the mastery stage, individuals achieve greater cultural competence and become more fully integrated into the host community. Rhein's (2018) explanation of the four stages of cross-cultural adjustment aligns closely with the earlier conceptualizations proposed by Lysgaard (1955) and Oberg (1960). Collectively, these models conceptualize cross-cultural adaptation as a dynamic process represented through the U-shaped curve of adjustment, as illustrated in Figure 1.

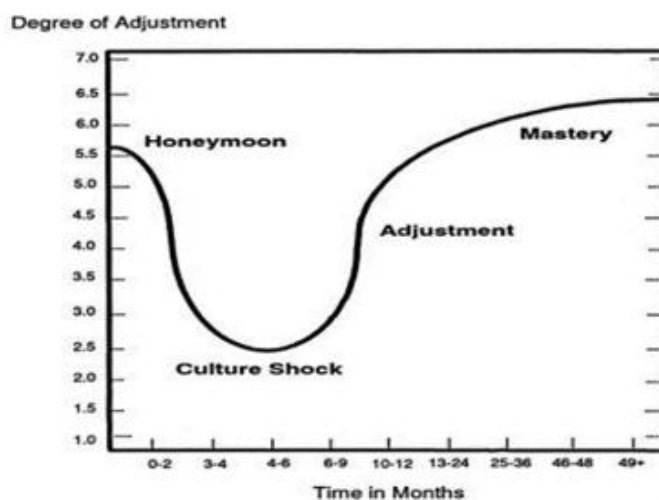


Figure 1. U-Shaped Curve of Cross-Cultural Adjustment as Described by Oberg (1960)

B. The Affect-Behavior-Cognition (ABC) Model

An alternative perspective on cross-cultural adaptation was introduced by Ward and Kennedy (2001) through the development of the ABC model, which was designed to explain the transitional experiences of individuals in intercultural settings. Compared with conventional interpretations of culture shock, this framework is considered to establish a stronger connection with issues related to psychological distress and mental health (Chaiyasat, 2020). Conceptually, the model was grounded in John W. Berry's theory of acculturation developed during the 1980s (Srisakda, 2018). Berry's framework explains acculturation as a process through which individuals negotiate the relationship between their cultural identity of origin and the culture of the host society. Within this model, four principal acculturation strategies are identified: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2011). These strategies subsequently form a classification of four social groups, namely integrated, separated, assimilated, and marginalized individuals (Chaiyasat, 2020).

Building upon this theoretical foundation, Ward and Kennedy (2001) refined Berry's acculturation theory by incorporating three key dimensions derived from their Affect-Behavior-Cognition (ABC) framework. These dimensions

consist of stress and coping, cultural learning, and social identification. Within the ABC perspective, stress and coping are associated with the affective dimension, cultural learning is linked to behavioral adaptation, and social identification corresponds to the cognitive dimension of cross-cultural adjustment. Through the integration of these concepts, the ABC model offers a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological, behavioral, and cognitive processes involved in intercultural adaptation (Chaiyasat, 2020).

C. Anxiety

For instance, the theoretical underpinnings for understanding foreign language anxiety often draw from broader psychological theories of anxiety, while simultaneously acknowledging the unique linguistic and cultural components that distinguish FLA from general anxiety (Boltayevich et al., 2025). Specifically, this theoretical framework will integrate concepts such as Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale to operationalize anxiety within a language learning context, alongside theories of identity formation and acculturation to understand the broader impact on international students (Paneerselvam & Yamat, 2021; Almashour, 2024). This holistic approach allows for a comprehensive examination of how linguistic insecurity, fear of negative evaluation, and communication apprehension manifest in foreign language learners (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025). It also incorporates insights from studies that investigate the perceived causes of anxiety and its coping mechanisms among students, particularly in oral presentation contexts (Docena et al., 2023; Rafieyan, 2016). Furthermore, this section delves into self-determination theory, exploring how basic psychological needs and L2 motivation influence the learner's emotional experience and engagement in language learning (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021). Moreover, a detailed exploration of idiodynamic approaches can illuminate the real-time fluctuations of anxiety and enjoyment during language tasks, offering a granular understanding of affective states (Aubrey, 2022; Gregersen et al., 2014).

D. Language Acquisition

This theory examines how individuals acquire and develop proficiency in a second or foreign language, considering both cognitive and socio-affective factors. It encompasses various perspectives, from Krashen's input hypothesis to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, each offering insights into the complex processes involved in mastering a new linguistic system. These theories are crucial for understanding how emotional factors, such as anxiety, can impede or facilitate the acquisition process (Haroud et al., 2025). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development highlights the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in language learning, suggesting that anxiety can disrupt this crucial guided engagement, thereby hindering skill development (Yuan, 2025). Building on these frameworks, Horwitz et al. specifically identified communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety as distinct categories of foreign language anxiety that directly impede the development of linguistic skills across speaking, listening, reading, and writing domains (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025). This perspective underscores the necessity of considering affective variables in pedagogical approaches, as heightened anxiety can significantly compromise a learner's ability to process linguistic input and produce output effectively (Sari, 2020). The "affective filter" hypothesis further posits that high anxiety levels can block comprehensible input, thereby limiting language acquisition (Jing-ping, 2021).

E. Acculturation

This theory illuminates how international students navigate the linguistic and cultural demands of a new academic setting, often experiencing a complex interplay of emotions that impact their language learning journey (Byrd & Abrams, 2022). Specifically, it examines how cultural stress, discrimination, and a sense of belonging or alienation can exacerbate or mitigate foreign language anxiety, affecting overall academic performance and well-being (Shao et al., 2020). The theoretical background thus integrates these three interconnected domains—anxiety, language acquisition, and acculturation—to provide a robust framework for investigating the multifaceted challenges encountered by international students in higher education. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how these factors collectively shape the lived experiences and academic trajectories of this student demographic. Anxiety, characterized by feelings of tension and apprehension, is a common phenomenon among students that can significantly impact their learning processes (Lin, 2022). While a moderate degree of anxiety can enhance motivation and performance, excessive levels are detrimental to learning outcomes across various skills (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025). In the context of language acquisition, anxiety is specifically associated with poorer proficiency and actively hinders the development and improvement of language skills (Kim et al., 2025). This type of anxiety, termed Foreign Language Anxiety, is a distinct construct encompassing negative emotional reactions and worries specific to learning or using a second language (Alsaloili & Tale, 2022). It is a prevalent issue among foreign language learners since the 1970s, manifesting as a complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors tied to classroom language learning (Lin, 2022). This pervasive phenomenon can manifest as a fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test-taking anxiety, significantly impeding a student's ability to engage effectively with the target language (Ahmed, 2021). This form of anxiety can impact students across all intellectual and academic ability levels, manifesting as worry, fear, and apprehension (Wakuma, 2025). This distinct psychological phenomenon is often connected to an inability to freely communicate with native and non-native foreign language speakers, leading to adverse emotional responses such as apprehension, shame, and low self-esteem (Valieva et al., 2019). These emotional burdens can prevent learners from

engaging in communicative activities, thereby limiting opportunities for linguistic practice and development (Haroud et al., 2025).

III. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodological framework of the study, detailing the procedures and materials used to address the research questions and ensure the reproducibility of the findings. It includes a description of the research design, participant selection, data collection instruments, and analytical procedures employed to meet the study's objectives (Shanmugam & Jeevarathinam, 2023). This study uses a mixed method. This method was used to answer the following research questions (1) Language Barriers Contribute to Feelings of Anxiety, Isolation, and Reduced Sense of Belonging Among International Students, and (2) Language Support Systems to Enhance Academic Outcomes and Strengthen the Mental Resilience of International Students, thereby Promoting a More Conducive Learning Environment. This method consists of two steps. First, it included collecting qualitative data through in-depth interviews to understand the subjective experiences of international students related to language barriers and their impact on their mental resilience. Second, it included quantitative data collection through a standardized survey to measure the level of anxiety, isolation, and sense of belonging (Nazir, 2024). This mixed-method approach enables data integration between rich qualitative data and measurable quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Park et al., 2024). The mixed method enables the researcher to integrate qualitative and quantitative data, providing a richer and in-depth understanding compared to only using one (Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023). This approach also increases the validity and reliability of the research findings by providing various perspectives that complement each other (Suharyanti et al., 2018, p. 284).

The subjects of this study were foreign students at Walailak University in 2024. The data on the research subjects are presented in the following table.

TABLE 1
SUBJECTS OF STUDY

No	Country	Number of people in the program			Total
		Bachelor's	Masters's	Doctor	
1	Cambodia	1	0	4	5
2	Kenya	0	1	2	3
3	Sierra Leone	0	0	1	1
4	Zambia	0	1	0	1
5	Somalia	0	1	0	1
6	Timor-Leste	0	1	0	1
7	Tanzania	0	0	1	1
8	Nepal	0	0	1	1
9	Nigeria	0	0	1	1
10	Bangladesh	0	0	2	2
11	Pakistan	0	1	4	5
12	Myanmar	16	2	2	20
13	Philippines	3	3	0	6
14	Bhutan	0	2	0	2
15	Uganda	0	0	1	1
16	Vietnam	2	1	4	7
17	Sri Lanka	0	0	1	1
18	Indonesia	3	0	1	4
19	Afghanistan	0	0	1	1
20	Egypt	0	0	1	1
21	Ethiopia	0	0	3	3
22	Russia	1	0	0	1
23	Bahrain	1	0	0	1
24	Zimbabwe	1	0	0	1
25	United States of America	1	0	0	1
26	India	2	0	0	2
27	Iran	0	0	1	1
28	China	18	37	74	129
Total		49	50	105	204

The data were collected through interviews and surveys. The instruments used to collect the data were (1) an interview guide and (2) a survey. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Language Barriers Contribute to Feelings of Anxiety, Isolation, and Reduced Sense of Belonging Among International Students

The findings of this study indicate that language barriers contribute to anxiety, isolation, and a sense of belonging in international students, which can be understood through the lenses of language anxiety, social isolation, sense of belonging, and coping strategies.

In terms of language anxiety, the survey results from 204 international students revealed that 72% of respondents reported significant anxiety when interacting in English, both inside and outside the classroom. This anxiety primarily manifests in public speaking contexts and during group discussions, where some students feel pressured due to their inability to express themselves effectively. Students with lower English proficiency tend to experience higher levels of anxiety, which affects their willingness to engage in social interactions.

Furthermore, the findings revealed a strong connection between language barriers and social isolation among international students. Approximately 68% of respondents reported experiencing difficulties when attempting to socialize with peers and local students, which subsequently contributed to feelings of alienation from the broader campus environment. Many participants indicated that they spent more time alone and felt less integrated into campus life. This sense of isolation was further reinforced by challenges in understanding everyday conversations and participating in extracurricular or informal activities beyond classroom settings. Such difficulties suggest that linguistic limitations not only hinder academic engagement but also impede the development of meaningful social relationships, which are essential for psychological well-being and successful cultural adaptation.

In relation to the sense of belonging, the findings indicate that 65% of respondents reported feeling only minimally connected to their university community. Language barriers were identified as a key factor contributing to this diminished affiliation, as many students expressed difficulty engaging in extracurricular activities and student organizations that primarily operate in English. When asked about participation in campus initiatives, a significant portion of students reported choosing not to participate due to fears of misunderstanding or being judged by their peers. Consequently, these factors collectively contribute to reduced involvement in university life and weaken students' overall sense of belonging within the campus environment.

Additionally, regarding coping strategies, the findings indicate that despite experiencing language-related challenges, some students actively developed mechanisms to manage their anxiety and social isolation. Approximately 54% of respondents reported the use of technology—such as language-learning applications, translation tools, and social media platforms—to enhance their language proficiency and build new social networks. This suggests that, while linguistic and cultural barriers persist, students demonstrate resilience and agency in adapting to an unfamiliar academic and cultural environment.

Overall, the findings illustrate that language barriers at Walailak University significantly affect international students' emotional well-being and engagement, particularly contributing to elevated anxiety, feelings of isolation, and a diminished sense of belonging. These outcomes highlight the need for institutional and pedagogical interventions aimed at fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Strengthening communication support systems, developing structured language assistance programs, and enhancing opportunities for intercultural interaction may reduce anxiety, facilitate smoother adjustment, and ultimately improve the academic and social experience of international students studying in Thailand.

B. Language Support Systems to Enhance Academic Outcomes and Strengthen the Mental Resilience of International Students, Thereby Promoting a More Conducive Learning Environment

The findings further reveal a positive correlation between structured language support systems and improved academic performance among international students. Approximately 78% of respondents who participated in language support initiatives—such as tutoring, mentoring, and skill-building workshops—reported that these programs significantly enhanced their understanding of course content. Many respondents specifically noted measurable improvements in their English language proficiency, particularly in reading and writing, which subsequently contributed to higher academic achievement. Moreover, the availability of English tutors and intensive language training played a crucial role in increasing students' confidence and enabling more active participation in classroom discussions and academic activities. These outcomes suggest that well-implemented institutional support mechanisms can mitigate language-related challenges and foster a more equitable learning environment for international students.

Furthermore, in relation to mental resilience, the study found that effective language support systems also contribute positively to the psychological well-being of international students. Approximately 70% of respondents reported that access to language support programs helped reduce anxiety and stress associated with academic communication. These initiatives provided a greater sense of confidence and security when engaging in coursework, which is essential for maintaining emotional stability. Several students also indicated that having opportunities to participate in discussion groups and speaking practice sessions made them feel more comfortable in classroom settings. These supportive environments not only alleviated feelings of alienation but also strengthened students' social networks, thereby enhancing their overall sense of community and belonging on campus.

In terms of the overall learning environment, the implementation of enhanced language support systems contributed significantly to creating a more conducive and supportive academic atmosphere. Approximately 75% of respondents reported feeling more motivated to engage in coursework and participate in academic discussions when such support was available. Moreover, language support initiatives improved interpersonal interactions between international and local students. Peer mentoring programs, in particular, played an important role in strengthening social relationships and fostering meaningful engagement within the campus community. As a result, these interventions helped cultivate a more inclusive and collaborative educational setting, benefiting not only international students but the broader student population as well.

Additionally, the findings indicate that participation in extracurricular activities, when paired with language support, plays a significant role in strengthening students' self-confidence and resilience in facing both academic and non-academic challenges. Approximately 65% of respondents reported that involvement in campus activities—facilitated by language support—helped reduce stress levels and increased their motivation to learn. Access to various programs, such as speaking workshops, cultural events, and social engagement activities, enabled international students to feel more integrated and empowered within the university environment.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the enhanced language support system at Walailak University not only improves academic outcomes but also contributes to greater psychological resilience among international students. By fostering a more supportive and inclusive learning environment, language support initiatives help students feel more confident, connected, and capable of succeeding in both academic and social domains. These findings highlight the importance of developing comprehensive language support strategies as a key component in promoting international student success within a globalized university context.

The findings of this study emphasize the pivotal role of English language proficiency in reducing cultural stress, academic difficulties, and negative emotional responses among international students, reinforcing its centrality for effective communication and learning (Gatwiri, 2015). These results align with prior research demonstrating that language difficulties are among the most critical challenges shaping international students' psychological well-being and overall adjustment to university life (Gatwiri, 2015; Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016). Notably, communication barriers were reported as more stressful than academic workload, further highlighting their significant impact on students' adaptation and daily functioning (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016). The present study confirms that insufficient English proficiency hinders academic participation, limits social interaction, and disrupts intercultural learning, leading to increased anxiety, isolation, and reduced belonging among international students (Andrade, 2009; Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2022). These findings reinforce the need for targeted language support systems to facilitate smoother academic transitions and enhance students' overall higher education experiences (Gatwiri, 2015; Zhao & Shang, 2022; Martirosyan et al., 2015). Language barriers also contribute to negative academic attitudes, difficulties adapting to instructional styles, and decreased learning motivation, which may trigger psychological distress (Qian & Yu, 2023). Proficiency in the host language—particularly English—is therefore essential for acculturation, mental health stability, and academic success (Shen, 2023; Alshenqeeti, 2016). Host national connectedness, strengthened through language competence, has been shown to mediate the relationship between personal resources and adaptive student outcomes, improving psychological adjustment and well-being (Bethel et al., 2020). This reinforces the value of comprehensive language support programs that enhance social integration, reduce acculturative stress, and improve academic performance (Bethel et al., 2020; Parray et al., 2020). Two dominant research trajectories emerge from existing literature: the direct impact of second-language proficiency and the influence of host-country interaction on student adaptation (Wilczewski & Alon, 2022). Without a shared language, meaningful relationships between international and domestic students are difficult to establish, limiting opportunities for academic collaboration and intercultural exchange (Abdul-Rahaman et al., 2022). Strengthening linguistic competence is therefore vital for preventing isolation, homesickness, and related socio-emotional challenges (Lim & Vighnarajah, 2018; Wilczewski & Alon, 2022). As global higher education continues expanding, language, financial barriers, and social isolation remain dominant determinants of international students' well-being (Elkhodr et al., 2024). Accordingly, universities must prioritize structured language support programs—formal and informal—that foster meaningful communication, build support networks, and enhance academic engagement (Bethel et al., 2020). These interventions should form part of a broader institutional strategy aimed at strengthening acculturation and mitigating psychological risks associated with cultural transition (Gómez et al., 2014; Razgulin et al., 2023; Gebregergis & Csukonyi, 2025). Strong communication skills further enable international students to navigate unfamiliar environments, engage in intercultural dialogue, and build diverse support networks—key processes in reducing acculturative stress and fostering psychological resilience (Bozdağ, 2020; Wilczewski & Alon, 2022). Thus, language programs must be positioned not merely as academic aids, but as essential components of holistic support systems that ensure equitable access to learning and campus life (Dombou et al., 2023; Miranda & Lin, 2012). Such initiatives can reduce personal, social, and cultural loneliness while improving belonging and connection to the academic community (Girmay & Singh, 2019). In this context, effective language development shifts from a supplementary service to a foundational institutional priority necessary for student integration, well-being, and success (Arthur, 2017; Hofhuis et al., 2023). Strengthening language support can alleviate psychosocial pressures, enhance mental health outcomes, and facilitate smoother academic and social adjustment (Shen, 2023). This becomes increasingly urgent given rising mental health challenges among international students linked to sociocultural adjustment difficulties and limited support networks (Razgulin et al., 2023; Dingle et al., 2024). Evidence

further suggests that culturally responsive programming and strong support systems are among the most effective approaches in improving student resilience (Lari et al., 2025). Therefore, higher education institutions must adopt holistic support frameworks integrating academic, linguistic, and psychosocial assistance tailored to the unique needs of international learners (Martirosyan et al., 2019).

V. CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that a majority of participants (72%) reported experiencing anxiety when communicating in English, particularly in situations involving public speaking or group interactions. This increased anxiety contributed to avoidance behavior and reduced social participation, ultimately reinforcing feelings of isolation, with 68% of respondents reporting difficulty forming social relationships with peers. This suggests that language barriers contribute to feelings of anxiety, isolation, and a reduced sense of belonging among international university students in Thailand. Further findings of the study were that approximately 78% of international university students in Thailand who accessed language support services reported improved comprehension of academic material, while 70% noted significant decreases in anxiety and stress levels. These findings suggest that targeted language support systems not only improve academic performance but also provide psychological reassurance, allowing students to feel more confident in their communication skills.

Furthermore, the first conclusion of this study states that language barriers cause feelings of anxiety, isolation, and a reduced sense of belonging among international students at universities in Thailand. Based on this conclusion, it is recommended that universities in Thailand develop programs to overcome language barriers for international students in Thailand. These programs can include foreign language courses within the university and Thai language courses at the university. The second conclusion of this study is that a targeted language support system not only improves academic performance but also provides psychological peace. Therefore, it is recommended that universities in Thailand increase the number of extracurricular activities and peer mentors for international students at Thai universities.

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Exploring the Microinsult Strategy (Assumption of Criminal Status) in *12 Years a Slave* Through the Judgment System

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Abstract—Assumption of criminal status is a microinsult subcategory within racial microaggressions, explored in this study through the appraisal system of judgment to analyze its depiction in the movie *12 Years a Slave*. The research focuses on utterances containing judgment evaluations, extracted from narrative stages, including Orientation, Complication, and Resolution. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with linguistic experts and analyzed using Spradley's (2016) framework, modified by Santosa (2021), encompassing domain, taxonomy, and componential analyses. Findings indicate the prevalence of microinsults across the film's narrative stages, with specific judgments categorized into social esteem (SOC)—normality, capacity, tenacity—and social sanction (SAC)—veracity and propriety. In the Orientation stage, microinsults were minimal, with evaluations highlighting normality and propriety. The Complication stage showed significant intensification, with 27 instances, including capacity (10), tenacity (3), veracity (7), and propriety (7), reflecting heightened racial bias and prejudice. In the Resolution stage, microinsults persisted with 16 evaluations, predominantly propriety (15), suggesting moral judgment remained a focal point. Overall, 45 judgment evaluations were recorded: 2 in normality, 10 in capacity, 3 in tenacity, 7 in veracity, and 23 in propriety. These findings underscore how the assumption of criminal status is systematically embedded and reinforced through various evaluative dimensions, aligning with the narrative's portrayal of racial microaggressions. This study contributes to understanding racial microinsults in media, emphasizing how cinematic narratives perpetuate social biases through evaluative judgments.

Index Terms—racial microaggression, Appraisal Theory, Systemic Functional Linguistics, film studies, racism

I. INTRODUCTION

Racism is a structured social system in which the dominant racial group, based on an ideology of inferiority, classifies and ranks individuals into social groups known as "races". They use this power to devalue, disempower, and unfairly allocate valuable societal resources and opportunities to those defined as inferior (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Williams, 2013). Race is primarily a social construct shaped by markers such as nationality, ethnicity, phenotypic traits; all of which reflect unequal access to power and resources in society (Williams, 1997). Racism operates on multiple levels. Cultural institutions within society socialize the population to accept the inferiority of non-dominant racial groups as a truth. This belief leads to negative stereotypes and prejudices toward stigmatized racial groups, which in turn support discriminatory treatment of these groups by both individuals and social institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Williams, 2013). A key characteristic of racism is that its structure and ideology can persist within government and institutional policies, even in the absence of explicitly racially prejudiced individuals (Bailey et al., 2017).

Racism functions as a structured system that interacts with other social institutions, influencing and being influenced by them, to uphold, rationalize, and perpetuate a racial hierarchy. It has established a series of dynamic, interconnected components or subsystems that mutually reinforce one another, creating and sustaining a cycle of racial inequities across various sectors of society (Reskin, 2012). Therefore, structural racism exists within, and is supported by, various societal systems, including housing, labor, and credit markets, as well as the education, criminal justice, economic, and healthcare systems. Consequently, racism adapts over time, preserving its widespread harmful effects through multiple mechanisms that evolve to replace previously reduced forms (Phelan & Link, 2015; Williams, 2013).

The concept of structural racism described above provides a framework for understanding the deeply embedded and adaptive nature of racism across various societal institutions. Feagin (2006) argues that "racism is a systemic and institutionalized phenomenon, deeply embedded in social structures, practices, and policies". This understanding is particularly relevant when examining racism in the United States, where systemic inequality has been historically and persistently woven into the fabric of the nation's key institutions. From the nation's founding to the present day, the racial hierarchy created by institutionalized racism has shaped access to resources, opportunities, and rights for people of color, particularly African Americans. In the context of the U.S., racism not only continues to manifest in overt ways but also operates subtly within laws, policies, and social norms, reinforcing racial disparities in areas such as housing, education, and criminal justice. Collins (2000) notes that "racism operates through intersecting systems of power, creating inequality not only in race but also in gender, class, and sexuality". Thus, the enduring impact of racism in the U.S. is not only a reflection of individual prejudices but also of a larger, structural system that perpetuates inequality across generations.

Black Americans have long been exposed to both systemic and personal racism, which sustains disparities in multiple facets of life. Discrimination against Black individuals is not only a contradiction to the fundamental principles of fairness and equal opportunities in the United States, but it also leads to significant health disparities, contributing notably to the health gap between Black and White Americans (Colen et al., 2018). Black Americans, in particular, have been historically subjected to both institutional racism (such as policies and practices that hinder access to opportunities and perpetuate racial inequalities, like residential and educational segregation) and interpersonal racial discrimination (such as direct discriminatory interactions, including racial slurs or microaggressions) (Williams & Mohammed, 2009).

These forms of discrimination are linked to serious physical and mental health issues, including higher mortality rates, hypertension, depression, anxiety, and psychological distress (Williams & Mohammed, 2013; Paradies, 2006). In healthcare settings, studies indicate that discrimination against racial/ethnic minorities and implicit biases among healthcare providers are widespread, negatively affecting the quality of healthcare delivery (Shavers et al., 2012; Stepanikova & Oates, 2017). Patients who experience or perceive discrimination are more likely to avoid seeking healthcare or delay essential medical treatment (Lewis et al., 2015). Nonetheless, additional research, particularly using national samples, is needed to better understand the full scope of discrimination's impact (Pascoe & Richman, 2009).

One effective medium for depicting and conveying messages about racism is film. As a cultural medium that can reach a wide audience, film has the ability to illustrate complex social dynamics, including issues related to racism. One of the films that was used as a platform to convey the message of racism is *12 Years a Slave* (2013). This film is based on the true story of an African-American man named Solomon Northup, who lived as a free man in 19th-century New York. The film portrays the painful experiences of Solomon Northup, a free Black man who was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Over the course of twelve years, he endured physical and mental suffering that reflected the brutality of the slave system. At the same time, the film highlights the resilience and struggle of individuals against injustice, as well as how humanity can persist even amid cruelty.

Films that explore racism can serve as a powerful medium for exploring societal issues, and when analyzed through a linguistic lens, they offer valuable insights into how language constructs, reinforces, or challenges social ideologies. According to Fairclough (1995), "language is not merely a neutral tool for communication; rather, it plays an active role in shaping and reinforcing social reality." In this sense, the attitude system, a key component of the appraisal framework in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), provides a useful approach for analyzing how attitudes are expressed in film dialogue, character interactions, and narrative structures. This system focuses on the emotional responses, judgments, and evaluations expressed in language, which can be crucial in understanding how racism is represented and confronted in films.

In the context of racism, films like *12 Years a Slave* portray characters struggling with systemic oppression and racial discrimination. By using the attitude system, researchers can analyze how language conveys the characters' emotional responses to their experiences, how they evaluate others based on race, and how attitudes of superiority or inferiority are embedded in speech. For example, in *12 Years a Slave*, the attitudes expressed by the white slave owners or other oppressive figures can be analyzed through negative judgment and affect, showing how racism is not only a societal structure but also an emotional and evaluative force. Meanwhile, the expressions of defiance or hope by the oppressed characters can be analyzed through positive affect and judgment, revealing their resistance to racial subjugation.

Research Questions

How does the Judgment System depict the microinsult strategy with the subcategory of assumption of criminal status in the movie *12 Years a Slave*?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Attitude System

Through the attitude system, the study of linguistic features such as modality, affective expressions, and evaluative language can uncover how racism is depicted through characters' attitudes, beliefs, and emotional states. As Martin and White (2005) note, "attitude involves our emotional response to people, events, and things, which often involves judgments and affect." This linguistic approach allows for a deeper understanding of the film's ideological

underpinnings, providing insights into how racism is not merely a visual representation, but also a complex interplay of attitudes and emotions conveyed through language. Thus, the combination of film analysis and the attitude system in linguistic research offers a comprehensive way to explore how media representations of racism influence and reflect societal attitudes, making it an effective tool for understanding the linguistic mechanisms that perpetuate or challenge racial ideologies.

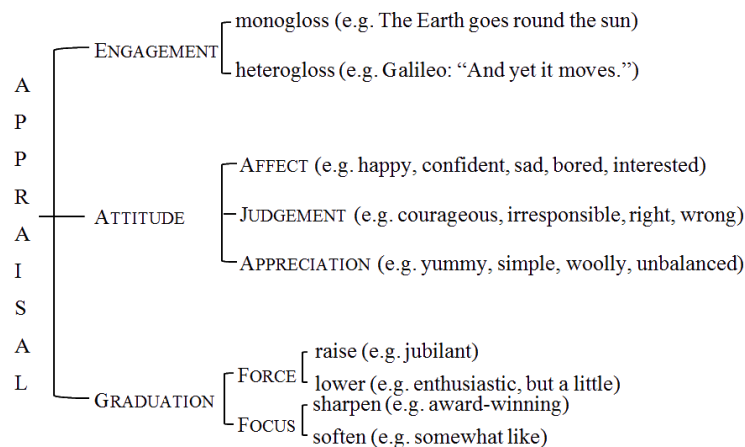


Figure 1. Appraisal Distribution

In analyzing language to depict the concept of microinsults, particularly the assumption of criminal status, the researchers have chosen to focus on the attitude system within the appraisal framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The Attitude system is essential for understanding how speakers or writers convey emotions, make judgments, and evaluate phenomena. By utilizing this system, we can delve deeper into how subtle, often implicit, negative evaluations are constructed in discourse. Specifically, the Attitude system helps reveal the underlying emotional stances, moral judgments, and evaluations that perpetuate microinsults in communication. The system is divided into three categories (Martin & Rose, 2007): affect, judgment, and appreciation, each of which plays a critical role in unpacking the assumption of criminal status as a microinsult.

Affect is relevant when microinsults elicit or reflect emotional responses, either from the speaker or the receiver. Then, judgment is central to analyzing how human behavior is evaluated according to social norms and moral codes. In the case of microinsults, the assumption of criminal status often involves negative judgments about an individual's integrity or trustworthiness. Appreciation comes into play when microinsults target objects, environments, or actions indirectly associated with the assumption of criminal status. For example, describing someone's clothing or mannerisms as "unusual" or "inappropriate" could subtly evaluate them as not conforming to societal expectations.

Attitude system is instrumental in uncovering how speakers or writers convey evaluations of emotions, behaviors, and phenomena. Specifically, to examine the assumption of criminal status, the focus is placed on the judgment category. Judgment evaluates human behavior in terms of social norms, ethical principles, and cultural expectations, making it highly relevant to uncovering the subtle ways microinsults operate in discourse (Martin & Rose, 2007).

SOCIAL ESTEEM 'venial'	positive [admire]	negative [criticize]
normality [fate] 'is s/he special?'	<i>lucky, fortunate, charmed... normal, average, everyday... in, fashionable, avant garde...</i>	<i>unfortunate, pitiful, tragic... odd, peculiar, eccentric... dated, daggy, retrograde...</i>
capacity 'is s/he capable?'	<i>powerful, vigorous, robust... insightful, clever, gifted... balanced, together, sane...</i>	<i>mild, weak, wimpy... slow, stupid, thick... flaky, neurotic, insane...</i>
tenacity [resolve] 'is s/he dependable?'	<i>plucky, brave, heroic... reliable, dependable... tireless, persevering, resolute...</i>	<i>rash, cowardly, despondent... unreliable, undependable... weak, distracted, dissolute...</i>
SOCIAL SANCTION 'moral'	positive [praise]	negative [condemn]
veracity [truth] 'is s/he honest?'	<i>truthful, honest, credible... sincere, genuine... frank, direct...</i>	<i>dishonest, deceitful... insincere, fake... deceptive, manipulative...</i>
propriety [ethics] 'is s/he beyond reproach?'	<i>good, moral, ethical... law-abiding, fair, just... sensitive, kind, caring...</i>	<i>bad, immoral, evil... corrupt, unfair, unjust... insensitive, mean, cruel...</i>

Figure 2. Judgment's Categorization

Judgment can be further divided into two main types: social esteem and social sanction (Martin & Rose, 2007). Social esteem involves evaluations related to an individual's capability, normality, or tenacity. For instance, assumptions like "You don't seem to belong here" may subtly question someone's normality or appropriateness, reflecting biases about who is perceived as fitting within societal spaces.

Social sanction pertains to moral evaluations of a person's behavior, such as judgments about their honesty or integrity. In the context of microinsults, the assumption of criminal status often involves negative moral judgments, as seen in statements like "Are you sure you're not doing anything illegal?" Such remarks implicitly position the individual as untrustworthy or morally suspect, perpetuating stereotypes tied to criminality.

By focusing on judgment, this analysis highlights how language encodes subtle but impactful evaluations of human behavior that reinforce prejudice and discrimination. It allows for a critical examination of the linguistic strategies that sustain societal biases, particularly in the context of microinsults and their implications for marginalized groups.

B. Racial Microaggression

In this study, the judgment system is used to depict the microinsult strategy under the subcategory of assumption of criminal status. This framework is derived from the theory of racial microaggressions. Microaggression refers to commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights toward people of color (Sue, 2010, p. 29). According to Harrison and Tanner (2018), there are three forms of microaggressions: (1) microassault, (2) microinsult, and (3) microinvalidation.

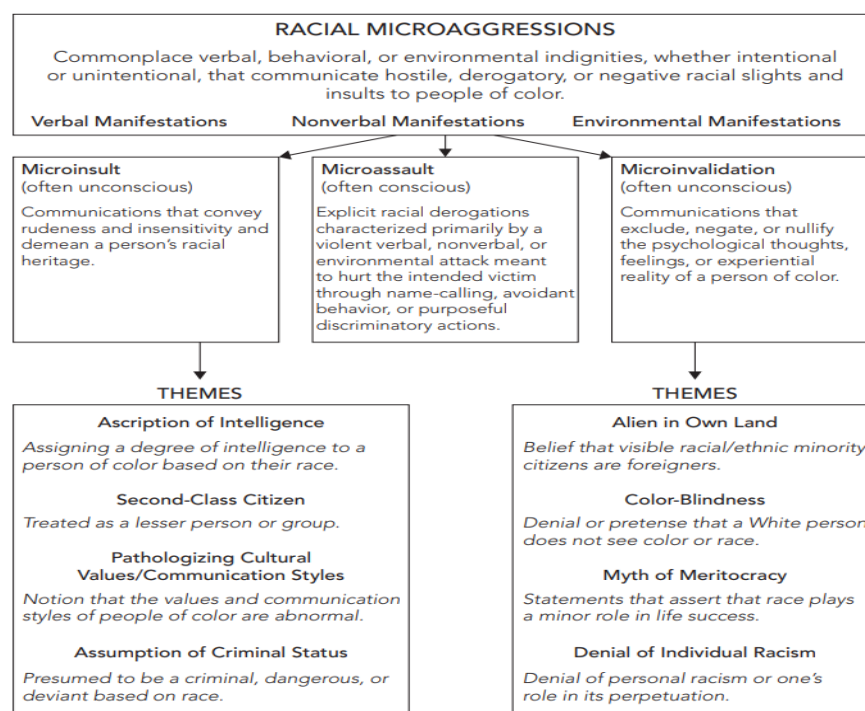


Figure 3. Types of Racial Microaggression

Based on the figure above, this research focuses solely on microinsult with the theme of assumption of criminal status. Assumption of criminal status refers to verbal microaggressions that perceive victims of racism as criminals and dangerous based on their race. In this context, the Black race is depicted as slaves in the film *12 Years a Slave*.

C. Previous Studies

Several studies on racism have been conducted by researchers from various countries. Many of these studies fall under the domain of critical discourse analysis with a focus on racism. Notable studies in this area include works by Breazu (2022), Salem et al. (2021), Adamu et al. (2019), Graber et al. (2019), Welsh et al. (2020), Khalifa (2017), Mahbub et al. (2020), Patton et al. (2017), Bridgeforth (2021), Litchmore et al. (2015), Briscoe and Khalifa (2015), Wu and Wall (2021), Al Ahmad and Awwad (2020), Farkas et al. (2018), Hughey and Daniels (2013), Trochmann et al. (2021), Naidu et al. (2023), Bates (2023), Kadim (2022), Shukry (2013), Muller (2021), Sengul (2019), Wang and Catalano (2023), Ali Afkhami et al. (2018), McGannon and Butryn (2020), and Civilia et al. (2020). None of these studies, however, use film as their research medium. The settings for these studies include novels, news, speeches, online media, and fieldwork. For example, fieldwork studies have been conducted by Briscoe and Khalifa (2015), Naidu et al. (2023), Bates (2023), Trochmann et al. (2021), Adamu et al. (2019), Welsh et al. (2020), Bridgeforth (2021), and Litchmore et al. (2015). Novel-based research includes works by Al Mamoori et al. (2021), Khalifa (2017), and Mahbub et al. (2020). Speech-based studies include McGannon and Butryn (2020), Kadim (2022), Shukry (2013),

Ali Afkhami et al. (2018), Sengul (2019), and Salem et al. (2021). News-based research includes Lopez (2020), Reitmanova et al. (2023), Al Ahmad and Awwad (2020), Serafis et al. (2020), Breazu (2022), and Graber et al. (2019). Online media studies include Indrawati (2021), Muller (2021), Wang and Catalano (2023), Wu and Wall (2021), Civila et al. (2020), Farkas et al. (2018), and Patton et al. (2017).

The difference between these previous studies and the current research design lies in the use of an SFL approach, particularly focusing on the appraisal system, with an emphasis on the attitude subsystem as an analytical tool. Among the previous studies, none specifically used the appraisal system to explore the racism strategy based on the racial microaggression theory, especially the microinsult. By using the judgment system of attitude element, this research investigates how antagonist characters express the microinsult strategy of assumption of criminal status for attacking the protagonist characters. Thus, the research problems in this study are as follows:

How does the judgment system depict the microinsult strategy with the subcategory of assumption of criminal status in the movie *12 Years a Slave*?

III. METHODOLOGY

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the judgment system within the appraisal framework to explore how it represents the microinsult strategy under the subcategory of assumption of criminal status in the movie *12 Years a Slave*. To achieve these objectives, the study adopted a qualitative research design with a focus on SFL, particularly the appraisal framework, as proposed by Martin and Rose (2007). This approach is suitable for examining how language constructs meaning in social and cultural contexts and for analyzing the role of judgment in expressing implicit biases and social dynamics.

The research primarily focuses on the movie *12 Years a Slave* as its data source. This film, which depicts the harrowing journey of Solomon Northup, provides a rich context for analyzing utterances laden with judgments and microinsults, particularly those that align with the theme of criminalization. The narrative stages of the movie such as orientation, complication, and resolution serve as the framework for examining judgment instances. This aligns with Santosa's (2021) concept of research locations encompassing settings, participants, and events as the larger social structures.

The study employed purposive sampling, focusing on specific scenes in *12 Years a Slave* where judgment and microinsults are prominently featured. Purposive sampling ensured that only relevant data consistent with the research objectives were included, following the recommendations of Teddlie and Yu (2007). To triangulate findings, the study incorporated document analysis of the movie script and a focus group discussion (FGD) conducted in 2024 at the Descriptive Linguistics Department of Universitas Sebelas Maret. This FGD involved experts in linguistics and film studies, who provided qualitative insights into the interplay between language and discrimination in the film.

In terms of analysis, the study applied Spradley's (2016) ethnographic analysis method, encompassing domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural theme analysis. This methodology was designed to uncover the cultural and linguistic nuances embedded in the narrative, emphasizing how judgment constructs meaning and conveys implicit social biases. By exploring these themes, the study aims to reveal the strategies used to represent microinsults in the film and their broader implications for understanding societal prejudice.

IV. RESULTS

This section discusses the results in relation to the research questions, focusing on how the judgment system within the appraisal framework is employed to depict microinsults, specifically those associated with the assumption of criminal status. The analysis highlights the linguistic strategies used to embed microinsults in dialogue and narrative, offering insights into how these strategies contribute to the portrayal of systemic prejudice. Additionally, the section explores the broader implications of these linguistic choices for character development and audience perception of societal biases.

How Does the Judgment System within the Appraisal Framework Depict the Microinsult Strategy Categorized as Assumption of Criminal Status in *12 Years a Slave*?

The judgment system provides a comprehensive tool for analyzing how evaluative language operates to portray such microinsults, focusing on attitudes and moral assessments directed towards individuals. This analysis aims to reveal how linguistic elements are utilized to reinforce discriminatory stereotypes and contribute to character portrayal and narrative progression.

The distribution of the judgment system, including its categories and frequency in depicting microinsults in the movie, is presented in the table below.

TABLE 1
COMPONENTIAL TABLE

STAGES	MICROINSULT	JUDGMENT'S CATEGORIES				
		SOC			SAC	
		Nor	Cap	Ten	Ver	Pro
ORIENTATION	Assumption of Criminal Status	1				1
COMPLICATION	Assumption of Criminal Status		10	3	7	7
RESOLUTION	Assumption of Criminal Status	1				15
TOTAL		2	10	3	7	23

Note:

SOC: Social Esteem

SAC: Social Sanction

Nor: Normality

Cap: Capacity

Ten: Tenacity

Ver: Veracity

Pro: Propriety

The table above illustrates the distribution of judgment categories that realized *microinsult: assumption of criminal status* occurring across the different stages of the narrative (Orientation, Complication, and Resolution). Within the judgment categories (*SOC* as Social Esteem and *SAC* as Social Sanction), there is further breakdown into subcategories including *Nor*=*Normality*, *Cap*=*Capacity*, and *Ten*=*Tenacity*, for Social Esteem, and *Ver*=*Veracity*, and *Pro*=*Propriety* for Social Sanction. The data reveal that the Complication stage exhibits a substantially higher frequency of microinsults. These instances are distributed across both domains of judgment: within Social Esteem (*SOC*), manifesting as judgments of Normality (1), Capacity (10), and Tenacity (3), and within Social Sanction (*SAC*), evident as judgments of Veracity (7) and Propriety (7). Conversely, the Orientation and Resolution stages demonstrate a comparatively lower incidence of microinsults. In these stages, the phenomenon is predominantly concentrated within the Propriety (*SAC*) subcategory, a finding underscored by the prominent count of 15 instances in the Resolution stage.

A. Judgment's Category of Social Esteem: Normality to Portray Microinsults With the Theme of Assumption of Criminal Status

DATA (1) Judgment: Social Esteem: Normality

"Shackle my niggers. Get them to my cart."

The excerpt above is found in the "Orientation" stage. It depicts a case of racism categorized as a microinsult with the theme of assumption of criminal status. This racist expression was uttered by slave traders to their slaves. The clause also labels the slaves as if they were criminals. The phrase directly portrays the slaves with their hands shackled, resembling the treatment of criminals. This data is also categorized under *Judgment: Social Sanction: Propriety*. The clause "Shackle my niggers" represents an evaluation directed at the slaves in the film. Furthermore, from the perspective of *Normality*, the clause seems to depict the perceived destiny of all Black people, who are assumed and labeled as slaves.

DATA (2) Judgment: Social Esteem: Normality: Negative

Context: Epps raises his whip again. The whip quivers in his hand, ready to be used... but he cannot bring himself to strike. He then turns to Solomon and hands him the whip. Solomon hesitates to swing the whip handed to him. However, Epps keeps insisting that Solomon do it until Solomon has no choice but to comply.

Mr. Epps: "You will strike her until her flesh is rent, and meat and blood flow equal."

In Mr. Epps's utterance, "meat and blood flow equal," elements of racism are reflected in the form of *Microinsult: Assumption of Criminal Status*. This statement places Solomon in a position where he is deemed incapable of controlling his actions, as though inherently, as a Black slave, he is seen as someone prone to violence or brutality without reflection. This utterance dehumanizes Solomon by reducing him to a tool for inflicting pain, disregarding his humanity entirely.

This statement also aligns with *Judgment: Social Esteem: Normality: Negative*. Epps implies that Solomon, as a slave, lacks the behaviors or traits that conform to the accepted human standards of society. By forcing Solomon to inflict violence on Patsey to the point of severe injury, Epps regards such an action as something acceptable and expected from a slave. Conversely, social norms governing human rights and dignity are disregarded, and Solomon, as a slave, is compelled to act against the moral principles that should apply to every individual. In Epps's view, these principles are not expected of a slave.

B. Judgment's Category of Social Esteem: Capacity to Portray Microinsults With the Theme of Assumption of Criminal Status

DATA (3) Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity

Context: Tibbeats sings a mocking song to the slaves, repeating it as they work in the field.

Tibbeats: "Nigger run, run so fast."

The phrase "nigger run, run so fast," sung by Tibeats in this context, carries profound meaning related to *Microinsult: Assumption of Criminal Status* and *Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity*. Specifically, this phrase reflects the stereotypical assumption that Black people, in this case, slaves, are constantly seen as threats or criminals. The deliberate use of the word "nigger" dehumanizes individuals based on their race, associating them with behaviors perceived as dangerous or criminal. By saying "run so fast," Tibeats implies that the slaves are always in a position to flee, portraying fear and distrust, reinforcing the stereotype that Black individuals are threats to be feared.

In relation to *Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity*, this phrase underscores the low social regard for the slaves. Tibeats not only views them as objects meant to labor without rights but also degrades their value and dignity as individuals. "Run so fast" is not merely a physical command but also a reflection of the belief that the slaves lack equal social capacity and are only seen as entities to be exploited or ridiculed. These two aspects are interconnected, as the criminal assumptions imposed upon individuals reflect a reduction in their social capacity, reinforcing the notion that Black individuals are undeserving of higher levels of dignity within the social structure.

DATA (4) Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity

Context: Tibeats sings a mocking song to the slaves, repeating it as they work in the field.

Tibeats: "Nigger run through the field."

The phrase "nigger run through the field," sung by Tibeats in this context, conveys *Microinsult: Assumption of Criminal Status* and *Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity*, highlighting racial discrimination and the degradation of the slaves' dignity. In this case, the use of the word "run" can be interpreted as a representation of the need to flee or avoid danger, which is often associated with criminal or threatening behavior. Through this mocking song, Tibeats implies that the slaves are perpetually seen as being in a precarious position, as though they lack freedom or the right to live without fear, instead being viewed as individuals who must constantly be warned or ordered to "run." This reinforces the stereotype that Black individuals, particularly slaves, are always associated with criminal status or danger, even when performing mundane tasks like working in the field.

From the perspective of *Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity*, the phrase also illustrates the low social value attributed to the slaves. Tibeats's mocking song, with the words "run through the field," not only devalues their physical abilities but also diminishes their social capacity as individuals entitled to dignity and equal rights. In essence, the slaves are viewed as nothing more than objects to be exploited and ridiculed, without any acknowledgment of their humanity. These two concepts are interrelated, as the criminal assumptions imposed upon Black individuals directly contribute to the reduced social capacity assigned to them, illustrating how slavery not only led to physical exploitation but also to the denigration of the slaves' social identity and dignity.

The occurrences of *Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity* in the film *12 Years a Slave* are only found in the scenes where Tibeats sings mocking songs to the slaves, specifically during the "Complication" stage.

C. Judgment's Category of Social Esteem: Tenacity to Portray Microinsults With the Theme of Assumption of Criminal Status

DATA (5) Judgment: Social Esteem: Tenacity

Context: Tibeats sings a mocking song to the slaves, repeating it while they work in the field.

Tibeats: Stoved his head in a hornet's nest.

This utterance conveys mockery or disdain toward an individual by portraying their actions as exceedingly foolish or reckless. The phrase implies that the person has done something profoundly detrimental or disruptive, akin to absurdly provoking a situation full of danger or conflict. Such language not only degrades the individual but also pathologizes their behavior, portraying it as intrinsically flawed or irrational within the dominant group's norms. Additionally, it shows cultural bias by deeming the behaviors or lifestyles of Black individuals as inappropriate or problematic, labeling them as poor or unwise decision-makers.

Linguistically, this utterance corresponds to *Judgment: Social Esteem: Tenacity*. Tenacity refers to an individual's capacity to resolve problems. In this context, the utterance conveys a negative evaluation of the individual's ability to handle situations wisely. The phrase assesses the individual's actions as not only reckless but also indicative of a lack of resilience or competence in dealing with issues effectively.

D. Judgment's Category of Social Sanction: Veracity to Portray Microinsults With the Theme of Assumption of Criminal Status

DATA (6) Judgment: Social Sanction: Veracity

Tibeats: Goddamn you! I thought you knowed something!

Analyzing this utterance, the clause "you knowed something" must be understood in the context of the preceding expression of anger and frustration. In this context, the clause can be categorized as a *Microinsult: Assumption of Criminal Status*, as it implies a negative assumption about the knowledge or competence of the person being addressed. Additionally, the clause is connected to *Judgment: Social Sanction: Veracity*, which evaluates the truthfulness or accuracy of an individual's knowledge. By expressing disappointment over the expectation that the person should have possessed certain knowledge, the utterance implies social sanction against the validity or reliability of the individual's understanding.

DATA (7) Judgment: Social Sanction: Veracity

Tibeats: One had a rope and it was hung around his neck.

This phrase implicitly assumes that the individual described is involved in criminal or dangerous activities, suggesting that they have been punished or subjected to extreme measures. Within the context of *Microinsult: Assumption of Criminal Status*, the utterance demonstrates how individuals from certain groups can be prejudicially viewed as engaging in unlawful or undesirable behavior, as implied by the negative connotations of the action described.

In terms of *Judgment: Social Sanction: Veracity*, the statement reflects an evaluation of the accuracy or legitimacy of these assumptions within the social framework. By depicting the individual in a derogatory and demeaning manner, the utterance reinforces the perception that extreme actions or violence inflicted upon them might be seen as justified or in line with societal expectations, despite actually being forms of stigmatization.

E. Judgment's Category of Social Sanction: Propriety to Portray Microinsults With the Theme of Assumption of Criminal Status

DATA (8) Judgment: Social Sanction: propriety: Negative

Context: Epps raised his whip again. The whip quivered in his hand, ready to be used. Yet, he couldn't bring himself to strike. He then turned to Solomon and handed the whip to him. Solomon hesitated to swing the whip that was given to him. However, Epps insisted that Solomon comply, leaving him with no other choice. Finally, Mr. Epps issued a grave threat to Solomon, stating that if Solomon refused, he would kill every slave present.

Mr. Epps: *Or I will kill every nigger in my sight!*

In Mr. Epps' utterance, "*I will kill every nigger in my sight!*", there is a clear indication of racism through *Microinsult: Assumption of Criminal Status*. The statement assumes that Solomon, like the other slaves, is viewed more as an object or tool subject to Epps' power, devoid of any rights to defend himself or resist the orders. In this context, Epps portrays Solomon and the other slaves as inherently linked to violence or as threats to white people. This conveys a degrading perception, implying that Black individuals, as slaves, lack recognized moral capacity or self-control within society, and as a result, can be arbitrarily threatened or punished.

The statement also relates to *Judgment: Social Sanction: Propriety: Negative*, indicating that the behavior imposed on Solomon—whipping Patsey—is deemed legitimate by Epps within the context of his social norms, even though it violates universal moral standards. Solomon is forced to commit violence against Patsey because Patsey is accused of breaking plantation rules, such as leaving without Epps' permission. From Epps' perspective, this violation warrants severe punishment, which he views as justifiable and appropriate, even though it is clearly immoral and unacceptable in broader societal terms. Epps' threat to kill the slaves underscores his belief in his absolute authority to inflict cruel punishments without regard for the rights or dignity of the enslaved.

DATA (9) Judgment: Social Sanction: Propriety: Negative

Context: Epps raised his whip high, ready to strike Patsey. However, despite his burning rage, he couldn't bring himself to deliver the blow. He then turned to Mrs. Epps, who stood proudly, urging him to proceed.

Mrs. Epps: *Strike the life from her!*

At the resolution stage of this conflict, Mrs. Epps' statement, "*Strike the life from her!*", illustrates an extreme form of racism, openly desiring and encouraging violence against the enslaved Patsey. This statement demonstrates *Microinsult: Assumption of Criminal Status*, treating Patsey as inherently guilty or deserving of severe punishment, even to the point of losing her life.

On a broader level, this command represents *Judgment: Social Sanction: Propriety: Negative*, wherein such acts of violence are not only considered acceptable but justified under the prevailing racist social norms of the environment. Mrs. Epps, as the "appraiser," directs her negative judgment toward Patsey, no longer viewing her as a human being with the right to life, but as someone unworthy of respect or protection. This underscores Patsey's position as a second-class individual, tragically illustrating the depth of racism that normalized hatred and violence within that society.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis demonstrate how the microinsults linked to the assumption of criminal status, categorized under *Judgment: Social Esteem: Normality*, successfully depict the dehumanization of marginalized individuals. Phrases such as "Shackle my niggers" and "Get them to my cart" are indicative of racial stereotypes that perpetuate the belief that Black people are inherently criminal. These expressions normalize their subjugation, reducing their humanity and reinforcing structural injustices. As exemplified in the dialogue of Epps, "You will strike her until her flesh is rent," the cruelty towards Black slaves is framed as a natural trait, reinforcing the assumption that Black people are predisposed to violence or deserving of harsh punishment. This is in line with Sue et al. (2019), who highlight how microinsults perpetuate systemic racism through subtle, everyday language. However, this study distinguishes itself by showing how these racial presumptions were historically normalized through overt language and institutional behaviour, whereas Sue et al. focus on contemporary settings. Similarly, Young (2018) discusses the role of language in reinforcing stereotypes, adding to the body of literature by examining the mechanisms through which marginalized groups are portrayed as inferior in historical contexts, such as slavery. This analysis highlights the role of microinsults in perpetuating racial hierarchies by presenting marginalized individuals as abnormal or inherently criminal.

Further examination of *Judgment: Social Esteem: Capacity* reveals how microinsults related to the assumption of criminal status serve to devalue marginalized people by framing them as lacking moral capacity. For example, Tibeats's mocking lines, "nigger run, run so fast" and "nigger run through the field," stereotype Black people as inherently criminal and as fugitives, reinforcing the narrative that they are a constant societal threat. This linguistic representation diminishes their perceived social worth, framing them as morally and socially inferior. These findings align with the Appraisal Theory of Martin and Rose (2007), which explores how language shapes social evaluations and attitudes. By applying this framework to historical settings, this study demonstrates how language was historically weaponized to uphold systemic injustice. Smith et al. (2012) support this, emphasizing the role of linguistic presumptions in marginalizing racial minorities, thus reinforcing their dehumanization and societal exclusion.

Moreover, the analysis of *Judgment: Social Esteem: Tenacity* reveals how the linguistic portrayal of Black people as defective and incapable of wise decision-making perpetuates microinsults related to criminality. Tibeats's sarcastic remark, "stoved his head in a hornet's nest," implies that Black slaves lack resilience and sound judgment, reinforcing the stereotype that they are incapable of making rational decisions. This analysis resonates with Risdianto (2024), who explores how language in political biographies either enhances or undermines public perceptions of perseverance. Similar to Cahyono (2024), who examines how language in biographies shapes stories of resilience, this study highlights the role of judgmental language in perpetuating systemic prejudice, both historically and socially.

The examination of *Judgment: Social Sanction: Veracity* shows how the assumption of criminal status is linked to perceptions of untrustworthiness and dishonesty. Tibeats's contemptuous remark, "Goddamn you! I thought you knew something," challenges the credibility of Black slaves, further reinforcing their perceived inferiority. Additionally, the statement "One had a rope and it was hung around his neck" depicts societal norms that legitimize harsh punishment and implicitly assume wrongdoing. This ties into Risdianto's (2024) work on how language in state relocation news undermines the legitimacy of marginalized viewpoints, as well as Faqiyah's (2022) study on how biased appraisals of trustworthiness are shaped by gender. Both studies reveal how microinsults contribute to systemic discrimination by delegitimizing marginalized groups based on racial presumptions of criminality and untrustworthiness.

Finally, the study on *Judgment: Social Sanction: Propriety: Negative* demonstrates how racialized presumptions within the assumption of criminal status shape harsh and violent treatment. Mr. Epps's declaration, "I will kill every nigger in my sight!" and Mrs. Epps's command, "Strike the life from her!" frame the torture and death of Black slaves as acceptable, further normalizing the idea that Black people deserve violent punishment. This parallels Utami's (2023) examination of news coverage on Reynhard Sinaga, where language framed him not only as a criminal but as the embodiment of criminality itself. Both cases illustrate how microinsults are used to uphold societal norms that justify systemic injustice against marginalized individuals, particularly in relation to racialized presumptions of criminality.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study, grounded in Martin and White's appraisal framework and a narrative structural model, reveal the intricate ways in which linguistic strategies, particularly the judgment system, are employed in the film *12 Years a Slave* to construct and perpetuate microinsults categorized under the assumption of criminal status. From the analysis, it is evident that these microinsults are distributed unevenly across the narrative stages—Orientation, Complication, and Resolution. The Complication stage emerges as the most dominant, containing the highest number of microinsults (23 instances), with diverse representation across judgment categories. In contrast, the Orientation and Resolution stages feature relatively fewer instances, indicating that the Complication stage serves as a focal point for exposing systemic prejudice through evaluative language.

The findings further reveal that different categories within the judgment system contribute to the construction of microinsults. For instance, under Social Esteem - Normality, two instances explicitly label Black characters as inherently criminal, as seen in dehumanizing commands like "Shackle my niggers," portraying slavery as a normalized condition for Black individuals. Similarly, under Social Esteem - Capacity, three instances center on Tibeats' mocking songs, such as "Nigger run, run so fast," which perpetuate stereotypes of Black individuals as fugitives or criminals. Additionally, Social Esteem - Tenacity accounts for three instances of mockery targeting perseverance and determination, while Social Sanction - Propriety dominates the analysis with 15 instances, highlighting moral assessments of enslaved individuals, such as Epps forcing Solomon to whip Patsey.

The dominance of Propriety judgments underscores the moral dimension of systemic racism as portrayed in the film, revealing how characters are evaluated based on dehumanizing stereotypes and societal biases. Furthermore, the narrative stages reflect distinct linguistic patterns. The Orientation stage introduces microinsults minimally, setting the groundwork for systemic bias. The Complication stage, as the narrative's climax, amplifies the linguistic embedding of microinsults, intensifying the portrayal of societal prejudice. Finally, the Resolution stage consolidates these prejudices, illustrating their lasting implications for the characters' fates.

In sum, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how systemic prejudice is linguistically constructed in cinematic narratives. By analyzing the interplay between micro-level language choices and macro-level narrative strategies, the research underscores the critical role of film as a medium for reflecting and challenging societal biases. It also highlights the utility of the judgment system as an analytical tool for uncovering the subtle yet pervasive ways in which language can perpetuate stereotypes and systemic discrimination.

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Footing in Courtroom Discourse: A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Opening Statements in George Floyd's Murder Trial

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Abstract—Drawing on Erving Goffman's (1979, 1981) interaction model of footing, which distinguishes between the different speaker's roles of animator, author, and principal, this study explores how shifts in speaker alignment serve as linguistic and ideological strategies that frame competing communicative acts in courtroom discourse. This paper provides a forensic linguistic analysis of opening statements presented in George Floyd's murder trial (2021). The study's main objectives are to demonstrate how courtroom discourse is not only a site of legal argumentation but also of ideological performance, to identify the various speakers' roles in the opening statements of Floyd's murder trial, and to show how these participation roles are manifested linguistically in discourse. The study uses a qualitative forensic discourse analysis approach to discuss how the different speakers' roles are linguistically represented in the opening statements of the trial at hand. Findings reveal that the lawyers adopt particular participation roles during their opening statements, including the roles of animator, author, and principal. These participation roles are linguistically realized by various strategies, including the use of speech acts, modality, agency, emotive language, nominalization, attitude markers, lexical choices, active and passive voice, and evaluative language. Theoretically, the study contributes to forensic linguistics by demonstrating the analytical efficacy of Goffman's participation framework in uncovering the pragmatic and ideological dimensions of courtroom discourse.

Index Terms—courtroom discourse, footing, George Floyd, opening statements, speaker's roles

I. INTRODUCTION

Courtrooms have always been sites for rhetorical power negotiation practiced by specific linguistic strategies (Henderson et al., 2016). Courtroom discourse is perceived as the most linguistically complex communicative setting, where language functions not only as a carrier of information but also as a performance of power, persuasion, and identity formation (Holt & O'Driscoll, 2021; Tvrdíková, 2025). Every word is strategically significant in legal settings, as lawyers tread cautiously with their linguistic choices to build discourses, influence jurors' perceptions, and align themselves with institutional or moral authority. Opening statements particularly prepare the ground for such communicative relations, determining the trial's linguistic, ideological, and affective tone by presenting the central topic, positioning the participants, and framing the defendant's actions within a broader linguistic, moral, and juridical framework (Cotterill, 2003; Heffer, 2005). Opening statements present numerous linguistic strategies and participation roles. To identify these roles, we should recognize the various ways lawyers use footing, speakers' alignment to their words and social role, to communicate their meanings. Revealing such participation roles of footing is relevant to understand the hidden meanings in courtroom discourse. Arguing from this context, this study offers a forensic linguistic analysis of the opening statements in George Floyd's murder trial (2021). Consequently, a forensic linguistic analysis of courtroom discourse is theoretically and analytically pertinent to revealing how language serves as a persuasion and manipulation tool that reconciles legal argumentation with linguistic performance.

The murder trial of George Floyd provides a captivating case study for the investigation of footing in legal discourse. This trial is concerned with the arrest of Floyd, an unarmed African American man. Global demonstrations against racial injustice and police brutality were triggered by video footage that showed Chauvin, a white police officer, kneeling on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes. The trial turned into a historic legal event that represented the larger fight against systematic racism and responsibility in American law enforcement. In addition to legal issues, its proceedings, especially the opening statements, reflected ingrained ideological and linguistic language that influences public opinion. With its globally publicized trial due to its racial and institutional implications, language was brought to center stage as an excellent vehicle for the negotiation of responsibility and justice. Both defense and prosecution opening statements were not only procedural but also ideological, each presenting contrary moral visions: one invoking justice, accountability, and system reform, and the other invoking legal restraint, reasonable doubt, and the complexity of policing. These opening statements thus yield fertile ground for investigating how footing can be strategically negotiated to construct plausibly linguistic arguments that appeal to jurors and the broader public (Tracy & Robles, 2013).

This study draws on Goffman's (1981) footing model, which refers to the speaker's roles or stance towards his/her utterance and towards others in an interaction, including the alternation between these roles, such as animator (the one who actually utters), author (the one who combines words), and principal (the one whose belief or stance is being expressed). In courtrooms' contexts, such role-switching becomes a critical linguistic and rhetorical tactic: lawyers may address as institutional authority figures bringing institutions to life, as strategic framing writers composing frames, or as principals articulating moral beliefs (Goffman, 1981; Holt & Johnson, 2010). In analyzing these conversions, one sees how speakers manage across multiple identities, i.e., legal, moral, and social, accounting for alignment with or disaffiliation from the ideologies framing their linguistic arguments (Holt & O'Driscoll, 2021).

From a forensic linguistics perspective, an investigation into footing in courtroom discourse offers an important understanding of how legal professionals construct authority and manage accountability through language. Previous studies have shown that courtroom discourse is marked by strategic voice control and stance to present impartiality, assert institutional authority, or enact humanization of actors (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014; Coulthard & Johnson, 2017). Footing management can thus serve as an ideological strategy, allowing speakers to foreground certain perspectives and demonstrate how the various legal aspects within courtrooms are linguistically constructed. The shifting dynamic between the prosecution's fixed moral footing and the defense's dynamic readjustments during the George Floyd trial demonstrates the broader linguistic struggle for moral authority and institutional legitimacy in legal language.

The current study raises two research questions: first, what are the various speakers' roles in the opening statements of Floyd's murder trial? Second, how are these participation roles manifested linguistically in the opening statements of the selected trial? The answer to these research questions encompasses the main objectives of this study: to identify the various speakers' roles in the opening statements of Floyd's murder trial, and to demonstrate how these participation roles are manifested linguistically in the discourse of the trial's opening statements. This study, therefore, attempts to explore how Goffman's (1981) footing model can be analytically extended to courtroom discourse analysis, particularly to the opening statements in George Floyd's murder trial. By using linguistic strategies, such as the use of speech acts, modality, agency, emotive language, nominalization, attitude markers, lexical choices, active and passive voice, and evaluative language, this study reveals how lawyers establish, shift, and negotiate animators', authors', and principals' roles. As such, it seeks to expose the ideological and pragmatic underpinnings of such footing shifts, which, in turn, are anticipated to contribute to both forensic linguistics and discourse studies by demonstrating how Goffman's footing model can offer useful insights into the way language reinforces, resists, and enacts institutional ideologies in courtrooms.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Forensic Linguistics

Forensic linguistics is the scientific study of language within legal contexts, focusing on how linguistic evidence can inform issues of authorship, meaning, credibility, and power in legal settings. This field of linguistics bridges linguistics, law, and criminology, applying linguistic theories and analytical tools to texts such as police interviews, courtroom exchanges, confessions, and legal documents (e.g., Wortham, 1996; Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2014; Coulthard & Johnson, 2017; Wright & Picornell, 2024). Its scope extends from micro-level linguistic analysis, such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Khafaga, 2022a), to broader discourse and sociolinguistic examinations of how power, identity, and ideology are enacted through language. Forensic linguists examine not only *what* is said but also *how* it is said, emphasizing the relationship between linguistic form and communicative intention. In courtroom discourse, this involves studying strategies like questioning patterns, turn-taking, narrative construction, and stance management to reveal how participants use language to assert authority, establish credibility, or manipulate interpretation (Heffer, 2005). According to Wortham (1996), forensic linguistics offers rigorous methodologies ranging from phonetic analysis and stylometry to discourse analysis. Its potential is confirmed by its historic achievements, and its future is shaped by continuous developments in digital profiling and ethical transparency. Scholars in this field (e.g., Coulthard, 1994; Shuy, 2006; Prihantoro & Gillings, 2025) argue that linguistic analysis provides critical insight into how justice is linguistically constructed, often uncovering implicit bias, coercion, or misrepresentation embedded in speech acts and institutional texts. By combining empirical linguistic methodologies with interpretive discourse analysis, forensic linguistics contributes to both legal outcomes and theoretical understandings of communication in institutional power settings.

B. Courtroom Discourse

According to Cotterill (2003), courtroom discourse describes the unique written and spoken language patterns that are employed in courtrooms. These include the statements made by judges, the questions posed by attorneys, the testimony of witnesses, and even nonverbal cues like gestures and body language. Courtroom discourse is quite institutionalized; it is formal, goal-driven, and frequently conflict-oriented with strict turn-taking guidelines and predetermined sequences like the question-and-answers sessions governed by legal roles. Courtroom discourse, thus, is featured by particular linguistic features that may be missed in ordinary genres of discourse. Turn-taking in courtroom

discussions is clearly defined and controlled by institutional roles. Since only some actors, such as judges and attorneys, have the authority to start turns, the court is an extreme version of institutional discourse. Adjacency pairings, such as question-answer, commanding response, and objection-ruling sequences, are frequently used to structure the discussion in courtroom discourse (Tannen, 2007; Zaiton, 2025). Courtroom discourse is a reflection of hierarchical duties characterized by numerous linguistic strategies. These linguistic tactics are highly represented in opening statements (Auer, 1998).

C. Opening Statements

Opening statements are procedural pillars of courtroom discourse, a jury's first systematic exposure to a case's competing arguments. Functionally, opening statements outline what each side intends to have the evidence establish; rhetorically, they perform complex tasks of persuasion and framing that affect jurors' understandings well in advance of formal evidence (Tiersma, 1999; Conley & O'Barr, 2005). From an analytical discourse perspective, opening statements situate the trial within a particular story schema, constructing characters, causality, and morality with linguistic and rhetorical choices consistent with each side's ideology. Prosecutors always use the opening statements to construct a narrative of guilt, centering upon evidence as the inevitable confirmation of a preconceived discourse. This involves the strategic use of language, fact sequencing, modality, and evaluative language expressing certainty and legitimacy (Luchjenbroers, 1993). Defense counsels, on the other hand, use their opening statements to communicate doubt and undermine the prosecution's account. The contrast between the two strategies reflects what Cotterill (2003) describes as 'the battle of narratives,' a struggle not only over facts but also over interpretive authority.

From a pragmatic perspective, opening statements employ a range of discourse strategies. First, they employ framing, the tactic of selecting and concentrating on some feature of reality in order to promote a particular interpretation (Goffman, 1974). Second, opening statements use footing shifts, whereby speakers place themselves between reporting, narrating, and aligning with jurors, thereby establishing rapport and credibility (Goffman, 1981; Archer, 2005). Third, they use narrative coherence and fidelity, which means that they enhance juror persuasion by establishing a story that appears to be consistent and morally compelling (Fisher, 1987). Linguistically, opening statements are likely to employ pronoun manipulation (e.g., 'we,' 'I,' 'you'), evaluation adjectives (e.g., 'tragic,' 'cold-blooded'), temporal staging for the purpose of achieving emotional congruity and moral judgment, and the frequent use of predictive modals (e.g., 'you will hear,' 'the evidence will show') to support the speaker's epistemic authority (Heffer, 2005). Further, these statements are performative acts: they don't just report the expected evidence, but they begin to constitute the moral and narrative world of the trial (Austin, 1962). Empirical evidence in forensic linguistics shows that preliminary impressions of the jury, established through opening statements, have a strong influence on verdicts (Diamond & Casper, 1992), which emphasizes the performative and cognitive power of the opening statement as an initial site of persuasion.

D. Ervin Goffman's (1981) Interaction Model of Footing

Goffman's (1981) interaction model of footing is an analytic framework to analyze the way speakers position themselves in interaction through shifts in alignment, role, and stance. In this conceptual model, footing refers to the relational and communicative frame of reference of the participant with respect to both the utterance and interlocutors, with changes in how speakers frame authority, distance, or involvement. Goffman's (1979) three fundamental roles in any spoken discourse are the 'animator' (the person who controls the mechanical production of the utterance), the 'author' (who chooses or devises the language), and the 'principal' (whose stand, belief, or liability it exemplifies). These roles either converge or diverge according to context, which allows speakers to strategically vary voice and identity to achieve rhetorical tasks. In the context of courtroom discourse, such shifts have especially high stakes since lawyers need to constantly contend with the interaction between personal beliefs, institutional mandates, and rhetorical presentation (Goffman, 1974; Holt & Johnson, 2010). With footing analysis in mind, researchers can discern how legal participants negotiate multiple facets of stance, such as moral, professional, and ideological, and so shed light on the complex mechanics by which linguistic performance affects perceptions of authority, credibility, and justice (Clayman, 1992).

According to Cowper (2003), Goffman transcends the duality of speaker and hearer. He argues that footing demonstrates how language is used to establish and reshape various stances and maintains that frames, the larger interpretive framework for events, are closely related to footing. Similar to a musical key shift in discussion, a change in footing frequently indicates a change in frame. Footing shows how people constantly shift their location inside the macro-contexts that comprise frames (Clayman, 1992). Čekaitė and Ann-Carita (2019) further argue that footing continues to have a significant impact in several fields, including conversational analysis to track participants' footing alterations moment by moment and classroom discourse by highlighting how stance-taking facilitates the negotiation of voice, authority, and many viewpoints in classroom interactions. Significantly, for Sandrelli (2017), a useful perspective for examining conversational turns in general and courtroom discourse in particular is Goffman's (1981) footing model, which is further heightened by Wright et al.'s (2022) argument that footing shows how casual discussions are performative, complicated, and negotiated.

Furthermore, Goffman's (1981) model of footing intersects with contemporary approaches to stance and identity in discourse studies, extending its analytical relevance to modern forensic contexts. Previous research (e.g., Du Bois, 2007; Tracy & Robles, 2013; O'Driscoll, 2018; Khafaga, 2022b) emphasizes that stance-taking and footing are intertwined in

constructing social meaning, as speakers continuously index evaluation, positioning, and alignment through their linguistic choices. Within the context of this study, footing is thus not treated as a static categorization but as a dynamic process through which trial participants construct and negotiate professional, moral, and ideological identities through linguistic performance. Consequently, by integrating Goffman's model with recent developments in discourse pragmatics, this framework enables a comprehensive understanding of how the prosecution and defense, in Floyd's trial, employ footing to manage their institutional voices, perform persuasion, and implicitly position themselves within the broader socio-political discourse surrounding race, justice, and accountability.

E. Previous and Related Studies

Much previous research has employed Goffman's (1981) interaction model of footing in numerous communicative contexts, including education, media, political communication, and everyday talk, demonstrating its effectiveness as an interactional role and identity construction analysis model. In classrooms, previous studies have shown how teachers change footing to manage authority and rapport, switching between institutional and interactional roles to enact classroom control and participation (Lee, 2011; Nguyen, 2012). In media communication, especially radio and television interviews and news broadcasts, footing has been used to understand how journalists navigate neutrality, credibility, and audience identification (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Ekström, 2006; Choe, 2020). Political communication research has also invoked footing to illuminate how politicians build personas and manage ideological framing; moving between the voices of institutional functionaries, empathetic publics, and moral authorities, they create persuasive texts that appeal to competing audiences (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Fetzer & Bull, 2012). In everyday-occurring communication, footing works to negotiate relationships and identity performance, with speakers shifting between humor, seriousness, and authority to identify with or disaffiliate with interlocutors (Tracy & Robles, 2013). Significantly, these studies highlight footing's function as a ubiquitous linguistic approach to orchestrate social roles, interactional positioning, and ideological framing in multiple communicative contexts.

Within the context of courtroom discourse, footing analysis has received growing attention in forensic linguistics, as legal communication demands constant negotiation of authority, detachment, and moral responsibility. Heffer (2005), for example, argues that lawyers and judges employ footing shifts to maintain institutional control while guiding jury interpretation, balancing objectivity with persuasion. Holt and Johnson (2010) further investigate courtroom interactions, identifying how lawyers alternate between animator, author, and principal roles to recontextualize speech, assign blame, or distance themselves from potentially biased statements. Similarly, Cotterill (2003) examines the Simpson trial to show how attorneys manipulate footing to frame moral narratives and influence juror perceptions of credibility and guilt. More recent studies (e.g., Gibbons, 2014; Coulthard & Johnson, 2017; D'hondt, 2019; Chen, 2020; Mısırlı & Akın, 2024) have discussed the concept of footing in courtrooms by integrating it with stance and evaluation theory, emphasizing how footing shifts signal ideological alignment and pragmatic meanings with institutional values. These studies affirm that footing in courtroom discourse is not only a structural phenomenon but also a pragmatic resource for managing institutional voice, projecting legal authority, and shaping ideological meaning. The present study builds on this by applying footing analysis to the Floyd murder trial, highlighting how prosecutorial and defensive rhetoric deploy alignment shifts to perform moral, legal, and ideological roles before the court and the public.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection, Description, and Rationale

The data used in the current study was taken from George Floyd's murder trial (2021). The opening statements pertaining to the trial under investigation can be downloaded from the Famous Trials website (see Appendix). The data consisted of two opening statements delivered by the two lawyers in George Floyd's murder trial. The study is grounded in a qualitative forensic discourse analysis approach to discuss how the different speakers' roles are linguistically represented in the opening statements of the trial at hand. The selected data was classified into two major corpora: (1) the opening statement by the prosecution presented by attorney Jerry Blackwell and (2) the opening statement by the defense represented by attorney Eric Nelson. Each corpus received qualitative discourse analysis using Goffman's (1981) footing framework that focused on indicators signaling transitions between the roles of animator, author, and principal. Such a qualitative forensic linguistic analysis approach enabled an extensive interpretation of the way footing operates effectively as a linguistic and ideological strategy within courtroom discourse.

The rationale for selecting the opening statements of George Floyd's trial is based on the exceptional discursive and linguistic value. Opening statements are the beginning site of discourse construction during a trial where lawyers do not introduce evidence but set the moral and factual frame before the jurors (Heffer, 2005; Coulthard & Johnson, 2017). In the high-profile case at hand, the statements embody competing versions of justice, accountability, and institutional legitimacy and are thus perfectly suited to examine how footing mediates between linguistic performance and legal arguments. The selection of this data set also matches the study's forensic linguistic objective, i.e., to reveal how language is not only a legal implement but also a site of linguistic performance struggle.

B. Procedures

The analysis followed a four-stage qualitative procedure grounded in Goffman's (1981) footing model and forensic linguistics analysis principles. The first stage constitutes the preparation of the selected data, in which the official transcripts of the two opening statements were collected, verified, and classified into linguistic units pertinent to footing and participation roles. The second analytical stage comprises the coding and identification of the linguistic indicators of footing, such as pronoun shifts, speech acts, modality, lexical choices, and reported speech, which were coded using a discourse-analytic approach to detect transitions between animator, author, and principal roles (Holt & Johnson, 2010). The third stage encompasses the interpretation and categorization of the identified linguistic manifestations of footing to determine how footing shifts were employed to construct authority, moral alignment, and ideological stance (Clayman, 2013). Finally, the fourth stage is dedicated to highlighting and discussing the findings obtained from the analysis of the selected data. The four analytical stages are complementary, as they illustrate how footing functions as a persuasive and ideological strategy in courtroom communication, revealing how the micro linguistic analysis effectively contributes to the macro level of interpretation pertaining to the two opening statements under investigation.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Footing Through the Role of an Animator in Floyd's Trial Opening Statements

In the two opening statements of Floyd's murder trial, the role of an animator is practiced by the two discourse participants, attorney Jerry Blackwell representing the prosecution and attorney Eric Nelson representing the defense.

(a). The Prosecution as an Animator

In his opening statement, the prosecution attorney, Blackwell, exercises the role of an animator that is linguistically realized by many strategies, including speech acts, repetition, direct speech, agency, emotive language, and modality.

Excerpts (1)

1(a) Please, I can't breathe, please, man, please... I can't breathe, please. I can't breathe.

1(b) Tell my kids I love them.

1(c) My stomach hurts. My neck hurts. Everything hurts.

In 1(a), the prosecutor is directly quoting George Floyd, bringing his words to life by reporting them. The use of "please" and the repetition of "I can't breathe" is a way of taking an empathic role, invoking the jury's emotional reaction. Goffman's model of footing shows that the animator is reporting what another person said, invoking immediacy and verisimilitude, and thereby making Floyd the active "speaker" and the prosecutor an animator. The use of the first-person pronoun "I" powerfully identifies Floyd as the speaker and puts the speech in the context of an experiential report of his physical sensation. Repetition is employed here as a linguistic strategy to intensify urgency and agony, a hallmark of passionate speech. These repetitions emphasize the animator role, highlight Floyd's pain and vulnerability, and make the experience directly accessible to the listener.

In 1(b), George Floyd is clearly the animator, as he is the original source of the words. The prosecutor reports this statement verbatim to the jury, thereby assuming the animator role, transmitting Floyd's voice while preserving its affective and interpersonal content. The first-person possessive in "my kids" establishes Floyd as the speaker and locates the speech in his personal domain, emphasizing the relational and familial stakes involved. Also, the use of the imperative mode "tell my kids" signals directive perseverance, and the lexical item "love" carries strong emotive content, making the plea morally and affectively charged.

Similarly, in 1(c), the brief, fragmented sentences resonate with Floyd's physical pain. The prosecutor's animation emphasizes suffering. The footing marks a shift from the narrator prosecutor to a direct speaker of Floyd, making it experiential for the jury. Floyd is the animator, in the sense that he is the immediate source of the words being expressed by the prosecution to the jury. The first-person possessive pronoun "my" designates Floyd as the origin of the experience being reported. In uttering his words, the prosecutor allows the jury to directly feel Floyd's bodily sensations and pain. The repetition of "hurts" is emphatic that connotes severe and escalating physical pain, and the movement from particular in "my stomach hurts. My neck hurts" to general in "everything hurts" are linguistically constructing a sense of generalized suffering.

(b). The Defense as an Animator

The defense attorney, Eric Nelson, also exercises the role of an animator in his opening statement. Here, the footing practiced through the speaker's role of an animator is linguistically communicated by various strategies, including the use of reported speech, active voice, speech acts, repetitions, and lexicalization.

Excerpts (2)

2(a) You will see Officer Lane draw his service weapon after Mr. Floyd failed several times to respond to his commands to show him his hands.

2(b) Mr. Martin asked Mr. Floyd to come in and either buy the cigarettes, exchange, or return the cigarettes. And that second time again, Mr. Floyd refused.

2(c) Officer King and Lane escorted Mr. Floyd to the third location; Minneapolis Squad 320.

In 2(a), the defense animates the action of Officer Lane, reporting in the officer's voice. Footing shifts from Nelson as speaker to a channel for officers' action, creating factual immediacy. The defense places Officer Lane on the surface as an actor performing actions, treating Mr. Floyd as the recipient of actions. The focus is on external action and not internal states or moral judgment, and hence the officer is the speaker-animator of procedural action. The expression "you will see" employs future-oriented deictic phrasing, creating immediacy and guiding jury attention to forthcoming evidence. Also, the use of the action verbs, such as "draw," "failed," "respond," and "show," describes procedural steps clearly and maintains objectivity. The temporal sequence in "after Mr. Floyd failed several times" further emphasizes causality and order of actions.

In a similar vein, in 2(b), the focus is put on what is done by Mr. Martin as speaker-animator, making requests to Floyd, and on Floyd's responses. Linguistically, the text is a dialogic exchange in a neutral, procedural register, where observable communicative acts are prioritized over moral judgment. The action verbs "asked" and "refused" render it extremely explicit to know who says what and to whom, which, in turn, communicates animator responsibility. Additionally, the use of the coordinated options in "buy the cigarettes, exchange, or return the cigarettes" is specific and shows clarity of instruction, and the temporal sequencing "that second time again" emphasizes repetition and persistence for assessing compliance. Notably, the animator role backgrounds Floyd's refusals linguistically and foregrounds Martin's requests. The whole utterances in 2(b) direct the jury to observable behavior and discursively build interaction to legitimize the officers' subsequent behavior, in accordance with the defense's case on reasonableness and obedience.

The same holds for 2(c), with the defense establishing Officers King and Lane as the direct agents (animators) who are taking physical action and Floyd as the recipient. The defense is highlighting action over interpretation, placing the movement in a procedural and neutral frame, and calling attention to the officers' actions without fault being assigned. The specific use of the action verb "escorted" creates controlled, legal movement, inferring treatment, not compulsion. In addition, the declarative speech act contained in the entire structure of 2(c) maintains an objective tone. Thus, the animator's role foregrounds the actions of the officers, using future-tense language, active voice, and declarative style to obtain a unbiased and objective tone that directs jurors towards legal process and aids the defense's portrayal of police conduct as being orderly and in accordance with procedure. Table 1 summarizes the footing through the animator role within the opening statements in Floyd's murder trial.

TABLE 1
FOOTING THROUGH THE ROLE OF AN ANIMATOR IN FLOYD'S TRIAL

Speaker	Footing role	Linguistic strategy	Pragmatic function
Prosecution	Animator	- Speech acts (directives, declaratives) - Repetition - Lexical choices - Direct speech - Emotive language - Agency (first-person pronoun)	- Conveying distress - Evoking empathy - Humanizing victims - Highlighting suffering
Defense	Animator	- Speech acts (declaratives) - Future-oriented phrasing - Direct description - Active voice - Reported speech - Temporal markers - Action verbs.	- Showing compliance or failure to comply - Emphasizing police actions - Maintaining neutrality

B. Footing Through the Role of an Author in Floyd's Trial Opening Statements

Another speaker's role that is adopted by the two attorneys is the role of an author, through which they use footing to persuade the court of their own goals.

(a). The Prosecution as an Author

The prosecution attorney assumes the author role, presenting a constructed discourse that demonstrates a dexterous narrative authority and presents the victim's suffering before the court. Such an author role is linguistically realized by various strategies, including declarative speech acts, modality, emotive language, lexical choices, temporal markers, and repetition.

Excerpts (3)

3(a) You will learn that on May 25th of 2020, Mr. Derek Chauvin betrayed this badge when he used excessive and unreasonable force upon the body of Mr. George Floyd, that he put his knees upon his neck and his back grinding and crushing him until the very breath, no ladies and gentlemen, until the very life was squeezed out of him.

3(b) You will learn what happened in that nine minutes and 29 seconds when Mr. Derek Chauvin was applying this excessive force to the body of Mr. George Floyd.

3(c) We have two objectives in this trial... the first objective is to give Mr. Chauvin a fair trial. Mr. Chauvin has the presumption of innocence. He is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty.

In 3(a), the author is the prosecutor, Blackwell, who dictates the meaning of words to the jury. Linguistically, by employing the words "you will learn," the author sets what is being reported up as a story being retold to the audience, dictating the meaning and imposing on how the jury is to know what is occurring. The prosecutor selects the lexical terms and the grammatical constructions that express judgment and moral evaluation of Chauvin's conduct. The use of words and/or phrases like "betrayed," "excessive and unreasonable force," and "grinding and crushing" is strongly evaluative, as they highlight the conduct as morally and legally wrong. Furthermore, the sequence from "knees on his neck and on his back" to "until the very life was squeezed out of him" employs progressive intensification, linguistically constructing a climax of violence. The rhetorical use of the interjection "no, ladies and gentlemen" is employed to command jurors' attention and to focus attention on the severity of the injury being done to Floyd. As such, the whole utterance is aimed at establishing a moral case, aligning the jury with the prosecution's stance, and portraying Chauvin as guilty.

The prosecutor is the author in 3(b) and gets to decide what the jury will see as occurring at the event. The use of the truth modal 'will' in "you will learn" communicates a high level of certitude to mark the guilt of the speaker with what transpires in the narrative and is controlling the meaning and interpretation of what is occurring by the reader. In this instance, the task of the author is to explain how long nine minutes and 29 seconds are and how much is the suffering. The specificity of time, "nine minutes and 29 seconds," adds accuracy and realism to the facts and ensures truthfulness, but the noun phrase "excessive force" entails judgment of appraisal in the sense that it conveys that the action is ethically and legally wrong.

In 3(c), the prosecutor becomes the author, constructing how the jury perceives the goals of the trial and the rules of law. By saying in so many words, "we have two goals," the speaker constructs the story, inducing the audience to become aware of the procedural and ethical boundaries of the trial. The author's role here is to construct anticipation and establish the standards of fairness. The lexicalization in the noun phrase "fair trial" and the verb phrase "presumed to be innocent" invokes legalized formal vocabulary that indicates procedural justice. The employment of declarative sentences generates authority and communicates a sense of forthrightness, reducing doubt about the aims of the trial. The numerical progression of objectives (first, second) frames the information and expresses structured thinking.

(b). The Defense as an Author

The speaker's role of an author is also adopted by the defense attorney and is linguistically realized by directive and declarative speech acts, evaluative language, lexical choices, and truth modality.

Excerpts (4)

4(a) Reason is an idea that wholly permeates our law, our legal system, and it forms the foundation, and you will see and hear that repeatedly throughout the course of this trial.

4(b) Common sense tells us that we need to examine the totality of the circumstances to determine the meaning of evidence and how it can be applied to the questions of reasonableness of actions and reactions.

4(c) This becomes important as we learn about police practices, because what you will learn is that when an officer responds to what is sometimes a routine and minimal event, it often evolves into a greater and more serious event.

In 4(a), the defense attorney identifies himself with being the authoritative voice of knowledge and interpretation, foregrounding "reason" as a master concept that guides legal analysis. The speaker does not act or bring actions to life but constructs the ideational framework for the jurors to interpret evidence. The employment of the abstract noun "reason" mirrors a physical action for a conceptual principle, and the evaluative lexis in "wholly permeates" and "forms the foundation" emphasizes universality and authority. Additionally, the employment of the truth modality in "you will see and hear that repeatedly" directs the attention of jurors to future evidence and, thus, claims control over interpretation.

In 4(b), the defense is the source of interpretive authority. The statement attributes guidance to "common sense," but linguistically, the defense authors the principal and instructs the jury on how to process evidence, shaping their analytical stance. The employment of the abstract noun phrase "common sense" foregrounds an evaluative principle rather than an action, and the use of the modal and obligation verb in "need to examine" signals necessity, guiding jurors' behavior in evaluating evidence. The complex sentence structure with causal reasoning connects the principal "common sense" to the action "determine the meaning of evidence," emphasizing logical coherence.

In 4(c), the defense performs the function of a writer, projecting himself as a source of knowledge and meaning. The assertion employs cause-and-effect reasoning and explains how a normal police practice may lead to more, guiding the jury's understanding of what follows. The terms of assessment in "important," "routine and minor event," and "larger and more severe event" is the weight and scale of consequences. Moreover, the use of the causal adverbials "because" and "as" makes a logical connection between the witnessed action and its effect, and the use of the future modal in "you will learn" directs jurors' attention towards future evidence while projecting authorial control of interpretation. Table 2 summarizes the footing through the author's role within the opening statements in Floyd's murder trial.

TABLE 2
FOOTING THROUGH THE ROLE OF AN AUTHOR IN FLOYD'S TRIAL

Speaker	Footing role	Linguistic strategy	Pragmatic function
Prosecution	Author	- Declarative speech acts - Truth modality - Emotive language - Lexical choices - Temporal markers - Repetition.	- Directing jury attention to sequence of events - Establishing narrative authority; guide jury interpretation - Clarifying trial goals
Defense	Author	- Directive speech acts - Declarative speech acts - Evaluative language - Lexical choices - Truth modality.	- Establish interpretive authority - Direct jury interpretation - contextualize escalation

C. Footing Through the Role of a Principal in Floyd's Trial Opening Statements

A further speaker's role that is adopted by the two attorneys in their opening statements is the role of a principal. Again, the two attorneys assume this speaker's role to persuade the court of their own goals.

(a). The Prosecution as a Principal

In his opening statement, the prosecution attorney undertakes the principal footing, stating beliefs and evaluations about police policy. Such a principal role is realized by some linguistic strategies, including the use of modality, evaluative language, passive constructions, nominalization, repetition, and temporal adverbs.

Excerpts (5)

5(a) You will learn in this case quite a lot about the Minneapolis Police Department's use of force policy. What you're going to see and learn a lot about is what is the standard for applying force against individuals.

5(b) The force used shall be consistent with current Minneapolis Police Department training.

5(c) From moment to moment, what may be reasonable in the first minute may not be reasonable in the second minute, the fourth minute or the ninth minute and 29 seconds.

In 5(a), the prosecutor positions the Minneapolis Police Department and its policies as the principal, the authoritative source of rules and standards. Linguistically, the prosecutor attributes norms and guidelines to the MPD rather than themselves, signaling that these are institutional directives, not personal opinions. This establishes a layer of authority that lends credibility to the prosecution's argument. In doing so, the prosecutor employs various linguistic strategies, including repetition in "you will learn" and "what you're going to see and learn," which emphasizes the instructional and evidential nature of the discourse. Also, the use of phrases like "use of force policy" and "standard for applying force" invokes institutionalized, formal language associated with rules and protocols. The declarative sentence is utilized to assign responsibility to the MPD as the authority, which ultimately differentiates the speaker's role from that of the principal. Most importantly, through attributing norms to the MPD, the prosecution establishes the legitimacy of the allegations of using excessive force, which ultimately has the function of guiding the jury to know what expected behavior is and where the deviation lies.

Likewise, in 5(b), the prosecutor attributes normative authority to MPD, presenting its training as the guiding standard. Significantly, the modal verb "shall" signals obligation, framing the MPD as the principal whose standards define lawful and ethical conduct. The speaker is delegating responsibility for normative evaluation to the institution rather than asserting personal judgment. The lexical choices in "shall be consistent" and "current Minneapolis Police Department training" convey formalized obligation and compliance with institutional rules and emphasize official procedural authority and up-to-date standards, respectively.

The same principal role continues in 5(c), wherein the prosecutor backgrounds individual judgment in favor of legal and procedural norms as the rule, casting reasonableness as a relative, situational measure. In insisting on "what may be reasonable," the weight of the assessment of Chauvin's behavior is implicitly bound to normative standards of law and professional policing standards rather than individual judgment. Furthermore, the use of temporal repetitions in "first minute... second minute... fourth minute... ninth minute and 29 seconds" is highly evocative in stressing granularity and exactness, signaling that reasonableness is measured on a continuous scale, not statically. Also, the oppositional structure in "may... may not" linguistically inscribes shifting acquiescence, noting that adherence to standards is moment-dependent.

(b). The Defense as a Principal

The defense attorney assumes the role of a principal, which is maintained by some linguistic tools, such as the use of the past-tense factual verbs, evaluative contrast, nominalization, negation, abstract nouns, declarative speech acts, future-oriented directives, and nominalization.

Excerpts (6)

6(a) Derek Chauvin did exactly what he had been trained to do over the course of his 19 year career. The use of force is not attractive, but it is a necessary component of policing.

6(b) There is no political or social cause in this courtroom.

6(c) At the conclusion of this evidence, you will be instructed as to the law...when you review the actual evidence...there will only be one just verdict and that is to find Mr. Chauvin not guilty.

In 6(a), the defense assumes the role of a principal, placing Derek Chauvin's actions under the rubric of institutional norms and professional training. The focus shifts to universal legal and ethical standards that dictate police conduct, condoning his actions under accepted norms. The precise application of the past-tense and fact verbs "did what he had been trained to do" to emphasize conformity to training rather than individual initiative, and the evaluative words "not attractive, but necessary" to contrast subjective perception with objective need, puts force into an ethical category. The other linguistic device to rehearse the role of principal is nominalization in "component of policing," abstracting force into a structural element of professional practice and depersonalizing it. In this context, the defense's language justifies Chauvin's behavior within professional norms and locates the defense's rhetoric around institutional principles, minimizing individual blame and establishing procedural legitimacy.

In 6(b), the defense adopts the principal stance by locating the courtroom as a site of rule by legal norms and objectivity in preference to political or social agendas. The defense believes that the trial must be explained in terms of the institutional and procedural values of the law rather than those of extrinsic influences. The lexicalization of "political" and "social cause" makes possible biases or influences conceptually rather than concretely. Further, the negation in "no...because" emphatically excludes external influence and confirms equality. Crucially, the core function here puts the defense on the side of advocating institutional norms, framing the trial as a location governed by evidence and law alone.

In 6(c), the defense adopts the role of a principal by resting on legal authority as well as on normative advice. The text positions the verdict in a place where it must be pronounced according to law and evidence, elevating Chauvin's innocence as the only legally justified outcome. This speaker's central function is expressed through a range of linguistic devices, such as use of the truth modal 'will' in "you will be instructed" and "you will review" to guide the jurors' attention and build procedural expectation, use of the evaluative lexis in "only one just verdict" to convey exclusivity and legal-moral appropriateness, and use of nominalization in "conclusion of this evidence" and "actual evidence" to build the defense account of legality and procedural appropriateness, leading to Chauvin's acquittal being the sole legal option. Table 3 summarizes the footing through the principal role within the opening statements in Floyd's murder trial.

TABLE 3
FOOTING THROUGH THE ROLE OF A PRINCIPAL IN FLOYD'S TRIAL

Speaker	Footing role	Linguistic strategy	Pragmatic function
Prosecution	Principal	- Evaluative language - Modality (truth, obligation) - Passive voice - Nominalization - Temporal adverbs - Repetition	- Legitimizing prosecution claims - Highlighting dynamic evaluation of force - Conveying policy compliance
Defense	Principal	- nominalization - Past tense - Evaluative contrasts - Speech acts (directives, declaratives) - Modality (truth)	- Justifying actions - Establishing neutrality - Directing jurors toward verdict - Asserting legality and fairness

V. DISCUSSION

The above forensic linguistic analysis of footing in the opening statements of George Floyd's murder trial (2021) reveals that both lawyers strategically alter footing to establish credibility, manage alignment with jurors, and negotiate moral and institutional power. The findings revealed in this study demonstrate that footing, as hypothesized by Goffman (1981), is not static but rather changing alignment and is a discursive and linguistic tool by which power, responsibility, and identity are negotiated in the courtroom. Both prosecution and defense exhibit ubiquitous back-and-forth switching between the animator, author, and principal positions, each taking on distinct persuasive and ideological purposes. The patterns and objectives of these footing shifts are significantly different across the two sides; however, the prosecution's foundation aims to establish aggregate moral agreement and institutional legitimacy, whereas the defense seeks to empathize with the defendant, highlight legal technicality, and disentangle Chauvin's personal agency from institutional blame. Analytically, footing practiced by the two attorneys in their opening statements is linguistically manifested in various strategies, including the use of speech acts, agency, active and passive voice constructions, nominalization, evaluative and emotive language, lexicalization, temporal markers, and modality. These linguistic strategies are representative of the three speakers' roles adopted by the attorneys throughout the opening statements in Floyd's murder trial. This finding reconciles with many previous studies (e.g., Sun, 2015; Henderson et al., 2016; McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey, 2025), whose contributions highlight the significance of these linguistic strategies in communicating the various participation roles in courtroom discourse.

It is analytically shown that the opening statement of the prosecution, given by Jerry Blackwell, revealed disproportionate use of collective and moral bases. Institutional voice is used by Blackwell for a major part of the

presentation, relying on the justice system and overall social morality. The recurring use of inclusive pronouns, such as "we" and "our" demonstrate a common moral space between the prosecution, jury, and society. Blackwell's footing also fluctuates between narrator and moral commentator. In describing the dying words of Floyd, he employs a humanized, sympathetic footing when he stated, "You will learn that Mr. Floyd said 27 times he couldn't breathe." The quoted word is employed as the footing animation that Goffman (1981) demands, a language reenactment that aligns the speaker in order to become an animator of another's voice. Putting Floyd's own words in context establishes emotional proximity and challenges jurors to adopt a morally invested point of view. The prosecution's opening statement also provides epistemic authority by oscillating between ground that is experiential and evidence-based. Sentences such as "you will see, you will hear, you will know" communicate certainty and remind the prosecution of the author's and principal's status. The recurrence of modal verbs, such as "will see" and "will hear" reiterates epistemic commitment, labeling the coming evidence certain and clear (Heffer, 2005; Khafaga, 2023). Significantly, the prosecution's foundation creates a triadic congruence between law, morality, and belonging in the group, placing Floyd as a structural injustice victim while constructing the legal system as the reparation instrument.

Contradictorily, the defense opening statement by Eric Nelson shows a different footing strategy of focusing on distance, technical rationality, and legal precision. The defense footing was between institutional explainer and neutral commentator, avoiding emotive alignment and instead constructing the case in evidentiary and procedural terms. Nelson is inclined to adopt a footing of fact mediator, and as such, he adopts a reported footing in the sense of "you will see body camera footage" and "you will hear expert testimony." This footing constructs a position of objectivity and professionalism (Cotterill, 2003). Furthermore, the strategic footing shift also allows Nelson to embed Chauvin's position in an updated manner. Through pronoun shifting and passive voice, such as "force was used" and "the officers reacted," Nelson decreases Chauvin's active agency, constructing what Goffman (1981) referred to as footing misalignment, a move that displaces the speaker from the central focus of moral culpability. This discursive distancing is typical of defensive courtroom practice (Luchjenbroers, 1993; Heffer, 2005; Gupta, 2022). The defense also employs recontextualization of institutional agency, frequently invoking "the Minneapolis Police Department training" and "policy-approved techniques." This footing shifts agency out of Chauvin and onto the institution, portraying the defendant as an instrument of policy rather than an independent moral actor. This is consistent with what Fairclough (1995) calls institutional intertextuality, meaning that the use of institutional discourse to legitimate and emasculate personal blame. Obviously, Nelson's use of modality, as in "may show," "could indicate," and "might suggest," exhibits low epistemic commitment, indicating uncertainty and hence calling for jurors to adopt a cautious interpretive stance. This footing shift creates an evidential framework of reasonable doubt, the target of the defense's linguistic performance.

The analysis further clarifies how footing in courtroom discourse functions as both an interactional and ideological mechanism. Interactionally, footing allows speakers to negotiate professional (attorney, judge) and lay (juror) participants' power asymmetry. Ideologically, footing allows counsel to inscribe larger social meanings like justice, race, and morality into trial discourse. In the Floyd trial, footing is both a linguistic resource and a performative social act of positioning. The prosecution's footing appeals to society's narratives of racial injustice and invokes moral solidarity, whereas the defense's footing appeals to institutional procedure and individual neutrality. These irreconcilable orientations are an instance of what Goffman (1981) refers to as 'production format layering,' in which speakers inhabit a variety of frames of reference (professional, moral, and institutional) at once. The ideological significance of the findings consists of the ways footing constructs juror alignment. The moral footing of the prosecution's opening statement conveys emotional and communal engagement, on the one hand, and the technical footing of the defense's opening statement establishes cognitive distance, on the other. These alignments are indicative of how courtroom discourse functions as a site of linguistic and ideological negotiation between legal rationality and moral justice (Conley & O'Barr, 2005; Cotterill, 2003).

VI. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of Goffman's (1981) interaction model of footing in the opening statements of the George Floyd murder trial, focusing on the linguistic strategies employed by the prosecution and defense to convey ideological positioning. The analysis revealed systematic differences across animator, author, and principal roles. The prosecution strategically used animator footing to voice the victim and bystanders, author footing to construct morally evaluative narratives, and principal footing to assert ethical and normative judgments. Conversely, the defense used animator footing to voice officers and witnesses procedurally, author footing to frame narratives rationally, and principal footing to assert legality and adherence to police training. These findings directly address the research questions by showing how footing roles are employed to shape juror perception, convey ideological stance, and achieve trial objectives, confirming the relevance of footing analysis in forensic linguistics.

For future research, this study recommends a number of further studies as follows: First, examining other trials would allow for cross-case comparability to determine whether the footing strategies revealed in the current study are stable across legal case types. Second, combining multimodal analysis, i.e., gestures, facial expressions, and intonation, could reveal how nonverbal signals interact with linguistic footing to influence juror interpretation. Third, investigating juror response to different footing strategies may provide empirical evidence of their effect on persuasion, integrating discourse analysis and social cognition and legal psychology. Finally, cross-jurisdictional and cross-cultural comparison

may investigate how legal convention and courtroom culture affect the use of footing in determining the use of strategic communication in forensic linguistics contexts.

APPENDIX

Link to the two opening statements of George Floyd's murder trial:

<https://www.famous-trials.com/george-floyd/2718-opening-arguments-in-the-george-floyd-murder-chauvin-trial>

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A Quantitative Inquiry Into Translation App Usage and Post-Editing Strategies Among Taiwanese EFL Tertiary Students

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Abstract—With enhanced technology, numerous students increasingly use varied applications to facilitate their English learning, and some have chosen translation apps to improve their comprehension. However, due to the imperfect and inconsistent quality of translation, the content produced by these apps may still require verification and correction. This study examined how Taiwanese tertiary students utilized translation apps to help them learn English, what post-editing strategies they adopted to check the final product, and their perceptions of using these apps. A total of 519 participants were recruited, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and one-way ANOVA through SPSS Statistics 23. The results revealed that students primarily used translation apps for reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation practice. They frequently applied light post-editing strategies to correct grammar and word choices and full post-editing strategies to add context or rectify inaccurate translations. It also showed that English proficiency influenced students' use of post-editing strategies; intermediate and proficient students employed post-editing strategies more frequently than those at the preliminary level. Most students expressed positive attitudes toward using translation apps to learn English. Finally, this study highlights the potential of integrating translation apps and post-editing strategies to improve students' learning efficiency, reinforce their linguistic abilities, and foster metacognitive development.

Index Terms—translation apps, English learning, tertiary EFL learners, post-editing strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a strategy that helps people break the language barrier and is often used in the language learning process. Yulita (2021) indicated that through the translation process, learners could comprehend the contexts and learn English more promptly. As learners learn languages via translation, they can improve language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, translation can be an effective language learning technique for individuals learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Samardali & Ismael, 2017).

Owing to the advancement of technology, language learners have more options that are different from the traditional learning models to support the language learning process via varying learning tools. Among these tools, language learning applications (apps) are properly regarded as the most effective way to suit individuals' needs without restrictions on time and place. Take translation apps as an example; some researchers indicated that applying Google Translate in language courses improved students' English reading, writing, vocabulary, and translation skills (Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Bahri & Mahadi, 2016), among which most significant is for practicing their writing skills. Moreover, after utilizing translation apps for English learning, Bahri and Mahadi (2016) pointed out that students enjoyed their English learning process more and better understood their English proficiency. Using apps in language learning not only brings some benefits to learners, but they also have positive attitudes toward using translation apps in their language learning experiences.

Apart from making good use of proper apps in language learning, the translation abilities of learners, namely the competence of post-editing, play an essential role in producing qualified translation texts. Post-editing is generally defined as correcting the output produced by machine translation (MT). Lin et al. (2021) suggested that to prevent language-related jobs from being replaced by AI in this AI-powered era, language learners need to learn how to recognize and assess the quality of the raw output and cultivate their post-editing abilities. Currently, machines cannot provide a translated text full of warmth, creation, and characteristics. Hence, in response to the ever-changing technology, learners are advised to develop their transcreation competence and enhance post-editing skills to offer improved high-quality translation work (Lin et al., 2021).

Most of the studies separated the topics of translation strategies (Edelia & Maharsi, 2022; Khan et al., 2021; Liao,

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2006; Thani & Ageli, 2020) and post-editing strategies (Girletti, 2022; Hong & Lee, 2021), and the former targeted EFL learners, while the latter targeted professional editors and translators. Given this, this study focused on tertiary students in Taiwan. It aimed to examine students' use of translation apps in English learning, explore their post-editing strategies after using translation apps, and gain insight into their perspectives on integrating translation apps into their language learning process. Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions are proposed:

1. In what ways do students utilize translation apps to support their English learning process?
2. What types of post-editing strategies do students employ after generating translations through apps?
3. How do students perceive the use of translation apps as a supplementary tool for learning English?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Translation as an English Learning Strategy

Students often use translation while learning foreign languages since it is a practical learning way to acquire their second language (Samardali & Ismael, 2017). Through translation, it could improve students' English in various aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar, idiomatical expressions, writing skills, and so forth (Alaboud, 2022; Khan et al., 2021; Samardali & Ismael, 2017). Additionally, based on Alaboud's (2022) research, students could improve their linguistic and conversational abilities when learning translation accompanied by innovative devices. Using effective translation tools to learn languages helps learners progress significantly in improving their foreign language skills.

Liao (2006) indicated that EFL learners frequently took translation as an English learning strategy. Some research held a positive attitude toward translation in English learning (Edelia & Maharsi, 2022; Khan et al., 2021; Liao, 2006; Ying et al., 2018) and has revealed that learners used their first language to help them comprehend the contents of a foreign language (Edelia & Maharsi, 2022; Liao, 2006; Ying et al., 2018). However, some research argued that translation harms learners' English learning process (Thani & Ageli, 2020; Ying et al., 2018). Further, different factors influenced learners' utilization of translation. For instance, low English-proficient learners preferred translating in English learning, while high English-proficient learners preferred using English directly. Learners with high English proficiency were inclined to learn English skills by analyzing different grammatical structures (Liao, 2006; Qassem, 2021; Yulita, 2021). Although various factors can influence learners' willingness to learn English through translation, the strategies for doing so remain common among EFL learners.

Additionally, as the AI-driven era is a present progressing tense, many translation tools, such as MT, a digital device to translate texts from one language into another without human intervention (Kornacki, 2018; Potapova et al., 2022), revolutionize their translation quantity and quality. Thanks to the development of MT, students strengthened their language skills after using it to assist their foreign language learning. In recent years, many tech tycoons such as Google, Microsoft, and DeepL introduced their translation apps featuring the neural machine translation (NMT) system, enabling translation apps to generate more accurate and higher-quality translations (Caswell & Liang, 2020; Forman, 2023; Mohan & Skotdal, 2021; Pitman, 2021). OpenAI's app version of ChatGPT could even converse with users and understand their translation requests through a natural language processing tool, which enables users to obtain a satisfying translated production (OpenAI, 2023; Timothy, 2023). With the assistance of modern translation apps, foreign language learners now can comprehend messages written in other languages, improving skills in both native and foreign languages. Even with numerous MT options, this study was limited to translation apps that leverage mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, to translate messages from one language to another.

B. Post-Editing Strategies

Metacognitive skills, including planning, self-monitoring, and self-revision, can be used to produce a well-translated work (Shreve, 2009; Whyatt & Naranowicz, 2020) and to learn languages. Indarti (2024) pointed out that initially, translators would use planning skills to organize their post-editing process and decide the necessary strategies to apply to the specific genre of translation. While translating, translators were aware of mistakes in the translated content by utilizing self-monitoring skills and ensured that the emerging translation reached the expected quality by using self-revision skills (Indarti, 2024; Whyatt & Naranowicz, 2020). During language learning, students often detect MT's mistranslations using self-monitoring skills. Through the self-monitoring strategies, students could comprehend the context, cultivate their critical thinking, and develop problem-solving abilities, facilitating them to build an applicable way of study (Araghian et al., 2018; Cárdenas, 2018; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Yang & Wang, 2023). Jia and Lai (2022) maintained that the quality of MT production is not as accurate as human translation. Therefore, post-editors had to follow the criteria of each translation genre to offer a steady translation quality for target readers. In other words, post-editors were responsible for guaranteeing that the intended meaning of the source language was conveyed correctly in MT output and that errors in the target language were corrected (Michael et al., 2016; do Carmo, 2017). Moreover, depending on varied genres of texts, post-editors adopted different post-editing strategies, namely, light post-editing and full post-editing (Jia & Sun, 2022; Koponen, 2016; Krings, 2001; Massardo et al., 2016), and utilized specific strategies based on the expected results of the translation. Massardo et al. (2016) argued that light post-editing strategies aimed to provide a semantically correct translation without any omitted information; full post-editing strategies aimed to provide a semantically, syntactically, grammatically, and stylistically acceptable translation. Given these concepts, Chang (2020)

and Shih (2021) indicated that post-editors employed light post-editing strategies, such as the correction of spelling, grammar, and punctuation, to amend linguistic-related errors in MT. Alternatively, post-editors amended pragmatic and affective errors in MT with full post-editing strategies involving correcting linguistic-related errors, supplementing information, and using appealing descriptions and tone (Chang, 2020; Shih, 2021). If a post-editor effectively uses post-editing strategies, it will optimize the translation quality and enable target readers to absorb the information easily.

Although MT greatly benefits the post-editing process, learners still need to develop their post-editing capabilities to provide a more accurate production. Students nowadays tend to use post-editing strategies rather than translating with MT or from scratch (Harto et al., 2022); in using post-editing strategies and other tools, such as dictionaries, search engines, etc. (Chang, 2022) to revise the MT raw output; their translation productivity would then increase and the quality of translated texts would become superior, which finally represented that the overall translation was fluent and accurate (Cui et al., 2023; Jia & Lai, 2022; Tavares et al., 2023). In addition, students also improve their English and post-editing skills from post-editing practices (Harto et al., 2022; Jia & Lai, 2022; Varela Salinas & Burbat, 2023). As students post-edited different topics of texts, they were more sensitive to the specific post-editing strategies they used, weighing their words more precisely. They sometimes could still comprehend the context with limited linguistic knowledge and effectively communicate the message from the source language to the target language without analyzing the structures of different languages.

Nevertheless, students may not translate well while using MT post-editing strategies. Liu et al. (2022) indicated that if students solely used MT-generated content without revision, they could not progress in English and post-editing skills. Even though students adopted MT post-editing, students who were deficient in English and lacked translation time during the post-editing practices produced subpar translations that were frequently translated with a direct transfer strategy (Jia & Lai, 2022; Varela Salinas & Burbat, 2023; Yu & Lu, 2023). Therefore, excellent language and post-editing skills are vital for students who want to produce superior translations.

C. Perceptions of Learning English With Translation Apps

As translation apps have progressed from the rule-based system to the NMT system, they have now even incorporated AI to assist with translation. The translation apps, including Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, Reverso Context, Speak and Translate, etc., were utilized in English learning courses. Lake and Beisly (2019) stated that translation apps could be used to train English-speaking skills. During the speaking practice with translation apps, students had more conversations with their classmates and teachers in that utilizing translation apps allowed learners to understand and review the content they had learned before; meanwhile, this created a bilingual environment and helped students engage in the class (Lake & Beisly, 2019). Moreover, translation apps are often used in vocabulary learning. Alotaibi and Salamah (2023) illustrated that students realized how to use words and expressions wisely and reduce the number of omissions, referring to untranslated words or parts, by contrasting the source and target translation contexts from the translation app. After that, the translation results they post-edited became more accurate and acceptable. Furthermore, Bin Dahmash (2020) maintained that students used Google Translate to practice grammar, pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary. Through its camera feature and a built-in dictionary, students could transfer the paragraph of the source language into the target language and search for the vocabulary they did not understand, enabling them to comprehend the context thoroughly. Overall, the functions of translation apps diversify learners' language learning experiences and facilitate them to improve their language learning performances.

Besides, mobile learning was often credited with boosting learners' motivation, sustainability, and autonomy in language learning since the learning process was more entertaining and attractive than conventional teaching materials (Jeong, 2022; Kaceti & Klímová, 2019; Lu & Xiong, 2023; Metruk, 2021; Mujiono, 2023). In particular, the use of translation apps in English learning has shown positive impacts, enhancing students' motivation, engagement, and language proficiency in both language learning and translation training environments (Alotaibi & Salamah, 2023; Lake & Beisly, 2019; Ross et al., 2021). Alotaibi and Salamah (2023) emphasized the importance of educators teaching students how to effectively use translation apps and improve translation quality through post-editing. Moreover, thanks to the assistance of translation apps, students are highly motivated and relieved when using translation apps to improve their language skills, such as speaking, writing, and pronunciation skills (Alotaibi & Salamah, 2023; Bin Dahmash, 2020; Ross et al., 2021). In short, the positive attitudes toward translation apps from students and educators highlight translation apps' effectiveness in enhancing students' motivation and improving their language skills, further solidifying irreversible translation apps' role as valuable resources in modern language learning.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Context

This study adopted a quantitative approach using a questionnaire to investigate students' use of translation apps in English learning, their perceptions, and their post-editing strategies. The instrument was adapted from the ITLS (Liao, 2006), perceived usefulness of machine translation (Yang & Mustafa, 2022), and satisfaction with translation outcomes (Hong & Lee, 2021), and further refined through a literature review. A pilot test confirmed strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.936$).

Following revisions, the formal survey was administered from August 24 to October 27, 2023, via Google Forms to Taiwanese university students who used translation apps for English learning.

B. Background Analysis

The study collected 519 questionnaires, but fourteen samples were excluded because the respondents were either not university students, had never used translation apps for English learning, or were not enrolled in a university in Taiwan. Consequently, only 505 responses were included in the data analysis, which utilized the mean, standard deviation, independent t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The final questionnaire demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.946$), with subscale reliability values of 0.914, 0.933, and 0.902. Of the 505 respondents, 75.6% were female ($N = 382$), and 24.4% were male ($N = 123$). Most participants were enrolled in Universities of Science and Technology (66.7%, $N = 337$), followed by General Universities (32.7%, $N = 165$), with a small proportion from other institutions (0.6%, $N = 3$). In terms of academic standing, seniors constituted the largest group (45.7%, $N = 231$), followed by juniors (20.2%, $N = 102$), sophomores (13.7%, $N = 69$), and first-year students (13.5%, $N = 68$). An additional 6.9% of respondents ($N = 35$) were categorized as “other”.

In this study, students' proficiency levels were categorized, using the CEFR framework, as preliminary (A1–A2), intermediate (B1), and proficient (B2–C2). The largest proportion of students fell within the preliminary level (43.6%, $N = 220$), followed by the intermediate level (34.1%, $N = 172$). Additionally, 12.9% ($N = 65$) reported having no English certification, and 9.5% ($N = 48$) were classified as proficient. In terms of translation app usage, participants were allowed to select up to three apps. Based on the total number of selections ($N = 1,150$), the most frequently used tools were Google Translate (42.5%, $N = 489$) and ChatGPT (26%, $N = 299$), followed by Apple Translate (21.9%, $N = 252$), DeepL Translate (4.2%, $N = 48$), Microsoft Translator (2.7%, $N = 31$), and Reverso Translation (0.5%, $N = 6$).

IV. RESULTS

A. The Use of Translation Apps in English Language Learning

Table 1 presents the overall mean and standard deviation of students using translation apps for English learning. The overall mean score was 3.55, with individual scores ranging from 2.97 to 4.25. University students primarily used translation apps to comprehend articles, clarify English structure, learn pronunciation, expand vocabulary, and translate texts.

Regarding reading comprehension, five items (1, 2, 3, 11, and 12) specifically focused on students' use of translation apps for this purpose. Among these, item 11 ($M = 3.83$) and item 3 ($M = 3.57$) received relatively high scores, indicating that students often relied on translation apps to translate English web content into Chinese while reading, which helped them better understand the context. However, item 1 ($M = 2.97$) showed that students did not typically use translation apps before reading English articles.

Vocabulary learning was another prominent area where translation apps were widely used. This is reflected in several items, including item 5 ($M = 3.72$), item 7 ($M = 4.22$), and item 8 ($M = 4.25$). Students frequently utilized translation apps as modern dictionaries, as these apps allowed them to search for unknown words easily. Students could better understand word usage in specific contexts by comparing content between the source and target languages.

In addition to reading and vocabulary, translation apps were also helpful for pronunciation practice. The mean score in this area was 3.89, highlighting the effectiveness of these apps in improving students' pronunciation skills. Furthermore, translation apps enhanced translation speed and overall efficiency, as students could use features such as document translation. By uploading an entire file, they would receive a complete, translated document, saving time and making the translation process more efficient. This benefit is reflected in items 14 ($M = 3.63$), 15 ($M = 3.79$), and 20 ($M = 3.75$).

TABLE 1
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION: USE OF TRANSLATION APPS IN ENGLISH LEARNING

Item	Statement	M	SD
1	I use translation apps first to understand the content before reading English articles.	2.97	1.26
2	I use translation apps after reading English articles to check if I comprehend the context.	3.41	1.11
3	I use translation apps while reading English articles.	3.57	1.12
4	I write down my ideas in Chinese and translate them into English with translation apps, which helps me complete my English composition.	3.00	1.25
5	I use translation apps to clarify the differences and similarities of words between Chinese and English.	3.72	0.97
6	I use translation apps to clarify the differences and similarities in grammar between Chinese and English.	3.39	1.08
7	I use translation apps to look up English vocabulary.	4.22	0.87
8	I use translation apps to replace the traditional dictionary.	4.25	0.94
9	I use translation apps to learn English pronunciation.	3.89	1.03
10	I use translation apps to learn English idioms and phrases.	3.37	1.10
11	I use translation apps to translate an English web page into Chinese.	3.83	1.12
12	I use the image translation function in translation apps to learn English.	3.57	1.16
13	I use the real-time transcription function in translation apps to understand English conversations.	3.08	1.27
14	I use the document translation function in translation apps to accelerate the speed of the translation process.	3.63	1.12
15	I use translation apps to finish my English assignments more quickly.	3.79	1.11
16	I use translation apps to check my English assignments.	3.60	1.14
17	I use translation apps to better recall the content of English lessons.	3.39	1.09
18	I use translation apps to review the English vocabulary I have learned.	3.43	1.15
19	I use translation apps to improve my translation skills.	3.48	1.07
20	I use translation apps to translate texts effectively.	3.75	0.99
21	I depend on the translation produced by translation apps to understand the content of English lessons.	3.44	1.15
22	I depend on translation apps to learn English.	3.34	1.11
Total		3.55	1.10

Moreover, the t-test was used to examine differences by gender and university type, while the one-way ANOVA was conducted to analyze variations based on English proficiency levels. The results indicated no significant relationship between gender or university type and the use of translation apps, with p values for gender ($p = .256$) and university type ($p = .306$) both exceeding the 0.05 significance threshold. However, the one-way ANOVA results, as shown in Table 2, revealed a significant difference in translation app usage based on English proficiency levels ($p = .000 < .05$). Post hoc analysis using Scheffe's test further clarified the differences between groups, showing that students at the preliminary level used translation apps significantly more often than those at the intermediate ($MD = .2440$, $p = .003$) and proficient levels ($MD = .4809$, $p = .000$).

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF ONE-WAY ANOVA FOR USE OF TRANSLATION APPS IN ENGLISH LEARNING AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between	11.762	3	3.921	9.504	.000***
Within	206.684	501	0.413		
Total	218.446	504			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

B. Post-Editing Strategies Students Adopted After Using Translation Apps

As shown in Table 3, the overall mean and standard deviation were 3.49 and 1.07, respectively. The mean scores ranged from 3.19 to 3.69, and the standard deviation for all items exceeded one, indicating that the data distribution was fairly concentrated. The results also revealed that university students often corrected vocabulary errors, added supplementary information, and fixed incorrect expressions in the target language after using translation apps, positively impacting their learning outcomes.

This study categorized post-editing strategies into light post-editing and full post-editing. Light post-editing primarily involved correcting linguistic and grammatical errors, while full post-editing addressed syntactic, semantic, and stylistic mistranslations. Questionnaire items 23 to 26 represented light post-editing strategies, while items 27 to 29 reflected full post-editing strategies. Among the light post-editing strategies, students frequently corrected vocabulary errors in the translations produced by apps, as seen in item 23 ($M = 3.60$). Regarding full post-editing, students focused on improving translation quality by adding additional information and correcting misused target language expressions, as reflected in items 27 ($M = 3.54$) and 29 ($M = 3.53$).

The use of post-editing strategies also led to improvements in students' overall translation skills. After receiving an initial translation from the apps, students spent less time on the first version of the translation and more time enhancing the quality, mainly when translating between Chinese and English. This was reflected in items 31 ($M = 3.66$) and 32 (M

= 3.60). In other words, translation efficiency improved after students revised the output generated by translation apps, as evidenced in item 34 ($M = 3.69$).

TABLE 3
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION: POST-EDITING STRATEGIES

Item	Statement	M	SD
23	I correct the vocabulary in the translation done by translation apps.	3.60	1.09
24	I correct the grammar and word order in the translation done by translation apps.	3.50	1.09
25	I correct the use of punctuation in the translation done by translation apps.	3.33	1.13
26	I correct the use of terminology in the translation done by translation apps.	3.19	1.15
27	I add supplementary information or explanations in the translation done by translation apps to ensure the completeness of the translation work.	3.54	1.09
28	I correct the cultural references and metaphorical expressions in the translation done by translation apps.	3.25	1.06
29	I correct wrong expressions or presentations that do not meet the actual use of the target language in the translation done by translation apps.	3.53	1.05
30	I understand the English structure better after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.50	1.04
31	I can accomplish my translation tasks more quickly after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.66	1.01
32	My English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation quality improved after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.60	1.02
33	My English-Chinese and Chinese-English translation competence improved after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.52	1.02
34	My effectiveness in translation was enhanced after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.69	1.03
Total		3.49	1.07

Although the statistical results showed no significant differences in post-editing strategies based on gender or university type, Table 4 shows that post-editing strategy use differed significantly among students with different English proficiency levels, as indicated by a p -value of 0.003 ($p < .05$). The F -value of 4.791 suggests a moderate effect size, indicating that proficiency level has a meaningful impact on post-editing strategy use. Accordingly, Scheffe's post hoc test was employed, revealing that students at the intermediate ($MD = .2351$, $p = .04$) and proficient levels ($MD = .3900$, $p = .026$) used post-editing strategies more frequently than lower-level students. However, the mean differences (MD) between these groups suggest varying degrees of strategy use. The results also imply that students at the lower proficiency level may rely less on post-editing strategies, possibly due to limited linguistic awareness or editing skills. Moreover, the relatively large within-group variance ($SS = 320.419$, $MS = 0.64$) suggests that individual differences in post-editing strategy use exist within each proficiency level. The findings highlight the need to provide targeted post-editing instruction, especially for lower-proficiency students, to help them develop effective revision strategies when using translation apps.

TABLE 4
RESULTS OF ONE-WAY ANOVA FOR POST-EDITING STRATEGIES AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between	9.192	3	3.064	4.791	.003**
Within	320.419	501	0.64		
Total	329.61	504			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

C. Students' Perceptions of Using Translation Apps as an English Learning Supplement

The mean and standard deviation values in Table 5 reflected students' perceptions. The overall mean was 3.49, with individual scores ranging from 3.00 to 3.97. Items 35 to 43 focused on students' perceptions of post-editing strategies, while items 44 to 47 examined their perceptions of learning English with translation apps.

Concerning adopting post-editing strategies after receiving app-generated outputs, students expressed positive attitudes toward using these strategies. They reported improved comprehension of contexts after revising materials produced by translation apps, as shown by the high mean score of 3.79 in item 40. Students viewed translation apps favorably when learning about them. According to items 45 ($M = 3.70$) and 47 ($M = 3.97$), students experienced reduced anxiety when using translation apps to learn English and considered them practical tools for language learning.

However, students held neutral views regarding translation apps' quality and accuracy, as indicated by the mean scores in items 36 ($M = 3.00$) and 37 ($M = 3.10$). They did not feel that the translation output fully met their expectations, maintaining a balanced, neutral perspective on the overall quality of translations provided by the apps.

TABLE 5
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

Item	Statement	M	SD
35	I think I can notice the mistranslations in the translation apps.	3.41	1.01
36	I think the translation apps' results are exactly as I expected.	3.00	0.92
37	I believe in the translation results that the translation apps have provided.	3.10	0.98
38	I think I have a deeper understanding of the different types of texts after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.54	0.89
39	I think I can translate more accurately after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.57	0.91
40	I think I comprehended the context better after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.79	0.90
41	I am satisfied with the accuracy of the final work after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.49	0.90
42	I am satisfied with the fluency and readability of the final work after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.57	0.91
43	I am satisfied with the terminologies in the final work after revising the translation work done by translation apps.	3.40	0.92
44	I think using translation apps enhances my motivation and interest in English learning.	3.42	0.98
45	I think using translation apps reduces my learning fear of learning English.	3.70	1.00
46	I think using translation apps can increase my opportunities to interact with native speakers.	3.44	1.09
47	I think translation apps are good English learning supplements.	3.97	0.88
Total		3.49	0.95

Additionally, the study examined the relationships among three dependent variables: the use of translation apps in English learning, post-editing strategies, and students' perceptions. As presented in Table 6, the results of descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation revealed significant relationships between these variables ($p = .000$), indicating robust relationships rather than chance occurrences. A moderate positive correlation was identified between the use of translation apps and students' perceptions ($r = .586$), highlighting that students who use translation apps more frequently tend to have a more favorable perception of them. Likewise, a moderate correlation exists between post-editing strategies and students' perceptions ($r = .524$), indicating that students who engage more in post-editing tend to view the translation apps more positively. However, the positive correlation between the use of translation apps and post-editing strategies was relatively weak ($r = .367$) compared to the other relationships. This suggests that merely using translation apps does not strongly predict how frequently students engage in post-editing. Other factors, such as learners' proficiency level, may influence post-editing behavior.

Since students' perceptions correlate more strongly with both app usage and post-editing strategies, this could indicate that positive attitudes toward translation apps may encourage both frequent usage and engagement in refining translations. On the other hand, the weaker correlation between app use and post-editing may suggest that some students rely on raw translations without making substantial edits while others actively refine their output. The standard deviations (SDs) are relatively high (1.10 for app use, 1.07 for post-editing strategy, and 0.95 for perceptions), indicating an inconsistency in how students interact with translation apps and their post-editing behaviors, suggesting individual differences in how students adopt and integrate translation tools into their learning.

TABLE 6
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS FOR STUDY VARIABLES

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Use of Translation Apps in English Learning	505	3.55	1.10	-	.367**	.586**
2. Post-Editing Strategies	505	3.49	1.07	.367**	-	.524**
3. Students' Perceptions	505	3.49	0.95	.586**	.524**	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A. Discussion and Conclusion

With the increasing prevalence of translation apps, teachers and students have begun incorporating them into language teaching and learning (Hoi, 2020; Polakova & Klimova, 2023). This study further highlights that university students in Taiwan frequently use Google Translate and ChatGPT as their preferred translation tools. The results also indicated that students preferred reading and translating the original online articles simultaneously. With the various functions of translation apps, students could analyze sentence structures in both languages, look up new vocabulary, and practice pronunciation. These apps made their workflow faster and made them more effective learners during translation. Translation apps had a positive impact on students' English learning experiences, as they helped improve their skills in multiple areas and learning outcomes, which aligned with previous research (Alaboud, 2022; Alhaisoni & Alhaysony, 2017; Bahri & Mahadi, 2016; Bin Dahmash, 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Wongsuriya, 2020).

Besides, the study indicated that students gained a better understanding of the context when learning to correct different types of translation errors from the raw output of these apps. At the same time, they were able to reduce their anxiety during the English learning process. Kim and Cha (2023) reported similar findings, showing that students better understood reading original texts and felt less intimidated when speaking English. Furthermore, the findings revealed a correlation between students' use of translation apps and their English proficiency levels. Students at the preliminary level relied more heavily on these apps for language learning. In contrast, intermediate and proficient students used apps less frequently as they could comprehend most content without assistance, consistent with Khan et al.'s (2021) research.

Although translation apps could be used for language learning, students still needed to use their metacognition strategies to notice, reflect and revise the outcomes of translations, which aligned with the findings of Alhaisoni and Alhaysony (2017). Their research noted that students often cross-checked word meanings in dictionaries when using translation apps for vocabulary learning. Further, this study revealed that the light post-editing strategies students frequently used included correcting words and grammar while their full post-editing strategies often involved adding supplementary information and amending inaccurate expressions in the target language. Moreover, the results showed that English proficiency influenced students' post-editing strategies, consistent with several studies (Chung, 2020; Niño, 2008; Shin & Chon, 2023). It was observed that intermediate and proficient students employed post-editing strategies more frequently than those at preliminary levels. Stapleton and Leung (2019) argued that learners' proficiency in a second language enabled more advanced students to identify a broader range of errors and apply the appropriate post-editing strategies. Similarly, Chung (2020) noted that learners with lower proficiency tended to correct only lexical errors, whereas those with higher proficiency could address more complex translation issues. This suggested that proficient learners possessed sufficient linguistic knowledge of both languages, allowing them to easily translate between both languages.

B. Limitations and Suggestions

This research primarily examined Taiwanese tertiary students' use of translation apps in English learning, their post-editing strategies, and their perceptions of translation apps as a supplement to language learning. However, there are several limitations that future research should address.

First, as Timothy (2023) highlighted, the interactive nature of ChatGPT allowed users to customize translations and provide feedback for adjustments. This differs significantly from traditional translation tools such as Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, and DeepL Translate. Therefore, future studies might focus on investigating one particular AI translation app to gain a more focused understanding of its unique capabilities. Second, the influence of linguistic differences across languages should be considered. Different languages follow distinct grammatical rules, which may lead to variations in the use of post-editing strategies. For example, Yang (2018) pointed out that Chinese-to-English translations often require correcting grammatical errors and addressing omissions. In contrast, English-to-Chinese translations more frequently involve using established terms and correcting mistranslated words. Future research could explore post-editing strategies in specific language pairs, such as Chinese-to-English or English-to-Chinese, to better understand these variations.

Despite these limitations, this study provides a foundational understanding of EFL learners' use of translation apps and post-editing strategies. It also offers valuable insights into students' positive perceptions of translation apps as practical tools in their English learning experiences. Hence, based on these findings, it is recommended that language teachers integrate translation apps with explicit post-editing instruction to help students refine accuracy, fluency, and contextual understanding, leading to more effective language learning and strengthening their overall language proficiency.

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Foreign Learners' Perceptions of Plurilingual Pedagogy in Indonesian BIPA Classrooms: Insights Into Learning Engagement and Performance

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Abstract—This study investigates the perceptions of foreign learners toward plurilingual pedagogy in BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers) programs and examines how these perceptions impact learning performance. Drawing on translanguaging theory and the CEFR's plurilingual framework, the study responds to a gap in Indonesian language education where multilingual learner realities are often mismatched with monolingual instructional norms. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were gathered through a 15-item Likert-scale questionnaire, followed by qualitative data from reflective essays, interviews, and classroom document analysis. Four BIPA learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds participated in both phases. Descriptive and thematic analyses were used to triangulate perception scores with students' learning behaviors and narratives. Findings indicate that positive learner perceptions toward plurilingual strategies, especially those incorporating cultural context and cross-linguistic scaffolding, are associated with greater engagement, metalinguistic awareness, and reflective learning. Conversely, students with limited multilingual proficiency or linguistic insecurity showed cognitive overload and lower performance. Challenges identified include teacher readiness, affective resistance, and monolingual instructional materials. This study contributes to the discourse on inclusive language education by demonstrating that perception is not peripheral but central to plurilingual pedagogy's success. It advocates for pedagogical shifts in BIPA instruction, including integration of learners' language repertoires, culturally anchored materials, and teacher training in translanguaging. The findings have broader implications for language programs operating in linguistically diverse, transnational contexts. However, challenges such as limited teacher readiness and scarce

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plurilingual resources persist. Based on research at a state university in Indonesia, the study underscores the need for curriculum updates and teacher training aligned with CEFR's plurilingual principles.

***Index Terms*—plurilingual pedagogy, BIPA, foreign students, translanguaging, learning perception**

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, our view of language learning has undergone significant changes. Whereas language learning used to be rooted in a monolingual approach that emphasized grammar, there is now a growing awareness that language is pluralistic, dynamic, and greatly influenced by social and cultural contexts. One of the key changes in this paradigm shift is the emergence of plurilingual pedagogy, an approach that acknowledges and leverages the linguistic diversity and cultural identities of learners (Council of Europe, 2020). This shift does not merely affect teaching methods in the classroom but also reflects a fundamental change in perspective. Learners are now positioned as active subjects who construct meaning through cross-linguistic interaction, rather than passive recipients of rigid rules.

The plurilingual approach views language competence as the ability to combine various semiotic resources in diverse communication situations, rather than merely mastering specific languages in isolation. This concept aligns with translanguaging theory, which asserts that speakers flexibly utilize their entire linguistic repertoire without rigid boundaries between languages (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018). Rather than undermining target language learning, translanguaging enriches understanding, promotes learning autonomy, and acknowledges the existence of linguistic identities that are often marginalized in monolingual classrooms. Cummins (2009) emphasizes that when educational institutions value students' first languages and life experiences, the benefits are not only cognitive but also emotional.

In this framework, Indonesian language learning for foreign speakers (BIPA) is an interesting example at the intersection of language policy, cultural diplomacy, and the multilingual diversity of learners. The potential of BIPA as a plurilingual learning space is actually very large. However, the implementation of plurilingual strategies in BIPA classrooms is still uneven and tends to be minimal. Although the BIPA learning environment is generally multilingual, teaching practices often revert to monolingual patterns, resulting in the linguistic richness brought by learners being underutilized.

The gap between students' multilingual reality and the monolingual approach in teaching can hinder their engagement while limiting learning outcomes. Therefore, understanding how international students perceive the implementation of plurilingual strategies in BIPA learning is crucial. Students' perceptions are not an additional factor but a core aspect that influences motivation, participation, and cognition (Dörnyei, 2005; Little & Kirwan, 2019). When their linguistic backgrounds are valued, students are more likely to engage deeply and achieve academic success.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the following: How do foreign learners in BIPA programs perceive the application of plurilingual pedagogy? What challenges do they encounter when navigating multilingual instruction? And crucially, how does their perception relate to their learning outcomes? Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, this study integrates statistical and thematic data to provide a nuanced understanding of the pedagogical affordances and constraints of plurilingualism in BIPA classrooms.

By situating this research within the broader discourse of inclusive and equitable language education as advocated by Council of Europe (2020) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4: Quality Education), the study contributes not only to empirical knowledge but also to pedagogical innovation. It positions BIPA not merely as a language program but as a frontier for testing and refining plurilingual pedagogical models that are urgently needed in today's transnational educational spaces. Given Indonesia's rising prominence as a regional hub for language diplomacy, optimizing BIPA through inclusive pedagogies such as plurilingualism is not only a classroom concern but a strategic national priority.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Plurilingualism and The CEFR

Plurilingual competence, as comprehensively outlined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020), transcends traditional monolingual or bilingual paradigms that treat languages as discrete and independent systems. Instead, this model emphasizes an integrated and dynamic use of learners' entire linguistic and cultural repertoires to construct meaning, communicate effectively, and engage in intercultural exchanges (Council of Europe, 2020). In plurilingualism, language users do not simply toggle between isolated codes; they fluidly mobilize their varied linguistic resources in service of communication and understanding.

Dynamic language proficiency cannot be viewed merely as the sum of skills in separate languages, but rather as a holistic and continuously developing capacity through sustained plurilingual practice. An individual builds communicative competence by integrating all the languages they know in a unified way, enabling mediation, code-switching, and translingual expression (Council of Europe, 2020). This integrative perspective aligns with a theoretical framework that views plurilingual competence as a complex system comprising interconnected cognitive, affective, and social resources (Kleppin, 2022).

Empirical findings further emphasize the relevance of this perspective in the context of BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing, Indonesian for Foreign Speakers), where learners must navigate cultural differences and linguistic diversity. Several studies reveal that although BIPA teachers often integrate elements of general cultural awareness into the learning process, they often lack a clear awareness of pluricultural competence as a specific and structured learning objective. This highlights the need for conscious efforts to incorporate such competence into pedagogical approaches (Asteria et al., 2023). Additionally, studies examining the impact of BIPA learning confirm that learning Indonesian not only contributes to improved language proficiency but also strengthens cross-cultural adaptation skills. Both of these are part of the primary objectives of plurilingual education, thereby underscoring the strategic value of applying a plurilingual approach in teaching (Ahmed & Aman, 2024).

B. Translanguaging Theory

The pedagogical implications of plurilingualism are closely related to the concept of translanguaging, which was first introduced by García and further developed by Wei (2018). Translanguaging is not merely a switch between languages, but rather a discursive and cognitive practice that legitimizes the use of the entire linguistic repertoire of learners as the primary means of constructing meaning. Through translanguaging, switching between languages when speaking, thinking, reading, or writing can occur naturally and smoothly, while challenging the dominance of monolingual norms that are still strong in formal education. As explained by García and Wei (2014), translanguaging creates a safe space for students to utilize all the language resources they have without fear of being corrected or excluded. This perspective aligns with Cummins' (2009) idea that the languages possessed by bilingual and multilingual learners support one another, and restrictions on the mother tongue can hinder cognitive development and academic success.

The application of translanguaging in learning requires educators to play an active role, not merely allowing but also encouraging the strategic use of various languages in the classroom. This approach can expand access to learning materials, strengthen language proficiency, and affirm students' identities. However, recent research reminds us that translanguaging is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a practice rich in social, cultural, and political dimensions. Its impact can be empowering, but it remains dependent on factors such as class ideology, popular culture, and institutional policies (Jaspers, 2018; Sultana & Dovchin, 2019). Thus, while translanguaging has the potential to bring about significant change, its success is highly dependent on the local educational context.

C. Research Gap in the Indonesian BIPA Context

Despite the growing international attention to plurilingualism and translanguaging, there is a marked lack of empirical research exploring these concepts in the context of Indonesian language instruction for foreigners. BIPA classrooms are inherently diverse, yet most pedagogical approaches remain monolingual or implicitly subtractive in nature. The integration of plurilingual strategies into BIPA remains largely unexplored in the literature, particularly from the perspective of the learners themselves.

Previous studies have primarily focused on curriculum design, cultural materials, and teacher training in BIPA, with limited inquiry into how learners perceive and respond to plurilingual practices. Moreover, the link between learner perception and academic performance within a plurilingual BIPA framework remains under-researched. This gap is significant because it limits a comprehensive understanding of how inclusive pedagogical approaches can be refined to support Indonesia's expanding position as a regional hub for language diplomacy and multicultural education.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a nuanced understanding of foreign students' perceptions of plurilingual pedagogy in BIPA classrooms and its connection to their learning performance. The choice of this design was intentional, as it allows for an initial identification of broad trends through quantitative data, followed by an in-depth exploration of the underlying factors through qualitative inquiry.

The research unfolded in two sequential phases. In the first phase, a structured Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to capture numerical data on students' perceptions. The second phase then built on these findings through the collection of richer, more contextual data via reflective essays, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, enabling a deeper interpretation of the perceptions identified earlier.

This study involved four international students enrolled in the BIPA program at a state university in Indonesia. The four participants were purposively selected to reflect the diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the initial phase, they participated in a quantitative phase by completing a perception questionnaire, which provided an initial overview of the extent to which they were engaged in plurilingual learning strategies. Subsequently, the same participants underwent a qualitative phase, ensuring data continuity and enabling the researcher to conduct an in-depth comparison between perception scores, personal reflections, and observed classroom behavior.

Data collection was conducted using four complementary techniques. First, a Likert scale questionnaire containing 15 questions measured perceptions of plurilingual practices, including support for understanding, application of translanguaging strategies, and integration of cultural elements. Second, participants were asked to write a reflective essay describing their learning experiences in the context of plurilingual BIPA learning. Third, semi-structured

interviews were conducted to explore written responses in greater depth and obtain more nuanced perspectives. Fourth, the researcher examined classroom documents, such as student assignments and learning materials, to see the extent to which plurilingual elements were applied in teaching practice.

Data analysis was conducted using two approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to group perception levels and identify interindividual variations. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic methods to identify recurring patterns, such as the perceived benefits of translanguaging, cognitive challenges that arose, and levels of cultural engagement. The results of both phases were then synthesized into case studies, linking perception scores with reflective narratives and findings from classroom observations. Although the number of participants was intentionally limited to allow for more in-depth analysis, the qualitative data obtained was rich in information and potentially relevant to plurilingual learning contexts in other settings.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section outlines and analyzes the study's findings by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. The discussion is organized into three key areas: (1) how students perceive plurilingual pedagogy, (2) the challenges faced in implementing plurilingual approaches in BIPA instruction, and (3) how these perceptions relate to learners' academic performance.

A. Student's Perceptions of Plurilingual Pedagogy in BIPA

The results of the quantitative phase revealed that foreign students enrolled in the BIPA program generally hold favorable perceptions toward the application of plurilingual strategies in their language learning. Using a 15-item Likert-scale questionnaire (maximum score: 75), the perception scores among four students ranged between 47 and 57. The two highest scorers, BM and DN, each obtained 57 points, which categorizes their perception as "Good". JY scored 52 ("Fairly Good"), while KM, with a score of 47, showed the most reserved attitude ("Fair").

To clarify how students view the application of plurilingual pedagogy, a table is presented that contains each participant's perception score and relevant response categories. This table provides a concise but informative overview of the variations in attitudes that emerged among the respondents.

TABLE 1
FOREIGN LEARNERS' PERCEPTION SCORES AND RESPONSE CATEGORIES

Participant	Perception Score	Response Category
BM	57	Positive
DN	57	Positive
JY	52	Fairly Positive
KM	47	Slightly Negative

This classification shows differences in the level of acceptance of multilingual teaching. BM and DN appear to show strong enthusiasm, while the results from KM indicate uncertainty and even a possible sense of discomfort. It is important to note these differences in scores as they provide a relevant perspective for examining the level of engagement and performance of participants in the next stage of analysis. In general, the indicators that consistently received the highest ratings include:

- "I find cultural learning activities helpful in understanding the Indonesian language."
- "I learn a lot about cultural diversity in BIPA classes."
- "I feel free to use other languages (besides Indonesian) to help me learn."

The findings suggest that students responded positively to plurilingual elements, especially when these were connected to cultural context and opportunities for linguistic autonomy.

Qualitative findings from students' reflective essays provide a deeper insight into the background of their perceptions. For example, BM wrote:

"Saya merasa terbantu ketika pengajar membandingkan kata-kata dalam bahasa Indonesia dengan Mandarin atau Jepang. Saya bisa lebih cepat mengerti arti dan cara pakainya."

This statement indicates that cross-linguistic comparisons used as a translanguaging strategy are not only positively received but also effectively enhance understanding. A similar point was made by DN:

"Belajar budaya Indonesia sangat membantu saya mengerti kata-kata yang sulit. Ketika membahas tradisi, saya merasa lebih dekat dengan bahasanya."

This quote aligns with the view of the Council of Europe (2020), which emphasizes that plurilingual competence includes linguistic and sociocultural mediation, enabling learners to establish connections between language and culture.

In contrast, JY and KM expressed a more cautious perspective. JY wrote:

"Kadang-kadang saya bingung ketika guru menggunakan bahasa Inggris atau menjelaskan dengan bahasa lain. Saya tidak terbiasa."

Although he categorized his perception as "Fairly Good" overall, this comment indicates the cognitive challenges of managing the use of multiple languages in a single learning activity.

KM, whose score was the lowest, expressed:

"Saya lebih suka belajar pakai bahasa Indonesia saja. Kalau pakai banyak bahasa, saya bingung dan takut salah."

This reflects a sense of linguistic insecurity, consistent with Cummins' (2009) view that students must first feel confident in both L1 and L2 before cross-linguistic transfer becomes facilitative.

From these data, three significant patterns emerged:

1. Learners with rich multilingual backgrounds (e.g., BM and DN) not only perceive plurilingual instruction as effective but also feel empowered by it. Their familiarity with other languages such as Mandarin, Japanese, or English allowed them to draw beneficial comparisons and apply learning strategies flexibly.
2. Learners with limited plurilingual experience (e.g., KM) tend to feel overwhelmed or confused by plurilingual input, especially when it occurs spontaneously or without guided scaffolding. This suggests that plurilingual pedagogy is not inherently beneficial unless it is contextually and cognitively accessible.
3. Cultural engagement enhances perception. Students valued BIPA instruction that connected linguistic content with cultural insights, especially when such instruction allowed them to reflect on their own cultural frameworks. This aligns with Wei's (2018) conceptualization of translanguaging as a space of identity negotiation, where students co-construct meaning by integrating linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Taken together, these findings provide empirical support for the Council of Europe's (2020) emphasis on plurilingualism as a learner-centered, meaning-oriented, and identity-affirming educational goal. In the BIPA context, students respond positively when plurilingual practices are used to deepen comprehension, celebrate diversity, and enable self-expression. However, the varied responses also signal that plurilingual pedagogy must be implemented responsively, accounting for learner profiles, readiness, and previous exposure to multilingual learning.

These insights call for a more nuanced application of plurilingual pedagogy not as a fixed method, but as a flexible instructional orientation that adapts to the diverse repertoires and preferences of BIPA learners. Educators should be trained not only in the technical use of translanguaging strategies, but also in diagnosing learner comfort zones, mediating affective barriers, and designing plurilingual activities with reflective depth.

B. Challenges in Implementing Plurilingual Strategies

While the integration of plurilingual strategies in BIPA instruction is generally perceived positively by learners, the implementation process is not without substantial challenges. Data from both the questionnaire and students' reflective essays indicate that learners encounter various linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical obstacles that may undermine the full potential of plurilingual pedagogy in practice.

Cognitive Overload and Language Switching Difficulties

One of the most commonly cited challenges is the difficulty of switching between multiple languages during the learning process, especially when it happens spontaneously or without sufficient scaffolding. Students with lower perception scores often expressed confusion and discomfort when required to engage in *translanguaging* tasks.

As stated by KM, who scored lowest on the perception scale:

"Saya lebih senang menggunakan bahasa Indonesia saja. Kalau pakai banyak bahasa, saya bingung."

This highlights a cognitive strain when multiple languages are introduced simultaneously without adequate support. In the questionnaire, KM also marked a score of 1 (very low) on the item "I often use other languages to help me learn Indonesian," suggesting a lack of metalinguistic readiness. This finding aligns with Cummins' (2009) *interdependence hypothesis*, which posits that positive cross-linguistic transfer requires a stable foundation in both L1 and L2; otherwise, translanguaging may lead to confusion rather than comprehension.

Uneven Language Proficiency Across Repertoires

Another challenge pertains to unequal competence among the languages within a student's repertoire. Learners may possess functional proficiency in their L1 but limited or passive knowledge in other languages that are often used as reference points by instructors (e.g., English). This mismatch may hinder rather than support learning. For instance, JY reflected:

"Kadang-kadang susah kalau harus pakai bahasa Inggris, karena saya tidak biasa."

Despite being open to plurilingualism in principle (scoring 52/75), JY's comment reveals that reference languages selected by the teacher are not always shared across learners. This creates an unintended exclusionary effect, undermining the inclusive intention of plurilingual pedagogy.

As Gorter and Cenoz (2015) explain, the overlapping competence between languages is a crucial factor in the effectiveness of plurilingual instruction. When such overlap is weak or absent, learners struggle to benefit from cross-linguistic scaffolds.

Lack of Instructional Support and Teacher Readiness

Teacher-related factors also emerged as significant barriers. Some students noted that plurilingual practices were inconsistently implemented, depending heavily on the instructor's preferences and comfort with managing multilingual input. Observational data confirmed that not all teachers encouraged language alternation or provided strategies for effective plurilingual learning.

This finding resonates with Piccardo and North (2019), who argue that teacher preparation is essential for plurilingual pedagogy to move beyond incidental code-switching and become an intentional, empowering practice. Without formal training in translanguaging techniques and classroom language ecology, instructors may default to monolingual norms even in multilingual settings.

Affective Resistance and Linguistic Insecurity

Beyond cognitive and pedagogical barriers, some students also displayed signs of affective resistance a reluctance to participate in multilingual activities due to fear of making mistakes or losing face. This is especially evident among students with lower perception scores, who preferred monolingual clarity over multilingual flexibility. As reflected in KM's statement:

"Kalau pakai banyak bahasa, saya takut salah dan jadi malu."

This statement emphasizes that psychological safety is a key factor in multilingual classroom learning. Wei (2018) emphasizes that the success of translanguaging is not solely determined by the application of teaching strategies, but also by the creation of an emotional space that makes learners feel valued and confident to utilize all the language resources they have.

Instructional Materials Not Supporting Plurilingual Practices

The results of the study indicate that most of the learning materials used in teaching BIPA are still centered on a monolingual approach, thus providing few opportunities for planned language comparison or multilingual activities. Many students expressed that their learning process would be more optimal if the materials explicitly encouraged the use of other languages they master as tools for thinking and communication, rather than merely positioning them as peripheral background knowledge.

These findings underscore the need for curriculum and instructional material development aligned with the action-oriented and multilingual vision mandated by the CEFR. Ideal instructional materials should be enriched with multilingual dialogues, cross-cultural problem-solving tasks, and specialized opportunities for students to reflect on interlingual interactions and how such dynamics shape their linguistic identities.

C. The Relationship Between Perception and Learning Performance

A central finding of this study is the demonstrable relationship between learners' perceptions of plurilingual pedagogy and their observed learning performance in the BIPA classroom. While plurilingual approaches are theoretically supported by a growing body of applied linguistics research, their practical success depends heavily on learner receptivity. This study supports the contention that perception is not merely an attitude by-product but a decisive factor that mediates cognitive engagement, emotional investment, and strategic language behavior (Ambariski, 2012; Dörnyei, 2005).

Positive Perception as a Predictor of Strategic Engagement

Learners such as BM and DN, who scored highly on the perception scale (57/75), consistently demonstrated signs of high strategic engagement, reflective thinking, and critical cross-linguistic transfer. Their narratives revealed a sophisticated ability to relate linguistic forms across languages, connect grammatical structures with cultural meaning, and deploy plurilingual strategies with confidence. For instance, BM noted:

"Saya merasa bisa mengingat kosa kata lebih baik ketika dibandingkan dengan kata-kata Mandarin atau Jepang. Struktur bahasanya jadi terasa lebih logis."

Such engagement is consistent with the findings of Macaro (2018) and Oxford (2011), who emphasize that positive beliefs about language learning influence the deployment of metacognitive and cognitive strategies, particularly in multilingual environments. Furthermore, the integration of identity, agency, and cultural self-reference in DN's account mirrors what Darwin and Norton (2015) term "investment": the degree to which learners commit to the language learning process when they feel valued and recognized.

"Belajar bahasa Indonesia terasa menyenangkan ketika saya bisa membandingkan dengan budaya saya sendiri. Saya merasa seperti bagian dari kelas, bukan orang asing." (DN)

This supports the Council of Europe's (2020) emphasis on "pluricultural mediation" and "learner autonomy through identity affirmation," where personal linguistic resources are not only permitted but legitimized as tools of learning and meaning-making.

Moderate Perception and Inconsistent Outcomes

In contrast, students like JY (score: 52/75) reflected a moderate perception toward plurilingual pedagogy. Although conceptually open to the idea, her limited proficiency in one of the reference languages (English) became a barrier. This suggests that perception may be positively aligned but practically constrained by linguistic competence, a finding echoed by Nouri et al. (2018), who argue that proficiency gaps within multilingual repertoires can moderate the impact of positive learner attitudes.

"Saya ingin bisa membandingkan bahasa, tapi kadang sulit kalau harus pakai bahasa yang saya tidak kuasai dengan baik."

JY's learning performance, while not poor, showed fluctuation based on task type she excelled in culturally anchored tasks but hesitated in metalinguistic discussions conducted in English. This supports the claim by Horwitz (2001) that plurilingual affordances are contingent on the degree of overlap and activation among languages known by the learner.

Negative Perception and Affective Withdrawal

The lowest performer, KM (47/75), exhibited signs of cognitive passivity and affective withdrawal. He showed resistance to language-switching tasks and expressed preference for monolingual instruction. His limited participation and lower self-reported comprehension were consistent with his reluctance to utilize *translanguaging* strategies.

"Kalau pakai banyak bahasa, saya takut salah. Lebih baik pakai bahasa Indonesia saja supaya fokus."

This aligns with Horwitz's (2001) research on language anxiety, which shows that learners who feel uncomfortable or insecure about multilingual environments tend to disengage or resort to avoidance. Yashima (2002) also identifies international posture and willingness to communicate as significant predictors of performance, suggesting that perception is both a cognitive frame and an emotional filter for action.

Empirical Collaboration With International Research

These findings resonate with previous international studies. Ushioda (2009) emphasizes the role of motivation as "person-in-context," where learner motivation and performance cannot be isolated from the sociocultural environment of the classroom. In plurilingual settings, this includes the degree to which learners perceive their identities and linguistic resources as respected.

In their study of bilingual education in Spain, Lasagabaster and Hugué (2007) also found that learners who viewed their multiple languages as an asset rather than a barrier reported higher levels of academic success and classroom engagement. The present study confirms that, in the Indonesian BIPA context, the perception of plurilingual pedagogy as empowering, flexible, and culturally affirming translates into greater learner agency and measurable performance indicators.

Theoretical Synthesis and Pedagogical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, these results support the integration of Dörnyei's (2005) motivational-affective framework, Darwin and Norton's (2015) investment model, and the Council of Europe's (2020) plurilingual vision. Learner perception is a dynamic variable that interacts with:

- Individual differences (linguistic background, anxiety, self-efficacy),
- Classroom ecology (teacher scaffolding, peer interaction),
- and broader ideological positioning (attitudes toward language hierarchy and cultural legitimacy).

For BIPA pedagogy, this means that learner perception is not merely a byproduct of good teaching; it is a central condition for its success. Teachers must not only design plurilingual activities but also cultivate positive perception through explicit validation of student voices, identities, and strategies. Performance, in this sense, is not separate from perception; it is *rooted in it*.

The correlation between perception, engagement, and performance can be illustrated conceptually to emphasize how student attitudes toward plurilingual strategies influence their classroom behavior and learning outcomes.

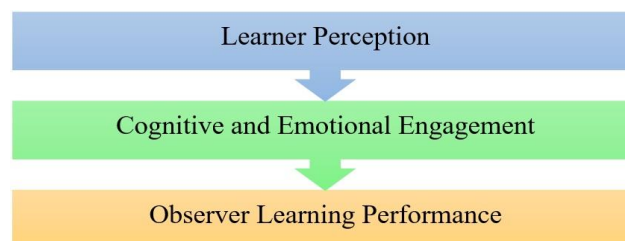


Figure 1. Conceptual Linkage Between Learner Perception, Engagement, and Performance

Learners with strongly positive perceptions (BM, DN) demonstrated higher engagement and stronger performance. Those with moderate perceptions (JY) showed mixed learning outcomes, while learners with less favorable perceptions (KM) exhibited lower engagement and comparatively weaker performance.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that plurilingual pedagogy holds significant potential in enhancing the learning experiences of foreign students in BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia for Foreign Speakers) classrooms. The findings indicate that students tend to perceive plurilingual approaches positively, particularly when instruction is culturally contextualized, allows for the active use of multiple linguistic resources, and affirms learners' multilingual identities. Such affirmation appears to encourage student engagement and fosters a deeper connection with the Indonesian language.

More importantly, the research confirmed a meaningful relationship between perception and learning performance. Students who view plurilingual practices positively and feel confident in utilizing their entire repertoire of languages tend to demonstrate higher cognitive engagement, deep reflective thinking, and active participation in learning tasks. Conversely, those who have negative perceptions or remain uncertain generally experience emotional barriers, cognitive burdens, and relatively lower academic achievement. This demonstrates that perceptions are not merely supporting aspects but rather highly influential mediating factors in the success of plurilingual and multilingual education.

However, the implementation of plurilingual pedagogy in the context of BIPA is not without challenges. Common obstacles include difficulties in managing code-switching, limitations in teacher readiness, and a lack of relevant teaching materials aligned with plurilingualism principles. These challenges indicate that success cannot rely solely on creative classroom strategies but requires systemic changes in the design, support, and evaluation of multilingual education. Therefore, educators are required to redefine language teaching approaches that can dynamically accommodate the linguistic and cultural diversity of learners. If implemented appropriately, this approach has the

potential to create more inclusive, empowering, and positively impactful BIPA learning, both in Indonesia and in various other plurilingual contexts around the world.

The findings of this study also carry significant weight for national language policy and curriculum design. As Indonesia continues to position BIPA as a key instrument of linguistic diplomacy and cultural engagement, embedding plurilingual pedagogy into official curriculum guidelines becomes essential. Policymakers are encouraged to revise BIPA frameworks to incorporate inclusive, learner-centered practices in line with the CEFR's plurilingual vision.

That said, this study is not without limitations. Its small sample size and focus on a single institution mean that the results should be interpreted with caution. While the qualitative insights provide valuable depth, broader studies involving larger and more diverse learner populations would enhance generalizability. Future research could explore the long-term effects of plurilingual instruction, examine teacher professional development in translanguaging, and investigate the role of digital tools in supporting plurilingual practices in BIPA classrooms.

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Distinctive Discourse Features of Ho Chi Minh's Political Speeches

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Abstract—As a politician, Ho Chi Minh wrote a substantial amount of political discourse to serve the revolutionary cause of the Vietnamese nation. However, many of his political speeches go beyond their fundamental social function, attaining the aesthetic qualities of literary and artistic works. In the anthology *On Revolutionary Ethics* published by Su That Publishing House in 1976, Ho Chi Minh skillfully integrated the distinctive features of political discourse with those of literary memoirs, a recognized artistic genre, to create a discourse that embodies profound cultural value.

Index Terms—culture, political discourse, memoirs, revolutionary ethics, discourse analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Political discourse has been recognized as a vital interdisciplinary research domain at the intersection of linguistics, communication studies, political science, and sociology (Fairclough, 2016; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Recent studies have extended beyond analyzing linguistic structures and forms to include media mediation, legitimation strategies, gender, and cultural hybridity in political communication (Cap, 2008; Koller & Kristof, 2022; Obenza et al., 2024; Obenza & Deluao, 2025; Roe-Crines, 2025). A systematic review conducted by Buehlmann et al. (2021) based on 164 studies indexed in the Scopus database, revealed that political discourse research has primarily been concentrated in Western countries over the past two decades. These studies often employ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore themes such as electoral language, public policy, power relations, and political communication.

However, a noticeable lack of intercultural research and theoretical innovation in analyzing political discourse in non-Western contexts remains. In Vietnam, scholarly attention to this field has only gained momentum in recent years. A significant contribution is the work of Nguyen (2012), who proposed a theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing Vietnamese political discourse as a form of power practice. In his subsequent doctoral dissertation, Nguyen (2015) explored conceptual metaphors such as "war," "journey," and "home" in the speeches of both Vietnamese and American leaders, shedding light on cultural characteristics and cognitive strategies in political communication.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, Nguyen (2020) applied Foucault's discourse theory to examine how Southern urban novels (1945–1954) reflected and constructed socio-political imaginaries. Additionally, Nguyen (2021) contributed to the field by studying "indefinite determiners" in English and Vietnamese political discourse, clarifying the strategic role of syntactic elements in positioning political stances and constructing implied meanings.

These studies reflect a growing interest in political discourse among international and Vietnamese scholars. However, most research focuses on Western political contexts or contemporary media phenomena. Meanwhile, the political discourses of revolutionary leaders, especially in post-revolutionary states, have yet to be systematically examined for their cultural-discursive identities.

President Ho Chi Minh, respectfully called Uncle Ho, was a world-renowned politician. He was the great master of the Vietnamese revolution, the beloved leader of the Vietnamese working class and the entire nation, an eminent soldier, a brilliant activist of the international communist and national liberation movements. He stands out as a prominent figure whose discourse not only conveyed revolutionary ideologies but also served as a profound expression of modern Vietnamese political-cultural identity. Analyzing the culture of political discourse in a selected anthology of Ho Chi Minh's works through the lens of discourse and cultural studies contributes to understanding the linguistic structures, expressive strategies, and ideological operations of a political leader, as well as the embedded cultural values transmitted through language. This study also presents an opportunity to enrich the global scholarship on political discourse with a Southeast Asian case rooted in a postcolonial, revolutionary, and Eastern cultural context - an area largely overlooked in previous meta-analyses.

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This article focuses on the anthology *On Revolutionary Ethics* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976), which includes 30 speeches and writings by Ho Chi Minh. Through this corpus, the study identifies the manifestations of political-cultural thinking in language use, the configuration of power–people relationships, and legitimation strategies that intertwine revolutionary ideals with the core values of Vietnamese national culture.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. Concept of Culture

There are numerous definitions of culture. According to Levine and Adelman (1993), culture is a shared background resulting from a common language and communication style, customs, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Seelyr (1997) defines it as the systemic, rather than arbitrary, more or less coherent, group-invented, and group-shared creed from the past that defines the shape of “reality”, and assigns the sense and worth of things; it is modified by each generation and in response to adaptive pressures; it provides the code that tells people how to behave predictably and acceptably, the cipher that allows them to derive meaning from language and other symbols, the map that supplies the behavioral options for satisfying human needs. In the scope of this study, culture is understood as the foundational system of values that shapes human consciousness and evaluation across all spheres of social life. Culture, therefore, is our awareness of the value inherent in all human activities and products, including those of politics and ideology. It serves as the spiritual foundation for individuals and communities, forming the normative basis for assessing all human activities and domains. Hence, we can speak of political culture, ethical culture, ideological and consciousness culture, cultural patterns in lifestyle, work ethic, literature, journalism, and beyond.

The evaluation of human life through a cultural lens always entails a historical dimension. Some cultural values are enduring and universal, while others exist only within a particular historical period, undergoing transformation or being discarded in societal evolution. Often, even when cultural terminology is not explicitly used, our judgments about social phenomena are, in essence, expressions of the perceived cultural value of the object in question. Thus, evaluating social activities based on cultural standards reflects historical consciousness and the capacity to construct identity.

From this perspective, analyzing the political discourse culture of Ho Chi Minh necessitates a unified approach - one that integrates dimensions of ideology, ethics, language, and style - within the broader framework of culture. Such an approach aims to explain his discourse's far-reaching influence and social impact.

B. Political Discourse

Political discourse is a form of institutional discourse produced within political communication, executed by political actors, and oriented toward pursuing power (Van Dijk, 1997; Chilton, 2004). More than a vehicle for information transmission, political discourse is a strategic tool for shaping ideology, regulating social behaviour, and legitimizing power through language. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2012), political discourse represents an intersection of language, power, and ideology within a specific sociocultural context. Analyzing political discourse is examining linguistic means through which political actors perform their political actions. To put it another way, the purpose of political discourse analysis is to reveal which strategic functions are enacted by choice of language. Schaffner (1996) suggests that a linguistic analysis of political speeches can be beneficial if it relates the details of linguistic behavior to political actions. Practically, analysis of political texts may involve pragmatics which views language as action, semantics which is concerned with metaphor, words and their references to entities in real worlds, and syntax which deals with agency, action process and theme (Chilton & Schaffner; as cited in van Dijk, 1997).

There are various approaches to political discourse analysis. One can begin from the linguistic micro level and examine which strategic functions are fulfilled by certain language means, or start from the macro level, i.e., proceeding from the communicative situation and the function of a text, and asking which linguistic means have been chosen to fulfill these goals (Schaffner, 1996).

In Vietnam, the study of political discourse intersects with linguistics, cultural studies, and media studies. Research works by Nguyen (2014), Nguyen and Hoang (2014), and Nguyen (2017) demonstrate that political discourse in the Vietnamese context consistently embeds elements of ethics, national solidarity, and collective consciousness. These features give rise to a deep cultural mode of political expression.

Within the scope of this paper, political discourse is approached as a highly strategic linguistic phenomenon. Language is not merely a reflection of reality; it is deliberately selected as a performative act that establishes authority, reinforces the politico-cultural value system within the community, and contributes to the construction of national identity.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs combined research methods to ensure systematicity, objectivity, and analytical depth in exploring the cultural dimensions of Ho Chi Minh's political discourse. First, linguistic statistical methods and classification techniques identify and categorize prominent linguistic units within Ho Chi Minh's speeches, such as reference sources, personal pronouns, idioms, and proverbs. Second, the linguistic analysis and synthesis method is applied to examine specific linguistic phenomena in depth, thereby generalizing systematic characteristics of his discourse. Third, the discourse analysis method serves as the central approach of the study. It enables an interpretation of texts concerning their

historical–social contexts, communicative purposes, and the speaker's positionality. This approach highlights linguistic strategies and political discourse's embedded cultural–ideological values. Finally, a qualitative content analysis method is employed to explore the deeper meanings of linguistic expressions, decode the messages conveyed through genre deployment, and interpret the ideological values and political-cultural characteristics reflected in each utterance. Integrating these methods ensures the scientific rigour of the research while capturing the multidimensional and rich nature of Ho Chi Minh's political discourse.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ho Chi Minh's political writings encompass various genres, including political essays, speeches, letters, reports, short stories, memoirs, poems, and plays. In his works, as in literature generally, genre is not merely a formal tool; once it becomes an integral component of a work, genre represents the author's particular worldview and conceptualization of the reality being portrayed. A given text may belong to a specific genre while simultaneously resonating with other genres, creating what modern literature scholars call *genre symbiosis* (Vu, 2002). Essentially, this phenomenon reflects the dynamic artistic nature of modern literature - a defining cultural feature of the genre itself.

This cultural trait is particularly evident in the anthology *On Revolutionary Ethics* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976). Although it does not include all of Ho Chi Minh's writings and speeches, the collection synthesizes the core principles of revolutionary ethics, centred on the ideology of "loyalty to the nation, filial piety to the people." Drawing from his revolutionary experience, Marxist-Leninist philosophical insights, and real-world understanding of Asian and European societies, Ho Chi Minh's language and content in this work manifest a distinct cultural value. The power of the 30 political discourses in the work *On Revolutionary Ethics* lies not only in their tightly reasoned logic and persuasive, sharp arguments but also in their authenticity, emotive language, and empathetic connection between author and audience - hallmarks of the *memoir genre*. These elements collectively contribute to his political discourse's rhetorical and cultural impact.

A. The Sources of Linguistic Materials Employed in Ho Chi Minh's Political Discourse

First and foremost, the linguistic materials cited in Ho Chi Minh's political discourse were carefully selected from the reality of the Vietnamese revolutionary movement and daily life. His method of selecting and presenting typical examples from a vast pool of real-life materials closely resembles the technique of choosing representative details used by literary prose writers. The events, circumstances, and characters mentioned in the texts are always associated with specific names, figures, and concrete information. Readers are easily persuaded by the credibility and authenticity of the events when encountering personal names, administrative locations, and a quantitative system of compiled and statistical data.

TABLE 1
STATISTICS OF LINGUISTIC SOURCES USED IN HO CHI MINH'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE

No.	Sources	Quantity	Rate (%)
1	Real names of real characters	24	22,6
2	Administrative place names	37	34,9
3	Quantitative statistics	45	42,5
Total		106	100%

The statistical analysis of linguistic materials used in Ho Chi Minh's political discourse reveals a deliberate and strategic selection of materials to enhance political communication. Among a total of 106 source references, quantitative statistical data account for the highest proportion (42.5%), reflecting a tendency to employ rational and objective elements to strengthen the credibility and persuasive power of the discourse. Specific data allows the discourse beyond mere expression, providing concrete evidence to persuade the audience. Administrative place names, which constitute 34.9% of the sources, spatially locate the communication context and demonstrate a wide geographical distribution. This reinforces the representative nature of the discourse and promotes a sense of community connection. Meanwhile, although the smallest proportion (22.6%), the group of personal names convey a significant symbolic value and set good examples for the public. These names are typically associated with historical or revolutionary figures and are intended to evoke emotion, inspire, and create spreading effects on the public. Ho Chi Minh's selection and combination of materials represent a flexible and effective language strategy, showcasing a harmonious blend between political discourse and literary memoir genre characteristics.

Examples:

- "In our Party, comrades Tran Phu, Ngo Gia Tu, Le Hong Phong, Nguyen Van Cu, Hoang Van Thu, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, and many others have heroically sacrificed for the people and the Party. They have set a shining example of revolutionary ethics and selflessness for us all to learn from." (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 79)

- "During the anti-American resistance movement in the South, there were many heroic women, such as Ut Tich, Ta Thi Kieu, Tran Thi Van, among many others. In the North, ten women from the sectors of workers, farmers, and soldiers were recognized as heroes. A total of 723 women across various sectors achieved remarkable accomplishments and were praised by Ho Chi Minh." (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 14)

Writing about real events and respecting the authenticity of the subject, Ho Chi Minh directly conveyed the truth of individual values to readers. This unique content characteristic of political commentary inherently transforms "factual information" into "aesthetic information." Rather than simply narrating reality, Ho Chi Minh's political discourse also

analyzes and generalizes the significance of the life phenomena being addressed.

Example:

- "Last year, Ha Tay province admitted 6,200 new Party members. However, after admitting them, were they provided with any education? (...) It is good to have "enlightenment" classes prior to admission, but short-term training classes are also necessary once someone becomes a Party member. New members do not fully understand the Party, its duties, and its operations..." (Ho Chi Minh, 1976)
- "Doing revolution is also a profession. Whatever profession one undertakes, learning is essential; thus, engaging in revolutionary work also requires study. Without proper education, party members cannot fulfil their revolutionary responsibilities" (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, pp. 151–152)

The linguistic materials quoted in the aforementioned remarks demonstrate the prominent presence of key features of the memoir genre within Ho Chi Minh's political discourse. These include timely and realistic information that adheres to the highest degree of factuality, while simultaneously serving as a means of artistic intervention in social life (Hoang, 2002, p. 50). The *Dictionary of Literary Terms* notes that memoirs focus on reflecting "a certain state of human existence or urgent social issues" (Le et al., 2007, p. 111). Ha (1999) states, "literary memoirs are a flexible, dynamic genre that vividly and freshly captures reality in its most direct form" (p. 210). Building on prior conceptualizations, Dinh (2020) asserts that, "regardless of perspective, researchers agree on the defining characteristics of the memoir genre as a narrative form that aims to present 'real people and real events' with strict adherence to 'factual information'" (p. 11).

Ho Chi Minh's political discourse, grounded in verifiable, real-life sources, reflects a deep respect for truth. Respecting the truth is tantamount to respecting the people and their right to receive accurate and objective information. This integrity gives political discourse its persuasive power, appealing to reason and emotion.

B. The Use of Expressive Language Means

In addition to incorporating characters, details, events, and statistical data that appeal to readers' rational understanding, Ho Chi Minh also employed a rich system of expressive language devices. Proverbs, idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and similes rooted in folk tradition were used extensively among these.

TABLE 2
STATISTICS OF EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE MEANS

No.	Type of expressive language	Quantity	Examples
1	Idioms, proverbs	75	- "<i>Chỉ tay năm ngón</i>" ("pointing fingers in all directions", denoting irresponsibility or avoiding manual labor) - "<i>Đến nơi đến chốn</i>" ("thorough and proper") - "<i>Ăn ngon mặc đẹp</i>" ("eating well and dressing nicely") - "<i>Trống đánh xuôi, kèn thổi ngược</i>" ("the drum beats one way, the trumpet sounds another", indicating lack of coordination) - "<i>Quang minh chính đại</i>" ("righteous and transparent") - "<i>Tự cao tự đại</i>" ("arrogant and conceited") - "<i>Mồ hôi nước mắt</i>" ("sweat and tears") - "<i>Ăn no mặc ấm</i>" ("having enough to eat and wear"), - "<i>Măng mọc quá pheo</i>" ("bamboo shoots surpassing the old stalks" – symbolizing younger generations exceeding their predecessors) - "<i>Con hơn cha là nhà có phúc</i>" ("a son better than his father is a family's blessing")
2	Figurative speech, comparison	59	- The Party is like a power generator; the various tasks are like electric light bulbs. When the generator is strong, the lights shine brightly. - Criticism and self-criticism are like walking on two legs. Only when both are strong can one move quickly; if one leg is shorter than the other, progress is slow. - In another metaphor, he asserted, "As the owner of the State, one must care for national affairs just as one cares for family matters."
Total		134	

In the selected anthology, Ho Chi Minh used 75 instances of folk idioms and proverbs, clearly reflecting a trend of popularization within his political discourse. Expressions such as "*chí công vô tư*" ("impartial and selfless"), "*ăn ngon mặc đẹp*" ("eating well and dressing nicely"), "*tự cao tự đại*" ("arrogant and conceited"), and "*mồ hôi nước mắt*" ("sweat and tears") are repeated frequently to emphasize revolutionary ethics and the central role of the people, in contrast to the limitations of revolutionary cadres. The use of vivid, emotionally charged, and folk-rich language contributed significantly to the accessibility and depth of Ho Chi Minh's linguistic style, reinforcing its persuasive power and cultural resonance.

Examples:

- *Nếu một người sơ suất, một việc sơ suất là có thể hỏng việc to; sai một ly đi một dặm* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976, p. 24) (If one person is careless, one task is neglected, it could ruin a major undertaking; If you make a **one-inch miscalculation, you may go a mile further**).

Ho Chi Minh sometimes added or omitted certain elements from proverbs or folk sayings to enhance the expressiveness and flexibility of idiomatic language. As a result, the language used in political discourse became rhythmically emphatic, rich in imagery, and more engaging and impactful for readers.

Examples:

- *Miệng nói tay phải làm mới được* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976, p. 22) (**Only when mouth and hands synchronously act** can it be effective).

- *Cơm chúng ta ăn, áo chúng ta mặc, vật liệu chúng ta dùng, đều do mồ hôi nước mắt của nhân dân mà ra* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976, p. 27) (**The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the materials we use** - all come from the sweat and tears of the people).

Such expressions make the discourse more vivid and concrete and lend it a rhythmic and harmonious cadence through the symmetrical structure typical of idioms and proverbs. The use of parallel imagery enhances cognitive engagement and universal associations for readers, thereby increasing the persuasiveness of the argument. The combination of logical and emotional appeal makes the political content more memorable, readable, and effective in reaching a broad audience.

Particularly in political discourse, where abstract concepts must be conveyed to audiences of diverse educational and social backgrounds, simplification and clarity are essential yet challenging. Rather than relying on theoretical or academic explanations filled with dry and abstract terminology, Ho Chi Minh consistently employed simple, relatable, and vivid comparisons that stimulated imagination and understanding.

Examples:

- *Tư tưởng cộng sản với tư tưởng cá nhân ví như lúa với cỏ dại. Lúa phải chăm bón rất khó nhọc thì mới tốt được. Còn cỏ dại không cần chăm sóc cũng mọc lu bù. Tư tưởng cộng sản phải rèn luyện gian khổ mới có được. Còn tư tưởng cá nhân thì cũng như cỏ dại, sinh sôi nảy nở rất dễ* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976, p. 93) (Communist ideology and individualistic ideology are like rice and weeds. Rice requires meticulous care and cultivation, whereas weeds grow wildly without attention. In the same way, communist ideology requires rigorous training and self-discipline, while individualistic ideology, like weeds, proliferates easily). (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 93)

- *Phê bình và tự phê bình cũng ví như người đi hai chân. Hai chân cùng khỏe thì tiến mau, nếu một chân dài, một chân ngắn thì tiến chậm* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976, p. 69) (Criticism and self-criticism are like two legs for walking. If both legs are strong, we move quickly; if one leg is long and the other short, progress is slow). (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 69)

Using familiar folk elements such as idioms, proverbs, and simple analogies gave Ho Chi Minh's political discourse an effective means to reach the masses. Political and social issues, ideological arguments, and philosophical viewpoints were no longer abstract theories or distant concepts. Instead, they became tangible and relatable aspects of everyday life for ordinary people. In his political discourse, metaphorical comparisons were employed as a particularly effective rhetorical strategy to convey revolutionary ideas through vivid and emotionally resonant expressions. Unlike abstract comparisons that alienated the masses, common in early twentieth-century political discourse, Ho Chi Minh advocated for the "popularisation" of political language, bringing it closer to the people's daily lives. Therefore, the elements used in comparisons were often familiar symbols to the Vietnamese, such as rivers, mountains, trees, families, farming, or carpentry. This approach made political messages easier to understand and shaped a discourse imbued with the cultural identity of a rice-farming nation.

One of the most striking features of such comparisons is the symbolic embodiment of revolutionary values through concrete images. For instance, the relationship between the people and the revolution is illustrated as: "The people are like water; the government is like fish," a metaphor that vividly highlights the symbiotic and inseparable bond between the ruling power and the people. Similarly, the image "Protect the unity of the Party as we protect the pupils of your eyes" serves as a rhetorical device and a significant discourse, emphasizing the existential importance of unity within the Party.

Moreover, Ho Chi Minh frequently employed comparisons to create value-based contrasts, drawing clear boundaries between "right and wrong" or "good and bad" ideologies.

Examples:

- *Học cái tốt thì khó, ví như người ta leo núi phải vất vả, khó nhọc mới lên đến đỉnh. Học cái xấu thì dễ, như ở trên đỉnh núi chỉ trượt chân một cái là nhào xuống vực sâu.* (Hồ Chí Minh, 1976, p. 51) (Learning good things is difficult, like climbing a mountain - it takes hard work and effort to reach the summit. Learning bad things is easy, like slipping from the top and falling straight into a deep abyss) (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 51).

The contrasting imagery between "climbing a mountain" and "slipping into an abyss" emphasizes the moral message and creates a strong psychological effect, as a warning and behavioural guidance. Another example "*Having talent without virtue is like being good at finance but embezzling from the treasury. Having virtue without talent is like the Buddha who does no harm but also cannot help anyone*" (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 74), showcases the artful combination of comparison and folk imagery (e.g., the Buddha) to convey a revolutionary philosophy of life.

From a discourse perspective, Ho Chi Minh's comparisons reflect a strategy of democratizing political discourse, transforming it into a "common language" shared between the Party and the people. Instead of imposing rigid and authoritative expressions, Ho Chi Minh established a sincere, dialogical relationship through relatable images: "*Workers must love machines as they love their children*" (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 98); "*Everyone must care for national affairs as they care for their household affairs*" (Ho Chi Minh, 1976, p. 98). These comparisons reflect dialectical thinking between the particular and the general, the individual and the collective, and a profoundly humanistic revolutionary worldview.

Additionally, comparison is key in reinforcing revolutionary values, especially in criticizing individualism. Ho Chi Minh described individualism as a "dangerous enemy," the "mother of all bad habits and vices," even comparing it to

"weeds" in opposition to "communist ideology as good rice." Such comparative images carry strong warnings and position the socialist values the speaker aims to propagate and guide.

From a rhetorical perspective, comparisons in Ho Chi Minh's political discourse reflect a flexible blend of folk elements (such as proverbs and familiar analogies) and political reasoning (explaining revolutionary ideals), creating both logically rigorous and emotionally persuasive statements. From a discourse analysis standpoint, these comparisons are concrete expressions of politically oriented discourse aimed at building trust, shaping ideology, motivating action, and awakening revolutionary spirit among the masses. Ho Chi Minh's political discourse maximized the strengths of symbolic language, thereby naturally conveying ideological messages and forming a distinctive style of working and living close to, and for, the people - one of the most essential qualities a revolutionary must possess.

C. Use of Address Terms

In literary reportage, the expression of subjectivity (the author's "self") and the need for dialogue (with readers) often coexist. Reportage is not merely a genre that records real events and phenomena, but also an art form with high dialogic characteristics. Drawing from this trait of reportage, the use of pronouns and terms of address in Ho Chi Minh's political discourse is remarkably diverse, rich, and strategically selected, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
ADDRESSING TERMS IN HO CHI MINH'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE

No.	Addressing terms	Examples
1	First person singular pronoun	Uncle, I
2	Terms of address indicating occupation and social position	soldiers, army, people, cadres, workers, traders, teachers, youth, intellectuals, cooks, street sweepers, teachers, engineers, commune members, secretaries...
3	First person plural pronouns	we, us, our youth, our young workers and peasants, our comrades, our Party, our cadres, our uncles and nephews, our soldiers, our government, our state, our regime, our army, our people, our Fatherland, our country, our farmers, our workers, our countryside, our party members, union members and cadres, the North of our country, our entire Party, our entire people, our society, our compatriots in the North, our compatriots in the South, our women...
4	Terms of address have kinship origins	Uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters, workers, nieces and nephews, employees, parents of female students, beloved grandchildren, excellent children of the Party and the Revolution, children, elders, people of socialist brother countries, young people, tens of thousands of boys and girls, mothers of soldiers, heroic sisters, heroic grandmothers, mothers and sisters, many teenage girls and children, nieces and nephews, ...

Despite holding the position of head of government and state, in many political discourses, Ho Chi Minh frequently employed inclusive and unifying pronouns such as *chúng mình* (we), *ta* (we/I), *Tổ quốc ta* (our Fatherland), *đất nước ta* (our country), *nhân dân ta* (our people), *miền Nam ta* (our South), *Đảng ta* (our Party), *chúng ta* (we), *cách mạng vĩ đại của chúng ta* (our great revolution), *thanh niên ta* (our youth), *đồng bào miền Nam ta* (our compatriots in the South), *thanh niên cả nước ta* (our youth nationwide), *phụ nữ ta* (our women), etc. The "inclusive" meaning embedded in these expressions helps foster a sense of unity and narrows the social distance between the speaker and the audience. This explains why Ho Chi Minh's political discourse often makes listeners feel that there is no divide in status, interests, positions, or ideals, and instead highlights the unity between the leader and the masses. Using the pronoun *ta* (we/I) instead of *tôi* (I) or *chúng tôi* (we) erases the boundary between the speaker and the audience, reinforcing a sense of collective identity, shared responsibility, and emotional connection within the discourse space. This system of pronouns and address terms is used most frequently. It reflects a flexible, emotionally expressive, and persuasive linguistic strategy, playing an essential role in community building and evoking national solidarity.

In addition, Ho Chi Minh often used kinship-based forms of address such as *anh chị em nhân viên* (brothers and sisters staff), *các cháu* (children), *những cháu thanh niên gái* (many young female youths), *những cháu thiếu niên và nhi đồng gái* (many young girls and children), *các bà, các mẹ, các chị anh hùng* (heroic aunts, mothers, and sisters), *cha mẹ các nữ học sinh* (parents of female students), and others. These expressions helped build warm, intimate, and affectionate relationships between the leader and the people. This style of address evokes a family-like atmosphere and shows deep care and respect toward different societal groups - from cadres, soldiers, and women to students, farmers, and workers. These kinship terms also reinforce traditional Vietnamese values such as emotional attachment, the importance of family culture, and village-community bonds. While aiming to promote revolutionary ethics, these forms of address avoid a cold, didactic, or commanding tone. Instead, they make Ho Chi Minh's discourse feel like heartfelt advice or sincere conversations, making the messages more emotionally resonant and easier to accept. This dialogic element contributes significantly to Ho Chi Minh's political discourse's persuasive power, influence, and enduring impact.

V. CONCLUSION

Ho Chi Minh's artistic political discursive practice not only made his messages easily understandable and accessible to the general public but also, through his language use in the anthology *On Revolutionary Ethics*, gave voice to the people and drew directly from real-life experience. From this, the values of a lifestyle and working style centred on the people and for the people were affirmed with great persuasive power, emphasizing his sincere desire to learn from the masses. Rather than theorizing abstract moral concepts, Ho Chi Minh aimed to help the audience understand them through life experiences, metaphors, examples of influential individuals, and real-life situations. His thought, ethics, and style are not separated or isolated dimensions but a unified whole, mutually dependent, complementary, and enriching one another. These three aspects together fully and authentically reflect the moral character of revolutionaries: a new and great morality, not for personal fame or benefit, but for the collective interest of the Party, the nation, and humanity. The political discourses in this collection address essential and present moral issues in political-social life through a language rich in artistic value. This core characteristic highlights the unique cultural values created by the seamless and harmonious combination of political and literary genres. From such cultural foundations, Ho Chi Minh's political discourse consistently maintains powerful political authority, with profound and lasting influence.

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The Integration of Individual and Cooperative Data-Driven Learning (DDL) as a Learning Innovation to Promote Collocational Acquisition

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Abstract—Collocational competence is a crucial component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' linguistic knowledge, contributing to fluency, accuracy, and naturalness in communication. Despite its importance, Thai EFL learners frequently experience difficulties in acquiring English collocations, and effective instructional approaches to address this issue remain underexplored. To bridge this gap, the present study investigates the integration of individual and cooperative Data-Driven Learning (DDL) as an innovative approach to teaching English adjective-noun collocations in EFL classrooms. A quasi-experimental study employing a One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design was conducted with 50 Thai EFL learners over a 12-week period, during which target adjective-noun collocations were studied through a combination of individual and cooperative DDL activities. The findings revealed that the integrated DDL approach significantly enhanced learners' collocational knowledge, particularly in recognizing and categorizing collocational patterns. However, its impact on productive use was comparatively limited, indicating the need for more targeted practice to facilitate the transfer of receptive knowledge into active production. In addition, Thai EFL learners revealed positive attitudes toward the integrated DDL activities, particularly valuing their interactive and engaging features. Overall, the study underscores the pedagogical potential of integrating individual and cooperative DDL as an effective instructional innovation that promotes collocational competence while fostering an active learner-centered and inclusive learning environment for Thai EFL learners who may be disadvantaged by traditional teacher-centered instruction.

Index Terms—Data-Driven Learning (DDL), collocational acquisition, cooperative learning, autonomous learning, quality education

I. INTRODUCTION

English collocations have played a significant role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning because mastery of collocations, such as adjective-noun combinations (e.g., '*strong evidence*', '*heavy rain*'), enhances learners' fluency and accuracy, enabling them to communicate more naturally and meaningfully (Lewis, 2000). Many scholars (e.g., Hedge, 2000; Hoey, 2005; Nation, 2008; Wray, 2009) have also highlighted that native speakers store and retrieve language in prefabricated chunks rather than isolated words. This makes collocational knowledge vital for EFL learners, as it enables them to express ideas accurately and fluently.

Despite their importance, collocations remain a challenging aspect for language learners, particularly Thai EFL learners, who often struggle to understand and produce them correctly. Many studies (e.g., Boonraksa & Naisena, 2021; Boonyasquan, 2006; Mallikamas & Pongpairoj, 2005; Phoocharoensil, 2011; Yumanee & Phoocharoensil, 2013) have further confirmed that many Thai EFL learners, regardless of their English proficiency level, have encountered many difficulties in learning and producing English collocations. For Thai learners, these difficulties are compounded by negative transfer from Thai to English, which often leads to inappropriate use of English collocations, such as '*strong rain*' instead of the correct '*heavy rain*'. Accordingly, collocation instruction should be emphasized in classroom practice to enable learners to overcome these challenges effectively. Although some studies on collocations have been conducted in Thai contexts, most of these studies aim to analyze collocational errors produced by Thai EFL learners (e.g., Boonraksa & Naisena, 2021; Boonyasquan, 2006; Mallikamas & Pongpairoj, 2005; Phoocharoensil, 2011; Yumanee & Phoocharoensil, 2013). Consequently, a research study investigating an effective method for teaching collocations, particularly adjective-noun collocations, to Thai EFL learners is relatively understudied. The lack of evidence from a research study leaves educators without comprehensive guidance on how to address these challenges in classrooms.

To shed light on this perspective, the present study explores the integration of individual and cooperative Data-driven Learning (DDL) as an innovative approach to teaching English collocation. DDL, introduced by Johns (1991), involves the use of extensive English corpora in language teaching and learning (Jones & Waller, 2015; Timmis, 2015).

Implementing DDL in language classrooms offers several advantages, as it is reported to help learners become more effective language users (Johns, 1991). Individual DDL tasks facilitate independent exploration of language patterns, whereas cooperative DDL activities foster collaboration and peer learning. Both approaches have demonstrated potential to increase learners' awareness of linguistic structures, promote learner autonomy, and support long-term retention (Boulton, 2010).

Despite its potential, DDL has not become a mainstream practice in language learning and teaching, partly due to perceived implementation challenges (Chambers, 2005; Farr, 2018). Given the ongoing debate regarding the advantages and disadvantages of DDL, further research is needed to clarify its effectiveness. Although the effectiveness of DDL has been examined in certain contexts, no previous studies have explored the combined use of individual and cooperative DDL activities as a pedagogical approach for teaching collocations, specifically adjective-noun combinations, to Thai EFL learners. This study addresses these gaps by investigating the integration of individual and cooperative DDL activities for teaching adjective-noun collocations to Thai EFL learners. The findings aim to enhance understanding of DDL's pedagogical potential in developing collocational competence and fostering positive learner attitudes, while contributing to the creation of a more learner-centered and inclusive environment for effective English collocation learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Importance and Challenge in Collocation Acquisition for EFL Learners

Collocations, defined as “the property of language whereby two or more words seem to appear frequently in each other's company” (Hoey, 2005, p. 2), play a crucial role in achieving both fluency and accuracy in language use. These habitual combinations—such as *‘make a decision’* or *‘strong coffee’*—are fundamental to native-like proficiency because they reflect patterns that are predictable to native speakers but often unfamiliar to EFL learners.

In the context of EFL learning, knowledge of collocations significantly enhances overall language proficiency, particularly in terms of fluency, accuracy, and naturalness in both spoken and written communication. Wray (2009) notes that when learners store and retrieve frequent word combinations as chunks, rather than assembling sentences word by word, their speech becomes more fluent, and processing demands are reduced. This pattern of usage also corresponds with native-speaker processing, contributing to more efficient and natural language production.

In addition to fluency, accuracy is similarly enhanced by collocational knowledge. The knowledge of collocations prevents learners from producing errors in expressions such as *‘do a mistake’* instead of *‘make a mistake’*, or *‘big rain’* instead of *‘heavy rain’*. Hedge (2000) and Hoey (2005) emphasize that mastering collocations allows learners to construct more natural-sounding sentences, thereby reducing awkward or non-idiomatic expressions. For instance, *‘strong tea’* is more naturally acceptable in native usage than *‘powerful tea’*, even though both adjectives can be synonymous in other contexts.

Despite their significant role in enhancing language proficiency, collocations present considerable challenges for EFL learners. Unlike single vocabulary items, collocations are not always easily deducible from the meanings of individual words, which can make their acquisition particularly difficult. The non-transparent nature of many collocations means that learners cannot always rely on direct translation or word-for-word understanding, which is a primary strategy for acquiring individual vocabulary (Schmitt, 2000). For example, the phrase *‘pay attention’* does not follow a literal or intuitive meaning of *‘pay’* and *‘attention.’* The verb *‘pay’* is commonly associated with financial transactions, but in this case, it takes on a figurative meaning when paired with *‘attention’*, making the phrase less transparent. Consequently, EFL learners who lack familiarity with such figurative uses often struggle to grasp the meaning, which can lead to misuse in both comprehension and production. This semantic opacity makes direct translation and word-for-word learning strategies—commonly used for vocabulary acquisition—less effective for collocations (Schmitt, 2000).

A further challenge involves negative transfer from the learner's first language (L1). EFL learners frequently apply collocational patterns from their native language to English, resulting in non-standard or unidiomatic expressions (Boonraksa & Naisena, 2021; Yumanee & Phoocharoensil, 2013). This phenomenon, described as negative transfer or language interference, is particularly evident among learners from non-English-speaking backgrounds. For instance, Thai EFL learners may produce phrases such as *‘play a mistake’* instead of *‘make a mistake’*, or *‘big happiness’* instead of *‘great happiness’*, reflecting L1-influenced lexical choices. This transfer of L1 collocational patterns occurs because learners tend to overgeneralize the rules they have learned in their first language and apply them inappropriately to English.

Limited access to authentic language input further exacerbates these challenges. EFL learners in non-English-speaking environments often lack regular exposure to natural, context-rich language, restricting their opportunities to encounter collocations in meaningful contexts. In the absence of immersive input, learners frequently rely on explicit instruction or artificial examples that may not adequately reflect real-world usage (Saito & Liu, 2021).

In summary, several interrelated factors, including lack of transparency, L1 interference, and limited exposure to authentic language, contribute to the difficulty of acquiring collocations in EFL settings. Although these challenges are

substantial, research indicates that instructional interventions emphasizing authentic input, contextualized learning, and corpus-based resources can support more effective acquisition and use of collocations.

B. Principles and Advantages of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) for Collocation Acquisition

The concept of DDL was first introduced by Johns (1991), who defined it as “the use of classroom computer-generated concordances to get learners to explore regularities of patterning in the Target Language (TL), and the development of activities and exercises based on concordance output” (Johns, 1991, p. 4). In this approach, learners interact directly with authentic linguistic data retrieved from corpora—large computerized databases of real-life language use—to discover lexical and grammatical patterns. Building on Johns’s framework, Sripicharn (2002) describes DDL as a process of analyzing vast databases of English texts through specialized software to identify recurring language features. The approach, also referred to as “classroom concordancing,” encourages learners to explore corpus-generated concordance lines to uncover the regularities of lexical patterns, transforming the language classroom into a site of linguistic investigation.

Johns (1991) proposed three fundamental steps in the classical DDL framework: *Identification*, *Classification*, and *Generalization*. The *Identification* step involves recognizing the target language item or structure to be examined, which can be initiated by teachers or learners. The *Classification* step requires learners to examine concordance lines—either paper-based or digital—from corpora such as the BNC or COCA, and group similar examples to observe recurring linguistic patterns. The final step, *Generalization*, is the most critical stage, as learners synthesize their observations and infer language rules based on evidence drawn from authentic corpus data. Through this inductive process, learners act as linguistic researchers, forming hypotheses and testing them against real language use. Based on these learning processes, DDL situates learners as active participants and central agents in knowledge construction rather than passive recipients of language rules.

Recognizing learners as central agents in the learning process, DDL has been widely regarded as an effective pedagogical approach, particularly for collocation acquisition. Sripicharn (2002) characterizes DDL learners as “active researchers” who interpret corpus evidence to develop linguistic understanding autonomously. This learner-centered approach fosters independence and critical thinking—both of which are essential in mastering collocational competence. Scholars such as Kulsithiboon and Pongpairoj (2018), Sripicharn (2002), and Yaemtui and Phoocharoensil (2019) emphasize that DDL promotes learner autonomy by allowing students to independently explore authentic corpus data and discover how collocations are used in diverse contexts. This autonomy is especially valuable in EFL environments, where exposure to native speakers or authentic input is limited (Saito & Liu, 2021). By repeatedly engaging with real examples of collocations, learners develop not only contextual understanding but also long-term retention and more accurate usage (Boulton, 2010).

Moreover, DDL encourages deep cognitive engagement as learners actively analyze and compare collocational patterns rather than memorizing fixed phrases. For instance, when studying the collocation ‘heavy rain’, learners may also observe how ‘heavy’ collocates with ‘traffic’ or ‘workload’, thereby gaining insight into its broader semantic range (Chambers, 2005). This analytical process enhances lexical awareness, promotes pattern recognition, and reinforces learners’ ability to make data-driven generalizations about language use. In summary, DDL embodies a discovery-based and exploratory model of learning that aligns with modern pedagogical principles emphasizing learner autonomy and critical thinking. By engaging learners in corpus analysis, DDL not only strengthens collocational knowledge but also cultivates reflective, independent learners capable of navigating authentic language data. Consequently, DDL serves as a highly effective approach for fostering collocation acquisition and overall linguistic proficiency in EFL contexts.

C. Challenges and Limitations of Implementing DDL in EFL Contexts

Despite its documented advantages, the implementation of data-driven learning (DDL), particularly in EFL contexts, has been reported to present several challenges in the existing literature (e.g., Boulton, 2010; Yaemtui & Phoocharoensil, 2019). One of the main difficulties lies in the technical and cognitive demands associated with using concordance tools. Many learners, especially those in settings with limited access to digital technology, may not possess the digital literacy required to navigate corpus interfaces effectively (Boulton, 2010). Moreover, interpreting concordance lines often proves difficult for novice learners, who may find it challenging to extract meaning from fragmented language data presented without surrounding context.

A further obstacle concerns the availability and relevance of corpus resources. Although widely used corpora such as the *British National Corpus* and *COCA* are readily accessible, they may not always suit learners whose linguistic needs are shaped by different cultural or professional environments (Yaemtui & Phoocharoensil, 2019). For instance, Thai EFL learners might find such corpora less relatable, as they reflect varieties of English that do not align with local language use or communicative purposes.

The role of the teacher also becomes more complex in DDL-based instruction. Teachers are required not only to be familiar with corpus tools but also to design learning activities that match students’ proficiency levels and learning goals. In practice, however, many EFL instructors lack sufficient training in corpus linguistics, which limits their ability to integrate DDL into regular classroom practice (Yaemtui & Phoocharoensil, 2019).

Finally, DDL is often more time-consuming than traditional teaching methods. The process of analyzing concordance lines and identifying patterns takes considerable classroom time, which may conflict with fixed course schedules or

student expectations for rapid progress (Boulton, 2010). These constraints point to the need for thoughtful integration and support if DDL is to be effectively used in typical EFL classrooms.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

Guided by the gaps identified in previous related studies, the current study aims to explore both the effectiveness and the learner perceptions of integrating individual and cooperative DDL in teaching adjective–noun collocations to Thai EFL learners. To achieve these purposes, the study is framed by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the integration of individual and cooperative DDL contribute to the development of Thai EFL learners' knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations?
2. What are Thai EFL learners' attitudes toward learning English adjective–noun collocations through individual and cooperative DDL?

B. Research Design

This study utilizes a quasi-experimental One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. This approach minimizes threats to validity arising from potential external influences, such as intervening and extraneous variables, thereby supporting both validity and reliability (Creswell, 2002). The inclusion of both pre-test and post-test measures enhances the study's validity and reliability, as comparing these scores enables the assessment of improvement in participants' adjective-noun collocational knowledge. In other words, if participants' post-test scores are significantly higher than their pre-test scores, the observed difference can be attributed to the acquisition of adjective-noun collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative data-driven learning (DDL) activities.

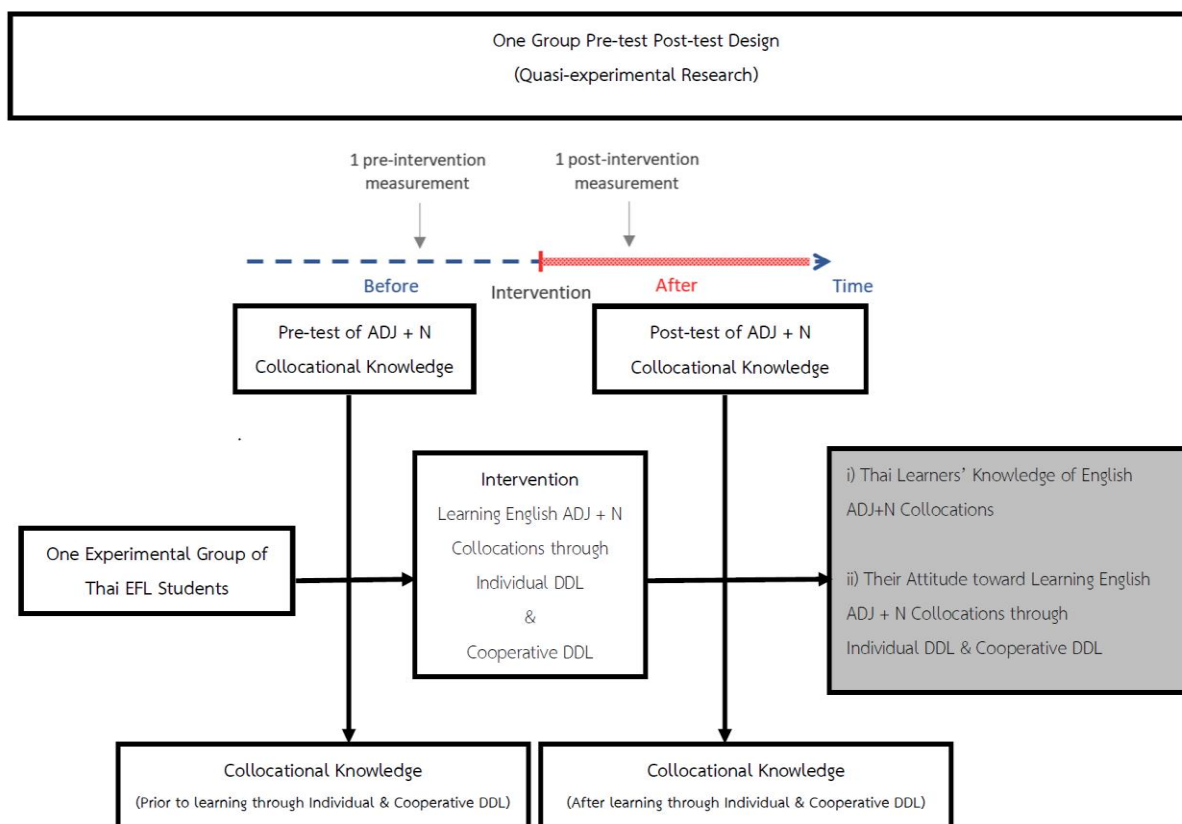


Figure 1. Research Design (A One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design)

C. Participants

The 50 participants were purposively selected from 4,500 undergraduate Thai students studying English at a Thai university, and convenience sampling was used to select the classes the researchers were assigned to teach. Additionally, the major criteria for selecting participants are that their first language be Thai and that they have studied English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for at least 12 years. Despite their experience in English language learning, none of the participants had any experience in learning English through DDL, nor were they familiar with using corpora to facilitate English language learning, especially collocations, prior to participating in the current study.

D. Data Collection

Prior to the intervention, which involved integrating individual and cooperative DDL activities for teaching adjective-noun collocations, the participants were asked to complete a pre-test measuring their knowledge of adjective-noun collocations. After completing the pre-test, the participants were required to attend 12-week collocation classes where the target adjective-noun collocations were taught through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL activities. The structure of each class is detailed below:

i) The first week consisted of a training session in which participants were instructed on learning collocations through both individual and cooperative DDL methods. After this training, participants completed the pre-test to evaluate their adjective-noun collocational knowledge prior to the intervention.

ii) From the second to the eleventh week, participants engaged in individual DDL activities during the even-numbered weeks (2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th) and cooperative DDL activities during the odd-numbered weeks (3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, and 11th). In these sessions, participants completed collocation exercises, including multiple-choice and gap-filling tasks. Both individual and cooperative DDL activities required participants to follow the DDL procedures of identification, classification, and generalization, and to consult the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to complete the tasks.

iii) After ten weeks of instruction, participants completed a post-test in the twelfth week. Post-test scores were compared with pre-test scores to assess improvements in collocational competence.

iv) Following the post-test, participants completed a questionnaire designed to investigate their attitudes toward learning collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL activities.

v) One week after the post-test, five participants were purposively selected for interview sessions. These interviews provided qualitative data on participants' learning experiences and the problem-solving strategies they employed while learning collocations through integrated individual and cooperative DDL activities.

E. Data Analysis

The current study employs both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis to investigate the effects of the integration of individual and cooperative DDL activities on adjective-noun collocation learning of Thai EFL learners and explore their attitudes towards this approach.

(a). Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data analysis was conducted to give comprehensive answers to research questions 1 and 2. The following table summarizes the research questions and the analytical methods:

TABLE 1
THE SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Research Question	Data Source	Analytical Method
Research Question 1: To what extent does the integration of individual and cooperative DDL contribute to the development of Thai EFL learners' knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations?	Pre-test scores and Post-test scores	paired-samples <i>t</i> -test
Research Question 2: What are Thai EFL learners' attitudes toward learning English adjective-noun collocations through individual and cooperative DDL?	Questionnaire	<i>M</i> and <i>SD</i>

(b). Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interview data provided comprehensive insights into participants' attitudes toward DDL and facilitated triangulation with the questionnaire results. The following table presents the research questions and corresponding analytical methods.

TABLE 2
THE SUMMARY QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Research Question	Data Source	Analytical Method
Research Question 2: What are Thai EFL learners' attitudes toward learning English adjective-noun collocations through individual and cooperative DDL?	Semi-structured Interview Transcription	Thematic Analysis

IV. RESULTS

The results regarding the integration of individual and cooperative DDL as a learning innovation to promote the acquisition of adjective-noun collocations among Thai EFL learners are organized according to the two research questions:

(i) the extent to which the integration of individual and cooperative DDL contributes to Thai EFL learners' acquisition of English adjective-noun collocations (i.e., the quantitative data from the comparison between the pre-test scores and the post-test score), and

(ii) learners' attitudes toward the integrated DDL approach (i.e., the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire and the qualitative data from the semi-structured interview.

A. To What Extent Does the Integration of Individual and Cooperative DDL Contribute to the Development of Thai EFL Learners' Knowledge of English Adjective-Noun Collocations?

The independent *t*-test was administered to compare between the mean score of the pre-test score and post-test score. To gain the detailed and comprehensive findings about the effectiveness of the integration of individual and cooperative DDL on enhancing Thai EFL learners' knowledge of adjective-noun collocations, the comparisons between the mean score of overall scores, multiple-choice scores, and gap-filling scores were also conducted. The comparison results are illustrated in Table 3 to Table 5.

TABLE 3
THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE OVERALL PRE-TEST SCORES AND THE OVERALL POST-TEST SCORES

Overall Score	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test	Sig.
Pre-test	6.05	0.32	5.82	0.00*
Post-test	9.23	3.18		

Based on Table 3, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the overall pre-test scores and the overall post-test scores of participants. The analysis aimed to determine whether there was a statistically significant improvement in the participants' overall scores after learning English adjective-noun collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL.

The results indicated a statistically significant increase in overall scores from the pre-test ($M = 6.05$, $SD = 0.32$) to the post-test ($M = 9.23$, $SD = 3.18$) with $t = 5.82$ and $p = 0.00$. The significant *p*-value signifies the effectiveness of the integration of individual and cooperative DDL in improving the participants' overall knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations.

TABLE 4
THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE SCORE OF THE PRE-TEST AND THE POST-TEST

Multiple-choice Score	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test	Sig.
Pre-test	3.78	1.29	5.53	0.00*
Post-test	6.63	3.02		

According to Table 4, a paired-samples *t*-test was administered to compare the participants' multiple-choice score of the pre-test and the post-test. The analysis aimed to determine whether there was a statistically significant improvement in the participants' multiple-choice scores after learning English adjective-noun collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL.

The results indicated a statistically significant increase in the participants' multiple-choice scores from the pre-test ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.29$) to the post-test ($M = 6.63$, $SD = 3.02$) with $t = 5.53$ and $p = 0.00$. The significant *p*-value indicates that the observed difference in means indicates the effectiveness of the integration of individual and cooperative DDL in improving the participants' receptive skills in mastering English adjective-noun collocations.

TABLE 5
THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE GAP-FILLING SCORES OF THE PRE-TEST AND THE POST-TEST

Gap-filling Score	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> -test	Sig.
Pre-test	2.28	1.69	1.24	0.22
Post-test	2.60	1.41		

With reference to Table 5, a paired-samples *t*-test was computed to compare the participants' gap-filling score of the pre-test and the post-test. The analysis aimed to determine whether there was a statistically significant improvement in the participants' gap-filling scores after learning English adjective-noun collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL.

The results indicate a slight increase in the mean score from the pre-test ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.69$) to the post-test ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.41$). However, the paired-sample *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between the two test scores, $t = 1.24$, $p = 0.22$. The lack of statistical significance suggests that the integration of individual and cooperative DDL had a limited effect on enhancing participants' productive use of English adjective-noun collocations within the timeframe of this study.

B. What Are Thai EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Learning Collocations Through the Integration of Individual and Cooperative DDL?

The following findings illustrate Thai EFL learners' attitudes toward learning English collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL. The results of each questionnaire statement were analyzed and calculated to arrive at the means and standard deviations. The triangulation between the questionnaire data and semi-structured interviews is also illustrated for a comprehensive analysis of Thai EFL learners' attitudes towards learning collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL.

TABLE 6
THAI EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING COLLOCATIONS THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF INDIVIDUAL AND COOPERATIVE DDL

Item	Thai EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Learning Collocations Through the Integration of Individual and Cooperative DDL Statement	M	SD	Interpretation (Level of Agreement)
Learning English collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL help me:				
1	Identify the similar patterns in English adjective-noun collocations	4.22	0.77	Agree
2	Identify the different patterns in English adjective-noun collocations	4.27	0.75	Agree
3	Categorize and group concordance lines	4.02	0.83	Agree
4	Construct patterns of English adjective-noun collocations	4.27	0.75	Agree
5	Improve knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations	4.27	0.85	Agree
6	Achieve learning goal and I would like to continue learning through this integrated approach	4.30	0.97	Agree

The findings in Table 6 reveal that learners perceived learning English collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL as beneficial in several aspects. Statements 1 and 2 received high agreement levels, with mean scores of 4.22 ($SD = 0.77$) and 4.27 ($SD = 0.75$), respectively, indicating that learners perceived that the integrated DDL approach helped them identify both similar and different patterns in English adjective-noun collocations. Additionally, learners agreed that this approach supported them in categorizing and grouping concordance lines ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.83$) and constructing patterns of English adjective-noun collocations ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.75$). Furthermore, they recognized the approach's contribution to improving their knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.85$). Lastly, the highest mean score ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.97$) was observed for learners' willingness to continue learning English collocations through this integrated approach, indicating a strong positive attitude toward the learning method.

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews reinforced the questionnaire findings, highlighting learners' positive perceptions of the integration of individual and cooperative DDL in enhancing their understanding of English adjective-noun collocations. Based on the interviews, five participants (100%) reported that they were able to identify both similar and different patterns of English adjective-noun collocations after learning collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL:

I found it very helpful. Working individually allowed me to focus and analyze the patterns, while the group discussions helped me confirm my findings. For example, I noticed that words like "strong" and "argument" often appeared together, which showed me how certain adjectives and nouns naturally pair.

(S1's semi-structured interview)

Absolutely, I could easily identify the patterns after working through the concordance lines on my own. When we discussed them as a group, it became clear how some adjectives are interchangeable with certain nouns, but others aren't. Discussing with my friends helped me understand the structure better.

(S4's semi-structured interview)

Moreover, all five participants (100%) reported that the DDL approach helped them systematically categorize and group concordance lines.

When I worked individually, I could focus on specific examples, like grouping adjectives with similar meanings, such as 'strong,' 'serious,' and 'valid,' with nouns like 'argument.' Then, during group work, we discussed and refined our categories.

(S2's semi-structured interview)

It was much easier to understand the relationships between words when I could group them together. For instance, we grouped adjectives into 'positive' or 'negative' categories, which helped clarify their usage.

(S5's semi-structured interview)

Apart from categorizing and grouping concordance lines, five participants (100%) expressed that constructing patterns of adjective-noun collocations was a significant outcome of the integrated DDL activities.

I realized that adjectives like 'strong' and 'serious' often pair with abstract nouns like 'argument' or 'concern', which helped me build a pattern in my mind.

(S1's semi-structured interview)

Working in groups helped us see patterns that I missed when working alone. Together, we constructed rules, like which adjectives fit better with specific noun types.

(S3's semi-structured interview)

All participants (100%) acknowledged that their knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations improved as a result of the combined individual and cooperative DDL approach.

This method was very effective for improving my understanding. Before, I didn't know why certain adjectives and nouns went together, but now I see the patterns clearly.

(S4's semi-structured interview)

I think my knowledge improved because the activities forced me to look deeper into how words are used together in real examples.

(S5's semi-structured interview)

Additionally, the qualitative data obtained from interviews further supported the questionnaire results, particularly regarding learners' willingness to continue learning English collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL. All five participants (100%) expressed the positive learning experiences and enthusiasm for continuing to learn English collocations through the integrated DDL approach due to its perceived effectiveness and engagement.

This method made learning collocations interesting and interactive. I would definitely like to use it again in future classes.

(S1's semi-structured interview)

This method has given me tools that I can use outside the classroom, which makes me excited to keep learning.

(S3's semi-structured interview)

Some participants (75%) expressed their preference of learning collocations through the integration of individual and cooperative DDL over traditional methods. They compared this approach with traditional methods of learning collocations, citing its hands-on and collaborative nature as a key advantage.

I've tried other ways of learning collocations, but this one is more engaging and effective. I'd prefer to use this method in the future.

(S5's semi-structured interview)

I enjoyed how the activities combined individual focus and group collaboration. It's much better than traditional learning methods, and I'd love to continue with it.

(S2's semi-structured interview)

In summary, the interview findings align with the questionnaire results, reinforcing the learners' strong positive attitudes toward the integrated DDL approach and their willingness to continue using it for learning English collocations. This combination of individual and cooperative learning activities was consistently described as engaging, effective, and motivating, further validating its potential as a valuable instructional method.

Overall, the integrated findings between questionnaire data and semi-structured interview data highlight that the integration of individual and cooperative DDL is perceived as an effective and engaging method for learning English collocations, particularly adjective-noun combinations, among Thai EFL learners.

V. DISCUSSION

A. The Effectiveness of Integration of Individual and Cooperative DDL as a Learning Innovation to Promote the Acquisition of English Adjective-Noun Collocations Among Thai EFL Learners

According to the empirical findings of this study, the integration of individual and cooperative DDL is regarded as an effective approach to enhance Thai EFL learners' overall knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations. Although the overall results demonstrate a positive effect, a more detailed analysis distinguishing between receptive and productive collocation skills reveals nuanced differences in impact. These results provide insights into the strengths, limitations, and pedagogical implications of the integrated DDL approach as an innovative strategy in EFL classrooms.

(a). Overall Development of English Adjective-Noun Collocational Knowledge

As evidenced by multiple assessments, this study demonstrates that integrating individual and cooperative DDL significantly improves Thai EFL learners' knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations. Quantitative data (Table 3) were analyzed using a paired-samples *t*-test, which revealed a significant improvement ($t = 5.82$, $p = 0.00$) between participants' pre-test ($M = 6.05$, $SD = 0.32$) and post-test scores ($M = 9.23$, $SD = 3.18$). These results indicate that the integration of individual and cooperative DDL is highly effective in facilitating the acquisition of English adjective-noun collocations. The findings of the present study confirm the positive outcomes reported in previous related studies, which highlighted the positive impact of DDL on enhancing learners' collocational proficiency.

In Thai educational contexts, Yaemtui and Phoocharoensil (2019) examined the contribution of DDL to the development of English collocational knowledge among high- and low-proficiency Thai EFL learners, finding that DDL supports overall collocational knowledge in both groups. Similarly, Sridhanyarat and Tangkiengsirisin (2025) confirmed the effectiveness of DDL, reporting that DDL based on the Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH) produced a significant effect on Thai learners' academic collocation performance. Beyond Thai contexts, several international studies (e.g., Ashouri et al., 2014; Boulton, 2010; Chambers, 2005; Timmis, 2015) have also demonstrated that applying the DDL method in language classrooms, particularly for learning collocations, offers potential advantages for learners.

The current study's findings regarding the positive effects of DDL on collocational knowledge can therefore confirm those of several previous studies. Apart from the consistent findings, the current study also extends beyond previous studies by demonstrating the potential outcomes of integrating individual and cooperative DDL as a learning innovation to enhance Thai EFL learners' knowledge of adjective-noun collocations. These findings provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the integrated DDL and its implications for language teaching.

(b). Significant Improvement in Receptive Skills

In addition to the overall development of English adjective-noun collocational knowledge, a detailed analysis of the participants' test scores—categorized into receptive and productive skills—was conducted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of integrating individual and cooperative DDL.

In terms of the receptive skills, the results from the multiple-choice assessment (Table 4) provide strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of the integrated DDL approach in enhancing learners' receptive skills of collocational knowledge. The mean score for the multiple-choice questions, which primarily assesses recognition and understanding of English adjective-noun collocations, increased significantly from 3.78 ($SD = 1.29$) in the pre-test to 6.63 ($SD = 3.02$) in the post-test. This improvement was statistically significant ($t = 5.53$ and $p = 0.00$) indicating a substantial enhancement in receptive knowledge following the intervention. As multiple-choice items often evaluate learners' explicit knowledge of collocational patterns, the improvement in scores signifies an improved ability to recognize and identify appropriate uses of English adjective-noun collocations. This finding aligns with previous studies highlighting the advantages of DDL in improving learners' recognition of collocations (receptive skills); for example, Yaemtui and Phoocharoensil (2019) confirmed that DDL method provides positive effects on the development of the receptive skills in using English collocations of high-proficiency Thai EFL students. Another Thai-context study was conducted by Khemkullanat and Khongput (2023) who highlighted the significant improvement in collocational knowledge, including recognizing grammatical collocations; students could identify target patterns and classify types. In international contexts, Lewis (2000) also suggested that DDL allows learners to notice collocational patterns within the context of natural language, leading to better retention and recognition of those collocation patterns. By examining authentic language data in DDL activities, learners can observe and analyze how words naturally co-occur in different contexts, helping them identify and understand collocational patterns. This active engagement in analyzing the language can enhance learners' recognition of collocation patterns. The learners' ability to recognize collocations in new contexts is improved because they have developed a deeper understanding of how words combine based on the data they have analyzed during DDL activities.

(c). Limited Impact on Productive Skills

In contrast to the significant gains in overall and multiple-choice scores, the gap-filling scores (Table 5) demonstrated no statistically significant improvement. The mean score of gap-filling task increased slightly from 2.28 ($SD = 1.69$) in the pre-test to 2.60 ($SD = 1.41$) in the post-test, with $t = 1.24$ and $p = 0.22$. This finding suggests that while the integrated DDL approach supports the recognition and differentiation of collocations, its effect on productive tasks, like generating collocations in contexts, may require more time and practice to achieve measurable improvements. This result is aligned with Boulton (2010) who explained that DDL has a more noticeable positive impact on learners' receptive skills (like recognition) compared to their productive skills (like speaking or writing). Likewise, Haji et al. (2017) reported that Indonesian learners' productive performance in verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations remained weaker than their receptive performance, emphasizing the challenge of generating collocations spontaneously. Based on the findings of this study and previous studies, DDL is particularly beneficial for tasks that involve recognizing and understanding language; however, the act of producing language like writing and speaking also requires practice in using those structures and developing fluency. This suggests that more extensive exposure and practice, particularly in contextualized settings, may be necessary to help learners actively retrieve and produce collocations correctly. Chiranorawanit and Sripicharn (2024) emphasized that teacher scaffolding plays a critical role in helping learners move from noticing lexical patterns in concordance lines to applying them in authentic communicative contexts. Consequently, more extensive exposure, guided corpus exploration, and output-oriented activities—particularly those embedded in meaningful, contextualized tasks—might be required to enable learners to retrieve and produce collocations accurately and fluently over time.

B. Thai EFL Learners' Positive Perceptions Towards Learning Collocations Through Integrated Individual and Cooperative Data-Driven Learning

Based on the findings of this study, Thai EFL learners have positive attitudes towards learning English collocations through an integrated approach combining individual and cooperative DDL. Both the quantitative results from the questionnaire and the qualitative data from interviews consistently reveal that Thai EFL learners perceive this integrated DDL method as effective and engaging approach for identifying similar and different patterns of adjective-noun collocations as well as categorizing and grouping concordance lines for pattern construction. They also reported their willingness to continue using the integrated DDL approach for learning English collocations in wider contexts.

(a). Facilitating Thai EFL Learners on the Process of Identifying Similar and Different Collocation Patterns

One of the most significant findings is that the integration of individual and cooperative DDL substantially enhances Thai EFL learners' ability to identify both similar and different patterns of English adjective-noun collocations. With mean scores of 4.22 and 4.27, learners reported their positive perceptions towards how the integration of individual and cooperative DDL helps them recognize the recurring patterns in adjective-noun collocations. Complementing these quantitative insights, the interview data further confirms high satisfaction among the majority of Thai EFL learners regarding this learning method. During interview sessions, Thai EFL learners frequently reported that they could identify adjective-noun patterns after individually consulting concordance lines. Crucially, their subsequent cooperative

discussions as a group allowed them to confirm their initial observations and deepen their understanding of these collocation structures.

This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of identifying patterns in language learning. Many studies on DDL emphasize its inductive nature, where learners become ‘language researchers’ by analyzing authentic language data (Johns, 1991). This process inherently involves identifying patterns, similarities, and differences. He and Xie (2024), for example, investigated the effectiveness of DDL in teaching noun collocations to pre-tertiary Chinese learners of English using *Corpusmate*, an online corpus tool. Their study revealed that DDL significantly enhanced participants’ abilities to recognize collocation patterns after engaging with corpus-based tasks. Similarly, in Thai context, Khemkullanat and Khongput (2023) examined effectiveness of DDL in learning target grammatical collocations (verb-, adjective-, and noun-preposition collocations) to Thai undergraduate students. They confirm that DDL improved learners’ ability to accurately classify target collocational patterns as well as identifying the usage of the content words with varying prepositions.

(b). Enabling Thai EFL Learners to Categorize and Group Concordance Lines to Construct Adjective-Noun Collocation Patterns

In addition to helping learners identify similar and different patterns of adjective-noun collocations, the integration of individual and cooperative DDL also proved beneficial in facilitating learners categorize and group concordance lines to construct patterns of English adjective-noun collocations. The mean score of 4.02 reflects the learners’ agreement that this approach facilitated a more systematic analysis of collocations. Additionally, the qualitative data obtained from interviews indicate that most Thai EFL learners satisfy with the combined individual and cooperative DDL approach in facilitating the process of categorizing and grouping concordance lines to construct adjective-noun collocation patterns. Thai EFL learners in the current study specifically described their ability to categorize collocations into various groups, such as adjectives with similar meanings (e.g., ‘strong’ and ‘serious’) or those belonging to positive and negative categories. This process of grouping helps learners build a more understanding of how collocations function, which is an outcome also found in studies by McCarthy and O’Dell (2005), who advocated for the importance of grouping words based on their meanings and usage patterns. Also, the importance of constructing patterns in language acquisition has been highlighted by Ellis (2002), who suggested that pattern-based learning enhances fluency and accuracy, as learners can draw on these patterns when producing language. Overall, one of significant outcomes of the integrated DDL activities is enhancing learners’ ability to categorize and group concordance lines to understand adjective-noun collocation patterns as well as to apply the patterns they observed to guide their language production.

(c). Promoting Autonomous and Cooperative Learning Among Thai EFL Learners

The integration of individual and cooperative DDL is clearly an effective approach to promote one of core principles of DDL which is its potential in enhancing autonomous learning (Barabadi & Khajavi, 2017; Binkai, 2012). During interviews, the Thai EFL learners in this study explained that DDL provided opportunities to engage with authentic language data in the form of concordance lines, which facilitated their direct observation of linguistic patterns. This direct engagement fosters learners’ ability to recognize and use collocation patterns appropriately. As learners individually interact with diverse examples of collocation usage, they develop an independent understanding of how collocations function across various contexts. Consequently, the individual DDL approach allows learners to independently explore corpus data, thereby fostering learner autonomy and reducing reliance on teacher-centered instruction.

Additionally, while many DDL studies primarily highlight its potential to foster autonomous learning through individual learner interaction with concordances, this study recognizes the integration of individual and cooperative learning as an innovative pedagogical approach that promotes both autonomous and collaborative learning. Cooperative learning, in general, is believed to promote engagement, discussion, and co-construction of knowledge. In the context of DDL, Thai EFL learners in this study confirmed during the interviews that they have opportunity to collaboratively analyze concordance lines, discuss their observations, and collectively formulate rules or patterns. This cooperative component provides a supportive platform for shared observations, meaningful discussion, and collaborative construction of knowledge which would enrich and reinforce the individual discovery process.

In conclusion, the combination of individual and cooperative learning within a DDL framework can promote both self-discovery and collaboration among learners for the acquisition of English collocations. Thai EFL learners in this study expressed positive perceptions toward learning English collocations through this integrated approach. They indicated that the initial individual exploration facilitated personal discovery, while the cooperative phase provided peer feedback, error correction, and reinforcement of learned patterns. Overall, the integrated DDL approach creates an inclusive learning environment in which learners are positioned at the center of the learning process as active agents of self-discovery.

(d). Perceived Advantages and Willingness to Continue Using the Integrated DDL Approach Among Thai EFL Learners

Questionnaire data indicate that Thai EFL learners perceive the integration of individual and cooperative data-driven learning (DDL) as effective for improving their knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations, as reflected by a

mean score of 4.27. Qualitative interview data further support these findings, with participants noting that the integrated approach deepened their understanding of why specific adjectives and nouns co-occur. Learners also explicitly expressed willingness to continue using the integrated DDL approach, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.30. Interview responses revealed a strong preference for the integrated DDL over traditional teacher-centered methods. These positive perceptions are consistent with previous studies reporting favorable learner attitudes toward DDL in various EFL contexts. In particular, Thai EFL learners have identified DDL as engaging, motivating, and effective for language acquisition (Kulsitthiboon & Pongpaiboj, 2018; Yaemtui & Phoocharoensil, 2019). Similarly, international studies demonstrate that learners value concordancing for vocabulary expansion and increased awareness of word aspects, including part-of-speech information, meanings, usages, lexico-grammatical structures, and collocations (Tosun & Sofu, 2023). The positive attitudes toward the integrated DDL approach further underscore the effectiveness of combining individual analysis with cooperative learning, a pedagogical strategy that enhances learner engagement, reinforces learning outcomes, and fosters sustained motivation for lifelong learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of the integration of individual and cooperative DDL in enhancing Thai EFL learners' knowledge of English adjective-noun collocations. The observed significant improvements in overall test scores and multiple-choice assessments validate the effectiveness of DDL in promoting the recognition and categorization of collocational patterns, a critical aspect of lexical proficiency. These results consistently align with existing literature on DDL's benefits for enhancing collocational knowledge and its positive impact on language learners' ability to recognize lexical structures.

However, the study also revealed that while the integrated DDL approach effectively facilitated the recognition of collocations, its impact on productive tasks, such as gap-filling exercises, was less pronounced. This suggests that while receptive knowledge can be effectively enhanced through DDL, transferring this knowledge into productive language use may require more extensive exposure and targeted practice.

In addition to the effectiveness of the integrated DDL approach on collocational knowledge, the study identified learners' positive attitudes towards this DDL approach. Learners particularly valued the interactive and engaging nature of DDL, which enabled them to analyze authentic language data, identify patterns, and internalize collocations. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature advocating for DDL as an effective pedagogy tool in second language acquisition.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that language educators should implement the integrated individual and cooperative DDL approach in their instructional practices. This approach can serve as a practical and flexible framework for enhancing learners' awareness of language patterns while simultaneously promoting independent exploration and peer collaboration. However, the study also revealed that while the integrated DDL approach effectively facilitated the recognition of collocations, its impact on productive tasks—such as gap-filling or sentence construction—was less pronounced. This suggests that although receptive knowledge can be significantly enhanced through DDL activities, transferring this knowledge into active, productive language use may require more extensive exposure, guided practice, and explicit opportunities for output-focused learning. Therefore, future classroom implementations of the integrated DDL approach should incorporate additional productive tasks that allow learners to apply and consolidate collocational knowledge in authentic communicative contexts.

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Navigating Stylistic Hybridity: A Stylistic Analysis of Scientific Indonesian in University Students' Academic Writing

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Abstract—This study investigates the stylistic characteristics of scientific Indonesian in university students' academic writing, identifying a pervasive phenomenon of stylistic hybridity. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, involving textual analysis of ten undergraduate research articles from various disciplines. The analysis was guided by an integrated framework drawing on Halliday and Hasan's cohesion theory and metadiscourse analysis. The findings reveal persistent challenges across multiple linguistic levels, including emotive and imprecise diction, syntactically complex yet functionally ineffective paratactic structures, mechanical use of cohesive devices, a strong preference for active voice, and fluctuating formal–informal tone. Quantitative indicators further show relatively low lexical density (45–55%) compared to professional academic writing. These patterns suggest that students are situated in a transitional phase, negotiating between colloquial expressiveness and scientific rigor. The study underscores the need for integrated stylistic training in academic writing curricula to enhance linguistic competence and strengthen the credibility of Indonesian as a language of global scholarship.

Index Terms—stylistics, scientific Indonesian, academic writing, stylistic hybridity, higher education

I. INTRODUCTION

As the national language and a mandated vehicle for science and technology (Law No. 24 of 2009), Indonesian is expected to function as a scientific language that conveys knowledge in an objective, concise, and systematic manner. However, a significant gap persists between this normative ideal and the actual writing practices of university students. Many student research papers exhibit a mixture of formal and informal registers, convoluted sentences, and weak discourse cohesion, which undermines both the quality of their academic work and the credibility of Indonesian as a language of science (Rahardi, 2019; Alwi & Dendy, 2017). Furthermore, stylistic analysis reveals that students' essays contain numerous deviations from standard Indonesian, particularly in orthographic conventions, lexical selection, and syntactic construction, indicating a lack of stylistic control in academic writing (Rasna et al., 2014). This challenge can be productively examined through stylistics, which analyzes the relationship between linguistic form and communicative function within specific contexts (Leech & Short, 2007). From a stylistic perspective, language use operates through the systematic integration of lexical choice, phrasal patterning, clausal structuring, and sentence construction, which together form the analytical basis for multilevel stylistic analysis (Putrayasa, 2021). In academic writing, stylistics is concerned with the effectiveness and appropriateness of expression, ensuring clarity, objectivity, and the construction of a persuasive scholarly persona. While previous studies have highlighted general challenges in Indonesian students' academic writing (e.g., Faridah, 2018; Tohamba, 2021), few have provided a fine-grained, multi-level stylistic analysis that captures the nuanced phenomenon of stylistic hybridity, the pervasive blending of distinct registers and rhetorical conventions.

Compounding this issue is the pervasive influence of digital communication, which prioritizes immediacy and expressiveness, thereby blurring the boundaries between informal and formal registers (Crystal, 2011). This creates a palpable tension between students' everyday linguistic habits and the rigid expectations of scientific discourse.

To address this gap, this study conducts a comprehensive stylistic analysis of students' academic articles. It aims to:

1. Identify the dominant stylistic features characterizing the use of scientific Indonesian in students' academic writing.
2. Examine how the concept of stylistic hybridity manifests in their diction, sentence structure, and use of cohesive devices.
3. Propose pedagogical implications for enhancing academic literacy in Indonesia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indonesian, as the national language, has been constitutionally mandated to function as a language of science and education (Law No. 24 of 2009). Beyond its status as the national language, Indonesian functions in social life as a stylistic resource that enables the expression of ideas, the construction of identity, and the realization of communicative intentions across a range of social domains (Putrayasa, 2021). This strategic role requires it to possess a register capable of conveying complex ideas with objectivity, precision, and systematic coherence. The development of this scientific register, however, is a relatively recent endeavor compared to languages with long-standing academic traditions. A standard grammar (Alwi et al., 2003) and formal terminological development have provided a foundation, yet the consistent application of these norms in practice, particularly among students, remains a significant challenge. In addition to the low quality of the language used to convey ideas, the sentences employed do not yet reflect linguistic politeness and ethical language use appropriate to the context (Putrayasa & Ramendra, 2022). Mastery of scientific style is a crucial aspect of academic maturity, reflecting precision in expressing scientific arguments (Alwi & Dendy, 2017). In reality, many student research papers reveal inconsistencies, combining formal and informal registers and exhibiting weak cohesion, which affects both the quality of their writing and the perceived credibility of Indonesian as a language of science (Rahardi, 2019).

The analysis of scientific language is deeply informed by stylistics, which examines the conscious and unconscious choices writers make at the levels of diction, syntax, and discourse within a specific context (Leech & Short, 2007). In writing, students use language not only pay attention to the type, unity, and structure of the sentence but also understand correctly the best way to use language (Putrayasa & Ramendra, 2022). In academic writing, stylistics is not merely concerned with aesthetic effect but with the effectiveness and appropriateness of expression in achieving communicative goals. From a stylistic perspective, the low quality of language used in conveying ideas, together with the failure of sentence construction to reflect contextual politeness and ethical norms, indicates a misalignment between linguistic form and the intended communicative and pragmatic functions (Putrayasa, 2023). An effective scientific style allows ideas to be communicated clearly while maintaining objectivity and constructing a credible authorial persona. From this perspective, stylistic analysis serves as a powerful tool for diagnosing students' linguistic competence and identifying areas for pedagogical intervention (Hyland, 2004). It connects linguistic form with rhetorical function, revealing how language choices shape meaning and persuade an academic audience.

A key concept emerging from studies of novice academic writing is that of stylistic hybridity, the blending of linguistic features from different registers within a single text. In the Indonesian context, this often manifests as a mix of formal academic lexicon and syntax with colloquial expressions, emotive language, and structures influenced by digital communication (Faridah, 2018; Tohamba, 2021). Previous studies indicate persistent stylistic problems in students' academic writing, including inappropriate diction, ineffective sentence structures, and nonformal elements, which reflect limited mastery of academic language conventions (Rasna et al., 2014). Explicit language instruction has been shown to reduce nonacademic expression patterns and improve stylistic control over sentence structure, vocabulary, and formal registers (Artika et al., 2018; Dewantara et al., 2024; Suandi et al., 2023). These findings provide empirical support for the concept of stylistic hybridity in novice academic writing in Indonesia and underscore the need to strengthen scientific language competence grounded in stylistic awareness. This hybridity can be interpreted as a transitional stage in the acquisition of academic discourse. Students are often caught between the expressive, informal styles dominant in their everyday digital communication (Crystal, 2011) and the rigid, impersonal conventions required by scientific writing. This creates a tension that results in inconsistent tone and register, undermining the stylistic unity and scholarly discipline of their texts (Hyland, 2004).

Research on academic writing, particularly within the systemic functional linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) traditions, has identified several core features of scientific style that students must master.

1. Lexical Choices: Scientific discourse demands precise, technical, and neutral diction. However, studies on Indonesian student writing frequently report the use of imprecise terminology and emotive adjectives, which weaken objectivity (Faridah, 2018; Tohamba, 2021).

2. Syntactic Structures: Expert academic writing often employs complex hypotactic structures to establish logical hierarchies between ideas. In contrast, student writing is frequently characterized by paratactic structures, leading to long, "stacked" sentences that lack subordination and logical flow (Hyland, 2004; Tohamba, 2021).

3. Cohesion and Meta discourse: Cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical links that hold a text together, while meta discourse encompasses the ways writers guide, engage, and position themselves in relation to their readers and content (Hyland, 2004). Student writers often use cohesive devices, such as conjunctions, mechanically rather than semantically, and underuse critical interactional meta discourse like hedging to express appropriate caution and critical stance (Diaz & Al Fajri, 2023; Hyland & Tse, 2004).

4. Authorial Voice: A conventional feature of scientific writing is an impersonal tone, often realized through the passive voice, which foregrounds the research process over the re-searcher. Indonesian students, however, show a strong preference for active voice with first-person pronouns, indicating a negotiation between asserting authorial identity and adhering to conventional impersonality (Faridah, 2018; Hyland, 2004).

The prevalence of these stylistic challenges points to a significant gap in academic literacy instruction. Indonesian language courses at the tertiary level often focus on general grammar and composition rather than the specific rhetorical and stylistic conventions of scientific writing across disciplines (Heryani, 2021). This lack of explicit, discipline-integrated stylistic training means that students are left to infer the "secret rules" of academic discourse on their own, often resulting in the imitative and sometimes awkward adoption of features from English-language sources without a deep understanding of their function (Subandowo et al., 2025). Consequently, there is a pressing need for pedagogical models that directly address stylistic competence as a core component of academic success.

In summary, the literature establishes that the development of a mature scientific style in Indonesian is a complex process hindered by linguistic interference, digital influences, and insufficient pedagogical focus. This study contributes to this field by providing a systematic, multi-level stylistic analysis to document the specific manifestations of this challenge and to inform more effective academic writing instruction.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with textual analysis serving as the primary method of inquiry.

The dataset comprised ten research articles written by undergraduate students from various disciplines—including social sciences, education, and humanities at both public and private universities in Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was used to secure a sample representing a spectrum of writing quality and disciplinary backgrounds.

The textual analysis was conducted using an analytical framework synthesizing concepts from systemic functional linguistics and meta discourse analysis. The following elements were systematically examined:

1. Diction: Formality, precision, and the use of emotive versus neutral language.
2. Sentence Structure: Syntactic complexity, the use of parataxis versus hypotaxis, and sentence economy.
3. Cohesion: Grammatical and lexical cohesive devices, informed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), and their pragmatic function, following Hyland's (2004) model of meta discourse.
4. Voice and Tone: Frequency of active versus passive voice and consistency in register maintenance.

To ensure analytical robustness, the process was conducted iteratively. Two independent coders analyzed the texts using the defined framework to establish inter coder reliability. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was achieved. Supplementary quantitative data, such as the frequency distribution of active/passive voice and lexical density, were calculated to provide a more comprehensive description of the identified stylistic patterns.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The stylistic analysis reveals that Indonesian university students' academic writing is situated in a transitional phase. Although students demonstrate partial familiarity with scientific conventions, their texts consistently display instability in diction, syntactic organization, and discourse coherence. This instability manifests as stylistic hybridity, in which features of formal academic discourse coexist with informal, expressive, and digitally influenced language practices. Rather than reflecting simple linguistic deficiency, this hybridity indicates an ongoing negotiation between communicative fluency and epistemic discipline in academic knowledge construction. The hybridization of formal and informal language features indicates that students are still negotiating the boundaries between communicative fluency and scientific rigor (Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004). In the first layer of analysis, diction emerged as the most visible stylistic challenge. The frequent use of emotive adjectives and intensifiers such as *sangat penting* (very important) and *menarik sekali* (very interesting) suggests that students prioritize persuasive emphasis over epistemic neutrality. These lexical choices shift the focus from analytical reasoning to evaluative stance, thereby weakening the objectivity expected in scientific discourse. From a stylistic perspective, this pattern indicates limited control over evaluative language rather than a lack of vocabulary knowledge.

A closer observation of lexical selection reveals a limited awareness of terminological precision. Terms like "masalah sosial" (social problem) or "pendidikan berkualitas" (quality education) are frequently used without conceptual clarity or definitional grounding (Tohamba, 2021). This imprecision reflects a lack of semantic discipline, which affects the clarity of scholarly argumentation (Hyland, 2004). Interestingly, some students attempt to imitate the diction found in English-language research articles. They often translate technical terms directly into Indonesian without adjusting to

local academic norms (Hyland & Tse, 2004). This translation interference produces awkward phrasing, such as “dalam konteks penelitian ini dihipotesiskan bahwa ...” (“in this research context, it is hypothesized that ...”), which sounds unnatural in Indonesian academic style (Subandowo et al., 2025).

In terms of sentence structure, many students construct overly complex sentences that obscure meaning. Clauses are frequently stacked without proper syntactic hierarchy, leading to confusion (Tohamba, 2021). The tendency to produce long, multi-clausal sentences suggests an assumption that complexity equals sophistication, when in fact it often reduces precision (Hyland, 2004). The syntactic pattern of student writing reveals a dominance of parataxis rather than hypotaxis. Coordination markers like *dan* (and) and *serta* (as well as) are used excessively, while subordinating conjunctions such as *meskipun* (although) or *walaupun demikian* (nevertheless) are underused (Faridah, 2018). This imbalance weakens argumentative cohesion and logical flow (Hyland & Tse, 2004). The dominance of paratactic sentence construction reflects a tendency to accumulate ideas through coordination rather than through logically layered subordination. As a result, syntactic complexity is achieved structurally but not functionally. Long sentences with minimal hierarchical signaling often obscure causal or contrastive relations between propositions, reducing argumentative clarity.

Another noticeable feature is redundancy. Students frequently restate the same idea with slightly different wording, creating verbosity rather than emphasis (Hyland, 2004). This redundancy, though unintentional, signals limited awareness of rhetorical economy—a vital principle in scientific discourse (Hyland, 2004). When examining paragraph structure, it becomes clear that coherence is often built around thematic repetition rather than logical progression (Tohamba, 2021). Many paragraphs begin with broad generalizations and fail to develop specific claims or empirical evidence. As a result, the argument appears circular rather than cumulative (Hyland, 2004). From a stylistic viewpoint, this pattern illustrates a dependence on narrative rather than analytical modes of writing (Hyland, 2004). Students tend to describe phenomena rather than analyze relationships between concepts. This descriptive style, while informative, lacks the explanatory precision required in scientific argumentation (Faridah, 2018).

Another linguistic aspect that deserves attention is cohesion. Cohesive devices in student writing are often mechanical rather than semantic. The frequent use of connectives like *oleh karena itu* (therefore) or *selain itu* (in addition) sometimes appears forced, as they are inserted without genuine logical necessity (Hyland, 2004). This mechanical use of connectors demonstrates that students are aware of the need for textual linkage but have not yet mastered the pragmatic dimension of cohesion (Hyland & Tse, 2004). Cohesion in scientific writing should not merely connect sentences—it should also signal logical reasoning and discourse hierarchy (Hyland, 2004). However, in many analyzed papers, cohesion functions more as a decorative tool than an argumentative mechanism. This finding suggests that stylistic awareness remains at a superficial level (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

The use of the passive voice is another important feature in scientific Indonesian. The data show that passive constructions are relatively rare in student writing, accounting for less than 25% of total clauses (Hyland, 2004). Instead, active sentences with first-person pronouns are frequently used, such as “saya melakukan penelitian ini” (I conducted this research). This stylistic choice indicates a preference for personal involvement over impersonality, which contradicts the conventional ethos of scientific discourse (Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004). The lack of passive constructions reduces objectivity and detracts from the perceived neutrality of academic claims (Hyland, 2004). Furthermore, pronoun usage reflects an identity negotiation process. Students appear to assert their authorship as a marker of confidence, but in doing so, they unintentionally diminish the impersonal authority expected in academic texts. This reveals a cultural tension between individual expression and institutional formality (Tohamba, 2021).

The analysis also identified a fluctuation between formal and informal tones within a single text. In some paragraphs, students employ highly formal vocabulary, while in others, they switch to conversational language (Faridah, 2018). This inconsistency disrupts the stylistic unity of the paper and weakens the impression of scholarly discipline (Hyland, 2004). Such stylistic fluctuation can be traced to the influence of digital literacy. The habits of writing on social media—where immediacy and expressiveness dominate—often spill into academic writing (Faridah, 2018). Consequently, students unconsciously adopt colloquial structures and emotive particles that reduce linguistic formality.

Another critical finding relates to lexical density. The average lexical density in student texts was found to be between 45% and 55%, lower than the typical density of professional academic writing, which averages above 60% (Hyland, 2004). This indicates that student writing contains more function words and fewer technical terms or conceptual nouns. Low lexical density reflects a dependency on general vocabulary rather than domain-specific terminology (Hyland, 2004). This suggests that students have yet to internalize disciplinary language, an essential component of linguistic competence in academia. From a stylistic perspective, lexical density is directly linked to cognitive sophistication. A writer with higher lexical density tends to use language as a tool for abstract reasoning rather than surface description. Therefore, improving lexical density is not merely a linguistic issue but also an intellectual one.

In addition to linguistic form, pragmatic features were also examined. The use of hedging expressions such as “dapat disimpulkan bahwa” (it can be concluded that) or “kemungkinan besar” (most likely) was limited. Instead, students often make categorical assertions, leaving no space for academic uncertainty (Hyland, 2004). This absence of hedging indicates a lack of rhetorical maturity. In scientific writing, hedging functions as a marker of critical thinking—it signals awareness of the limits of one’s claims (Hyland, 2004). Without it, the writing appears overly assertive and less credible. From the perspective of linguistic pragmatics, this categorical tone may reflect students’ educational background, where

certainty is often rewarded over analytical doubt (Tohamba, 2021). Therefore, stylistic refinement must be accompanied by a pedagogical shift that values critical modesty.

When analyzed from a genre perspective, the student texts partially conform to the structure of academic essays but fail to maintain stylistic discipline throughout (Hyland, 2004). While introductions often employ formal registers, the discussion sections revert to colloquial narrative tones. This imbalance indicates partial acquisition of genre conventions (Hyland, 2004). The role of stylistics in this context becomes central. Stylistics does not merely analyze linguistic form but also examines the relationship between language, thought, and social identity (Hyland, 2004). In this sense, the stylistic weaknesses of student writing mirror broader educational and cultural dynamics. The data also reveal that students exhibit creativity in expression, which sometimes clashes with academic conventions. Some students employ metaphorical phrases or rhetorical questions, such as “Apakah pendidikan kita sudah adil?” (Has our education become fair?) (Faridah, 2018). While engaging, such features deviate from the impersonal nature of scientific style.

These creative tendencies suggest that students are not resistant to language sophistication but rather lack guidance in channeling creativity within scientific frameworks. A balanced pedagogical approach is needed—one that values stylistic precision without suppressing expressive capacity. From a linguistic standpoint, the stylistic hybridity of student writing can be interpreted as a transitional stage in the evolution of Indonesian as a scientific language. As a relatively young academic language, Indonesian continues to adapt to the global conventions of scholarly communication while maintaining cultural authenticity. This adaptation process, however, creates stylistic tension. On one hand, students are encouraged to follow international standards of clarity and conciseness; on the other hand, the rhetorical richness of Indonesian culture values elaboration and contextual narrative (Tohamba, 2021). The coexistence of these tendencies results in stylistic hybridity.

The stylistic hybridity observed in student writing thus represents a site of linguistic negotiation—between modernity and tradition, global norms and local expressions (Hyland, 2004). This hybridity should not be viewed purely as a deficiency but as a linguistic reality of Indonesian academic discourse in transition. Pedagogically, these findings emphasize the need to integrate stylistic training into academic writing curricula. Instead of focusing solely on grammar and structure, language instruction should include analysis of tone, register, cohesion, and rhetorical stance. This would nurture both linguistic accuracy and intellectual discipline (Hyland, 2004). From an institutional perspective, universities should encourage lecturers to model good stylistic practices through exemplary academic writing. Exposure to well-written scholarly texts helps students internalize the stylistic norms of scientific Indonesian more effectively than prescriptive instruction alone.

Moreover, stylistic awareness should be embedded across disciplines, not limited to language departments. Every academic field from economics to engineering requires mastery of stylistic conventions that enable precise and credible communication of knowledge (Hyland, 2004). The stylistic development of students can also benefit from peer review practices. When students evaluate each other’s work, they become more conscious of language use and stylistic coherence. This collaborative reflection fosters metalinguistic awareness—a key factor in stylistic competence (Hyland, 2004).

In addition, digital tools such as corpus-based style checkers or academic writing software can assist in identifying stylistic inconsistencies. However, such tools must be complemented by human judgment to ensure contextual appropriateness and rhetorical nuance. Ultimately, the findings of this study reveal that stylistic competence in scientific Indonesian is not merely a matter of linguistic form but also of epistemological understanding. Writing style reflects how knowledge is constructed, validated, and communicated within a scholarly community (Hyland, 2004). This finding aligns with previous corpus-based studies showing that Indonesian scholars tend to use fewer hedging devices compared to their English counterparts (Sanjaya et al., 2015).

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF STYLISTIC FEATURES IN STUDENT WRITING

Stylistic Feature	Dominant Pattern	Percentage (%)	Interpretation
Diction	Emotive adjectives/adverbs	68%	Overuse of subjective language weakens scientific neutrality.
Sentence Structure	Multi-clausal parataxis	74%	Excessive coordination causes loss of precision.
Cohesion	Mechanical use of connectors	59%	Connectors often inserted without logical necessity.
Voice	Active (first-person)	75%	Preference for personal involvement reduces objectivity.
Tone	Inconsistent formal-informal	63%	Influence of digital writing habits affects formality.
Lexical Density	45–55%	-	Lower than professional standard (>60%), limiting technical precision.
Hedging	Limited use	31%	Lack of epistemic caution and critical stance.

Therefore, improving the stylistic quality of academic writing involves both linguistic refinement and cognitive transformation. Students must learn to view language as an instrument of reasoning, not just as a medium of expression. If nurtured properly, stylistic awareness can transform Indonesian academic writing into a more precise, persuasive, and intellectually grounded discourse. This, in turn, strengthens the position of Indonesian as a capable and credible language of science in the global academic landscape. In conclusion, the stylistic analysis demonstrates that while

students possess foundational writing skills, their mastery of scientific Indonesian remains developmental. Continuous exposure, feedback, and stylistic modeling are essential for cultivating a mature academic voice that aligns with the values of objectivity, clarity, and intellectual integrity.

This section presents a detailed stylistic analysis of Indonesian students' academic writing, supported by quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis focuses on diction, syntax, cohesion, voice, tone, and lexical density to identify stylistic patterns and linguistic tendencies. The table above demonstrates that stylistic weaknesses are distributed across multiple linguistic levels. The dominance of paratactic structures and emotive diction indicates a tendency toward expressive rather than analytical discourse.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF LEXICAL DENSITY BETWEEN STUDENT AND EXPERT WRITING

Group	Average Lexical Density (%)	Interpretation
Student Writers	45–55%	Reflects general vocabulary and descriptive focus.
Professional Academic Writers	60–70%	Indicates use of conceptual and technical terminology.

Lexical density analysis reveals that student writing employs a higher proportion of function words compared to expert writing, suggesting a descriptive rather than conceptual orientation in language use.

TABLE 3
VOICE USAGE IN STUDENT ACADEMIC WRITING

Voice Type	Frequency (%)	Interpretation
Active Voice (first-person)	75%	Indicates authorial assertion and personal involvement.
Passive Voice	25%	Reflects limited adoption of impersonal scientific tone.

The predominance of active voice reflects a communicative preference for personal engagement, which conflicts with the convention of objectivity in scientific discourse. This stylistic choice underscores the need for training in impersonal academic writing.

The findings paint a consistent picture of stylistic hybridity—a transitional blending of formal academic conventions with informal, expressive language. This phenomenon aligns with the view of academic writing as a social practice (Hyland, 2004), where students are still peripheral participants in the academic discourse community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The syntactic patterns reflect a developmental stage in mastering the "dense" style required for academic packaging of complex information (Schleppegrell, 2004). The pragmatic failures in cohesion and the underuse of hedging reveal a superficial model of academic writing, focusing on formulas over underlying rhetorical principles. The negotiation of voice highlights a tension between individual expression and institutional expectation. The lower lexical density (45–55%) provides quantitative support for the qualitative observation that student writing is more descriptive than conceptual (Halliday, 1989). This stylistic hybridity is not merely a deficit but a reflection of the dynamic process of mastering scientific discourse in a linguistically evolving and digitally influenced context.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study has delineated the distinctive stylistic profile of Indonesian students' academic writing, characterized by a persistent hybridity that blends formal conventions with informal, expressive language. The analysis confirms that challenges permeate all linguistic levels. This hybridity reflects a dynamic negotiation process—between global academic norms and local linguistic identities, and between digital informality and scholarly formality.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its systematic, multi-level stylistic analysis that captures this transitional phase. It moves beyond cataloging errors to interpreting them as signs of a living language adapting to new communicative demands. Stylistic competence, therefore, should be understood not merely as linguistic accuracy but as a marker of epistemic positioning within the academic community.

For practice, our findings argue for a pedagogical shift. Stylistic training must be integrated as a core component of academic literacy programs, moving beyond grammar instruction to include critical awareness of register, metadiscourse, and rhetorical stance. This training should be embedded across disciplines.

Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to track stylistic development or measure the effectiveness of specific interventions. Further studies could also compare the stylistic choices of students and experienced scholars in the same disciplines.

Ultimately, fostering stylistic competence is integral to empowering Indonesian students to participate confidently in global scholarly conversations while simultaneously nurturing the growth and prestige of the Indonesian language as a robust medium for scientific knowledge.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, the dataset is limited to ten undergraduate research articles, which restricts the generalizability of the findings across disciplines and institutional contexts. Second, the analysis focuses on textual products rather than writing processes; therefore, it does not capture students' drafting strategies or revision practices. Finally, the study does not include comparative data from expert academic writers within the same disciplines, which would allow for a more nuanced benchmark of stylistic maturity. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted as exploratory rather than definitive.

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Imperial Ideology and Narrative Complicity in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: A Postcolonial Stylistic Reading

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Abstract—This research examines how imperial and ideological power is stylistically recorded in Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (2007) using a postcolonial stylistic framework. The study explores Conrad's critique of empire while simultaneously revealing his inability to escape the confines of imperial ideology. The African characters are not portrayed as fully human, as they remain in the perpetual darkness. The narrative marginalizes Africans by allowing only one European to speak on their behalf. The integration of postcolonial theory and stylistics works to critically interpret the role of language in literature for reflecting, reinforcing, or resisting imperialist ideologies. The research demonstrates how imperialist attitudes are imposed or countered within the text at the level of choosing syntactic structure, transitivity, and metaphorical language. This work offers insight into language as an instrument for creating and maintaining colonial hegemony. The findings suggest that the critical narrative of empire in the story remains intertwined with imperial ideology, thus reflecting both a denunciation of colonial violence and a tacit complicity with imperial discourse.

Index Terms—imperial ideology, power politics, narrative complicity, postcolonial stylistics, marginalized Africans

I. INTRODUCTION

The interplay of language and power has been central to literary and postcolonial studies. Language is not merely a tool for communication in colonial discourse; it is also a powerful form of ideology used to construct, justify, and disseminate imperial domination. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2007) is a classic of colonial literature that continues to provoke debate among readers due to its portrayal of Africans and Europeans shaped by imperial narratives and power relations. The novella has also been heavily criticized by postcolonial critics such as Achebe (1977), who condemned it for dehumanizing African peoples and promoting a Eurocentric worldview, and Said (1993), who criticized it for perpetuating and reinforcing Orientalist discourses. Said's concept of complicit criticism reveals that, despite Conrad's moral unease with colonialism, he remained trapped within an imperial mindset. He recounted the inhumane treatment the colonizers inflicted on the colonized, which ultimately served to reinforce European power by silencing Africans without granting them any sense of liberation.

In recent decades, postcolonial stylistics has emerged as a potential field of study that combines stylistic methodology with the racial nature of postcolonialism (Simpson, 2004; Norgaard et al., 2010). Postcolonial stylistics considers the diversity of linguistic and rhetorical decisions in literary works to reveal ideological conflicts and cultural hierarchies. It suggests that language is not a neutral system but is influenced by historical and political context, and that stylistic patterns, which may include lexicon, grammar, metaphor, and pluralism, can be critically analyzed to reveal the power relations inherent in the text (Jeffries, 2010). Martin et al. (2025) illustrate how speech acts and conversational implicatures within the narrative subtly reinforce and undermine imperial authority, illustrating the complicity of multi-layered narrative with imperial ideology.

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In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad (2007) has introduced complex narrative techniques, such as framing, shifts of focalization, and metaphorical ambiguity, to create enigmatic and intricate narratives centered on colonial power. Marlowe's approach to colonialism is expressive yet also subversive, raising certain doubts (Leech & Short, 2007). The recurring use of the lexical fields related to terms like the darkness, wilderness and civilization further contributes to the novella's exploration of colonial and racial dichotomies (Boehmer, 2005). Moreover, the portrayal of African characters as silent and anonymous, and their grammatical marginalization is an indication of the stylistic elimination of the colonized subject, or what is referred to as passive, violent and voiceless subject in the imperial narrative of colonial discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

Therefore, this study aims to illuminate, through the application of postcolonial stylistics, the dynamics of colonial power that can be expressed and reproduced through a range of hidden meanings. The study focuses on the role of language in identifying potential resistances or actions that generate certain contradictions within the narrative. This type of intervention complements our understanding of how the ideological dynamics of colonial literature operate and why stylistic analysis can be key to understanding the structural layers of empire.

A. Statement of the Problem

This paper investigates the issue of imperialist ideology and narrative complicity in *Heart of Darkness* by Conrad (2007). The focus of the study is to highlight the ambivalent nature of imperialism and the Other in a literary text of the colonial period, which has been the subject of greatest scrutiny. The thematic issues as well as the stylistic problems regarding the narration of this colonial project have received a lot of criticism. The problem under study signifies the importance of postcolonial analysis and linguistic structures such as lexis, metaphor, syntax, and narrative voice in criticizing or assisting, creating, and maintaining colonial power and ideology. Conrad's choice of language and theme is subtle, layered and ideologically grounded that articulates Euro-centric perspective and stereotypical representation of the colonized. The challenge of dealing with such a complex narrative from a new angle demands a multidisciplinary approach, which combines the contention of postcolonial theory and the value of stylistics to question or complicit the imperial discourse embedded in the text.

B. Significance of the Study

The research is diverse as it addresses various angles of relevance both in literature and linguistics. This study is significant in bridging the gap between postcolonial theory and stylistics that provides a new way of looking into a classical colonial text. Through analyzing the imperial ideology and rhetorical strategies applied in *Heart of Darkness*, the study aims to help in gaining a better view of the idea that the language of literature can simultaneously resist to imperial mindset as well as can reinforce the colonial ideas in a covert manner. The paper shows that postcolonial stylistics is indeed a powerful method of revealing buried power structures in the text and that it works towards the construction of critical awareness of the role of language in shaping ideology and representations. The findings can also be used to better discuss some other colonial or postcolonial texts, and thus the interdisciplinary discussion between linguistics and literature can be fruitful for future studies.

C. Research Questions

1. How does the exploitative use of lexical items and metaphors in *Heart of Darkness* create and establish colonial ideology?
2. What role do syntactic construct and transitivity patterns play to make power relations between colonizer and colonized visible?
3. What postcolonial stylistic features expose the simultaneous complicity with and critique of imperialism present in the text, and how do these generate a narrative ambivalence?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The critical reception towards Conrad's (2007) *Heart of Darkness* has now changed as compared to the past because in the early years the appreciation of this work was based on its psychological richness in terms of its depth and innovative style of narration (Leavis, 1948). The criticism of the current time has taken a more critical glance at the representation of Africa and the ideology of the colonial project. Achebe (1977) in his trenchant criticism condemned *Heart of Darkness* as a bloody racist work of Conrad, but there was a break-through in the study as the interest of scholars shifted to its imperialist ideology and racial representation. Achebe claims that Conrad regards the African characters as dehumanized and portrays Africa along the lines of metaphysical blank spot, signifying as an inherent Euro-centric stare. This criticism has proved to be awfully significant in the postcolonial studies due to its challenging reassessment of the style and ideological overtones in the novel.

Said (1993) places *Heart of Darkness* in the context of the general discourse of what he terms as Orientalism and extends his criticism on this novel. He argues that though this work of Conrad is ambivalent in relation to imperialism, still it is implicated in the colonial narrative because he fails in describing the agency of colonized people or their humanity. The analysis provided by Said (1993) points out the necessity to study the ways in which linguistic and narrative choices

play the ideological roles. He also defines the first roughly the stylistic approaches to question the relationship between language and power.

Postcolonial stylistics is a useful methodological position of dealing with concerns like ideology, power relations, and narrative complicity. As it has been noted by Simpson (2004) that Stylistics can reveal the ways in which ideologies are textually inscribed especially when such inscription occurs within the linguistic moving patterns, namely lexical field, modality, and transitivity. The use of such method is particularly helpful in the interpretation of such texts as *Heart of Darkness* where metaphor, narrative unreliability, and ambiguity, complicate the ideological message. The fact that a systematic study of the way the colonial discourse is articulated and conveyed by the discursive means of translation as well as grammatical, lexical, and discursive levels are manipulated. It is also what Norgaard et al. (2010) point out with regards to the stylistic tools and power politics. Allin (2013) argues that stylistic features enable a subtle engagement with imperialism, allowing readers to grasp the ideological underpinnings of the narrative while simultaneously reflecting on its critique. Abdurrahman (2025) situates the novel within the postcolonial discourse by analyzing how complex sentence structures, narrative fragmentation, and polysemic language produce effects of uncertainty and ideological tension, reflecting the fractured moral landscape of imperialism.

This approach also addresses how Conrad's narrative resists the overarching logic of imperialism. IM (2019) highlights that Conrad's literature, along with Faulkner's, rejects the idea of accounting as a comprehensive system, thus questioning the imperial project's reliance on rational and bureaucratic justifications for colonialism. This impossibility of calculation constitutes a critique of imperial narratives that seek to impose order and control through totalitarian discourses.

A number of stylistic analyses of *Heart of Darkness* have emphasized how transitivity and agency help to portray colonial relations. The systemic functional grammar (SFG) developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) offers an effective mean of examining how Conrad attributes agency to characters or fails to, when looking at an individual in context, as a whole. An example of passive constructions is the African characters that in most of the cases are built up as passive receivers of action or not being given names at all indicating what Fowler (1996) refers to as a grammatical suppression of identity.

The authors of postcolonial texts, such as Boehmer (2005) and Ashcroft et al. (2002), tend to struggle against colonial language by disrupting dominate discourses. But then again in *Heart of Darkness* the resistance is unclear. Although the text seems to criticize imperialism in the form of the unease increasingly felt by Marlow, it continues to use dehumanizing images to a large degree and there is also the suppression of African subjectivity. So, the text might be seen as complacent with colonial ideology. These tensions can thus be lighted up by a stylistic analysis which can demonstrate how language can sustain as well as undermine the colonial authority. Amireh et al. (2025) frame *Heart of Darkness* within modernist narrative experimentation while emphasizing colonial mimicry and ideological slippage. They argue that Conrad's stylistic choices (irony, fragmentation) align with a postcolonial deconstructive reading in which text and imperial discourse interlock, illustrating how narrative can critique yet remain entangled in the ideological frames it seeks to expose.

Jeffries (2010) and Leech and Short (2007) call for integrating stylistic tools with critical theory to reveal how ideological values operate through grammatical and lexical patterns. Within this framework, Spivak's (1988) concept of "epistemic violence" offers a crucial perspective: linguistic silencing and abstraction, such as Conrad's description of Africans as "black shapes," function as stylistic mechanisms of colonial erasure. It is upon this framework that *Heart of Darkness* can be examined further in exploring that how metaphor, evaluative language and sentence structure influence ideological standpoint of characters and the setting. (Al-Fatlawi & Abu-Krooz, 2025). The metaphors followed in the novel, i.e., darkness, wilderness, emptiness are extensively used and hence serve the colonial binaries that oppose the European civilization as well as the African primitivism.

Narrative theorists have also highlighted how Conrad's framed narrative (the story within a story) produces what Armstrong (2017) calls 'narrative complicity.' The external narrator's composure contrasts with Marlowe's moral unease, inviting readers to identify with multiple ideological positions simultaneously. This layered narrative construction creates what Dannenberg (2008) calls 'ideological echo,' where linguistic frequencies and repetitions reinforce the instability of the moral perspective.

The enduring significance of *Heart of Darkness* in postcolonial studies is evident in its role as a springboard for subsequent literary works and critical engagements. The novella has become a "key benchmark for postcolonial critics," prompting "revisions" such as Ama Ata Aidoo's, which treats Conrad's text as a "general colonial narrative" (Hoeller, 2004). Similarly, Habila's (2010) *Oil on Water* offers another example of an "intertextual reading" that combines contemporary narratives with Conrad's work, demonstrating its continued relevance in addressing the legacy of colonialism (Vazquez, 2020). These postcolonial responses and reinterpretations not only critically analyze themes present in Conrad's narrative but also delve deeply into its "imperial foundations" through stylistic re-evaluation, prompting readers to consider how literary form and content shape the understanding of the historical and ongoing "imperial experience" (Said, 1993).

Despite the abundance of postcolonial criticism, very few studies have systematically employed stylistic tools to analyze *Heart of Darkness* as a colonial text. This discrepancy offers an interesting opportunity to discuss the role of language in the conception of colonial ideology and how stylistic devices can reveal this function. This research has the potential to explore, from a postcolonial critical perspective and within a theoretical framework, the application of stylistic analysis to add a more ideologically sensitive implementation of the literary language used in colonial literature.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this work is influenced by an interdisciplinary approach to postcolonial stylistics that brings together the particularities of postcolonial theory and the precision of stylistics. According to the Postcolonial Stylistics (Adami, 2025), the following is a synthesized structure of the postcolonial stylistic analysis, framed on the basis of some important concepts and levels of analysis presented in the text. The framework is the combination of postcolonial philosophy and stylistic features of the narrative, which presents a methodological framework for the textual analysis in the postcolonial context. Using this interdisciplinary method, the research explores how language can support or resist the formation of imperial ideology, the silencing of colonized people and narrative ambivalence as highlighted in *Heart of Darkness*.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology proposed in this research is based on the qualitative research involving the analysis of text specifically through the postcolonial stylistics lens that has been used to study how the colonial power and the imperial ideology have been encoded in *Heart of Darkness* by Conrad (2007). The excerpts paid attention for the analysis are limited to the passages with the strongest ideological value, referring to the African characters, the colonial setting, as well as to the thoughts of Marlow on imperialism. The key stylistic elements used for the analysis distinguish the lexical preferences, the use of metaphors, transitivity patterns, and narrator voice. In a systematic examination of such linguistic features, the work attempts to identify how power positions, race hierarchies and colonial binaries are constructed and maintained through language. The analysis is thematic and language based with a particular focus on the ideological meanings and the impact of language choices. This postcolonial stylistic reading of *Heart of Darkness* reveals a complex interaction with imperial ideology, where narrative techniques and stylistic choices, function both to perpetuate and to critique imperialist narratives.

V. DISCUSSION

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2007) operates within a framework of linguistic and ideological tension that simultaneously critiques and reinforces imperialist ideology. From a stylistic perspective, Conrad's language embodies the instability of imperialist discourse through shifting focus, stylistic ambiguity, and a lack of precise vocabulary. The present study aims to explore and understand how colonial power has been embedded ideologically and stylistically into the text. Selected excerpts have been analyzed, focusing on the ideas of imperial ideology and narrative complicity. Furthermore, postcolonial stylistics are examined in relation to lexical choices, metaphorical language, transitivity, structure, and the narrative voice. The interpretation of the excerpts shows how the use and application of postcolonial theory and stylistic resources either reinforce or critique imperial ideology.

Excerpt 1: "The conquest of the earth... is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea" (Conrad, 2007, p. 31).

The nominalization underlying this passage, however abstract (conquest, idea, pretense), obscures agency and depersonalizes colonial violence. It is the repetition of ideologies that lends greater validity to justification through ideas than through the material reality of the world. The analysis highlights the unequivocal use of the word "idea" both in the title and in the actual text itself. The moral lesson superimposed on the acts of exploitation is suggested by the verbal phrase "redemption," and the semantic ambiguity is produced by the indefinite article, which causes the speaker to relinquish any pretense of morality. The modal phrase, "not a pretty thing" is a euphemism that moderates the brutality of colonization. From a postcolonial stylistic perspective, the linguistic patterns reflect the underlying psychological process by which imperial agents legitimize their goal of cannibalization.

Excerpt 2: "Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light" (Conrad, 2007, p. 33).

The language choices of the narrative such as shapes, crouched, effaced and many others render people of African descent into barely recognizable figures. Present participles are used to imply incomplete or passive actions, indicating helplessness: the act of clinging to, or leaning over. The linguistic erasure of African presence and identity is conveyed through repetitive, incomplete, or fragmented structures ("half coming out, half effaced"). Based on the transitivity analysis, the Africans are participants in grammar, but barely in physical roles as an agent; hence, it represents what Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) describe as a grammatical reflection of the social marginalization. A constructed image of obscured silence and darkness in Africa perpetuates the colonial tradition of representing the land of the primitive.

Excerpt 3: "We live in the flicker may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday" (Conrad, 2007, p. 62).

In the light of the above-mentioned excerpt, Marlow juxtaposes the European Enlightenment with an untimely and dangerous African nowhere. Here, the metaphor of darkness, the most important semantic field of this novel, is expounded, representing the unknown and, at the same time, the morally corrupt. The temporal contrasts between yesterday and the flicker identify Africa as a product of a bygone era, in contrast to Europe, which is advancing toward modernity. Such a binary opposition, as Said (1993) points out, is a characteristic feature of the colonial discourse, which, in turn, is stylistically distinguished by the metaphorical construction of the sentence. The conciseness and ambiguity of the

expression “the darkness was here yesterday” contribute to creating a rhetoric of otherness that presents Africa as a backward predecessor of European civilization.

Excerpt 4: “Your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others” (Conrad, 2007, p. 45).

This is an outburst of ideological breach. The parallels, in the opposite form, are part of the critique of imperial triumphalism, since the designation of the strength under the category of chance and weakness as under the category of others implies that disposition toward colonial domination is a transitory state that fluctuates within an ethical vacuum. The relational clause, merely accidental, serves to debunk imperial power, undermining its legitimacy. According to the postcolonial parameter of styling, this phrase brings out the element of ambivalence in the narrative- a criticism incorporated in the narrative voice. This semantic inversion disturbs the assumptions of colonialism and reveals the way in which the language of Conrad questions the ideology within which it is inscribed. The analysis endorses Said’s (1993) idea of complicit critique; his nuanced postcolonial reading critically analyses imperial ideology which is more complicit rather than being fully oppositional.

Excerpt 5: “It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me” (Conrad, 2007, p. 41).

The prevalence of precautionary expressions such as “seemed,” “somehow,” “a kind of” points to epistemological uncertainty. Modality here encodes Marlowe’s fragile authority: knowledge is filtered through subjectivity and doubt. This linguistic hesitation aligns with postcolonial stylistic theory’s interest in how language reveals the instability of ideology (Simpson, 1993). The metaphor of “light,” diluted by modifiers, becomes self-reflective: enlightenment itself is dimmed by complicity.

Excerpt 6: “They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity” (Conrad, 2007, p. 34).

The coordinated verbs “howled,” “leaped,” and “spun” highlight the physical energy of the Africans, while Marlowe’s qualifying phrase “the thought of their ‘humanity’” re-establishes a colonial hierarchy of knowledge. Human morphology is divided into two parts: physical (primitive) expression and “thought” (European recognition). This division reinforces a linguistic dichotomy, even as it suggests empathy. Bhabha (1994) describes this moment as “meta colonial,” where the recognition of shared humanity destabilizes colonial domination.

In the passages analyzed above, metaphor, transitivity, nominalization, modality, and wordplay are the main stylistic features that contribute to the creation of colonial ideology. The African characters are usually put in the linguistic background or are stripped of their agency, whereas the imperial violence is masked or objectified. However, there are also some moments of ambivalence in the story as the stylistic forms are used to show the moral hypocrisy of the empire. This ambivalence demonstrates the significance of postcolonial stylistics in expressing both complicity as well as criticism in the colonist writings.

Analyzing *Heart of Darkness* from a postcolonial stylistic perspective demonstrates the role of language as both a reflection and instrument of colonial ideology. While Conrad initially appears to perceive injustice in imperial exploitation, he employs a linguistic framework that surreptitiously recreates Eurocentric discourse. Through lexical abstraction, the use of binary metaphors, and transitive structures, the words create an image of Africa as mute, alien, and sexually degrading, depriving the colonized of their agency and diminishing their right to a voice. This situation justifies European intervention. The exclusion of Africans is reflected grammatically, either through their marginalization or metonymic abbreviations that include terms like “forms” or “savages,” consistent with what Fowler (1996) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) call the grammatical form of social neglect.

Examining the reflective structure of the text identifies Marlowe’s narrative voice as situated between criticism and complicity. On the one hand, he fails to be disillusioned by the brutality of imperialism, and, on the other hand, his metaphorical use of language is colonial in nature. For example, the frequent use of metaphors like “darkness” and “wilderness” carries both geographical and racial connotations of the symbolical connection between African lands and primitivism. Current stylistic tactics are in accordance with the theory of orientalist representation developed by Said (1993), according to which the world of the colonized is subordinated to the world of the rational West as the irrational and inferior other.

However, the ideological breach is also observed in the text, where the artwork lends itself to critical dialogue on stylistic and postcolonial arrangements. A compelling example of the syntactic and semantic juncture against the imperial discourse is the confession made by Marlow, in which he acknowledges the reality of colonial power by simply characterizing it as a coincidence that occurred as a result of the shortcomings of others. This ambivalence lends weight to the argument put forward by Boehmer (2005) that there are numerous texts from the colonial era which either give a play of endorsement or of subversion in connection to the empire, corresponding to the moralistic as well as psychological ambivalence of the colonial agents.

By integrating postcolonial theory into stylistic tools, this research confirms once again that the concepts of ideology in *Heart of Darkness* can hardly be abstracted into thematic content; on the contrary, their ideological level seems to be rooted in the very texture of the text. The strength of postcolonial stylistics lies in its ability to uncover such subtle layers as how grammatical choices, metaphorical structures, and styles of discourse create, maintain, or destabilize imperial control.

(A) *How does the exploitative use of lexical items and metaphors in Heart of Darkness create and establish the colonial ideology?*

Conrad employs a dense array of lexical resources and metaphor that naturalize and normalize the colonial project while simultaneously presenting Africa as an unknown and primitive Other. The lexical signs like “savage”, “nigger,” “inhuman” and “prehistoric” create a linguistic hierarchy in which the identity of Europeans is constructed as rational, civilized, and enlightened, while that of Africans is constructed as irrational, bestial and backward (Achebe, 1977). The words do not represent neutrality and are consistently used to portray Africans as dark, wild, and voiceless.

The use of metaphors is fundamental to prompting notions about Africans. The narrative that presents Africa as a dark continent, the land of the unknown, the heart of darkness, has succeeded in constructing the image of Africa as a place of European exploration and control. The River Thames is metaphorically associated with civilization, and the Congo is depicted as a menacing, serpentine creature; an image that implies danger, temptation, and chaos. These metaphors carry ideological weight; they represent an image of Africa opposed to Europe, and imperial conquest serves a moral function (Said, 1993).

(B) *What role do syntactic construct and transitivity patterns play to make power relations between colonizer and colonized visible?*

In a syntactic sense, the passivation, nominalization, and agent suppression employed by Conrad contribute considerably to clarifying the role of the colonizers and to shifting blame for acts of violence and exploitation. The transitive approach patterns of Halliday’s *Systemic-Functional Grammar* and linguistic stylistics reveal that, in most material processes, the colonizers are presented as actors, while the colonized subjects are either omitted or relegated to passive positions. The popular words such as, the land was taken, or the natives were tamed, are used intentionally to conceal the one or the group of people doing the action or taming.

The grammatical effacement conceals the imperial representatives on the one hand and makes the consequences of the colonial violence seem normal on the other hand. Through their linguistic objectification, Africans are not typically represented as subjects of verbal or mental actions (thinking, speaking, feeling). In contrast, European characters-such as Marlow, or Kurtz- are granted space to act, to have a voice and to be conscious enough to narrate, judge and retrospect the happenings. This directional disparity in syntactic representation corresponds to the ideology of imperialism, where the colonizer’s point of view is pivotal and commanding, and the colonized are deprived of both speech and act (Fowler, 1996).

(C) *What postcolonial stylistic features expose the text’s simultaneous complicity in and critique of imperialism, and in what ways do they create a narrative ambivalence?*

Heart of Darkness has a complex and ambivalent narrative voice, which results from the narrative structure of a narrator (slightly embedded into a frame narrator) telling the monologue of Marlow. Marlow’s entire narrative is imbued with the colors of the imperial language and imagery which recalls the superior colonial ideologies addressing the African characters as phantoms, shadows, or savages. His story is fused with the imperial agenda in terms of content and language. For example, he writes Africa as a bottomless pit of darkness and lack of reason.

But this narrative voice is also already characterized by some elements of self-doubt, irony, and disillusionment, and this creates a room for criticism. In many instances, Marlow challenges the authenticity of colonialism by terming it as a robbery with violence and as an amplified murder. The paradox and ambiguity, like the description of Kurtz as both as an idealistic and a mad man, make the story complex and dilutes the imperial confidence. In addition, this ambivalence is underpinned by the fact that the narrator recounts the story of Marlow, but does not comment on it, therefore, the ideological stand-point of the narrative is unclear to the readers.

The style oscillates between affirmation and criticism, which corresponds to what critics such as Levenson (1991) and Bhabha (1994) have labelled as the ambivalence of the colonial discourse. Consequently, Conrad’s narrator not only participates in imperial ideology but also offers a critique that makes *Heart of Darkness* an important postcolonial stylistic project.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research has shown that the apparent ambiguity with which *Heart of Darkness* is often interpreted as a condemnation of imperialism actually contains a stylistic formulation and a subtle reinstatement of colonial ideology. The metaphor, word choice, and transitivity are analyzed in depth to reveal that Conrad’s use of language supports the binary opposition between the civilized self and the savage other, present in narratives of empire. However, the linguistic ambivalence of the text (the intention to critique the colonial world while simultaneously acknowledging itself as part of it) demonstrates that the authority of imperialists is not entirely solid.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the ideology of literary language from a postcolonial stylistic perspective, particularly in a work belonging to the colonial archive. The results demonstrate the need to study not only the explicit content of a literary work, but also its form of writing; form and substance, together, to generate authentic understanding and meaning. In short, *Heart of Darkness* offers an interesting starting point for deconstructing the discursive mechanisms of colonial power and constitutes a good example of how the stylistics of discourse can enrich postcolonial criticism by simultaneously revealing complicity with and opposition to imperial discourse.

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Echoes From the Sertão Across Linguistic Boundaries: A Study on the Chinese Translation and Reception of João Guimarães Rosa's Works (1949-2025)*

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Abstract—This study examines the Chinese translation and reception of the works of the Brazilian literary titan João Guimarães Rosa. Employing a literature-based research approach that integrates academic research in both Chinese and Portuguese, historical translation data, publishing archives, and literary criticisms, it systematically charts the trajectory of the Chinese translations of Rosa's works from 1949 to 2025. Focusing on the socio-historical factors driving translation practices across different time periods, the analysis explores how different translators, publishing markets, and literary fields interact in the cross-cultural circulation of Rosa's works. By juxtaposing the distinctive linguistic features of Rosa's works with Chinese readers' reception preferences, this study reveals the changing logic behind the dissemination of Rosa's works in Chinese, from the single-title translation of *The Third Bank of the River* to their eventual canonization within the Chinese literary world. The study offers both theoretical insights and practical references for Sino-Brazilian literary exchanges and future research on the translation of Portuguese literature.

Index Terms—João Guimarães Rosa, literary translation, Sino-Brazilian cultural exchange, translation reception, translation history

I. INTRODUCTION

Driven by the waves of globalization, economic, political, and cultural exchanges between China and Brazil have deepened steadily. Literature, a key medium for cultural interaction, has increasingly functioned as a bridge for enhancing mutual understanding and friendship between the two nations (Guerini et al., 2023; Xing et al., 2024; Zhang & Ye, 2025). Brazilian literature, distinguished by its unique regional-cultural identity and profound intellectual depth, has carved out a singular niche in the global literary arena, with its introduction into China through translation spanning over a century (Min, 2025). João Guimarães Rosa is unquestionably one of the major figures in Brazilian literature, internationally acclaimed for his penetrating portrayal of life in the Brazilian sertão (hinterland), his pioneering linguistic experimentation, and his deeply philosophical inquiries. However, compared to other Brazilian literary luminaries such as Jorge Amado or Clarice Lispector, the translation and scholarly examination of Rosa and his works in China remain relatively nascent. This phenomenon sits uneasily with both the deepening of Sino-Brazilian relations and Rosa's standing in world literature, rendering his case an anomaly in the history of Brazilian literature's Chinese translation.

At present, scholarship on Rosa is predominantly concentrated within Brazilian, European, and American academic circles, with a focus on his linguistic idiosyncrasies, narrative structures, and regionalism (Souza & Pereira, 2022; Rocha, 2023; Vital, 2022; Mandelbaum, 2021; Seligmann-Silva, 2009). Within Translation Studies, most research explores how translators interpret Rosa's works in the context of their global circulation (Mateus & Silva Júnior, 2023; Grossegese, 2021) and examines their reception within Anglo-American contexts (Borges de Faveri, 2009; Pisetta, 2020). What remains underexplored, however, are the socio-historical factors underlying the reception of Rosa's works across diverse cultural contexts. In China, despite the burgeoning interest in Hispanic and Portuguese (especially Brazilian) literature in recent years, scholarly attention has largely been confined to mapping the broader contours of their Chinese translations (Min, 2025; Lin, 2024; Lou, 2020). Research exclusively devoted to the translation and

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reception of Rosa's works is still at an early stage, lacking a systematic account of how they have made their way into China and how they have been received by Chinese readers.

As Guerini et al. (2023) argue in their study of Sino-Portuguese literary translation, the process transcends mere linguistic conversion; it is an act of cultural transmission and exchange that necessitates a profound analysis of the cultural, historical, and social factors at work. Building on this insight, this study systematically charts the nearly half-century journey of Rosa's works being translated into Chinese since as early as 1977, thereby filling a critical research gap in the study of Rosa's Chinese translation and reception. By excavating the socio-historical factors behind various stages of translation practices and examining the roles played by translators, publishers, and literary critics in the process of receiving and canonizing Rosa's works, this study reveals the transcultural resonance between Rosa's linguistic characteristics and the Chinese cultural context, presenting fresh perspectives and theoretical insights for Sino-Brazilian literary dialogue.

This study is guided by three interrelated questions. First, what are the period-specific characteristics of the translation and reception of Rosa's works in China, and what are the socio-historical motivations behind each stage? Second, what roles do the Chinese translators, publishing houses, and literary critics play in the reception and canonization of his works, and through what mechanisms? Third, given the obvious distance between Rosa's distinctive language traits and the Chinese cultural-linguistic context, how has transcultural resonance been achieved, enabling Chinese readers to understand and appreciate his writings in depth?

To address these questions, the study primarily employs a literature-based research method by systematically collecting relevant academic monographs, scholarly articles, literary criticism, prefaces and postscripts of different translations, and publishing data. This approach allows for a thorough synthesis of Rosa's creative background, thematic concerns, linguistic features, and related research. Situating Rosa's Chinese translation and reception within the broader framework of Sino-Brazilian cultural exchanges, this study offers a rigorous analysis of the dynamics through which Rosa's works have been translated and received in China, laying a solid foundation for further research on the history of translation and reception studies.

II. ROSA'S LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS AND THE INTERNATIONAL CIRCULATION OF HIS WORKS

A. Literary Characteristics: Sertão Writing and Linguistic Experimentation

João Guimarães Rosa was born in 1908 in Cordisburgo, in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. His literary style was deeply rooted in his experiences with the Sertão, the "hinterland" or "backcountry" of Brazil. In his childhood, he spent long hours in his father's grocery store listening to cattle herders, peddlers, and hunters recount tales of the wilderness, stories that would later find their way into his writing. As an adult, Rosa embarked on numerous expeditions into the sertão, navigating by canoe and trekking with cattle droves along riverbanks. He meticulously documented the flora and fauna, landscapes, folklore, and proverbs that he encountered in notebooks described as being "scarred and stained with cattle blood and horse sweat", raw materials that became the bedrock for much of his literary production.

Works such as *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*) and *Sagarana* are set against the backdrop of Brazil's northeastern sertão, depicting a rather mystical world of mountains, valleys, ravines, marshlands, and wastelands. In *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, Rosa follows the protagonist's wandering journey to reveal both the immensity and the enigma of the sertão, as well as the resilience and struggles of its inhabitants. His depictions of the natural landscape are strikingly precise and sensorial: "The sun, like an enormous ball of fire, hung above the endless wasteland, scorching the earth; every inch of land radiated heat, as if all things were on the verge of being reduced to ash." Such a distinct regional identity imbues his work with an evocative and quintessentially Brazilian atmosphere.

Linguistically speaking, Rosa is widely regarded as a radical innovator. He breaks with conventional Portuguese grammar, blending elements from multiple languages and various sertão dialects to create a vast corpus of lively neologisms, thereby forging a highly experimental mode of expression. In *O Léxico de Guimarães Rosa*, Martins (2021) catalogs many of these lexical inventions, including neologisms (such as *abelhar*, conveying the sense of "to give up," or *adormorrer*, a fusion of "to fall asleep" and "to die"), reduplicative formations (for example, *brisbrisar*, derived from *brisa*, meaning "a gentle waft of breeze"), creative reactivations of dialectal and archaic terms (such as *jagunço* and *vereda*, both specific to the backlands), as well as onomatopoeic constructions and semantic blends (for instance, *engenhingonça*, combining notions of ingenuity and makeshift crudity). These original terms do more than enrich Brazilian Portuguese; they endow the text with a profound poetic tension and vividly capture the lives and emotions of the sertão people, effectively conveying the unique nuances of their culture. The speech of Rosa's characters is imbued with a strong rural flavor - "That urge in my heart was like a flood bursting a dike; there was no containing it." Such vibrant, colloquial expressions bring his characters to life. In addition, his mastery of metaphor and symbolism lends his work deep philosophical weight. In *A Terceira Margem do Rio* (*The Third Bank of the River*), for example, the river and the dugout canoe serve as metaphors for destiny, prompting the reader's sustained reflection on human nature and existence.

B. The Aesthetic Dilemma of "Untranslatability": Challenges in the International Translation of Rosa's Works

Rosa was fluent in seven languages, literate in over ten, and had taught himself the grammars of a dozen more - endowing him with a remarkably acute understanding of translation (Lang, 2025, p. 4). In his correspondence with

translators, he frequently emphasized that translation is an arduous undertaking, particularly for his linguistically experimental works. While he acknowledged that certain sacrifices are inevitable for translators to preserve the core “poetics” of the original text, he also cautioned against oversimplification (Mateus & Silva Júnior, 2023). Writing to a German translator of his works, Rosa wrote, “Attempting to recreate the soliloquies of the sertão word-for-word, without losing an iota, would be an arduous and nuanced undertaking - of a Chinese-like extreme meticulousness (chinesamente minuciosíssimo). It is a difficult re-creation, costly, hazardous, and contingent” (Bussolotti, 2003, p. 113). The phrase “chinesamente minuciosíssimo” (meticulous to an extreme, in the Chinese manner) not only reflects his exacting standards for precision in translation but also suggests a keen insight into the profound differences between various linguistic and cultural systems.

Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa once described Rosa’s writing as “charged with power, ambition, and extraordinary linguistic genius - work that should have been won the Nobel Prize.” Yet it is precisely the radical linguistic experimentation and cultural specificity that make Rosa as one of the most authentically contemporary Brazilian writers that also pose formidable obstacles to the translation of his works beyond the Portuguese-speaking world (Mateus & Silva Júnior, 2023). Translators worldwide are frequently challenged by Rosa’s neologisms, idiosyncratic syntactic patterns, and dense regional references. Metaphors and symbols rooted in the lived realities of the Sertão, for instance, often lack ready equivalents in other cultural contexts, requiring translators to invest substantial effort in formulating strategies that balance the preservation of the original “flavor” with the readability required by the target audience. Broadly speaking, the international translation and circulation of Rosa’s work have been shaped by three persistent challenges: the rendering of region-specific cultural imagery (such as flora, fauna, and local customs of the sertão), the replication of linguistic experimentation, and the treatment of proper nouns, especially toponyms and anthroponyms.

In France, early translator Jean-Jacques Villard tended to reconstruct Rosa’s texts in standardized French, retitling *Grande Sertão: Veredas* as *Diadorim* and reducing the semantic density of key terms such as *Nonada* by translating them as *foutaises* or *bêtises*. Such choices resulted in the loss of the original’s rhythmic intensity and philosophical resonance (Faveri, 2009). By contrast, in later retranslations, Maryvonne Lapouge-Pettorelli followed Rosa’s own recommendations, prioritizing the preservation of the texts’ poetic and mythic dimensions and adopting a strategy of “French substitution plus annotation” for terms relating to flora and fauna. In Germany, Curt Meyer-Clason, working under Rosa’s personal guidance, sought to recreate the experimental quality of neologisms through syntactic restructuring, while nevertheless acknowledging that the rigidity of German grammatical norms constrained the transmission of certain effects (Mateus & Silva Júnior, 2023).

The difficulties encountered in Western translations of Rosa’s works resonate to a significant extent with those faced in the Chinese context. Chinese translators likewise confront the dual challenges arising from Rosa’s linguistic experimentation and deeply localized cultural references. On the one hand, dialectal expressions and neologisms rooted in the sertão often lack direct equivalents in Chinese (You, 2025, p. 303); on the other hand, Chinese readers are generally less familiar with Brazil’s sertão culture. Studies by Min (2025) and Lou (2020) both indicate that the Chinese translation of Brazilian and Latin American literature has long been shaped by the problem of “cultural distance”. The linguistic particularity of Rosa’s works further amplifies this challenge, which may help to explain, at least in part, the delayed reception of his works in China.

III. THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY AND DRIVING FORCES OF THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF ROSA’S WORKS (1949–2025)

A. The First Stage (1949–1976): The Absence of Translation Within a Politicized Context

(a). The Translation of Spanish and Portuguese Literature Under Ideological Filtering Mechanisms

From the founding of the PRC in 1949 until the end of the Cultural Revolution, the translation of foreign literature in China was characterized by a distinct “politics first” orientation. Song Binghui, a Chinese scholar of comparative literature, notes that foreign literature translation during this period was entirely state-led and characterized by a pragmatic attitude, with political ideology serving as the primary criterion for selecting works for translation. Within such historical context, works featuring prominent themes of class struggle or reflecting social revolution and people’s liberation were favored and became the primary subjects of translation (Song, 2007). Lou (2020) summarizes the Chinese translation of Latin American literature during this era as “politics-dominated”, where the core objective was to serve Sino-Latin American people-to-people diplomacy and ideological expression, and the selected translations focused primarily on realist themes involving anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and anti-hegemony. Song and Lv (2007) point out that during this time, the translation of literature from “oppressed nations”, such as Spanish-speaking Latin American countries and Brazil, was included in national cultural development plans. Although works from Asia, Africa, and Latin America were translated on a considerable scale (covering a total of thirty-five nations), the selection criteria were highly ideologized, privileging texts with explicit political positions and strong elements of social critique. The translation of Jorge Amado’s works serves as a prime example. As a member of the Brazilian Communist Party, his works, such as *Cacau* and *Terras do sem fim*, focused on class struggle and resistance against dictatorship. These themes closely aligned with China’s political priorities at the time, leading to extensive translation and circulation of

Amado's works, making the writer an important window through which Chinese readers came to understand Brazilian society and literature (Xing, 2022, 2023).

By contrast, although Guimarães Rosa's writings offer profound portrayals of life in the sertão, they lack an explicit revolutionary narrative and adopt a relatively ambiguous political stance. They are more concerned with philosophical questions such as human nature and existence, rather than foregrounding class struggle, which was a core theme of the political discourse that dominated China at the time. His magnum opus, *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, for example, presents the customs, landscapes, and inner lives of the Sertão through a distinctive linguistic style and narrative structure, without directly addressing political themes such as class conflict. Compounding the situation, the 1964 military coup in Brazil brought Sino-Brazilian diplomatic relations to a halt, creating further obstacles to the translation and dissemination of Rosa's works in China. Under the combined effects of a highly politicized cultural environment and strained bilateral relations, Rosa's name was excluded from China's translation agenda, resulting in his almost total absence from the Chinese literary scene during this period (Zhang, 2023).

(b). *The Marginalization of Brazilian Literature's "Latin American Identity" and the Shortage of Portuguese Language Expertise*

During this period, Chinese perceptions of Latin American literature were shaped primarily by works from Spanish-speaking countries in the region. In her discussion of whether Brazilian literature should be considered part of "Latin American literature," Min et al. (2019) contend that, due to linguistic barriers and limited channels of transmission, Portuguese-language literature occupied a marginal position within the circulation of Latin American writing. As the only country in Latin America with Portuguese as its official language, Brazil faced significant obstacles in the dissemination of its literary works. Within Chinese academia, research on and translation of Portuguese-language literature remained comparatively underdeveloped, and Brazilian literature was often subsumed under the broader rubric of Latin American literature, lacking independent scholarly attention and promotion.

Simultaneously, China faced an acute shortage of Portuguese-language specialists during this period. By the 1970s, only a few Chinese universities offered Portuguese courses, and the pool of professionally trained personnel was extremely limited (Zhang, 2020). This resulted in an extreme scarcity of professional translators capable of handling Brazilian literature. The challenge was further compounded by the linguistic experimentation of Rosa's writing, which places exceptionally high demands on translators' command of Portuguese. The prevailing practice at the time, i.e., translating foreign literature via intermediary languages such as Russian and English (Lou, 2020), was ill-equipped to convey Rosa's linguistic features, further exacerbating the difficulties in translating his works. As Song and Lv (2007) note, during the wave of translation of Asian, African, and Latin American literatures in China in the 1950s and 1960s, Brazilian literature did receive some attention, but the works selected were predominantly those with explicit political orientations and those more amenable to relay translation. Under these circumstances, Rosa's works struggled to enter the Chinese literary horizon, in contrast to those of Jorge Amado, which were frequently reprinted due to their leftist stance and themes of social criticism. Consequently, Rosa's distinctive literary appeal and cultural significance remained largely unrecognized and uncirculated in China during this stage.

B. *The Second Stage (1977–2000): The Single-Title Translation of The Third Bank of the River*

(a). *Rosa's Debut Translation in 1977: The Third Bank of the River and the Window Provided by World Literature*

With the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Brazil in 1974 and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, Chinese society entered a new phase in which foreign cultural exchange gradually resumed. Following the launch of the reform and opening-up in 1978, Chinese translation of Latin American literature moved into a stage often described as a "return to literary values", in which political considerations waned and literary merit became the principal criterion for selection. It was also during this period that Spanish and Portuguese language education developed steadily, and a cohort of professionally trained translators began to emerge (Lou, 2020). In 1977, the journal *World Literature* (Shijie Wenxue) resumed publication, marking a key moment in China's re-engagement with foreign literature. Lin (2024) finds that, as the country's only core journal devoted exclusively to the translation of foreign literature at the time, *World Literature* functioned as a "bellwether" for the field of Latin American literary translation, as the works it featured often carried a distinctly pioneering significance. That same year, Wang Yangle's translation of *The Third Bank of the River* was published in this journal, marking the first time a work by Rosa was rendered into Simplified Chinese, thus initiating his journey of translation and dissemination in China.

Drawing on his professional background in English and French, Wang acquired Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan through self-study and produced the translation via an indirect route. Although such an approach inevitably entailed limitations and could not fully reproduce the distinctive linguistic style and cultural density of Rosa's writings, Wang nonetheless succeeded in capturing the metaphors and emotional tension of the piece with admirable precision. In her translation, he hailed Rosa as "the most significant contemporary Brazilian novelist" (Wang, 1977, p. 103), a smart strategy aimed at capturing Chinese readers' attention by emphasizing Rosa's standing in the Brazilian literary canon, thereby establishing an initial foundation for the reception of his works in China. Moreover, the story resonated with Chinese readers upon publication, thanks to its relatively concise language and universal existentialist themes, making it something of a highlight in initial Sino-Brazilian literary exchange.

(b). *The Single-Title Translation Phenomenon: Repeated Anthologizing and the Limits of Circulation*

Before 2020, the Chinese translation of Rosa's works featured what Hu (2010) terms as the "single-title translation" phenomenon. *The Third Bank of the River* remained the almost exclusive translated short story by Rosa, and it was repeatedly anthologized in collections of short fiction from around the world. Notable examples include *The Third Bank of the River: Thirty-Eight Classics of Very Short World Fiction* edited by Yang Youli and Qiao Xiangdong in 1998, as well as *A Warm Journey: Ten Short Stories That Influenced My Life*, edited by the prominent contemporary Chinese writer Yu Hua. Beyond this single story, however, virtually no other works by Rosa were translated during the same period, resulting in a striking lack of systematic coverage.

This phenomenon was influenced by the broader environment of Latin American literary translation in China at the time. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Latin American "Boom" in literature generated intense enthusiasm in the Chinese literary market, with Spanish-language authors such as Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, and Mario Vargas Llosa taking center stage, while Brazilian literature remained largely marginalized (Min et al., 2019). The standardization process of the publishing market also significantly impacted Rosa's introduction into China. Following China's accession to the International Copyright Conventions in 1992, copyright awareness strengthened gradually, and the publishing industry shifted from a phase of "disordered competition" toward greater regulation and professionalization (Lou, 2020). As a result, publishers became increasingly cautious about introducing niche literary works. Due to the unique linguistic idiosyncrasies of Rosa's prose, the threshold for readership was inherently high, and the commercial risks associated with translation were difficult to assess. This further disincentivized publishers from translating Rosa's works, prompting them to focus their resources on established authors whose market appeal had been proven. In this context, *The Third Bank of the River* circulated in isolation during this period, without the support of Rosa's broader body of works that might have collectively constructed a more comprehensive image of Rosa's literary universe. Such isolation significantly constrained Chinese readers' potential to develop a more nuanced understanding of Rosa's world.

C. *The Third Stage (2001–2025): From Direct Translation to a Publishing Boom*

(a). *Xudong's Direct Translation: Portuguese Competence and the Breakthrough in Cultural Mediation*

From 2003 and 2005, Hu Xudong, then a professor at Peking University, served as a visiting scholar at the University of Brasília, where he immersed himself in Brazil's culture and developed a deep interest in Brazilian literature. After returning to China, he utilized his self-taught Portuguese to begin translating Rosa's work directly from the original language (Ueta, 2018).

Between 2009 and 2010, Hu published six translated stories from Rosa's *Primeiras Estórias* (First Stories) on his personal blog, including "The Margin of Joy", "The Notorious One", "Sorôco, His Mother, His Daughter", "The Little Girl from Over There", "The Dagobé Brothers", and "*The Third Bank of the River*". Although these translations originated from pure personal interest, they nevertheless blazed a trail for direct translation from Portuguese to Chinese and broke with the earlier reliance on intermediary languages. The posthumous publication of Hu's translated work in 2023, *Primeiras Estórias: Four Chapters of Short Stories*, further enriched the corpus of Rosa's Chinese translations and signaled the entry of Rosa's Chinese reception into a new phase of direct translation from the original Portuguese. Hu's work not only offered Chinese readers an experience closer to the source text, but also provided subsequent translators with valuable lessons and practical reference points.

(b). *The Translation Boom of 2025: Market Forces and Cultural Resonance*

The year 2025 witnessed an unprecedented publication boom of Rosa's works in Chinese. The People's Literature Publishing House released *Campo Geral*, translated by Chen Di; Jiangsu Phoenix Literature and Art Publishing House published *Primeiras Estórias*, translated by Lang Sida under the Chinese title *The Third Bank of the River*. The Shanghai People's Publishing House brought out a selected anthology of Rosa's short stories translated by You Yupin, drawing from four of his collections and also titled *The Third Bank of the River*. The near-simultaneous publication of these three volumes within a single year was no coincidence, but rather the result of multiple driving forces.

Regarding the publishing context, support from cultural diplomatic institutions and prominent intellectual figures served as a powerful catalyst. The Brazilian Consul General in Shanghai, for example, wrote a preface to the Chinese edition of *Campo Geral*. Yao Feng, a retired professor of Portuguese-Chinese translation from the University of Macau, assisted with Lang Sida's translation. Funding from the National Library of Brazil provided financial support for You Yupin's translation project, ensuring the smooth completion of both translation and publication. Meanwhile, publishers' strategic planning for the canonization of Rosa's works and the maximization of commercial interests also played a key role. *Campo Geral* was launched as part of a larger publication scheme orchestrated by The Shanghai 99 Reader (Jiujiu Dushuren). You Yupin's anthology features nineteen representative works from Rosa's peak period, encompassing fantasy, philosophical reflection, and psychological introspection, while is arranged in a mirror-like structure that balances thematic diversity with internal unity (You, 2025, p. 298). Lang Sida's translation curated twenty-one short stories with the aim of presenting a comprehensive view of Rosa's literary landscape (Lang, 2025, p. 3).

In terms of dissemination and promotion, endorsements by well-known writers like Yu Hua made a major contribution. Yu Hua famously included *The Third Bank of the River* in his hand-picked "*Ten Short Stories That*

Influenced One's Life" series, repeatedly recommending it to readers and students alike and generating widespread attention. His endorsement appeared prominently as a book cover blurbs for both Lang Sida's and You Yupin's translations. It is also noteworthy that the selection of *The Third Bank of the River* as a reading text for China's national college entrance examination (gaokao) dramatically boosted Rosa's reach and popularity among the general public and stimulated broader interest in the Brazilian writer's works. Furthermore, readers' resonance with existential themes is another important factor in driving up the sales of these translations. Rosa's profound inquiries into human nature and existence struck an emotional and intellectual chord with Chinese readers, fostering a desire to engage more fully with his works, a phenomenon that closely aligns with the rise of "diversified reading demands" among Chinese readers since 2013 (Lou, 2020).

It is fair to argue that these factors have combined to help You Yupin's translation to go through two reprints within a month of its release and win the Tencent Good Book award for Outstanding Literary Translation of 2025. In a sense, the 2025 publication boom of Rosa's works marked the writer's transition from a figure primarily discussed within academic circles to one embraced by a broader reading public - a shift from the marginal to the mainstream, injecting new vitality into Sino-Brazilian literary exchange.

IV. THE DUAL VARIATION OF TRANSLATION AND RECEPTION: INTERACTION MECHANISMS OF MULTIPLE FORCES

A. *The Translator Community: From Indirect Translation to Academic-Style Direct Translation*

The Chinese translation history of Rosa's works reveals a clear evolution within the translator community. In the early stage (1977–2000), translators were rarely trained in Portuguese and had to rely on their proficiency in other foreign languages to produce indirect translations. Wang Yangle's 1977 translation of *The Third Bank of the River*, for instance, was completed indirectly through self-taught Spanish and Portuguese based on his professional training in English and French. Although such an indirect approach did contribute to the initial introduction of Rosa's work into China, it was inevitably constrained: information loss and cultural distortion were difficult to avoid, and Rosa's highly idiosyncratic linguistic style and sertão-specific cultural elements could not be fully reproduced.

After 2000, with the steady development of Portuguese-language education in China, a cohort of professionally trained translators with solid Portuguese competence began to emerge. Hu Xudong represents a pioneering figure in this transition. Following his academic stay at the University of Brasília between 2003 and 2005 and his sustained engagement with Brazilian culture and literature, Hu undertook direct translations of Rosa's works with his self-taught Portuguese. The six stories from *Primeiras Estórias* that he published on his blog marked a breakthrough in direct translation, overcoming the limitations of indirect translation and enabling Chinese readers to engage more closely with the linguistic and aesthetic qualities of Rosa's original texts.

The translation boom of 2025 further accelerated the professionalization of Rosa's Chinese reception. Translators such as You Yupin and Lang Sida, both graduates of the Portuguese-Chinese Translation MA program at the University of Macau, brought to their work systematic training in literary theory and translation studies. Supplementing their translations with postscripts, translator's notes, and scholarly essays, they actively guided readers' interpretation of Rosa's works. Such translatorial behavior closely aligns with Rosa's own view that translators should engage deeply in the process of recreation (Viotti, 2008).

In her postscript "Searching for *The Third Bank of the River*" (You, 2025), You Yupin candidly describes translating Rosa as "a battle destined to be lost," yet insists on striving, on the basis of fidelity and intelligibility, to recreate the author's linguistic experimentation and playfulness. Every lexical choice in translation, she notes, was subjected to repeated deliberation in an effort to preserve Rosa's stylistic traits while keeping the text accessible to Chinese readers. Lang Sida similarly remarks, "Translating a language master like Rosa is akin to exploring a labyrinth; it is a dangerous undertaking where one frequently feels that both one's Portuguese and Chinese are inadequate - yet one must translate first to allow for subsequent refinement and optimization" (Lang, 2025). In a sense, these translators are no longer mere converters of language; they function as cultural interpreters. Through in-depth research into Rosa's historical background, thematic concerns, and linguistic strategies, and through refined translational techniques, they mediate the cultural world of Brazil's sertão for Chinese readers, serving as vital bridges in cross-cultural exchange.

B. *The Publishing Market: From State-Led to Commercial-Driven*

The evolving role of the publishing market has been a critical pillar in the Chinese reception of Rosa. From 1949 to 1978, the translation of Latin American literature was dominated by state-owned publishers, with selections focusing on works with explicit political leanings. Rosa was excluded due to his failure to meet these criteria. Between 1979 and 2012, the academic journal *World Literature* served as the central platform for the introduction of foreign literature, and the publication of Wang Yangle's *The Third Bank of the River* helped establish an initial readership for Rosa (Lin, 2024). During this period, commercial publishers remained cautious about translating niche literary figures due to perceived market risks, and Rosa's works still lacked systematic introduction. After 2013, commercial publishers became the dominant force in foreign literary translation. Presses such as the Shanghai People's Publishing House assumed a decisive role in shaping the dissemination and reception of Rosa's works, with editorial selection and promotional strategies exerting a direct influence on market response.

During the publication boom of 2025, the respective translations by You Yupin (The Shanghai People's Publishing House) and Lang Sida (Jiangsu Phoenix Literature and Art Publishing House) demonstrated different selection logics and promotional approaches. You's edition selected nineteen representative works from Rosa's creative peak, drawing from collections such as *Primeiras Estórias*, *Estas Estórias*, *Tutaméia*, and *Terceiras Estórias*, balancing diversity, popularity, and story length. Lang's edition includes twenty-one classic short stories to provide a comprehensive picture of Rosa's creative landscape, showcasing features such as female monologues and indigenous cultural elements to offer readers a distinctive interpretive perspective. In terms of promotion, publishers made extensive use of author endorsements and social media marketing to enhance visibility. Furthermore, the diversification of publishing formats - such as the release of e-books to suit the habits of the new media era - has further accelerated the canonization of Rosa's works in China.

C. *The Literary Field: Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Interpretation by Chinese Writers*

The interpretation and creative adaptation of Rosa's works by Chinese writers have constructed a dynamic "literary field" for his reception in China (Bourdieu, 1993). According to Bourdieu (1993), a literary field is a space of objective relations where agents (writers, critics, translators) compete for symbolic capital. In this context, the "consecration" of Rosa by leading Chinese authors has functioned as a powerful mechanism of cultural mediation. Yu Hua, a pivotal agent in this field, included *The Third Bank of the River* in his influential collection *Ten Short Stories That Influence a Person's Life*. By praising Rosa's "concise yet tense narrative that reveals the essential predicament of human nature," Yu Hua effectively transferred his own accumulated symbolic capital to Rosa, directly boosting the Brazilian author's legitimacy and popularity among the Chinese public. Furthermore, Yan Lianke's interpretation of Rosa emphasizes the "spiritual truth" embedded in his works, arguing that Rosa "allows us to experience shared, authentic emotions and sorrow within entirely impossible stories... a form of true spiritual realism where the writer abandons the logic of life to pursue the truth of the soul." These readings have offered Chinese writers new creative pathways, inspiring greater attention to the inner world and the spiritual dimensions of human experience. Echoes of Rosa's influence can also be discerned in the works of writers such as Ge Fei and Su Tong. Ge Fei's fiction frequently employs metaphors of fate and explorations of human nature that resonate with Rosa's existentialist reflections, while Su Tong's evocative depictions of regional cultures and his nuanced portrayal of emotional life similarly recall elements of Rosa's narrative practice. By domesticating Rosa's literary concepts within their own creative practice, these Chinese writers have built a bridge for cross-cultural dialogue, strengthening the acceptance of Rosa within the Chinese-language literary field and exerting a profound influence on the Chinese literary scene.

V. AN UNFINISHED JOURNEY: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF ROSA'S WORKS

A. *Sustained Engagement With Linguistic Challenges: Strategies for Translating Neologisms and Dialects*

The dense concentration of dialectal expressions and self-coined neologisms in Rosa's writing constitutes one of the most formidable linguistic barriers in the translation process. The language of Brazil's *sertão* as represented in his works is saturated with region-specific cultural meanings, compelling translators to negotiate a delicate balance between foreignness and readability. One possible direction for future practice lies in a more systematic use of paratextual aids - such as annotations, glossaries, and cultural introductions - to mediate between Rosa's experimental language and the expectations of Chinese readers. As Rosa himself suggested, "translation requires sacrifice, but the core must remain". In other words, translators should be flexible in deploying a range of translation techniques to enable readers to experience the distinctive appeal of Rosa's writing within a Chinese linguistic framework, while preserving the central ideas and cultural substance of the original texts. In practice, for example, when rendering Rosa's neologisms, translators may consider retaining the original terms in the main text while providing detailed explanations of their meanings and usage in a glossary. Such an approach can allow readers to consult these explanations as they read, deepening their understanding of Rosa's linguistic creativity without interrupting the narrative flow.

B. *Perfecting the Translation System: From Fragmented Introduction to Systematic Construction*

Despite the 2025 publishing boom, certain gaps remain in the Chinese reception of Rosa. Most notably, his magnum opus, *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, has yet to see a full Chinese translation - a conspicuous absence that severely limits any comprehensive understanding of his literary universe. Acclaimed as a "Brazilian Ulysses" and reputed to be a "virtually untranslatable volume", the novel's labyrinthine narrative structure, idiosyncratic style, and profound philosophical inquiry present a supreme challenge to any translator.

Constructing a comprehensive Chinese translation system for Rosa requires the establishment of sustainable Sino-Brazilian academic collaboration mechanisms and joint translation projects. Brazil possesses a wealth of scholarly resources and expertise in Rosian studies, while China boasts an expanding readership and a burgeoning cohort of translation professionals. Through institutional cooperation, both sides could jointly overcome linguistic and cultural hurdles to ensure translation quality. For example, scholars and translators from both nations would benefit from convening symposia to exchange pedagogical experiences and refine translation strategies. Moreover, greater emphasis should be placed on the training of Portuguese-language literary translators, strengthening their professional competence and intercultural communication skills (Zhang et al., 2024). Although the number of Chinese universities

offering Portuguese programs has increased in recent years, specialized training in literary translation still remains insufficient. Chinese universities could address this gap by introducing related courses and inviting experts from home and abroad to contribute to teaching, thereby providing intellectual support for the future translation of Rosa's works.

Beyond his fiction, Rosa's essays and correspondence - which also hold significant literary and cultural value - should be incorporated into future translation agendas. His essay collection, *Tutaméia (Terceiras Estórias)*, reveals his facets as both a diplomat and a philologist, while his correspondence offers intimate insights into his creative thoughts and personal experience. Moving beyond the present reliance on short fiction and pursuing a comprehensive translation of Rosa's diverse writings would enable Chinese readers to engage more fully with this major literary figure and would further deepen Sino-Brazilian literary exchange.

C. Potentials of Further Transcultural Circulation: From Literary Text to Cultural Symbol

Rosa's works possess considerable potential for cross-media dissemination. His fiction is replete with fantastical plots and original characters, offering rich material for film and television adaptation. For instance, the father's enigmatic canoe journey in *The Third Bank of the River* and the mystic tales narrated by the semi-literate storyteller in *My Uncle the Jaguar*, both exhibit a powerful visuality. If adapted for the screen, such narratives could attract wider audiences through the immediacy of visual language, thereby extending the cultural reach of Rosa's works. Audiovisual reinterpretation can also allow the sertão culture embedded in Rosa's writings to be presented to Chinese audiences in a more dynamic and accessible form, fostering deeper cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

In terms of cultural studies, similarities between Brazil's sertão culture in Rosa's works and Chinese rural culture offer fertile ground for comparative research. Both contexts are marked by distinctive regional traditions and sustained reflections on the relationship between humans and nature, the endurance of the human spirit, and the transformations of society. Comparative inquiry may reveal both the convergences and divergences across different cultural settings, thereby opening new avenues for cross-cultural research. For example, juxtaposing Rosa's portrayals of the resilience of backland communities with depictions of farmers' tenacious vitality in Chinese rural literature can illuminate a shared pursuit of human dignity and moral strength under differing historical and cultural conditions.

In educational contexts, Rosa's works may be incorporated into university-level Portuguese literature curricula as teaching materials aimed at fostering college students' literary appreciation and intercultural awareness (Lin, 2024). Instructors can guide students to analyze the linguistic features, narrative structures, and cultural dimensions of Rosa's writing, enabling them to experience the richness of Brazilian literature while deepening their understanding of Brazilian culture. As a significant symbol in Sino-Brazilian cultural exchange, Rosa's works - sustained by their reflections on human existence and existential inquiry - will continue to provide vital intellectual inspirations for cross-cultural dialogue, promoting deeper intellectual engagement between the two peoples.

VI. CONCLUSION

A review of the Chinese translation trajectory of João Guimarães Rosa's works from 1949 to 2025 reveals a complex and nonlinear path: from prolonged absence under a highly politicized cultural context, to the initial breakthrough marked by the single-title translation of *The Third Bank of the River*, and finally to a publication boom driven by market forces in 2025. This trajectory not only charts the gradual rooting of Rosa's writings in a foreign land, but also constitutes a revealing microcosm of the evolving Sino-Brazilian relationship, the transformation of China's translation ecology, and the shifts in cultural and aesthetic sensibilities.

From the perspective of socio-historical forces, factors such as political ideology, diplomatic relations, and cultural perception exerted significant influence over the Chinese translation and reception of Rosa's works at different stages. In the early stage, ideological filtering mechanisms and fluctuations in Sino-Brazilian diplomatic relations excluded Rosa from the field of translation. Over time, the normalization of bilateral ties, the restoration of cultural exchange, and readers' changing preferences combined to create more favorable conditions for Rosa's introduction. In the contemporary period, various market dynamics, endorsements by influential writers, and readers' resonance with existential themes collectively propelled Rosa's work beyond academic circles and into wider public readership.

The translator community, the publishing market, and the literary critical circle all played pivotal roles in Rosa's reception and canonization in China. Chinese translators gradually moved from indirect mediation to direct translation, continually negotiating linguistic and cultural barriers in an effort to recreate the unique aesthetics of Rosa's work. Publishers, through careful selection and strategic promotion, balanced scholarly value with market considerations and facilitated wider dissemination. Chinese writers' interpretations and creative appropriations of Rosa's work, in turn, constructed bridges of cross-cultural dialogue and reinforced his presence within the Chinese literary field.

Inevitably, this study has its own limitations. Owing to methodological constraints and challenges in data collection, it has not been able to investigate in depth the concrete processes and feedback involved in readers' reception of Rosa's works. Future research could combine methods such as close analysis of publicly available reader reviews, questionnaire surveys, and interviews to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the readers' responses and evaluations, thereby enriching the study of Rosa's reception in China.

As Sino-Brazilian cultural exchange continues to deepen, the Chinese translation of Rosa's works is destined to achieve further progress. Through refining the translation system, optimizing translation strategies, and expanding

dissemination channels, Rosa's works will continue to serve as a vital symbol of Sino-Brazilian cultural dialogue, providing shared humanistic values and intellectual inspirations that will sustain cross-cultural dialogue and propel Sino-Brazilian literary exchange to new heights.

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“Padahal kan kamu beda agama sama saya. Kenapa kamu kok ngefans sama saya itu?” How Gus Iqdam Uses Positive Politeness to Build Solidarity in the Multicultural Congregation of Sabilu Taubah

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Abstract—This study examined how Gus Iqdam (GI), a young religious leader in East Java, Indonesia, employs positive politeness strategies to foster solidarity within the multicultural Sabilu Taubah congregation, whose members come from diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Using a qualitative socio-pragmatic approach informed by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, data were collected through direct observation, audiovisual recordings, and publicly available sermon videos. The analysis identified eleven positive politeness strategies, including expressing attentiveness, using in-group markers, seeking agreement, incorporating humour, and offering gifts, that enabled GI to mitigate face-threatening acts, build rapport, and reinforce social cohesion. These strategies not only bridged religious and cultural divides but also nurtured communal identity and mutual respect. The findings advance socio-pragmatics and intercultural communication by demonstrating how contextually sensitive politeness practices can enhance inclusivity and unity in pluralistic religious settings, offering practical implications for religious, educational, and community leadership.

Index Terms—positive politeness, socio-pragmatic analysis, multicultural religious communication, interpersonal solidarity, inclusive discourse

I. INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a crucial element of human communication, serving to maintain social harmony and manage potential conflict by attending to individuals' "face", or public self-image. Brown and Levinson's (1987) influential theory defines politeness as strategic behaviour for navigating face-threatening acts (FTAs), distinguishing between positive face, the desire to be liked and appreciated, and negative face, the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. While these needs are universal, their expression is shaped by cultural norms. In collectivist societies, Mao (1994) argues, speakers often emphasize indirectness and deference to preserve group harmony, whereas individualistic cultures may value directness as a form of respect for autonomy. Similarly, Scollon and Scollon (2001) emphasize that politeness is culturally embedded and influenced by roles, power relations, and expectations, requiring communicative competence and cultural sensitivity in diverse or intercultural settings.

Politeness strategies are not merely linguistic choices; they are culturally and socially grounded practices for sustaining social relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014; Machino et al., 2025; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Brown and Levinson's model remains relevant across diverse contexts, particularly for analyzing communication in multicultural communities. In collectivist settings, politeness may manifest through deference and an emphasis on relational harmony,

making pragmatic and cultural sensitivity essential in cross-cultural communication (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Mao, 1994; Nkirote, 2024).

An illustrative case is Gus Iqdam (GI), a young religious leader (*kyai*) in East Java, Indonesia. His *ta'lim* assembly, Sabilu Taubah (ST), has grown from a small group into a congregation of tens of thousands, comprising individuals from various religious and cultural backgrounds, including Muslims, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists (Fikri et al., 2023; Ulfah, 2023). The weekly gatherings in Karanggayam village reflect a remarkable degree of intercultural and interfaith engagement. Members of the ST assembly often travel long distances and arrive early, highlighting not only devotion but also the social draw of GI's distinctive communicative style. This setting raises the scholarly question of how language use and politeness strategies contribute to cohesion and mutual respect in such a pluralistic context.

The utilization of positive politeness strategies by the GI exemplifies the framework proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). His communicative style, characterized by humour, inclusivity, and relational language, fosters familiarity and solidarity. Positive politeness encompasses strategies that appeal to the audience's desire for approval and belonging. GI employs humour not only for entertainment but also to diminish social distance, encourage participation, and establish rapport. Additionally, he utilizes inclusive language that acknowledges the diverse identities of his audience, thereby fostering a shared sense of purpose and value among them. By emphasizing spiritual growth, mutual respect, and togetherness, the GI strengthens communal bonds across religious and ethnic boundaries. His speech style resonates with both devout followers and secular attendees, indicating that effective positive politeness can attract and unite diverse audience members.

This study applies Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, which categorizes FTAs according to their impact on positive or negative face. Negative face reflects an individual's desire for freedom and autonomy, whereas positive face reflects the need to be liked and included. These concepts, though universal, are flexible and context-sensitive. The theory remains useful for analyzing politeness in multicultural settings where face needs vary with cultural norms (Brown, 2015; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Haugh, 2013; Ryabova, 2015).

Contemporary scholarship has expanded the study of politeness by offering fresh insights into its role in cross-cultural and digital contexts. Nkirote (2024) highlights how cultural norms shape the enactment of politeness, positioning it as a strategic resource for managing hierarchy, harmony, and identity in diverse interactions. Eslami et al. (2023) further demonstrate that identity and politeness are fluidly negotiated through discursive practices, requiring communicative competence attuned to sociocultural norms and power relations in a globalized world. Complementing this, Suparno et al. (2023) reconceptualize politeness in digital communication as a strategic discursive tool for navigating status, identity, and relational dynamics in multiethnic and technologically mediated environments.

In this light, the communicative practices of GI present a timely and insightful case for analyzing positive politeness in a highly diverse religious setting. This study examines how GI uses positive politeness to manage FTAs, build rapport, and promote inclusivity in his religious discourse. His use of humour, recognition of shared values, and careful attention to audience diversity allow him to bridge religious, ethnic, and linguistic divides. These strategies support social cohesion and interfaith understanding, making his communication style a powerful tool for managing diversity.

In pluralistic societies, such communicative competence is increasingly vital. Language functions not only as a vehicle for conveying information but also as a mechanism for managing identity, power, politeness, and social relations (Eslami et al., 2023; Nkirote, 2024; Suparno et al., 2023; Virtanen & Lee, 2022). The success of GI in promoting harmony among multicultural audiences underscores the broader significance of politeness as a context-sensitive and socially embedded phenomenon. This study contributes to sociopragmatics and intercultural communication by demonstrating how strategic language use upholds mutual respect and solidarity within diverse communities.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative socio-pragmatic approach to examine how GI applies Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness strategies in interactions with the Sabilu Taubah (ST) *ta'lim* assembly in Karanggayam Village, Blitar, East Java. Conducted in July 2024, the research explored how GI nurtures interpersonal relationships and fosters solidarity within a culturally diverse religious community. The socio-pragmatic framework enabled analysis of language use within its social and cultural context, highlighting how politeness strategies manage face and promote harmony (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Nkirote, 2024). Recent scholarship supports such context-sensitive approaches, particularly in intercultural and interfaith communication, where politeness is tied to identity and power dynamics (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). By focusing on the interplay of language, culture, and interaction, this study contributes to understanding how pragmatic strategies support cohesion and mutual respect in complex religious settings, offering insights into the role of politeness in maintaining unity in diverse communities.

This study utilized a triangulated data collection methodology, incorporating direct observation, audio-visual recordings, and publicly accessible secondary sources to construct a communication profile of GI's application of positive politeness. Primary data were gathered through direct observations and live recordings of the GI's preaching sessions at the MTST. The research team conducted recordings four times, each Monday evening, in July 2024. Supplementary data from YouTube videos provided additional examples of the GI's communicative style, facilitating the cross-validation of politeness strategies. This multi-source approach enhances the credibility and validity of the data (Carter et al., 2014; Meydan & Akkaş, 2024; Qassimi, 2023).

The data collection instruments included both human and technical components of the study. The researcher served as the primary instrument, employing her socio-pragmatic and discourse-analytic expertise to analyse the politeness strategies (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The technical tools comprised high-quality audio-visual equipment for recording verbal and non-verbal communication, complemented by structured observation instruments that facilitated the systematic identification of (Brown & Levinson, 1987) positive politeness strategies employed by the GI in his interactions with the MTST congregation. This combination ensured a comprehensive, reliable, and nuanced account of face-saving and solidarity-building practices in GI's religious discourses.

The data were analysed using descriptive techniques, adhering to the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2018), a widely recognized framework for qualitative research that emphasizes an iterative and systematic approach to interpretation. This model comprises four interconnected and recursive steps: (1) Data collection and familiarization: systematic observation and verbatim transcription of interactions to capture both verbal and nonverbal cues. Preserving contextual details is essential for accurately analysing politeness strategies. (2) Data reduction and coding: The corpus was filtered and coded to identify positive politeness strategies, such as attending to the listener's needs and employing in-group markers, while maintaining context through thematic categorization (Saldana, 2025). (3) Data cues and display: presenting reduced data through thematic matrices, charts, and summaries to highlight patterns and language use, thereby supporting clarity, revealing connections, and enhancing analytical transparency (Miles et al., 2018). (4) Conclusion drawing and verification: conducting interpretive synthesis grounded in the data and verifying claims through cross-checking, triangulation, and peer debriefing, in accordance with established qualitative standards (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, interactions between GI and the Sabilu Taubah (ST) *ta'lim* congregation exhibited 11 of Brown and Levinson's (1987) 15 positive politeness strategies. These strategies reflect speakers' efforts to maintain social harmony and minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs). The strategies identified include (1) noticing/attending to the hearer and showing sympathy; (2) using in-group identity markers to build solidarity; (3) seeking agreement; (4) giving/asking for reasons; (5) echoing or repeating the hearer's words as active listening; (6) including both speaker and hearer in the activity; (7) complimenting/expressing approval; (8) expressing optimism; (9) employing humour to ease tension; (10) asserting common ground by emphasizing shared experiences or similarities; and (11) giving "gifts" (tangible or symbolic) such as goods, time, sympathy, or support. Taken together, these strategies helped mitigate FTAs, build rapport, and reinforce social cohesion within a culturally plural setting.

A. Attention and Sympathy Toward the Hearer

In the following excerpt, GI directs deference and sympathy towards Mr. D, a key donor in the ST community, while also using affiliative humour with another attendee. Although the dominant orientation is positive politeness (approval, camaraderie), elements of negative politeness (respect for autonomy, non-imposition) surface through the use of indirectness and honorific address (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

1. GI: "*Lah alhamdulillah jadi luar biasa Pak D. Gek panggah awet enom beliau niki nggih to... Ora koyo sampeyan mosok kesusu tuwek ngunu.*"

(GI: Well, alhamdulillah, that's truly remarkable, Mr. D. And he still looks so young, doesn't he? Unlike you - how come you're in such a rush to grow old like that?)

Here, GI publicly acknowledges Mr. D's virtue and ongoing contributions. The compliment ("*awet enom... still looks so young*") exemplifies positive politeness by noticing the hearer and affirming his social value, thereby strengthening solidarity. The playful jab at another member immediately afterwards functions as joking, including a joke, a classic positive-politeness move that softens potential face threat and fosters camaraderie. Humour reframes what could be an FTA (alluding to ageing) into a bonding moment that normalizes proximity and inclusivity.

GI's turn design blends positive and negative politeness: positive politeness conveys closeness and appreciation; negative politeness is visible in deferential address (Mr. D) and indirectness that avoids imposing claims on the donor. This balance maintains familiarity without breaching respect crucial in a culturally layered, hierarchically organized *ta'lim* setting. The approach aligns with Goffman's (1967) notion of *face* as the negotiated social self and joke as self and with subsequent work on delicacy in public talk and accountability (Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Mao, 1994; Serpa & Ferreira, 2018).

This pattern mirrors broader tendencies in religious leadership discourse, where speakers often combine indirectness and empathy to uphold authority while remaining approachable (Boyatzis et al., 2011; Braun, 2020). In parallel, Holmes (2014) shows that humour can reduce face threats and enhance unity in institutional interactions. GI's ability to shift fluidly between deference and familiarity demonstrates culturally attuned communicative competence. In effect, his language use consolidates respect and belonging, enabling smooth, inclusive participation. Consequently, he strengthens both emotional bonds and social harmony in the religious space, an essential leadership resource in multicultural communities.

B. Using In-Group Markers

In the following excerpt, GI strategically employs in-group markers to cultivate solidarity and a shared identity within the congregation. Central to this is his use of a term which has been recontextualized within the MTST community: 'garangan'.

2. GI: *Kadang garangan-garangan i lho. Ngaji dunga. Ya Allah 'garangan' - Allah, pengin bojo ya Allah Gusti. Alhamdulillah donga diijabahi. Simpangan ning ndalan enek wong wedok rodok kapusan. Nyawang deke ketok ganteng, Masya Allah niki nopo mas Den Bst wah...*

(GI: Sometimes these *garangan-garangan*, you know, recite the Qur'an and pray. O Allah, I want a partner, O Allah. Alhamdulillah, the prayers were answered. Crossing the road, there was a woman who was a little taken in by how handsome he looked. *Mā shā' Allāh*, what is this, Den? Best, Allah, Best? Wow... Best? Wow...)

The *garangan* (*Herpestes javanicus*) is a wild mongoose-like animal culturally associated with aggressiveness and destructiveness, particularly due to its tendency to prey on domesticated chickens. In everyday usage, the term 'garangan' has therefore developed into a pejorative label for individuals perceived as wild, delinquent, and difficult to control. However, within the MTST community, the term undergoes significant resemanticisation. This shift in meaning is rooted in the group's origin story, which centres on seven early members - former heavy drinkers and petty offenders - who repented under GI's guidance. Their moral transformation enabled a process of identity reappropriation, through which a negative label was reclaimed and endowed with honourable value as a marker of spiritual renewal (Galinsky et al., 2013). The repeated use of the term in internal discourse and its reinforcement through communal rituals subsequently produced a stigma inversion, whereby the stigma is recast as a symbol of solidarity and piety (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). This phenomenon corresponds with the notion of religious identity reframing, wherein language serves as a tool for restructuring the community's moral and spiritual identity (Brandt, 2019; Omoniyi & Fishman, 2008).

GI reflects the congregation's spiritual condition, sincere Qur'anic recitation, and prayers for a life partner, while humorously acknowledging the ongoing vulnerability to worldly temptation. The term 'garangan'...wow... 'Garangan' is pivotal: GI redefines it to denote those who have repented from behaviors such as drinking or stealing and embraced a more devout life. This semantic shift from stigma to redemption transforms a previously pejorative label into a symbol of spiritual renewal. Within the ST community, 'Garangan' becomes a badge of honor, signalling personal growth and collective transformation. This linguistic reframing aligns with the Islamic principle of *taubah* (repentance), whereby sincere remorse restores one's standing in the *ummah* (Muslim community) and resonates with traditions that view reformed sinners as spiritually renewed through divine grace.

The move also reflects broader Javanese linguistic practice, where resignification reclaims stigmatised identities through communal memory and moral realignment. As scholars note, such group markers do not merely categorise; they actively construct shared values and cohesion (Allidina & Cunningham, 2023). In a multicultural religious setting, 'garangan' operates as an inclusive emblem that bridges diverse experiences by affirming both past struggles and ongoing spiritual growth. Through this strategy, GI cultivates empathy and moral authority, offering a safe, trusting environment. Ultimately, 'garangan' functions as a powerful resource for moral renewal, group solidarity, and spiritual resilience - a core positive-politeness mechanism of claiming common ground via in-group identity markers (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

C. Seeking the Interlocutor's Approval

In the following excerpt, GI seeks his interlocutor's approval as part of a broader strategy to build solidarity within the MTST community. The move fosters proximity and shared understanding while maintaining respect:

3. GI: *Nggih 'garangan' Nggih, kerana ya wis rada pantes cara njenengan. Nyuwun sewu, tapi Gusti Allah niki ya Maha Rahman Rahim. Ora padha karo menungsa. Beda, tapi cara etikane mawon lo nggih ta?*

(GI: Well, that may be because your way is quite reasonable. Forgive me, but Allah is the Most Gracious, Most Merciful. He is not like humans. Different-yet should the ethics not be the same, right?)

In this context, the GI elucidates that approaching the Divine with appropriate *adab* (ethics) enhances the probability of prayers being answered; while highlighting the ontological distinction between Allah and humans, he emphasizes the continuity of moral principles in respectful communication. Notably, the statement concludes with the Javanese Krama tag *nggih ta*. ("right?") is an approval-seeking mechanism that invites alignment and shares perspectives.

Functionally, *nggih ta? Nggih*, doubles as politeness. First, it realizes positive politeness by seeking agreement and affiliating with the audience's viewpoint (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Second, as a mitigating interrogative/hedge, it also performs negative politeness by softening potential imposition and displaying deference. The combination enables GI to maintain authority while remaining approachable, a balance that is especially salient in a hierarchically organized, multicultural *ta'lim* setting. This aligns with interactional accounts of face as a negotiated moral-social order (Goffman, 1967) and with observations that small tokens such as tag questions, gratitude, and address forms operate as face-enhancing strategies in religious discourse (Locher & Watts, 2008; Mokuchowska, 2023).

In spiritual contexts, approval-seeking tags such as "*nggih ta?*" ("right?") serve a dual function: they ratify the speaker's point while inviting collaboration. GI's polite marker helps create an environment in which members feel acknowledged and respected, reinforcing collective identity and smoothing differences in background and religious knowledge. In effect, the move contributes to rapport management and group cohesion, exemplifying how context-sensitive politeness practices support inclusive, dialogic religious communication.

D. Asking Questions and Requesting Reasons

In the following interaction, GI uses questions to invite dialogue and build rapport with attendees from the College of Buddhist Studies, thereby fostering familiarity and connection within the MTST community. The questioning accomplishes dual politeness work: it asks for reasons - a positive-politeness strategy in Brown and Levinson's (1987) taxonomy - and mitigates imposition through an open, choice-giving format characteristic of negative politeness.

4. GI: *Gimana ceritanya kok bisa hadir di sini gimana?*

Jamaah (J): *Kita KKN teng mriki. Hehe. Nggih ta? Heh. Enggih terus ikut teman.*

GI: *Heeh, lah. Heh. Lah, tadi kok nggak malah, nggak bales njenengan, woh nggak? Wow, pengajian iki nekakne Gus Iqdam.*

J: *Ndak, saya ngefans sama Gus Iqdam soalnya.*

GI: *Masyaallah, iki wong Budha malah ngefans aku. Sing Islam malah maido tolol? Whoa, tolol. Gimana-gimana? Padahal gimana-gimana? Padahal kan kamu beda agama sama saya. Padahal saya. Kenapa saya? Kenapa kamu kok ngefans sama saya itu?*

J: *Saya itu lihatnya di TikTok, yang pertama kan muncul.*

GI: *He-eh.*

J: *Terus sering muncul. Oh, kok ceramahnya... Oke. Kenapa Oke buat anak muda gitu?*

GI: *Nanti kamu datang gak, tak paksa gak, kudu syahadat - tenang aja. Wes, pokoké awaké dhéwé adem ayem.*

(GI: What's the story - how did you come to be here?)

Congregation (C): *We're on a community service programme (KKN) here. Yes, then I joined a friend.*

GI: *So why weren't you reluctant? You came to this gathering because of Gus Iqdam, right?*

C: *No, I'm a fan of Gus Iqdam, Oke Iqdam; that's why.*

GI: *Mā shā' Allāh, a Buddhist is a fan of mine - while some Muslims talk me down [joking]. How is it that, although you're of a different religion from me, you're a fan of mine?*

C: *I first saw you on TikTok.*

GI: *Uh-huh.*

C: *Then you appeared often. I thought, "These sermons are good for young people."*

GI: *Whether you come or not, I won't force you; there's no need to recite the shahada - Don't worry. We'll keep things calm and at ease.)*

Two features stand out. First, GI's open interrogatives *Gimana ceritanya...?* ("What's the story...?") and *Kenapa Iqdam and kenapa kamu kok ngefans...?* ("Why Iqdam" and "Why are you a fan of mine?") operate as stance-inviting questions that solicit the attendee's reasons and narrative. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, this realizes positive politeness by seeking agreement and giving/asking for reasons; it constructs common ground and displays interest in the other's perspective. Second, by reassuring the attendee, "I won't force you; no need to recite the shahada," GI minimizes imposition and reduces potential threat around interfaith difference, a hallmark of negative politeness (respect for autonomy, non-coercion).

Humour and warmth further defuse tension and thicken solidarity, turning potentially delicate topics (religious difference, conversion anxiety) into opportunities for inclusive affiliation. As Holmes (2014) notes, questioning in institutional talk can promote social bonding and navigate group dynamics; similarly, intercultural communication research links such pragmatic sensitivity to increased empathy and cohesion (Gudykunst et al., 1996). In this exchange, GI's design of questions paired with assurances models a dialogic, low-pressure footing that sustains rapport across faith boundaries while preserving dignity and choice.

E. Repeating the Statement

In the exchange below, GI uses repetition to maintain attention and reinforce affiliation with his congregation. Echoing key items from the interlocutor's answers operates as positive politeness: it displays attentiveness, ratifies the speaker's contribution, and narrows social distance.

5. GI: *R, rumahnya mana, Mbak R?*

J: *Batam.*

GI: *Batam.*

J: *Iya.*

GI: *Mohon maaf, agamanya apa?*

J: *Konghucu.*

GI: *Konghucu. Siap, siap, siap, siap. Mbak R ke sini pertama kali?*

J: *First time.*

GI: *Opo kui? Aku ora iso kaya R, piye?*

J: *Baru pertama kali, Gus.*

GI: *Oh, Iya, first time.*

(GI: R, where do you live, Miss R?)

C: *Batam.*

GI: *Batam.*

C: Yes.

GI: Pardon me, what is your religion?

C: Confucianism.

GI: Confucianism. Right, right, right, right. Is this your first time here, Miss R?

C: First time.

GI: What's that? I can't be like R, how so?

C: It's my first time, Gus.

GI: Ah, yes, first time.)

GI reflects key aspects of R's responses, such as *Batam*, *Konghucu* (Confucianism), and the notion of the first time, serving as alignment tokens that indicate attentive listening and encouragement to continue. This echoic repetition exemplifies a classic form of positive politeness, characterized by noticing and attending to the hearer and claiming common ground, and functions as positive reinforcement that ensures the interlocutor feels acknowledged and valued (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 2014; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). The repetition of "first time," in particular, recognizes the importance of R's experience and normalizes any potential anxiety or curiosity, thereby fostering solidarity in an intercultural context (Gudykunst, 2004; Gudykunst et al., 1996).

Simultaneously, repetition mitigates face-threatening acts by affirming responses prior to progression, while gentle inquiries (GI) alleviate potentially sensitive questions (e.g., regarding religion), maintain a non-confrontational tone, and uphold the interlocutor's autonomy (Aporbo et al., 2024; Latrech & Alazzawie, 2023). In religious gatherings, where sensitivity and mutual respect are of utmost importance, this echoic style fosters a warm, inclusive environment, enhancing rapport and cohesion while exemplifying respectful dialogic engagement.

F. Involving Speech Partners

In the following exchange, GI uses inclusive language to involve his congregation in the learning process, emphasizing that religious understanding may be gained not only from sacred texts but also by observing the good qualities of others. The inclusive pronoun *kita* ("we") functions as a positive-politeness resource that reduces social distance and builds solidarity by including speaker and hearer in the same activity (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

6. GI: *Lah, ini loh, R?) Loh, kita itu ngaji tidak harus dari kitab terus, atau apa. Dari orang lain yang memiliki kepribadian baik niku nggih ngaji, nggih ngaji. Niku kaya A, keng Mas DB. Ternyata, di balik gimble, di balik reggae-ne, nek aku iki ngopi. Nek beliau iki mesti enek slokine, tapi di dalam hatinya selalu tertanam: hormati ibumu, hormati, hormati ibumu.*

(GI: See, what I mean is that we don't have to study the Qur'an only from classical texts or formal teachers. Learning from someone with good character is also Qur'anic study. It is Qur'anic study too - like A or Mas DB. Behind the dreadlocks, behind the reggae style - while I might just be out having coffee- he always has a guiding maxim, 'loh maxim', and in his heart the message is deeply rooted: honour your mother, honour your mother, honour your mother. Maxim, Mother.)

Here, GI explicitly claims common ground through *kita* ("we"), inviting the audience into a shared epistemic and moral project. He reframes sources of religious learning: exemplary conduct becomes *ngaji* in its own right. By naming relatable figures (*A, Mas DB*) with unconventional appearances, GI normalizes diversity and recenters spiritual worth on integrity and filial piety rather than outward conformity. The triple repetition "honour your mother" intensifies alignment, acting as positive reinforcement and a mnemonic refrain that binds speaker and audience affectively.

Pragmatically, the move realises several positive-politeness strategies, including (i) involving S and H in the activity through the inclusive pronoun '*kita*'; (ii) asserting shared values (common ground); and (iii) using in-group markers such as local terms ('*ngaji*') and references to community figures (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In intercultural congregations, such inclusivity enables participants from diverse backgrounds to recognise themselves in the message, thereby strengthening rapport and participation (Eden et al., 2024; Feitosa et al., 2022; Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

Research on inclusive language likewise shows that we-framing fosters shared identity and rapport (Holmes, 2014) and that accessible, story-driven exemplars in religious discourse can enhance uptake and solidarity (Mokuchowska, 2024). In GI's practice, inclusive pronouns and relatable exemplars co-produce a welcoming, dialogic space for learning, one that supports unity and mutual respect across a diverse religious community.

G. Giving Praise

In this excerpt, GI uses praise as a strategic resource to acknowledge and honour others' contributions while deepening emotional connection and commitment to shared religious values. As positive reinforcement, praise validates the addressee and uplifts the group, thereby fostering unity and mutual respect within the congregation.

7. GI: *Yang saya hormati tamu-tamu yang luar biasa yang datang dari jauh-jauh. Alhamdulillah, malam hari ini ada vokal yang luar biasa, panjenenganipun Gus IH dari Pasuruan. Luar biasa suaranya yang baru saja kita dengarkan bersama yang mengajak kita semua membaca shalawat. Semoga lantunan-lantunan shalawat yang dibaca Gus IH senantiasa benar-benar menjadi semangat kita untuk semakin mencintai Rasulullah - peace and blessings be upon him. Aamiin.*

(GI: My deepest respect to the distinguished guests who have come from far away. Alhamdulillah, tonight we are graced by an extraordinary vocal performance by Gus IH from Pasuruan. His voice, which we have just

listened to together, is truly remarkable and has invited us all to recite shalawat. May the shalawat beautifully delivered by Gus IH continue to inspire us to deepen our love for the Prophet Muhammad - peace and blessings be upon him. *Āmīn.*)

In this context, the GI's engagement in '*ngaji*' (Qur'anic study) and their frequent use of the intensifier '*luar biasa*' (extraordinary), along with the communal framing ("we have just listened together"), serve to implement several positive-politeness strategies. These strategies include attending to the hearer, expressing approval or admiration (through compliments), exaggerating interest or approval, and establishing common ground through a shared devotional act, such as reciting '*shalawat*' (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Public acknowledgment of GI enhances his positive face, which pertains to social esteem and appreciation, aligning with Goffman's (1967) conceptualization of face-work as the maintenance of moral and social order.

Pragmatically, praise here also operates as a "gift" to the hearer (goods, sympathy, encouragement), which, in Brown and Levinson's terms, strengthens affiliative ties and builds rapport across the assembly. In a multicultural setting such as MTST, foregrounding shared admiration and gratitude helps bridge differences and consolidate an inclusive, cooperative footing. Empirical work on institutional and religious talk shows that praise and appreciation promote gratitude, affiliation, and group cohesion (Holmes, 2014; Watts, 2003). By amplifying GI's qualities and linking them to a communal aspiration - deepening love for the Prophet - GI not only validates an individual contributor but also animates collective values, encouraging the congregation to internalize respect, admiration, and devotion as shared norms.

H. Showing Optimism

In this excerpt, GI deploys optimism to motivate his congregation towards a positive outlook on life and faith. By voicing confidence in their capacity for spiritual fulfilment and success, he encourages self-belief while reinforcing trust in divine providence. In this religious context, optimism fosters hope and strengthens the perceived linkage between personal effort and divine grace.

8. GI: *Dan saya yakin ketika orang itu mampu berpikir dengan jenius, dengan serius, pasti dia akan menemukan nikmat tersebut. Wa mā bikum min ni'matin fa-min Allāh. Kenikmatan apa pun yang ada dalam diri panjenengan atau di antara sekitar panjenengan semuanya adalah dari Allāh Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā.*

(GI: And I am certain that when a person can think seriously and with discernment, they will surely discover that blessing. *Wa mā bikum min ni'matin fa-min Allāh* (Whatever blessings you have are from God), Whatever blessing you have within yourselves or around you is from God, the Exalted.)

GI's stance-taking "I am certain" is a textbook instance of positive politeness in Brown and Levinson's (1987) taxonomy, specifically the "be optimistic" strategy that aligns the hearer with a desirable outcome and presupposes shared commitment. Framing achievement as the co-production of effort and grace affirms the audience's competence and worth (positive face), while the absence of directives keeps uptake voluntary, thereby also displaying negative politeness (respect for autonomy).

The Qur'anic phrase *Wa mā bikum min ni'matin fa-min Allāh* (Whatever blessing you possess is from Allah) grounds optimism theologically, reframing it from mere affect to an ethic of gratitude and trust. In institutional religious discourse, such optimism is shown to bolster resilience and faith (Hussein & Al-Husseini, 2023) and to shape attitudes inclusively in diverse congregations (Zhu, 2025). Here, GI's confident yet non-imposing tone normalizes hope, invites perseverance in spiritual growth, and consolidates collective identity: members are encouraged to recognize their gifts as divinely sourced while continuing to strive. Through this blend of doctrinal anchoring and inclusive rhetoric, GI cultivates a cohesive, supportive environment in Sabilu Taubah, one in which gratitude, dignity, and ongoing self-improvement are shared communal aims.

I. Use of Humour

GI uses humour to foster solidarity and make religious teachings more relatable. By jokingly glossing the term '*garangan*' as a wayward person who has repented, he reduces social distance and creates a welcoming atmosphere. The light tone not only eases interaction but also reinforces a sense of community among those embracing spiritual renewal, rendering the message of repentance more accessible and engaging.

9. GI: *Enèk tante-tante tim Pajero ngunu, takok. Bojone wong-wong Pajero kuwi biasane nek nyeluk cah-cah, "tante". 'garangan' a "tante". Ora kaya pikiranmu angger "tante" kok dipikir ngerès thok. Nah, kalebu wong tolol ngunu kuwi, lho. Dadi "tante" kuwi nek takok ngéné: "Gus, garangan iku apa, sih? Garangan ki apa?" Aku bingung ditakonilah sing mlaku nganu-nganu iki garangan. Alhamdulillah, ora teka kabèh wongé? Iki wong shalih kabèh, wong apik saben dina jamaah... minum miras? Ora gelem iki ngombé banyu thok. Air laut? Yo air laut... peceren kuwi!*

(GI: There were some "Pajero club aunties" asking questions. The wives in Pajero circles often call the youngsters "auntie", "*tante*", "auntie". Not like how you lot always think - hearing "auntie" and assuming something indecent. That kind of thinking is [foolish - joking]. So one of the aunties asked, "*Gus, what is garangan? What does garangan masked*" mean? I was stumped wandering about it. They pointed and said, "This one's a *garangan*." Alhamdulillah, not everyone showed up today, eh? These are righteous folks - good people - every day the congregation... drink alcohol? No, just water. Seawater? Yes, seawater... from the drain!)

In this passage, GI's playful narrative re-signifies the *garangan* as a drain, or a stigmatized identity, to an emblem of redemption and belonging. The teasing asides and exaggerated contrasts (from "liquor" to "just water", "garangan water", and even "seawater from the drain") function as joking and exaggeration - recognized positive politeness strategies that claim common ground, display involvement, and soften potential face threats (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The humour demystifies the label, allowing self-identified *garangan* to feel seen, safe, and included, while inviting the wider audience to adopt an accepting stance.

In multicultural congregations, humour operates as a social glue: it lowers tension, bridges subcultural references (e.g., the "*Pajero*" motif), and aligns the group around shared values of repentance and improvement (Gifu et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2024; Zamroni, 2023). Here, GI's calibrated levity affirms positive face (approval, esteem) and sustains cohesion without coercion, illustrating how context-sensitive humour can animate moral themes and consolidate communal identity in religious discourse.

J. Demonstrating Similarities

GI underscores similarity and shared purpose with a respected philanthropist, Mr. Haji D, to cultivate solidarity and enhance message uptake. By aligning his own contribution (oratory and guidance) with Mr. Haji D's (material success and philanthropy), GI claims common ground and associates himself with a valued in-group model, a classic positive-politeness move (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

10. GI: *Jadi alhamdulillah, Pak Haji D, Dek e mirip-mirip karo aku. Ning nek aku kuwi modalé ngomong ngéné iki, nek piyambaké kan suksesé. Alhamdulillah, sing cedhak karo piyambaké kuwi kiai, Gus-Gus, nganti wong-wong kaya Mas Den Bst wis global.*

(GI: So, alhamdulillah, Mr. Haji D is somewhat similar to me. My "capital" is speaking like this, while his is his success. Alhamdulillah, the people close to him are respected figures, *kiai*, young religious leaders (Gus), even well-known people like Mas Den Bst. He's "gone global" now.)

By explicitly drawing a parallel between speech as moral capital and wealth as philanthropic capital, GI reframes these different resources as complementary means toward a shared communal end: guiding people on the path of repentance (MTST). This equivalence framing reduces social distance and encourages the audience to view both figures as relatable role models who mobilise distinct assets for collective religious purposes. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, GI asserts common ground and positions the speaker and hearer within the same activity, thereby reinforcing affiliation.

The move also resonates with Goffman's (1967) face-work: affiliating with an esteemed benefactor supports GI's positive face (credibility, esteem) while simultaneously enhancing Mr. Haji D's by publicly acknowledging his contribution. From a social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), such alignment leverages in-group prestige to bolster collective self-worth and norm endorsement; audiences are encouraged to identify with a unified moral project in which both rhetorical guidance and material generosity advance piety, social good, and community solidarity (see Khadka, 2024; Kish Bar-On & Lamm, 2023).

Pragmatically, the utterance performs multiple positive-politeness strategies: (1) Claiming in-group membership and shared values (religious guidance, *taubah*), (2) Exaggeration/hyperbole ("gone global") to amplify approval, and (3) Noticing/attending to the hearer's values by validating philanthropy and leadership as coequal virtues. Overall, by demonstrating similarities and complementary capital, GI consolidates communal identity and deepens rapport: different paths of eloquence and philanthropy are framed as aligned contributions to the same redemptive mission.

K. Providing Gifts

In religious settings, gift-giving is more than a simple transfer of goods; it is a ritualized communicative act that reinforces social cohesion, nurtures communal identity, and affirms relational hierarchies (Kádár et al., 2025; Shanka & Handley, 2011; Zhu et al., 2000). Within the *ta'lim* context of MTST, GI frequently mobilizes this strategy by offering financial gifts or community products to congregants both as appreciation and as a performance of benevolent leadership.

11. GI: *Bu M...*

J: *Enggih.*

GI: *Njenengan angsal arta. Niki saking Mas D, saking Mas S. kalih saking Mas NK. Mas NK punika MC ingkang luar biasa. Kula maringi Njenengan Rp 300.000 tunai.*

(GI: Mrs. M...

C: Yes, sir.

GI: You are receiving some money. This is from Mas D, Mas S and Mas NK. Mas NK is an outstanding MC. I will also give you Rp 300,000 in cash.)

In this instance, GI first attributes the financial gift to two donors (Mas S and Mas NK) and subsequently adds his own contribution. Pragmatically, this realizes Brown and Levinson's (1987) "give gifts to the hearer" positive-politeness strategy, fostering closeness, gratitude, and goodwill. Beyond the interpersonal level, public generosity by religious figures often indexes spiritual authority and moral legitimacy in Islamic communities, embedding leadership within norms of care and obligation (Feng et al., 2011; Kádár et al., 2025; Mauss, 2024; Shi et al., 2025). By giving in public, GI reaffirms status while expressing solidarity, softening leader-follower boundaries through shared affect and material support.

Gift-giving also builds collective identity. Acts like GI's gesture to Mrs. M seed a culture of reciprocity, strengthening belonging and shared responsibility (Gino & Flynn, 2011; Mauss, 2024). When ST-branded products circulate in these exchanges, economic participation intertwines with spiritual commitment, reinforcing a moral economy of mutual care. As Branco-Illodo and Heath (2020) argue, the "perfect gift" is defined less by price than by the symbolic resonance of its power to honour the recipient, consolidate relationships, and invoke a shared history. In this sense, GI's gifting is not mere charity: it is a culturally meaningful speech act that animates community values, sustains rapport, and deepens the congregation's sense of a common moral project.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study illustrates that GI's strategic employment of positive politeness strategies - comprising attentiveness, in-group markers, humour, repetition, praise, inclusive we-framing, optimism, questioning or soliciting reasons, and gift-giving - effectively cultivates interpersonal solidarity and mitigates face-threatening acts within a highly religiously diverse context. By integrating culturally embedded communicative practices with Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, GI bridges religious, ethnic, and generational divides within the MTST congregation, cultivating mutual respect, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging. These findings affirm that positive politeness is not merely a linguistic choice but a socially and culturally grounded strategy that sustains harmony and reinforces communal identity in pluralistic contexts. The analysis further contributes to socio-pragmatics and intercultural communication by illustrating how religious leaders can employ context-sensitive politeness to navigate complex identity dynamics and power relations.

These strategies were not ad hoc; they are deeply embedded in GI's communicative style and surface across sermons, personal interactions, and informal talk. For instance, his ability to combine humour with empathy humanises complex religious themes and connects with younger or less formally religious audiences. His repeated acknowledgement of group identity through in-group terms (e.g., *garangan*, *tim Pajero*) fosters a strong sense of shared experience, while symbolic acts of gift-giving reinforce social ties and elevate the communal spirit of the MTST. Ultimately, GI's discourse style reflects a nuanced understanding of relational dynamics in multicultural religious contexts and demonstrates how language can be a powerful tool for building cross-cultural solidarity within spiritual communities.

Future research should extend the investigation of positive politeness in religious discourse to other multicultural and interfaith contexts, enabling comparative analyses of how leaders in different traditions adapt strategies to their sociocultural environments. Scholars might also explore the role of digital media in amplifying or reshaping these strategies, given the increasing hybridisation of offline and online religious interactions. Practitioners in religious, educational, and community leadership are encouraged to adopt inclusive, contextually sensitive politeness strategies, such as humour, inclusive language, and symbolic gift-giving, to foster solidarity and bridge differences. Finally, longitudinal studies could examine how sustained use of such strategies impacts long-term cohesion, trust, and intergroup relations in diverse communities.

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Aligning EFL Education With Digital Skills in Saudi Vision 2030: A Systematic Review

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Abstract—Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aims to diversify the economy by enhancing human capabilities and essential skills, highlighting the importance of EFL education in fostering international collaboration and improving digital competencies for success in the global digital economy. However, existing EFL curricula and teaching methods appear to be misaligned with these digital goals. This systematic review analyzed the integration of digital skills in Saudi EFL contexts by synthesizing empirical research published from 2013 to 2025, employing the PRISMA framework and data from major databases, including IEEE Xplore, Springer, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Wiley Online Library. The review highlights five main themes: (1) the conceptualization of digital skills in EFL education as per Saudi Vision 2030, (2) integration of these skills into curricula and teaching practices, (3) alignment with workforce demands, (4) distribution across educational levels, and (5) identification of gaps, challenges, and potential future directions. The findings revealed conceptual inconsistencies in the EFL curriculum, highlighting the need for a unified framework. Key issues include insufficient managerial support, unclear policies, and a misalignment between curriculum goals and labor market demands, further exacerbated by the absence of policies to empower learners' digital skills across all educational levels. The study highlights that to achieve the Vision 2030 goals, there must be a shift in language learning, viewing technology not just as a tool but as a core competency, which necessitates agile, digitally integrated EFL frameworks from policymakers and curriculum designers.

Index Terms—conceptual inconsistencies, curriculum designers, empowering digital skills, systematic review, workforce demands

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital literacy is becoming increasingly crucial in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, playing a key role in promoting sustainable lifestyles (Bejaković & Mrnjavac, 2020; Donoso et al., 2020). The ongoing advancements significantly impact both everyday life and professional settings, leading to a decline in conventional workforce skills. This shift underscores the importance of individuals cultivating adaptability and advanced skill sets to thrive in the modern economy, where automation increasingly dominates (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2018; Tutar & Turhan, 2023; Goos et al., 2014; Autor, 2015). Digital learning utilizes ICT to transform access, engagement, and personalization in education, improving learner interactions with content and offering tailored learning experiences (Al Fraidan, 2024). As a result, it is crucial for instructors to become proficient in digital pedagogy. This expertise is essential for improving students' digital skills and literacy, thereby preparing them for future challenges and opportunities in a technology-driven environment (Ma & Ismail, 2025). Multiple studies highlight a shift from traditional education to online learning, emphasizing the importance of English proficiency and digital literacy as essential EFL skills for effective global communication and information access (Hemajothi & Jain 2022; Kumbo et al., 2023; Murcia et al., 2018).

Recent literature emphasizes the significance of digital skills and literacy in EFL education, enhancing student engagement and language learning. A synthesis of 20 studies by Sudirman (2025) underscored that tools such as media platforms and game-based learning can create interactive environments, though challenges such as limited infrastructure and inadequate teacher training impede implementation. Research by Palupi and Subianto (2024) revealed that 45% of EFL materials focused on functional skills, underscoring the need for improved digital literacy to evaluate information and overcome technological challenges. Pratolo and Solikhati (2020) emphasized the influence of teachers' attitudes on successful integration. Nguyen and Habók (2022) found increased digital literacy among university students linked to

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greater engagement with technology. Rinekso et al. (2021) stressed that digital literacy practices enhanced language learning in postgraduate EFL students. Psychological barriers, such as computer anxiety, also affected student perceptions of digital skills (Katsarou, 2021). Further, research by Đorđević et al. (2025) revealed that both basic and advanced digital skills improved employability across Europe. Narendran et al. (2025) advocated for technology-enhanced, learner-centered approaches, stressed the importance of core digital literacies, identified systemic factors contributing to the skills gap, and proposed integrative solutions. These studies highlight the need to promote positive perspectives on digital literacy, address related psychological issues, and develop robust curricula to improve EFL learning outcomes in Saudi Arabia and other regions.

As Saudi Arabia pursues economic diversification, integrating EFL education with digital skills training becomes crucial. While platforms like Madrasati and Blackboard Collaborate enhance educational equity and help align local practices with global standards, the lack of empirical data on the effectiveness of EFL programs in developing digital skills complicates policymaking, as challenges remain in integrating EFL instruction with creative and critical thinking skills. A thorough evaluation of educational methods is necessary to meet the objectives of Vision 2030 concerning human capability. Therefore, this systematic review examines the intersection of EFL and digital skills development in relation to labor-market needs under Vision 2030, aiming to inform policy and educational reforms for a knowledge-based economy. The study addresses the following research questions:

- (a) How are digital skills conceptualized in EFL education within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030?
- (b) How are digital skills integrated into EFL curricula and pedagogical practices?
- (c) To what extent is EFL education aligned with digital skill demands and workforce readiness under Saudi Vision 2030?
- (d) How is digital skill integration in EFL education distributed across educational levels?
- (e) What gaps, challenges, and future directions are identified in digital skill-oriented EFL education?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study reviews EFL education in relation to the digital economy, focusing on the integration of English and digital skills, in line with Saudi Vision 2030, and follows PRISMA guidelines for methodological rigor (Page et al., 2021). The review process involved several structured stages: identifying the study's purpose, formulating research questions, developing a review protocol, conducting an extensive literature search, systematically screening and selecting studies, extracting relevant data, and synthesizing findings. Each stage focused on ensuring consistency, reliability, and alignment with the study's objectives.

A. Search Strategy

To conduct the systematic review, a literature search was conducted across various academic databases, including IEEE Xplore, Springer, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Wiley Online Library, targeting peer-reviewed studies on EFL education and digital skills integration. In addition, empirical studies from 2013 to 2025 were reviewed using Google Scholar and general Google searches, focusing on developments in EFL education and digital skills in accordance with Saudi Vision 2030.

B. Eligibility Criteria

Establishing clear eligibility criteria was essential for the systematic review's scope, involving explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to select studies aligned with the research objectives. This framework ensured methodological rigor and relevance throughout the review process. The review's inclusion criteria required empirical research studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods) in educational settings related to English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Key themes included digital skills, digital literacy, ICT integration, educational technology, and AI practices in EFL contexts. The focus was on EFL instruction, with emphasis on digital competence, curriculum design, pedagogy, and employability. Studies published between 2013 and 2025 were eligible, reflecting advancements in the integration of digital skills in line with Saudi Vision 2030. Exclusion criteria included non-empirical studies, such as conceptual papers and literature reviews, to ensure an empirical focus. Studies not in English and those that failed to explicitly address digital skills or technology use in an EFL context were also excluded, along with publications available only as abstracts, without full-text access, for complete data extraction and analysis.

C. The Screening Process

The systematic review followed PRISMA guidelines, starting with a search that identified 3,462 records. After deduplication, 2,118 records were screened for relevance to EFL education, digital skills, and Saudi Vision 2030, resulting in 156 eligible articles. A full-text review removed 116 studies without empirical evidence, a clear EFL focus, or adequate digital skill integration. In total, 40 empirical studies met the inclusion criteria and addressed the research questions. The complete list of included studies is shown in Table 1, and the search strategy and screening process are illustrated in Figure 1.

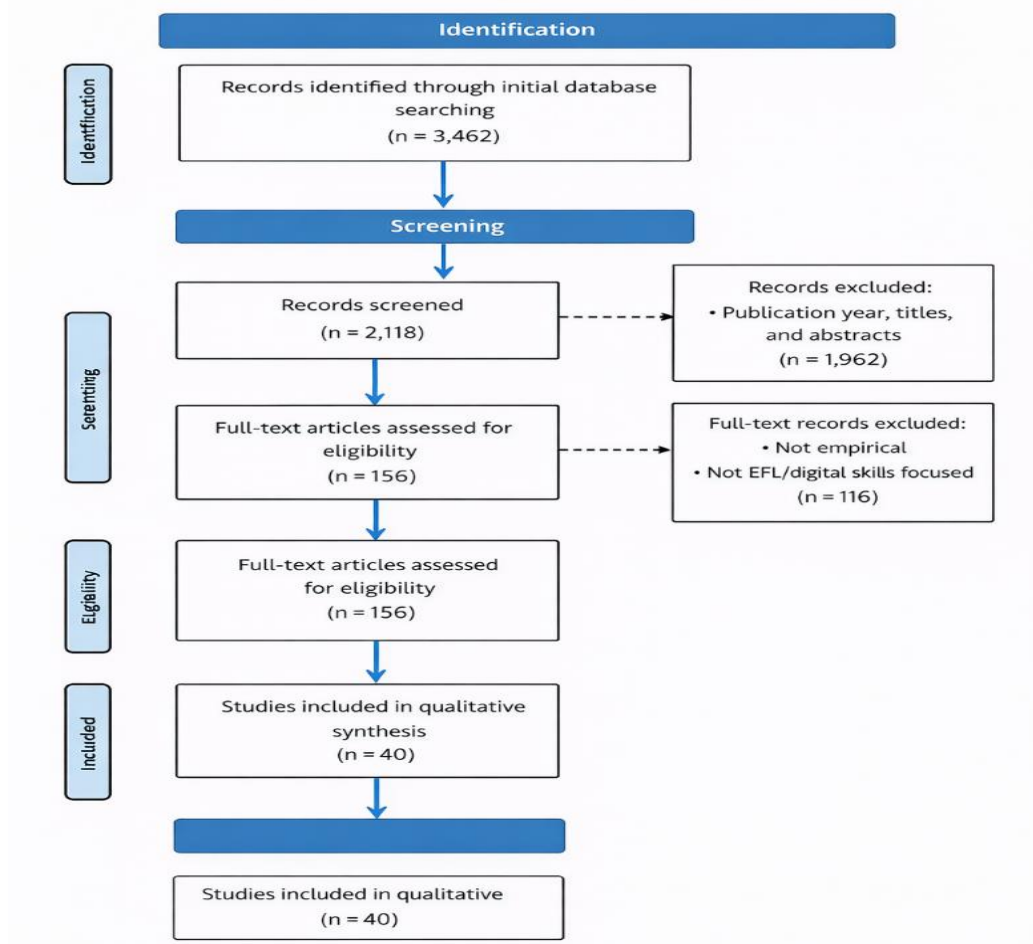


Figure 1. PRISMA Review Process

TABLE 1
ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW (N = 40)

S. No.	Author(s)	Year	S. No.	Author(s)	year
1	Alahmari	2013	21	Siambi	2023
2	Al-Maini	2013	22	Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad	2023
3	Gitsaki & Alabbad	2013	23	Al-Shakhis & Banks-Santilli	2023
4	AlMegren & Yassin	2013	24	Rahimi	2023
5	Gaballa	2014	25	Alharbi et al.	2023
6	Alenezi	2015	26	Qutub et al.	2023
7	Albugami & Ahmed	2015	27	Faisal	2024
8	Sofi, L. A.	2015	28	Ndiaye et al.	2024
9	Alresheed et al.	2016	29	Al Fraidan & Alaliwi	2024
10	Altawil	2016	30	Renno	2025
11	Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri	2016	31	Althobaiti	2025
12	Al Khateeb	2017	32	Mubarak	2025
13	Alhababi	2017	33	Abdulhaleem et al.	2025
14	Albedah & Lee	2017	34	Al-Khresheh et al.	2025
15	Alshammari et al.	2017	35	Elmahdi et al.	2025a
16	Almalki	2017	36	Nazim & Alzubi	2025
17	Al-Bareghi	2018	37	Elmahdi et al.	2025b
18	Assulaimani	2019	38	Banafi, N.	2025
19	Alamri	2020	39	Mohamed et al.	2025
20	Salem et al.	2022	40	Saleh & Alshewiter	2025

D. Coding and Analysis

A systematic review employed qualitative and quantitative content analysis to synthesize empirical study findings. Coding reliability was established through independent assessments of 20 articles by multiple raters, achieving an inter-rater reliability coefficient of over 92%. A dataset analysis subsequently examined study characteristics, including country, publication outlet, thematic focus, educational level, and relevance to digital skill integration in EFL education in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this systematic review of forty empirical studies, the relationship between EFL education and digital skill demands under Saudi Vision 2030 was analyzed. The studies, published from 2013 to 2025, employed various methodologies and highlighted 2025 as the peak year for publications, indicating a growing academic interest in EFL's role in the digital economy. In 2023 and 2024, each year had six studies, while 2017 also saw notable research activity; however, several years reflected minimal engagement in this area. For a detailed illustration of the year-wise publication trend, see Fig. 2.

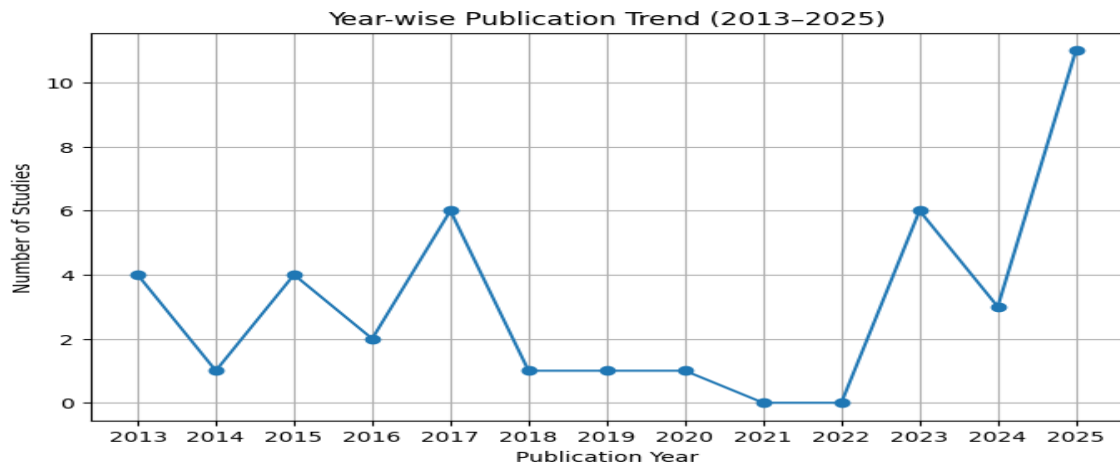


Figure 2. Year-Wise Publication Trend of Studies on EFL Education and Digital Skill Integration Aligned With Saudi Vision 2030 (2013–2025)

A. Conceptualization of Digital Skills in EFL Education Within the Framework of Saudi Vision 2030

The study's first research question investigated the conceptualization of digital skills in EFL education within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030, highlighting that empirical research defines these skills in diverse contexts to enhance English language learning via ICT and multimedia integration (Alahmari, 2013; Al-Maini, 2013; Gitsaki & Alabbad, 2013; AlMegren & Yassin, 2013), enhancing learner engagement and interaction through blended and online learning environments (Alenezi, 2019; Asa et al., 2025; Alresheed et al., 2016; Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016), promoting innovation and motivation, communication skills; addressing challenges of low proficiency, student involvement, and improving listening comprehension (Ndiaye et al., 2024; Alshumaimeri & Alhumud, 2021; Hamouda, 2020; Basal, 2015; Shahid & Ali, 2017), and fostering communicative competence, collaboration, and learner autonomy in digitally mediated contexts (Alshammari et al., 2017; Albedah & Lee, 2017). Digital skill-oriented EFL practices are increasingly aligning with educational and workforce objectives, highlighting the importance of academic English proficiency, digital literacy, critical thinking, and professional communication in higher education (Assulaïmani, 2019; Alamri, 2020; Rahimi, 2023). These studies highlight English as the dominant language in digital platforms and global communication, indicating that digital skills are crucial for employability and engagement in the digital economy (Alharbi et al., 2023; Qutub et al., 2023). Recent studies highlight the importance of digital skills in EFL education, emphasizing competencies such as AI-supported learning environments, data-driven instructional practices, and digitally mediated workplace skills (Siambi, 2023; Faisal, 2024; Ndiaye et al., 2024; Renno, 2025). Digital skills are essential for curriculum reform, national educational transformation, and the development of human capital aligned with Vision 2030, as highlighted by policy-oriented and cross-level studies (Banafi, 2025; Mohamed et al., 2025; Saleh & Alshewiter, 2025). These findings highlight the importance of EFL education in developing digital competence in line with Saudi Vision 2030, stressing the necessity to resolve conceptual inconsistencies and create unified frameworks that connect English language education with digital skills and national development objectives.

B. Integration of Digital Skills Into EFL Curricula and Pedagogical Practices

The second research question assesses the integration of digital skills in EFL curricula and practices within Saudi Vision 2030. Findings suggest a gradual incorporation of digital skills, evolving from technology-enhanced teaching to structured, outcome-oriented approaches. Early studies identified digital tools as supplementary resources for enhancing language exposure, learner engagement, and classroom interaction, and facilitating intentional language learning beyond conventional classrooms (Alenezi, 2019; Albugami & Ahmed, 2015; Altawil, 2016). Digital integration focused on teacher-directed instruction rather than digital competence goals. Research indicated that blended learning models, online discussion platforms, and collaborative digital tasks enhanced communicative language teaching, increased learner engagement, and the students' grammar performances (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016; Alhababi, 2017; Alshammari et al., 2017). Recent studies emphasize the importance of integrating digital skills into EFL curricula in higher education and teacher training. They call for curriculum redesign to align with digital competence frameworks, incorporating essential skills such as digital research, academic writing, and professional communication, as well as

improving vocabulary and speaking skills (Assulaimani, 2019; Alamri, 2020; Rahimi, 2023; Alharbi et al., 2023). Advanced pedagogical practices, including AI-supported instruction and project-based learning, are establishing digital skills as essential curricular outcomes from 2023 to 2025 (Siambi, 2023; Faisal, 2024; Ndiaye et al., 2024; Nazim & Alzubi, 2025). The findings underscore the connection between EFL curriculum design, pedagogical innovation, and national digital transformation goals, particularly highlighting the need for greater consistency in curriculum implementation across educational levels to support the digital skill integration objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. However, some studies have noted certain challenges, such as inadequate managerial support, along with time constraints, training issues, negative perceptions, unclear policies, resistance to change, limited resources, and insufficient infrastructure and evaluation, that impede success (Alenezi, 2019; Albugami & Ahmed, 2015; Nazim & Alzubi, 2025).

C. Alignment Between EFL Education, Digital Skill Demands, and Workforce Readiness

The third research question evaluated the alignment of EFL education with workforce digital skills as outlined in Saudi Vision 2030. Findings indicate that EFL education plays a vital role in preparing learners for the requirements of a digital economy. English proficiency is a key skill that facilitates access to digital tools, global communication, and professional knowledge, underscoring the importance of language education for employability and workplace competence (Assulaimani, 2019; Alamri, 2020; Rahimi, 2023). Higher education EFL programs integrate digital research skills, online collaboration, and professional communication tasks to better prepare graduates for technology-intensive workplaces. (Alharbi et al., 2023; Qutub et al., 2023). Recent studies emphasize aligning EFL education with national workforce priorities and Vision 2030. Research post-2023 aims to integrate digitally mediated employability skills, including critical digital literacy and problem-solving, into EFL instruction, as well as AI-supported professional practices. (Siambi, 2023; Faisal, 2024; Ndiaye et al., 2024; Renno, 2025). Policy-oriented and cross-level studies underscore the role of EFL education in supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and lifelong learning, framing digital skill development as a strategic response to labor-market transformation under Vision 2030 (Banafi, 2025; Mohamed et al., 2025; Saleh & Alshewiter, 2025). These findings highlight the role of EFL education in linking language learning to workforce readiness in the digital economy, while identifying discrepancies between curriculum goals and labor-market demands, underscoring the need to improve alignment between EFL curriculum design, industry needs, and national digital skill frameworks.

D. Educational-Level Distribution of Digital Skill Integration in EFL Education

The study's fourth research question examined the integration of digital skills into EFL education aligned with Saudi Vision 2030. A review of the literature revealed a strong focus on higher education, with 15 studies (37.5% of the total) focusing on university-level programs. Key topics included digital competence, artificial intelligence in education, academic English proficiency, and employability skills, emphasizing the essential role of higher education in advancing national digital transformation and preparing a workforce for the digital economy. Teacher education and professional development emerged as the second-largest focus in the literature, with 9 studies (22.5%) centered on EFL teachers' digital pedagogical skills and professional development via online and AI methods. Secondary education was the focus of 7 studies (17.5%), which addressed digital pedagogy and learning models for middle and high school EFL students. In contrast, primary education was notably less studied, with only three studies (7.5%) discussing early EFL instruction and ICT integration. Additionally, six studies (15.0%) adopted a cross-level or policy-focused perspective, analyzing curriculum reforms in line with Vision 2030 and national educational frameworks. These findings reveal a research focus on higher education and teacher development in digital skills for EFL education, while primary-level contexts are underexplored. This imbalance aligns with Vision 2030's workforce readiness goals but exposes a significant gap in early digital–linguistic development. There is a pressing need for a more inclusive research agenda that fosters digital skills across all educational levels, promoting EFL-related competencies from foundational to advanced stages.

TABLE 2
EDUCATIONAL-LEVEL DISTRIBUTION OF THE INCLUDED STUDIES (N = 40) ON DIGITAL SKILL INTEGRATION IN EFL EDUCATION ALIGNED WITH SAUDI VISION 2030

Educational Level	Description	Number of Studies (n)	Percentage (%)
Primary Education	Studies focusing on elementary/primary EFL learners, early digital literacy, and ICT integration at foundational levels	3	7.5
Secondary Education	Studies examining middle and high school EFL instruction, digital pedagogy, blended/online learning, and learner skills	7	17.5
Higher Education	University-level EFL contexts, foundation programs, undergraduate learners, digital competence, AI use, and employability skills	15	37.5
Teacher Education & Professional Development	Pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, digital skills, ICT efficacy, online/AI-supported professional development	9	22.5
Cross-level / Policy-oriented Studies	Vision 2030-aligned policy analyses, curriculum reform, national frameworks, or studies spanning multiple educational levels	6	15.0
Total		40	100

E. The Digital Skills–Oriented EFL Education: Gaps, Challenges, and Future Directions

The fifth research question highlighted gaps, challenges, and future directions in digital skills-oriented EFL education in relation to Saudi Vision 2030, noting significant gaps due to an overemphasis on higher education and limited empirical research on primary and secondary education. Tertiary institutions play a crucial role in preparing the workforce, but early education is often neglected, potentially hindering the development of important digital-linguistic skills necessary for lifelong learning. Additionally, there is a lack of clarity in defining digital skills within EFL curricula, leading to a wide range of interpretations, from basic ICT use to advanced AI skills. This issue underscores the need for a cohesive national framework that integrates EFL outcomes with the digital skill objectives outlined in Vision 2030. Challenges in teacher preparedness for integrating new technologies in EFL instruction include differing levels of digital pedagogical competence, the digital divide, inadequate access to devices, and insufficient digital literacy among both educators and students, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence, adaptive platforms, and data-driven learning tools (Shalan & Ahmad, 2024; Aldawsari & Almohish, 2024; Nazim & Alzubi, 2025; Hind, 2021; Aljameel, 2022). Limited access to digital infrastructure, inconsistent institutional support, and misalignment between curricular objectives and assessment practices were also highlighted as barriers to effective implementation. Multiple studies (Alharbi et al., 2023; Mohammed et al., 2023; Banafi, 2025) highlight the need for a digital skills measurement tool and a performance enhancement framework to modernize the English Language Program, recommending updated training methods, relevant content, practical experiences, and student feedback to align with Vision 2030's employability objectives.

IV. CONCLUSION

This systematic review examined studies from 2013 to 2025 on integrating digital skills in EFL contexts in Saudi Arabia, focusing on five themes: conceptualization of digital skills under Saudi Vision 2030, incorporation into curricula and teaching methods, alignment with workforce needs, distribution across educational levels, and identification of gaps, challenges, and future directions. The findings reveal inconsistencies within the EFL curriculum, highlighting the need for a cohesive framework. Key issues included insufficient managerial support, unclear policies, and a misalignment between curriculum goals and labor market demands, exacerbated by inadequate initiatives to improve learners' digital skills. The study emphasizes the importance of English proficiency in improving digital literacy, noting challenges like insufficient digital infrastructure and resistance to change. It recommends that policymakers prioritize professional development and equal access to digital resources to successfully integrate EFL education into the digital landscape of a post-oil economy. Future research should develop standardized frameworks connecting language proficiency with digital and employability skills to aid EFL teachers' professional development. Additionally, it is crucial to align the EFL curriculum, assessments, and labor market needs to achieve the human capital development goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

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On Some Unique Complementation Patterns in Korean: The Case of Monologual Question Complements

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Abstract—Korean has a large number of quotative constructions that have been grammaticalized into diverse functions in the domains of text and discourse (Koo & Rhee, 2019). Among these is a class of constructions that involve the speaker's self-quoted monologual questions that serve the role of complement of verbs of locution, cognition, and perception. Even though these verbs are structurally the matrix-clause predicates, the matrix-clause subject typically does not surface, i.e., the matrix clause is subject-less. These complement constructions involving monologual questions (MQCCs) present intriguing features from the grammaticalization perspective. Self-quoted questions characterize a 'dialogue' between the speaking self and the thinking/hearing self (cf. Koo & Rhee, 2019, p. 256). This type of feigned interactivity makes a text more dramatic and vivid as compared to the texts that do not employ such rhetorical devices. The functions of MQCCs are not associated with a specific form but rather exist in the configuration of juxtaposed clauses, with contextual effects. Therefore, this grammaticalization involves no formal changes with observable trajectories but functional reinterpretation of existing forms, one resembling grammaticalization as reported in Koo and Rhee (2019). MQCCs not only display unique complementation patterns but also present diverse grammaticalized functions through formal and conceptual extension, including many far removed from their original quotative function.

Index Terms—complementation, monologual question, grammaticalization, Korean

I. INTRODUCTION

Korean has a large number of complementation patterns. Complementizers (COMPs) are used in indirect quotation constructions (i.e., reportative constructions), developed from direct quotation constructions (i.e., quotative constructions). A unique type of quotative construction is one involving a directly quoted monologual question that serves the role of the complement of a set of verbs of locution, cognition, and perception. These monologual question complement constructions (MQCCs hereafter) present interesting grammaticalization scenarios. Despite such merits, they have not received attention in earnest to date, and this paper intends to fill the gap.

This paper is organized in the following way. Following this introduction, Section II provides a brief review of extant research; Section III provides a brief exposition on theoretical background focusing on a few topics that are relevant to the present topic in order to facilitate the discussion; Section IV briefly describes the research methodology; Section V reports unique patterns of complementation observed from the data sources; Section VI analyzes the development of MQCCs with respect to structural development, grammaticalization parameters, pragmatic operations, and conceptual networks; and Section VII summarizes the major findings and concludes the paper.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As briefly indicated above, MQCCs have not yet received much attention. The issues partly related to the topic have been addressed by Lee (1982b) with respect to the development of sentence-enders, Hoe and Kim (2022) focusing on complement choice, Song (2018) with respect to the quotative suffix *-tanta*, and Park (2022) with specific focus on adnominal clausal modifiers. A notable study is Lee (1986), in which the development of the markers of 'internal questions' (i.e., monologual interrogatives) has been investigated. More recently, Koo and Rhee (2019) analyzed the self-quoted questions developing into grammatical markers, and Rhee (2019a) extended the focus to diverse 'fake quotations' and 'feigned questions' and analyzed their development from a grammaticalization perspective. Noteworthy advancements notwithstanding, a comprehensive treatment of MQCCs has not yet been attempted.

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to facilitate the discussion of the development of MQCCs, a brief explanation on a few issues is in order, i.e., typology, sentence enders, and complementation in general. Typologically, Korean is an agglutinating, head-final, SOV, suffixal, non-tonal, and postpositional language (see Rhee, 2020, for detailed information on typological profiles of

Korean). Multiple suffixes and postpositions may stack and occupy slots of relatively fixed order. Argument NPs are often omitted and may occur without postpositional particles, and interpretive flexibility thus created often affects or even triggers reanalysis resulting in grammaticalization. Finite verbs are marked for tense, aspect, mood, and modality, whereas non-finite verbs are marked with converb-markers, also known as connectives, linkers, adverbializers, and non-finite markers, whose main function is adverbializing a non-finite verb (Bisang, 1995; Haspelmath, 1995; Haspelmath & König, 1995). Among the converb-markers, numbering about 26 (Hatcher, 2013), *-e/a* and *-ko*, both denoting ‘and’, are the most productively used forms, the former with more ‘consolidating’ effect on the described events combined (e.g., ‘hit and break’ for ‘destroy’) and the latter with more ‘isolating’ effect (e.g., ‘sleep and go’ for ‘sleep and then depart’) (Koo, 1987; Rhee, 2007). The final slot of the finite-verb morphology is occupied by the sentence-type marker, i.e., one signaling the type of the speech-act (see below).

Korean has an impressive inventory of sentence-type markers, known as ‘sentence-enders’, i.e., those signaling the speech-act of the clause, such as declarative, imperative, interrogative, hortative (propositive), promissive, exclamative, etc. (Rhee, 2020, p. 594). The sentence-type markers are modulated by the degree of honorification-politeness via an elaborate system of honorification, known as *hwakye* ‘speech-level’, partly illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
SENTENCE-ENDERS (SOHN, 1999, P. 355, MODIFIED)

	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative	Propositive
a. Plain	-(n)ta	-ni?/-nunya?	-ela/-ala	-ca
b. Intimate	-e/-a	-e?/-a?	-e/-a	-e/-a
c. Familiar	-ney	-na?/-nunka?	-key	-sey
d. Blunt	-(s)o	-(s)o?	-(u)o	-(u)psita
e. Polite	-eyo/-ayo	-eyo?/-ayo?	-eyo/-ayo	-eyo/-ayo
f. Deferential	-(su)pnita	-(su)pnikka?	-(u)sipsio	-(u)sipsita
g. Neutral	-(n)ta	-nunya?	-(u)la	-ca

Even though Table 1 shows a complex system of honorification, the listed forms are only representative forms for each level and each speech act. A more comprehensive list is overwhelming. For instance, Kim (2001, pp. 147-151) lists 381 sentence-enders across speech-acts (see also Rhee & Koo, 2017; Yae et al., 2024). Furthermore, the inventory is still increasing since more sentence-enders emerge through insubordination, whereby former connectives develop into sentence-enders.

Korean has a number of constructions which involve reporting speech, thoughts and perceptions. These constructions have been grammaticalized into diverse functions. They belong to two broad types: direct quotation constructions or ‘quotatives’ (with the known author) and indirect quotation constructions or ‘reportatives’ (with unspecified author). Quotatives have a locution verb *ha-* ‘say’, indicating that the embedded clause is what was ‘said’. Reportatives involve complementizers (COMPs), which introduce an utterance being reported as the complement of a verb. Reportatives are complex constructions involving a sentence-ender (speech-act marker), a locution verb (‘say’), and a linker (converb marker). Contemporary Korean has many grammatical markers, whose origins are ultimately traceable to reportatives. Quotatives and reportatives are exemplified in the following constructed examples:

(1) a. Quotative (with a locution verb *ha-* ‘say’)

ku-nun atul-eykey “salangha-n-ta” ha-ko malha-yss-ta
 he-TOP son-to love-PRES-DEC say-CONV say-PST-DEC
 ‘He said to (his) son, “(I) love (you).”’

b. Reportative (with a declarative COMP *-tako*)

ku-nun atul-eykey salangha-n-tako malha-yss-ta
 he-TOP son-to love-PRES-COMP say-PST-DEC
 ‘He said to his son that he loved her.’

Historically, the declarative COMP *-tako* is a phonologically eroded form of *-ta-ha-ko* (bold-faced and underscored in [1a]), from which the locution verb *ha-* is lost. Since quotatives involve direct quotation, which is a finite clause, the finite verb of the embedded clause needs to be marked properly by the speech level. In contrast with quotatives, reportatives do not involve speech-level differences in the complement clause of the report: reportatives use COMPs to mark the complement and each speech-act has only one COMP. The COMP for declarative clause complement is *-tako* (and its allomorphic variant *-lako*), as shown in (1b). The COMP *-tako* is related to the sentence-ender *-ta*, the ‘audience-blind’ declarative ender (Koo & Rhee, 2013; Rhee & Koo, 2017), the same as the ‘neutral’ speech level in Table 1. In addition to declarative COMP *-tako* (and its variant *-lako*), there are COMPs for other speech acts: *-nyako* for interrogative, *-lako* for imperative, and *-cako* for hortative.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study uses a conceptual, qualitative research method supplemented by descriptive frequency analysis, and involves no experimentation. The data have been collected from diverse sources, including lexica, historical and contemporary corpora. In particular, two corpora are used as data sources. The Korean Historical Corpus is a 15-million-

word historical corpus consisting of the texts from the 15th century through the early 20th century. Contemporary Korean data have been collected from the Drama and Cinema Corpus, a 24-million-word corpus, consisting of 7,454 scenarios of dramas and cinemas dating from 1992 through 2015. All complementation constructions were retrieved from the corpora and hand-screened to select valid instances and they were classified according to their forms and functions.

V. RESULTS

From the data collection, a large number of complementation patterns have been identified. Among various constructions that take a clausal complement is a set of MQCCs, which involves self-quoted monologal question in the form of direct quotation, i.e., one in which the main clause directly embeds the speaker's question as the complement (for a similar grammaticalization scenario, see Koo & Rhee, 2019). We will look into the morphosyntax of MQCCs, their functions, and their formal and functional extensions.

A. MQCC Morphosyntax

As briefly indicated above, MQCCs involve the speaker's self-quoted questions, i.e., monologal interrogative sentences, which serve the role of complement of verbs of locution, cognition, and perception, e.g., *ha-* 'say', *siph-* 'think/suppose/want', *molu-* 'not know', *po-* 'see', etc. It has been widely known that these verbs tend to have unique complementation patterns across languages (e.g., Kirsner & Thompson, 1976; Van der Auwera, 1985, for perception verbs; van Bogaert, 2011; Long & Deng, 2022, for locution and cognition verbs). MQCCs in Korean carry a unique characteristic of using the 'audience-blind' interrogative ends *-nka*, *-na*, *-kka*, and *-ci*, which belong to a larger set of the audience-blind forms (Koo & Rhee, 2013; Rhee & Koo, 2017). Audience-blind interrogatives have been variously named as 'internal questions' (Lee, 1963; Ahn, 1964), 'internal speech' (Lee, 1986), 'indirect questions' (Lee, 1979; Lee, 1982a, 1982b) and 'monologal questions' (Koo & Rhee, 2013). A MQCC involving a verb of cognition, *siph-* 'think; inclined to think' and a monologal question ender (MQ) *-nka*, is shown in (2), with an analytic gloss in (2i) in addition to a grammaticalized gloss in (2ii):

- (2) MQCC (MQ: *-nka*; V: *siph-* 'think')
- | | | | |
|------|---|--------------|--------------------------|
| | <i>icey</i> | <i>tutie</i> | <i>kaul-i-nkasiph-ta</i> |
| (i) | now | at.last | fall-be-MQ think-DEC |
| (ii) | | | fall-be-CNJC-DEC |
| (i) | '(I) think (asking myself), "Now, is it finally fall?"' | | |
| (ii) | 'It seems that it's finally fall.' | | |

Example (3) is a MQCC in which *-nka.siph-* carries the function of marking conjecture ('it seems', 'perhaps'), which grammaticalized from the string of a MQ (*-nka*) and a verb of cognition (*siph-* 'think'). The grammaticalization of this type of MQCCs proceeded to such an extent that contemporary speakers do not take the sentence analytically as in (2.i). A similar example involving different MQs (e.g., *-na*, *-nka*, *-ci*, etc.) and verbs (e.g., *po-* 'see' and *ha-* 'do, be, say'). It is to be noted that since the form is not taken analytically, the speaker is not likely to have said the monologal question 'Now, is it finally fall?' to themselves. Therefore, the complement clauses in MQCCs are 'pseudo-self-quotations' that have not been uttered in reality.

MQCCs carry a number of unique traits in morphosyntax. It is noteworthy that there exists some discrepancy between the subject and the predicate in MQCCs. In other words, even though the cognition/locution/perception verbs in them are structurally the matrix-clause predicates, the matrix-clause subject ("I") typically does not, or often cannot, surface, i.e., the matrix clause is often subjectless. For instance, the thinker in (2) is only implicit. The surface subjects 'now' in (2) was originally the subject of a lower clause, thus the grammaticalization of MQCCs involved 'syntactic upgrading' (Heine et al., 1991; Rhee, 2014, 2022), commonly found in Korean grammaticalization episodes (see VI-C for more).

Another interesting morphosyntactic feature of MQCCs is that, unlike other clause-taking complement constructions, MQCCs are not compatible with COMPs, i.e., they cannot be converted into reportatives. For instance, the monologal question-ends *-na*, *-nka*, *-kka* and *-ci* in MQCCs cannot be replaced by the interrogative COMP *-nyako* and retain the same meaning. This strongly suggests that the internal cohesion ('bondedness', 'coalescence', Lehmann, 2015, 1982) between the MQs and the verbs in MQCCs has reached to the point of inseparability through grammaticalization. The great extent of interlexical cohesion is also evident in that no material (notably a verb- or clause-modifying adverb) is allowed to be inserted between the two formants, such as 'truly' (for 'truly think') for (2).

Still another feature, though not applicable across the board, is the loss of morphosyntactic flexibility of the verb. The verb inflection is often highly restricted; MQCCs tend to be strongly tied to 'here and now' of the speech situation. For instance, most verbs in MQCCs are not inflected by tense, aspect, and modality. This feature is not uniformly applicable to all MQCC verbs, but the lack of morphosyntactic flexibility is also evident in that the *siph-* 'think' in (2) tolerates past-tense marking but not future-tense marking (see VI-B for more).

B. MQCC Functions

The primary functions of MQCCs are to mark conjecture and uncertainty. Since conjecture involves lack of certainty, the two functions are closely related. In the following, these two functions are discussed with examples.

(a). Conjecture

Questions inherently carry the indeterminacy meaning, supposedly from ‘absence of knowledge’, ‘desire to know’, ‘have reason to ask’, etc. associated with them. Inheriting such indeterminacy, monologual questions embedded in MQCCs developed into the markers of the notions related to it: ‘conjecture’ and ‘uncertainty’. The most common function of marking conjecture has been exemplified in the above in (2) but the conjectural function is not restricted to it; many combinations of monologual question markers and cognition/perception/locution verbs carry this function. For instance, the monologual question marker *-ci* and the cognition verb *siph-* ‘think’ form a MQCC with the conjectural function as shown in the following:

(3) Conjectural MQCC (MQ: *-ci*; V: *siph-* ‘think’)

- ku-ka tohakhha-yss-ci siph-ta*
 (i) he-nom arrive-pst-MQ think-DEC
 (ii) arrive-pst-CNJC-DEC
 (i) ‘(I) think, “Did he arrive?”’
 (ii) ‘He may have arrived./ He seems to have arrived.’

Since illocutionary force of an interrogative speech-act makes little difference by the negative and affirmative polarity (cf., ‘Did he arrive?’ and ‘Didn’t he arrive?’), the monologual questions of either polarity seem to carry nearly identical, or at least very similar, meaning in some MQCCs, as illustrated below:

(4) Conjectural MQCC (MQ: *-na*; V: *siph-* ‘think’)

a. affirmative

- ku-ka tohakhha-yss-na.siph-ta*
 he-NOM arrive-pst-CNJC-DEC
 ‘He seems to have arrived. (lit. I think, (asking myself) “Did he arrive?”)’

b. negative

- ku-ka tohakhha-ci.anh-ass-na.siph-ta*
 he-NOM arrive-NEG-PST-CNJC-DEC
 ‘He seems to have arrived. (lit. I think, (asking myself) “Didn’t he arrive?”)’

(b). *Uncertainty*

Conjecture is indeterminate in nature and thus may involve variable degrees of certainty. Even though conjecture is typically highlighting some degree of certainty (e.g., ‘He seems to have arrived’), it may signal a very low degree of certainty, i.e., uncertainty (e.g., ‘He may come but it’s uncertain’). Despite the shared feature of indeterminacy, the two functions have distinct flavor and are treated as constituting different functional categories. The uncertainty-marking function of MQCCs is exemplified in the following examples:

(5) a. Uncertainty MQCC (MQ: *-na*; V: *molu-* ‘not know’)

- ku-ka o-na.molu-keyss-ta*
 he-nom come-UNC-FUT-DEC
 ‘He may be coming, but it is not certain if he is coming.’

b. Uncertainty MQCC (MQ: *-kka*; V: *siph-* ‘think’)

- ku-ka cengmal o-l-kka.siph-ta*
 he-nom really come-FUT-UNC-DEC
 ‘(I) am wondering if he is really coming; he may not.’

(c). *Variability in Degree of Certainty*

As discussed briefly above, the primary functions of MQCC are to signal conjecture and uncertainty. Different MQCCs have slightly different nuances and different degrees of perceived realizability or certainty. Obviously, the differences in nuances and the epistemic strengths are partly due to the semantics of the verbs and the context (cf. Heine, 2002). This is illustrated with the following set of examples involving different verbs, i.e., *po-* ‘see’, *siph-* ‘think’, and *molu-* ‘not know’ (note that the verb *molu-* ‘not know’ normally occurs with the future marker *-keyss-* without a future meaning):

- (6) a. *ku-ka cwuk-ess-na.po-ta* (< *po-* ‘see’)
 b. *ku-ka cwuk-ess-na.siph-ta* (< *siph-* ‘think’)
 c. *ku-ka cwuk-ess-na.molu-keyss-ta* (< *molu-* ‘not know’)
 he-NOM die-PST-CNJC-DEC
 a/b/c. ‘He seems to have died.’

All three examples can be translated as ‘He seems to have died’, but (6a) involving the verb *po-* ‘see’ signals the highest degree of perceived certainty, followed by (6b) involving the verb *siph-* ‘think’, and (6c) involving the verb *molu-* ‘not know’ signals the lowest degree of certainty (thus, highest degree of uncertainty). The reason for differential strengths between ‘see’, ‘think’, and ‘not know’ seems to be straightforward from the verbal semantics.

Another contributor to the variability is the context, i.e., the content of the monologual questions serving as a complement. For instance, if the complement question is unrealistic or plainly exaggerated, the degree of certainty encoded by the MQCC decreases. This is illustrated in the following contrast:

- (7) a. *ike-y cikum kkwwum-i-nka.siph-ta*
 this-NOM now dream-be-CNJC-DEC
 ‘This seems to be a dream now.’
- b. *pakk-ey nwuka w-ass-nu-nka.siph-ta*
 outside-at someone:NOM come-PST-CR-CNJC-DEC
 ‘It seems that there is someone outside.’

In the examples above, both signal conjecture (e.g., ‘it seems...’), but (7a) is more unlikely, thus of a lower level of certainty or truthfulness, than (7b). Our knowledge tells us that the speaker of (7a) is not dreaming now if they are speaking to their interlocutor. However, the speaker makes their point that what is referred to is beyond realistic, by employing this MQCC. Seemingly trivial, this plays a rather important role; this has to do with the motivation for innovating MQCC. Having a ‘direct quotation’ (often imagined or exaggerated) as the complement of MQCCs creates a more dynamic and vivid flavor, as compared to the non-MQCC counterparts. It has been observed that Korean uses pseudo-quotations that, first used by the speaker’s desire for dramatization and expressivity, are grammaticalized into diverse functions, e.g., reason marker, concessive topic marker, pejorative topic marker, purposive marker, intention marker, and diverse stance markers (Rhee, 2019a, pp. 204-209; Rhee & Koo, 2020; see also Rhee, 2009, for development of certain adverbs through use of such pseudo-quotations).

C. Functional Extension of MQCC

As the main verb and its formal complement in MQCCs become syntagmatically and conceptually tighter, MQCCs acquire diverse functions that are even more removed from the quotative meanings of conjectural and uncertainty, such as diverse epistemic and emotional meanings. The development of new functions is a result of conceptual extension from conjecture and uncertainty through a selective focus on certain aspects of an event or state of affairs. These extended functions are evolutive functions from cognitive operations or are contextually-modified functions from the co-occurring markers (such as connectives). The extended functions may be of the endings (i.e., in the main clause) or of the connectives (i.e., in the non-main clause). New epistemic and emotional meanings include probability, doubt, apprehension, tentative intention, and emphasis.

(a). Probability

The probability-marking function emerges as the interlocutors pay attention to the realizability or likelihood of a described event or situation; it indicates that the speaker is inclined to affirm the proposition suggested by the monological question. For instance, when the speaker uses MQCCs involving the monological question “is it true?”, they indicate that its converted proposition (i.e., ‘it is true’) is probable (i.e., ‘it is probably true’). This function is exemplified in the following examples:

- (8) a. Probability MQCC (MQ: *-nka*; V: *po-* ‘see’)
ku-uy mal-i cengmal-i-nka.po-ta
 he-GEN word-NOM truth-be-PROB-DEC
 ‘What he says seems to be true.’
- b. Probability MQCC (MQ: *-nka*; V: *siph-* ‘think’)
ike-n eccelswueps-nun inyen-i-nka.siph-ta
 this-TOP be.unavoidable-ADN destiny-be-PROB-DEC
 ‘This seems to be an unavoidable destiny.’

(b). Dubitative

On the opposite side of the probability on the affirmative-negative spectrum is doubt, though not as extreme as negation. Evidently, this function of marking doubt and suspicion has grown out of the uncertainty function through increased negativity. MQCCs in this function signals that the speaker is inclined to doubt the proposition derived from the monological question. For instance, when the speaker uses MQCCs involving the monological question “will it rain?”, they indicate that its converted proposition (i.e., ‘it will rain’) is unlikely (i.e., ‘it is unlikely that it will rain’). This function is exemplified in the following example:

- (9) Dubitative MQCC (MQ: *-kka*; V: *siph-* ‘think’)
Ille nal pi-ka o-l-kka.siph-ta
 this.kind day rain-NOM come-FUT-DUB-DEC
 ‘It is unlikely that it will rain on a day like this.’

(c). Apprehensional

Still another derived function is to mark apprehension. By using MQCC in this function the speaker signals that they are inclined to fear an event or situation related to the monological question. When the doubt or suspicion is intensified and the context involves an event that is likely to happen and undesirable (cf. Schultze-Berndt, 2015; Vuillermet, 2018; Yae et al., 2023), there emerges a new function of marking fear caused by it. For instance, when the speaker uses MQCCs

involving the monological question “is this the end of my luck?”, they indicate that its converted proposition (i.e., ‘it is the end of my luck’) is something that the speaker fears (i.e., ‘I’m afraid this is the end of my luck’). This function is exemplified in the following examples:

- (10) a. Apprehensional MQCC (MQ: *-nka*; V: *siph-* ‘think’)

ike-llo kkuth-i-nka.siph-ta
 this-with end-be-APPR-DEC
 ‘(I) am afraid that this is the dead-end.’

- b. Apprehensional MQCC (MQ: *-na*; V: *po-* ‘see’)

amwulayto cencayng-i na-lye-na.po-ta
 by.all.meanswar-NOM break-PURP-APPR-DEC
 ‘(I) am afraid a war might break out in all probability.’

This function may use either positive (‘is it?’) or negative (‘isn’t it?’) monological questions as complements, with no noticeable semantic distinction.

(d). *Tentative Intention*

A more recent development involves acquisition of conative meanings, i.e., marking the speaker’s tentative intention. The conceptual motivation of this development is straightforward: the speaker asks a question to themselves because they are thinking about it, and if it involves something to do, they are likely to pursue it. This intention, though, is tentative as it is indicated by a question not a statement. For instance, when the speaker uses MQCCs involving the monological question “should I quit the job?”, they indicate that its converted proposition (i.e., ‘I should quit the job’) is something they are considering doing, at least for the moment (i.e., ‘I may as well quit the job’). This function is exemplified in the following examples:

- (11) a. Tentative intentional MQCC (MQ: *-kka*; V: *siph-* ‘think’)

cikcang-ul kumantwu-l-kka.siph-ta
 job-ACC quit-FUT-INTN-DEC
 ‘I might as well quit the job.’

- b. Tentative intentional MQCC (MQ: *-kka*; V: *po-* ‘see’)

yehayng-ina ka-l-kka.po-ta
 travel-TEP go-FUT-INTN-DEC
 ‘I might as well go on a trip.’

(e). *Emphatic*

The last function extended from conjecture and uncertainty is that of emphasis. The motivation of this development may not be immediately clear, but it is related to the strategic use of a rhetorical question and hyperbolic negation. By a rhetorical question, the speaker signals that the answer is obvious and thus is not needed, and by a hyperbolic negation, the speaker is pushing the intensity to the maximum by claiming unknowability. This is illustrated by the following examples:

- (12) a. Emphatic MQCC (MQ: *-kka*; V: *po-* ‘see’)

ecci nay nala-lul ic-ul-kka.po-nya
 how my country-ACC forget-FUT-EMPH-Q
 ‘(I) never forget my country. (lit. Does it seem that I will...?)’

- b. Emphatic MQCC (MQ: *-nka*; V: *molu-* ‘not know’)

nalssi-ka elmana tewu-nka.molu-a
 weather-NOM how be.hot-EMPH-END
 ‘The weather is very hot. (lit. (I) don’t know how hot...)’

D. *Extended MQCCs*

As seen in the above, MQCCs started out as a complex sentence, in which the MQCC verb is the main predicate, i.e., it occurred as the part of a verbal morphology of a finite clause. In recent times, MQCCs have undergone, or been undergoing, structural extension in a number of ways. The most prominent changes are (i) becoming connectives by allowing connectives to follow them (note that the functional category of the final form of a periphrasis determines that of the entire construction), (ii) allowing non-MQ enders (i.e., regular question markers), and (iii) allowing non-Q enders (i.e., regular speech-act markers). The structural extension leads to functional extension as well into different, yet related, functions. The first type preserves the original characteristics of MQCCs, e.g., the use of MQ and the use of the verb of cognition, perception, or locution, the only difference being followed by a connective instead of a sentence-ender; the other two, on the other hand, depart from MQCCs by not using the MQ or not using a question ender.

(a). *Connectives*

MQCCs elaborated in 3.2 and 3.3 involve the verbs of cognition, perception, and locution that are the predicates of the main clause. But they may function as connectives by being hosted by another connective (i.e., converb) and thus occurring in subordinate clauses or coordinate clauses, depending on the recruited connective. The following is such an example, in which the MQCC is followed by a causality-marking connective *-ese* (or its variant *-yse*) and the whole construct *-nka.ha.yse* serves the function of a causal connective with a strong sense of possibility:

(13) Causal connective (MQ: *-nka*; V: *ha-* 'say'; CONN *-ese*: CAUSAL)

<i>kunye-ka</i>	<i>o-nu-nka</i>	<i>ha-yse</i>	<i>manhi</i>	<i>kitaly-ess-ta</i>
(i) she-nom	come-CR- <u>Q</u>	<u>sav-CSL</u>	much	wait-PST-DEC
(ii)	come-CR- <u>CSL</u>			
- (i) 'Because (I) said (to myself), 'Is she coming?', (I) waited long.'
(ii) '(I) waited long because she might be coming.'

Example (13) involves the monologual question ender *-nka* and the verb of locution *ha-* 'say', which together form a MQCC, which, in turn, is followed by the causal connective *-yse*. The function of marking causality with a strong sense of possibility is compositional directly inheriting 'possibility' from the MQCC and 'causality' from the connective. Similarly, another MQCC-based connective, i.e., circumstantial connective, is built on the circumstantial/causal connective *-ni* 'as it happens to be', as shown in the following:

(14) Circumstantial connective (MQ: *-kka*; V: *ha-* 'say'; CONN *-ni*: CIRCUMSTANTIAL)

<i>myengphwum.payk-ul</i>	<i>sa-l-kka.ha-ni</i>	<i>ton-i</i>	<i>mocala-n-ta</i>
luxury.brand.bag-ACC	buy-FUT- <u>CIRC</u>	money-NOM	be.short-PRES-DEC
- 'As it happens (I) don't have enough money to buy a luxury-brand bag.'

There are cases, however, whose newly acquired functions are not transparently deducible from the function of the connective that is recruited. For instance, the general consolidating connective *-a/-e* 'and' is involved in the development of an apprehensional connective ('for fear of; fearing that; lest') and the conditional connective *-myen* (similarly with the circumstantial connective *-ni* in [14]) is involved in the development of a topic-presentation connective ('as for'), as exemplified below:

(15) a. Apprehensional connective (MQ: *-kka*; V: *po-* 'see'; CONN *-a/-e*: CONSOLIDATOR)

<i>moki-eykey</i>	<i>mwulli-l-kka.po.a</i>	<i>pakk-ey</i>	<i>mos</i>	<i>naka-keyss-ta</i>
mosquito-to	be.bitten-FUT- <u>APPR</u>	outside-to	cannot	go.out-FUT-DEC
- 'Fearing that I might be bitten by mosquitoes, I can't go outside.' (Rhee, 2019b, p. 108)

b. Topic-presentation connective (MQ: *-nka*; V: *ha-* 'say'; CONN *-myen*: CONDITIONAL)

<i>keki-ka</i>	<i>eti-nka.ha.myen</i>	<i>nay</i>	<i>kohyang-i-ta</i>
there-NOM	where- <u>TOP</u>	my	hometown-be-DEC
- 'As for the place (lit. if (one) asks "Where is there?"), that is my hometown.'

(b). Extension to non-MQ Enders

Formal extension of MQCC also occurred with the question enders that are not used in monologual questions, e.g., *-nya* and *-lya*, the latter inherently futuristic (related to the archaic future marker *-li-*). For instance, a new connective *-nya.siph.key* [Q.think.CONN] functions as a hypothetical simulative marker ('as if'), and a new connective *-lya.siph.e* [Q.think.CONN] functions as a marker of cause or reason, as exemplified below:

(16) a. Simulative connective (Q: *-nya*; V: *siph-* 'think'; CONN *-key*: MANNER)

<i>encey</i>	<i>nanli-ka</i>	<i>na-ss-nu-nya.siph.key</i>	<i>hankalow-un</i>	<i>mosup-i-ta</i>
when	war-NOM	occur-PST-CR- <u>SIM</u>	be.idyllic-ADN	appearance-be-DEC
- 'It appears to be idyllic as if the war did not break out. (lit. '... in a manner of asking "When did a war break out?")'

b. Causal connective (Q: *-lya*; V: *siph-* 'think'; CONN *-e/a*: CONSOLIDATOR)

<i>encey tto</i>	<i>po-lya.siph.e</i>	<i>setwulle</i>	<i>po-le</i>	<i>ka-ss-ta</i>
when again	see- <u>CSL</u>	hurriedly	see-PURP	go-PST-DEC
- '(I) hurriedly went to see (him) because I might not see him again. (lit. '... thinking, "When will I see (him) again?")'

(c). Extension to non-Q Enders

More recently, there occurred the structural extension to non-question enders, e.g., declarative, infinitive, and transferentive. Declarative sentence-ender is used for statements and infinitive is for verbal roots. Transferentive is a unique connective signaling a sudden change of scenes (e.g., 'from studying to falling asleep', 'from walking to being run over', etc.). New functions that arise from the extension are many and varied, including causal, circumstantial, transferentive, simulative, etc. The causal connective function is illustrated by the following:

(17) a. Causal connective (END: DECLARATIVE; V: *siph-* 'think'; CONN *-e/a*: CONSOLIDATOR)

<i>khunil</i>	<i>na-keyss-ta.siph.e</i>	<i>ellun</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>cali-lul</i>	<i>ttena-ss-ta</i>
big.trouble	occur-FUT- <u>CSL</u>	quickly	that	spot-ACC	leave-PST-DEC

‘I quickly left the place because a big trouble might occur. (lit. ... thinking, “A big trouble will occur.”)’

- b. Causal connective (END: TRANSFERENTIVE; V: *po-* ‘see’; CONN *-ni*: CAUSAL)

ton-i *eps-ta.po.ni* *maum-to* *wichwuktoy-n-ta*

money-NOM not.exist-CSL mind-also get.dispirited-PRES-DEC

‘Since (I) don’t have money, I become even daunted at heart. (lit. ... seeing, “There is no money.”)’ (Rhee, 2019b, p. 109)

VI. DISCUSSION

Based on the description of MQCCs and their formal and functional relatives, we will discuss a few issues of theoretical importance, e.g., developmental patterns, grammaticalization parameters, pragmatic operations, and conceptual network.

A. Structural Patterns

In the preceding sections, structural and functional characteristics of MQCCs and their extended forms were elaborated. Individual forms have their own complex developmental paths, and thus the developmental patterns cannot be mapped in a streamlined, step-by-step fashion for individual cases. Despite the complexity, overall patterns are observable from historical and contemporary data. Even though not every MQCC or its extension could be elaborated, the constructions’ patterns of MQ/converb and the verb can be summarized as in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 2
MAIN-CLAUSE USAGE

MQ	<i>ha-</i> ‘say’	<i>siph-</i> ‘think’	<i>po-</i> ‘see’	<i>molu-</i> ‘not know’
<i>-nka</i>	<i>-nka.ha-</i>	<i>-nka.siph-</i>	<i>-nka.po-</i>	<i>-nka.molu-</i>
<i>-na</i>	<i>-na.ha-</i>	<i>-na.siph-</i>	<i>-na.po-</i>	<i>-na.molu-</i>
<i>-kka</i>	<i>-kka.ha-</i>	<i>-kka.siph-</i>	<i>-kka.po-</i>	<i>-kka.molu-</i>
<i>-ci</i>		<i>-ci.siph-</i>		<i>-ci.molu-</i>

TABLE 3
NON-MAIN CLAUSE USAGE

CONV	<i>ha-</i> ‘say’	<i>siph-</i> ‘think’	<i>po-</i> ‘see’	<i>molu-</i> ‘not know’
<i>-e/a</i> (consolidator)	<i>-na.ha-e</i>	<i>-nka.siph-e</i> <i>-na.siph-e</i> <i>-lya.siph-e</i> <i>-ta.siph-e</i>	<i>-kka.po-a</i> <i>-na.po-a</i>	<i>-ci.molu-a</i> <i>-na.molu-a</i>
<i>-ese/ase</i> (sequential)	<i>-na.ha-ese</i>	<i>-nka.siph-ese</i> <i>-na.siph-ese</i> <i>-lya.siph-ese</i> <i>-ta.siph-ese</i>	<i>-nka.po-ase</i> <i>-kka.po-ase</i>	<i>-ci.molu-ase</i> <i>-nka.molu-ase</i> <i>-kka.molu-ase</i>
<i>-ni</i> (causal)	<i>-kka.ha-ni</i> <i>-nka.ha-ni</i>	<i>-nka.siph-te-ni</i> <i>-na.siph-te-ni</i>	<i>-ta.po-ni</i>	<i>-ci.molu-ni</i> <i>-na.molu-ni</i>
<i>-key</i> (manner)		<i>-nya.siph-key</i>		
<i>-i</i> (manner)		<i>-ta.siph-i</i>		
<i>-ko</i> (coordinator)	<i>-na.ha-ko</i> <i>-kka.ha-ko</i> <i>-nka.ha-ko</i>			<i>-ci.molu-ko</i>

Tables 2 and 3 show a few notable characteristics. The original MQCC structures are evenly spread across the MQs and the verbs (apart from individual form’s strengths reflected in frequency of use), with an exception of *-ci*. The reason for the more restrictive nature of *-ci* is not immediately clear, but it may be partly due to the fact that the *-ci* in Modern Korean specializes in occurring in negative sentences, marked by either morphologically marked (by *an* ‘not’ or *mos* ‘cannot’) or lexically marked (by *molu-* ‘not know’). Its use in a non-negative context is only the MQCC usage. This means that in a grammatical paraphrasis, a participating form’s lexical or morphological characteristics may affect its distributional patterns of the whole construct.

Another characteristic is that in extension to non-main clause usage, the most frequently utilized converbs are the consolidator *-e/a* ‘and’ and the sequential *-ese/ase* ‘and then’, across all verb types. This is likely due to the fact that these converbs present an event and signals that there is something else after that (from the ‘and’ and ‘then’ meanings), which triggers evocation of diverse relationships between the events or states sequentially linked by them, e.g., causal, apprehensional, etc. In this respect, the other converbs, marking cause and manner, can be said to be too restrictive and do not leave much room for inferences, hence less diverse functions.

B. Grammaticalization Parameters

In grammaticalization research, a number of mechanisms, principles and parameters have been proposed (notably, Lehmann, 2015, 1982; Heine et al., 1991; Hopper, 1991; Bybee et al., 1994; Kuteva et al., 2019; Khammee, 2024, among others). The four parameters proposed in Kuteva et al. (2019) are desemanticization, extension, decategorialization, and erosion. In the following, we will briefly discuss each of these.

Desemanticization refers to loss in meaning content, or semantic bleaching. The major target of desemanticization is a lexical item such as nouns and verbs. MQCCs involve verbs as the major contributor of lexical meaning. It is evident that the verb meanings have been considerably bleached, to the point of classifying some uses of those verbs, e.g., *po-* ‘see’, *siph-* ‘think’, and *ha-* ‘say/do/be’ as adjectives in dictionaries. Desemanticization with *siph-* is extensive: it meant ‘think’ in historical times but now its meaning is similar to ‘be inclined to think’ (Rhee, 2021). In MQCCs, *siph-* does not have the cogitation meaning but signals that the speaker has a situationally motivated reason to think, hence, conjecture. Similarly, the verb *po-* generally means ‘see’ (which inflects), as a transitive verb, but also means ‘seem’ (which does not inflect), as an intransitive verb. Hence, the lack of perceptive action meaning led to its classification as an adjective by lexicographers. Desemanticization is observable not only with lexical forms but also with grammatical forms, i.e., MQs. The question meaning associated with the audience-blind question markers has been completely lost in MQCCs. Only the notion of indeterminacy associated with questions survived in the uncertainty meaning in MQCCs.

Extension, also known as context generalization, refers to use in new contexts. MQCCs started out as genuine quotative constructions, i.e., syntactic constructions, but their usage was extended to non-quotative contexts. Also, MQCCs were part of the main clause predicates, but their usage has been extended to subordinate clause predicates.

Decategorialization refers to loss in morphosyntactic properties characteristic of lexical or other less grammaticalized forms (Kuteva et al., 2019). A notable instance of decategorialization is observed with the verb *po-* ‘see’, which, as briefly indicated above, lost its transitive verb features of taking the experiencer and the theme as its arguments. Likewise, the verbs *siph-* ‘think’ and *ha-* ‘say, do, be’ have lost much of their categorial features (and meaning). Some of these changes occurred in the history of Korean as a general process, not restricted to MQCC, but since changes are cumulative and intertwined in mutual feeding relationships, the change that occurred in MQCCs may have contributed to the general change of those verbs.

Erosion, or phonetic reduction, refers to loss in phonetic substance. MQCCs are periphrases, involving the MQ and the verb (and historically a tense marker), and are written with inter-lexical spacing between them according to the orthographic rules. Phonological erosion of MQCCs is not visible in writing, even though erosion of grammaticalized forms, in general, is frequently observed for the agglutinating nature of Korean. Despite the conservative nature of normative writing, there is a clue suggesting erosion of the forms in MQCCs in popular writing. The interrogative marker (i.e., the final element of the complement) and the matrix verbs of locution, cognition, and perception have strong internal bondedness, and the string (along with further suffixes attached later) behaves as fully ‘unverbated’ single grammatical morphemes. Due to the increase of internal cohesion and desemanticization of the verb, they are often written without lexical spacing in popular writing. This strongly suggests that they have lost, or are losing, the autonomy of the participating forms. A more subtle type of erosion, also not observable in writing, is that since MQCCs have acquired grammatical meaning, they do not carry phonological salience (e.g., they are not stressed). Thus, MQCCs arguably have undergone some erosion, but still the level of erosion is minimal.

C. Pragmatic Operations

Grammaticalization of MQCCs involves some pragmatic operations, which may have triggered or facilitated the process, such as discourse motivation, reinterpretation, reanalysis and analogy. We now turn to a discussion of each of these.

There is no conclusive motivation for innovation of MQCCs, but considering the source structures, we can make reasonable guesses as to the motivation. Monologual question complements characterize a ‘dialogue’ between the speaking self and the thinking/hearing self (Koo & Rhee, 2019; Rhee & Koo, 2020). This type of feigned interactivity makes a text more dramatic and vivid as compared to the texts that do not employ such rhetorical devices (cf. Rhee, 2025). There are many instances of grammaticalization that resulted from strategic or feigned interactivity for dramatic effect (Rhee, 2009, 2014, 2019; Koo & Rhee, 2019; Rhee & Koo, 2020, among others).

The innovation of multiple paradigms from a syntactic construction is largely due to analogy, pragmatic inferencing, and functional reinterpretation. The MQCC functions can be said to exist in the configuration of juxtaposed clauses (note that the source construction and the grammaticalized MQCC do not show differences in surface form). Therefore, this grammaticalization involves no formal changes with observable trajectories but functional reinterpretation of existing forms. The most prominent reinterpretation is observable in syntactic upgrading briefly mentioned in V-A. The original matrix verb has lost its main verb status; and the verb in the embedded complement clause has become the main verb. This process seems to have been facilitated by the syntactic idiosyncrasy of a pro-drop language, i.e., argument omissibility. This is shown in Figure 1, in which the complement clause subject (‘he’) becomes the main clause subject (instead of the implicit ‘I’) and the complement clause predicate (‘die’) becomes the main clause predicate (instead of ‘see’).

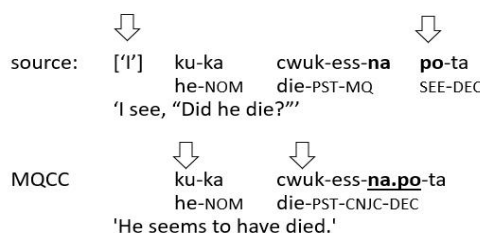


Figure 1. MQCC and Syntactic Upgrading

Another significant pragmatic operation is analogy. Describing the complex history of MQCCs is beyond our scope, but a rough diachronic development is as follows. Historical records suggest that the functions of the oldest MQCC forms, which involved MQs *-kka* and *-nka* (in their historical variant forms), may have been the model of the later MQCCs (involving the MQs *-ci* and *-na*). The earliest occurrence patterns of the MQCC involved the locution verb *ha-* 'say' (which, being a light verb, also had the meanings of 'do, be, make'), which occurred with the MQs *-ka/-ko* in Old Korean, the predecessors of *-kka* and *-nka* (cf. Ko, 2011, pp. 89-90) (note that MQ *-ko* is a moribund state in contemporary Korean). In Early Middle Korean, MQCCs additionally use the verbs of cognition and emotion, e.g., *cehu-* 'worry' (which, however, fell into disuse). This negative context seems to have contributed to the emergence of apprehensional functions (cf. Rhee & Kuteva, 2026). In Late Middle Korean, MQCCs additionally use the perception verb *po-* 'see' (15th century), cognition verbs *siph-* 'think' (16th century) and *molu-* 'not know' (17th century), etc. It is likely from this observation that the extension has been enabled by the analogy based on semantic and structural affinities between the earliest model of [MQ + 'say'] (*-ka/ko.ha-*) 'say, asking oneself' and the innovated forms with different MQs and verbs.

D. Conceptual Networks

Since MQCC functions are results of conceptual extension through inferencing and the changes are not discrete but gradient, they form a conceptual network or a semantic map (Narrog & Ito, 2007; Narrog, 2010), as shown in Figure 2.

Recapitulating the discussion in preceding sections, the core functions of MQCCs are to mark conjecture and uncertainty in the main clause. Later functions in the main clause include signaling probability, doubt, suspicion, intention, apprehension, and emphasis. When MQCCs recruited connectives (converbs), they also became periphrastic connectives marking apprehension, cause, circumstantiality, scene transfer, and topic presentation. When the MQCCs are extended to structures involving non-MQ forms, they begin to mark similarity, cause, and scene transfer. These functions are conceptually closely related, and some of them are strongly influenced by the functions of the newly recruited markers.

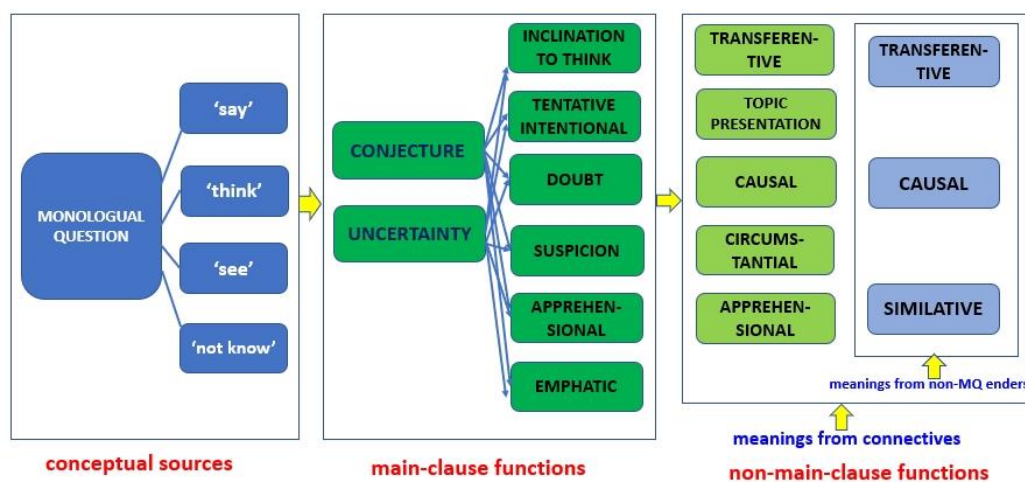


Figure 2. Functional-Conceptual Network of MQCCs

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Korean has a number of monologal question complementation constructions (MQCCs), developed from monologal question enders (*-nka*, *-kka*, *-na*, and *-ci*) and verbs of locution, cognition, and perception ('say', 'think', 'not know', and 'see'). Direct quotations of monologal questions served as the verbal complement, but soon the interrogative meanings disappeared. The indeterminacy meaning (from 'absence of knowledge', 'desire to know', 'have reason to ask', etc.) associated with monologal questions transformed into the meanings of 'conjecture' and 'uncertainty', which were the earliest functions of MQCCs.

MQCCs also developed diverse functions through the conceptual and pragmatic processes. New epistemic and emotional meanings of MQCCs include possibility, doubt, suspicion, tentative intention, apprehension, emphasis, etc. As

MQCCs became extended by allowing non-MQs and recruiting connectives, they became part of periphrastic connectives and acquired diverse meanings, often with the semantic contribution of the participating connectives, e.g., apprehension, cause, circumstantial, transferentive, topic presentation, similitive, etc.

The patterns of formal and functional extension as attested in historical data suggest that certain forerunner forms (MQ-forms *-nka* and *-kka* and the locution verb *ha-* ‘say’) served as the model of analogy based on structural and semantic affinities between the model and the later innovative forms.

APPENDIX

ABF: audience-blind form; ACC: accusative; ADD: addressee; ADN: adnominalizer; APPR: apprehensional; CIRC: circumstantial; CNJC: conjectural; COMP: complementizer; CONN: connective; CONV: converb; CSL: causal; DEC: declarative; DUB: dubitative; EMPH: emphatic; END: sentence-ender; FUT: future; GEN: genitive; HON: honorific; HUM: humilitive; INTN: intentional; MQ: monologual question marker; MQCC: monologual-question complement construction; NEG: negative; NOM: nominative; NOMZ: nominalizer; PERF: perfective; PLUP: pluperfect; PRES: present; PST: past; PURP: purposive; Q: question; SIML: similitive; SPK: speaker; SUBJ: subject; SUSP: suspicion; TAM: tense-aspect-modality; TOP: topic; TP: topic presentation; TRNS: transferentive; UNC: uncertain

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Topic Interest and Engagement in Indonesian Primary EFL Classrooms: Cognitive, Behavioural, and Motivational Links

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Abstract—This study examined the relationship between topic interest and cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement among Indonesian primary EFL learners and whether this relationship strengthens across instructional cycles. Using a five-cycle mixed-methods longitudinal design (101 learners per cycle), we combined cycle-wise Spearman correlations, repeated-measures correlations (rmcorr) to capture within-student coupling, and linear mixed-effects models with person-mean centring to test change over time. Brief observations and student/teacher interviews provided explanatory vignettes. Cycle-wise associations ranged from moderate to very strong, and rmcorr indicated large within-student coupling between interest and each engagement strand ($r_{rm} \approx .80-.88$, $p < .001$). Mixed-effects models revealed robust positive effects of interest on all outcomes, as well as significant interactions between interest and cycle, indicating that the payoff of interest increased throughout the semester. Qualitative episodes illustrated mechanisms—topical resonance, clear criteria and rehearsal, and bounded autonomy—that converted value into strategy use, participation, and persistence. Findings position topic interest as a high-leverage, classroom-proximal target for primary EFL; curating resonant themes, making progress visible and manageable, and embedding minor choice points are low-cost moves that make engagement more likely and more durable over a semester.

Index Terms—topic interest, primary EFL learner engagement, mixed-methods, repeated-measures correlation, linear mixed-effects models

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I. INTRODUCTION

In primary English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classrooms, engagement depends not only on exposure and practice but also on whether the lesson content connects with what pupils find meaningful. Topic interest—how engaging, relevant, or enjoyable content appears—can catalyse attention, curiosity, and effort in ways that routine coverage often does not (Renninger & Hidi, 2016; Wahyuni et al., 2025a). In Indonesia, primary EFL is commonly delivered as “muatan lokal” (local content) using standard syllabi and teacher-assembled materials. While this arrangement affords flexibility, it also places a heavy burden of curation that can misalign topics with children’s lived interests (Zein, 2017a). Addressing topic interest is therefore a pragmatic lever: it can be shaped within existing curricular structures and daily routines, with the potential to energise participation and sustain the engagement that schools aim to cultivate (Wahyuni et al., 2025b, 2025c).

This study is grounded in three complementary strands of research. *First*, interest development conceptualises interest as a growing relation between a person and content, progressing from triggered and maintained situational interest to emerging and well-developed individual interest (Renninger & Hidi, 2016). As interest develops, learners devote more attention, connect new material to prior knowledge, and persist through difficulty. *Second*, student engagement research—especially the tripartite model of Fredricks et al. (2004)—distinguishes cognitive, behavioural, and affective/motivational dimensions; later syntheses show that engagement is malleable and responsive to task design, relevance cues, and classroom climate (Fredricks et al., 2016). Treating topic interest as a proximal antecedent explains how lesson content can “switch on” cognitive strategies, visible participation, and persistence, particularly for young learners. *Third*, contemporary L2 motivation accounts highlight future-oriented selves and sustained effort; meaningful, self-concordant tasks maintain engagement over time, linking classroom episodes to longer-term trajectories (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022).

Despite this theoretical clarity, several issues persist in Indonesian primary EFL. Empirically, topic interest is often subsumed under broader motivation, obscuring its distinctive contribution as an antecedent to cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement (Wahyuni et al., 2025a, 2025c). Conceptually, its operation at the level of everyday lesson content remains under-specified, even though small choices about themes, examples, and task formats may cumulatively shape climates of curiosity and participation (Fredricks et al., 2016; Renninger & Hidi, 2016). Practically, teachers and school leaders need actionable levers that are compatible with existing curricula; yet, research is rarely translated into concrete, topic-level decisions about materials, scaffolding, and autonomy-supportive routines that are feasible in busy classrooms (Zein, 2017a, 2017b). These gaps motivate a focused analysis that centres topic interest as a malleable, classroom-proximal driver of engagement in Indonesian primary EFL.

The present study makes four contributions. *First*, it foregrounds topic interest—rather than treating it as background context—clarifying its status as an antecedent to cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement (Renninger & Hidi, 2022). *Second*, it adopts a classroom-embedded, developmental lens, recognising that interest and engagement unfold across the rhythms of a school term and can be shaped by topic selection, task design, and autonomy supports appropriate to young learners. *Third*, it bridges theory and practice by translating interest–engagement principles into decisions that teachers can enact—curating resonant topics, layering scaffolds, and inviting bounded autonomy (Fredricks et al., 2016). *Fourth*, it situates these micro-level choices within contemporary L2 motivation accounts that emphasise persistence and self-relevance, linking day-to-day design with broader motivational trajectories (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022).

Guided by this background and framing, the study asks: (1) How is topic interest related to cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement in Indonesian primary EFL classrooms? (2) How do these relations change across instructional cycles over a semester as topics and supports evolve? (3) How do routine classroom practices—especially topic selection, scaffolding, and autonomy support—activate and sustain topic interest and engagement? Together, these questions aim to specify a coherent, practical pathway from topic choices, through classroom processes, to engagement dynamics that is theoretically grounded yet workable within existing policy and curricular constraints.

A. Leveraging Topic Interest in Primary EFL Classrooms

Topic interest—the value learners attach to lesson content—acts as a lever for mobilising engagement in primary EFL. The four-phase model of interest development explains how situational interest, triggered and maintained across short episodes, can develop into emerging and well-developed individual interests through repeated meaningful encounters, marked by attention, persistence, and self-initiated strategy use (Renninger & Hidi, 2016). Appealing topics provide an initial motivational boost, but the spark fades unless instruction re-signals their value, making topic choice a key design variable. In CLIL, subject matter that matters to learners supports tolerance of higher linguistic load, extended task engagement, and extra effort to express ideas (Coyle et al., 2010). Micro-studies show that curiosity scaffolds—co-authored prompts, picture sequences, and branching choices—help sustain attention as complexity rises (Ainley, 2012; Ainley & Hidi, 2014). Value raises the payoff of effort and tolerance for ambiguity, whereas novelty without links to children’s concerns yields only brief arousal.

Motivational frameworks clarify the rationale behind. Self-determination theory predicts that contexts that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness sustain intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2018). Interest-aligned topics afford meaningful choice (autonomy), optimally challenging work (competence), and socially recognised concerns

(relatedness). Small decisions—between two themes, response modes, or project foci—are sufficient for ownership while preserving coherence (Renninger & Hidi, 2016). Contemporary L2 motivation syntheses argue that self-concordant tasks maintain effort over a school term (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022; Hiver et al., 2021). Classroom emotion research suggests that foreign language enjoyment increases when teaching is supportive and the content is meaningful, while anxiety is mitigated (Dewaele et al., 2023a, 2023b; Wahyuni et al., 2025c). Read together, topic interest is a reliable upstream condition for affective and cognitive engagement.

The Indonesian context heightens salience. With English positioned as local content, instruction often relies on teacher-assembled materials and uneven guidance (Zein, 2017a, 2017b), which risks misalignment between mandated content and children's interests. Recent Indonesian work treats situational interest as a feasible entry point within constraints, drawing on local culture and child-centred experiences to make value visible (Wahyuni & Tan, 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2025a, 2025b). Interest-forward curation raises participation and opens space for strategy modelling and metalinguistic noticing.

Methodologically, operationalisations sometimes blur the distinction between value, enjoyment, and novelty; rely on single-item proxies; or covary with interactional changes, complicating attribution. Many demonstrations are short-cycle. These issues motivate designs that keep topic interest analytically distinct, track relations across lessons, and attend to co-varying features. The stance here is to treat topic selection as its own design variable and examine how interest relates to affective/motivational and cognitive engagement over cycles.

Finally, interest is not “free.” Under tight constraints, teachers may lack readily available materials; yet, low-cost levers—such as learner-contributed artefacts, locally sourced images, and brief two-option choice architectures—can make autonomy and value perceptible, especially when paired with tasks that require explanation, inference, or perspective-taking. The defensible position is not that interest cures all, but that it is a high-leverage starting point for orchestrating the emotion–cognition conditions under which primary learners invest effort.

In sum, the literature justifies centring topic interest as a malleable, near-task antecedent to engagement and identifies conditions for durability: re-signalled value, miniature genuine choices, and thinking-visible tasks—a synthesis consistent with theory (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022; Renninger & Hidi, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2018) and evidence from international and Indonesian settings (e.g., Ainley, 2012; Dewaele et al., 2023a, 2023b; Wahyuni et al., 2025a, 2025c; Zein, 2017a).

B. Cognitive-Affective Engagement in Primary EFL Learning

Engagement explains why some lessons elicit sustained effort while others fade. The tripartite account distinguishes behavioural, affective/motivational, and cognitive strands (Fredricks et al., 2004), with later syntheses refining definitions and emphasising malleability to design and climate (Fredricks et al., 2016). In primary EFL, the closest companions to topic interest are the affective/motivational and cognitive strands, which together determine whether learners feel inclined to invest and whether they can invest effort strategically.

On the cognitive side, engagement entails sustained attention, strategy use, goal monitoring, and metacognition. Across primary L2 contexts, tasks that require explanation, inference, and perspective-taking prompt deeper processing than recognition-level activities, especially when learners transform input into personally meaningful output (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). Formative assessment—characterised by clear criteria, success exemplars, and timely, specific feedback—raises persistence and calibrates next steps (Andrade & Heritage, 2017). These routines stick more readily when topics are valued; perceived meaning buffers risk-taking during strategy deployment (Renninger & Hidi, 2016). Interest, then, does more than lift mood: it shifts the cost–benefit calculus of investing cognitive resources.

On the affective/motivational side, classroom emotion research identifies foreign language enjoyment as a robust correlate of participation and persistence, shaped by teacher support, task design, and content meaningfulness (Dewaele & Li, 2021). Recent modelling suggests enjoyment, boredom, and anxiety coexist dynamically; activities that foreground meaning and provide supportive challenge buoy enjoyment and mute boredom (Dewaele et al., 2023a). Control-value theory explains why activating positive emotions is more likely when learners perceive value (in terms of interest/relevance) and control (as a manageable challenge with clear goals); the inverse pattern fosters withdrawal (Pekrun, 2024). Through this lens, topic interest functions as a value signal that co-generates adaptive emotion and readies cognitive systems for effortful work.

Because engagement intertwines emotion and cognition, the choice of measurement matters. Studies often combine affective and motivational indicators into composites, blending interest with enjoyment or willingness to participate, thereby obscuring the specific role of interest. Post-task self-reports in primary classrooms are sensitive to novelty and social desirability; observation rubrics and teacher ratings are underused, and factor structures are rarely revalidated for younger learners in new cultural contexts. A defensible strategy is to keep interest analytically distinct, triangulate (using questionnaires, observations, or interviews), and employ repeated measures across sequences—an approach adopted in this study. Design work shows how cognition and affect can be co-engineered: story-based tasks with perspective-taking ask children to reason about intentions while expressing ideas in the L2; inquiry tasks with public displays invite explanation and justification; and reflective closures prompt pupils to name what they learned and how it felt (Gkonou et al., 2016; Pinter, 2017), creating control–value experiences that invite engagement and success.

Autonomy support cuts across both strands. Age-appropriate choices—between two topic options targeting the same forms, among product formats, or in grouping—reliably raise perceived value and ownership and are associated with

strategic effort (Fredricks et al., 2016; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). For novices, autonomy works best as guided autonomy: bounded options preserve curricular coherence and cognitive clarity; unconstrained choice can inflate uncertainty and erode control. Here, topic interest is the hinge—choice around content is the most straightforward route to value for children and amplifies the payoff of feedback and metacognitive routines.

Recent syntheses in language education, therefore, treat engagement as dynamic and co-regulated, responsive to design (Hiver et al., 2021), and situated within longer-arc motivational currents (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022). Within this framework, the role of topic interest is not trivial or merely additive; it primes affective readiness and cognitive willingness. Accordingly, this review positions topic interest as an upstream design decision that determines whether the rest of the engagement architecture can function as intended in primary EFL.

C. Topic Interest and Engagement—An Integrative View

The literature supports a theory of action for primary EFL in which topic interest acts as a near-task antecedent: when teaching braids value, control, and thinking and re-signals value over time, interest energises affective/motivational and cognitive engagement. Short elicitation—such as picture talks, learner artefacts, and quick polls—helps teachers adapt texts and tasks that already matter to pupils. CLIL work shows that when content is meaningful, learners tolerate a higher linguistic load, allowing teachers to model strategies and prompt metacognitive reflection (Coyle et al., 2010). The challenge is sustainability: value must be refreshed through rotating sub-themes, varied stimuli, and visible learner contribution; one-off “fun” topics rarely endure (Ainley & Hidi, 2014; Renninger & Hidi, 2016).

Designs that pair reasoning with emotionally resonant artefacts are especially productive in the primary years. Stories, songs, and local issues operate not only as hooks but also as vehicles for explanation, inference, and perspective-taking, cultivating the cognitive habits teachers seek (Darmawati et al., 2020; Sakti et al., 2024). Control–value theory clarifies the mechanism: when pupils see why an activity matters and how it is manageable, emotions such as enjoyment and curiosity are activated, supporting strategic effort (Pekrun, 2024). Feedback and reflective closures that make criteria explicit help children link what they did with how it felt, reinforcing value and perceived control (Andrade & Heritage, 2017; Pinter, 2017).

Within this architecture, autonomy support is bounded and purposeful. Limited options—such as two topics serving the same language functions, alternative response modes, or negotiated grouping—signal respect for preferences without overcomplicating planning and are associated with greater enjoyment, ownership, and effort (Dewaele et al., 2023a, 2023b; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). In Indonesia, where teachers assemble materials under tight planning time, bounded choice offers a low-cost route to visible autonomy while preserving coherence (Zein, 2016). Because novelty, teacher immediacy, peer relations, and reading load also shape engagement, robust designs separate topical value from novelty through recurring routines with rotating themes and input pitched just above the independent level.

The Indonesian context sharpens the case. With English taught as local content, teachers are responsible for curriculum design. Interest-forward planning is a lever that does not require policy reform: locally grounded topics, combined with familiar activity formats (picture talk, role-play, and project work), can sustain situational interest as linguistic demands increase. Recent Indonesian studies have shown that these designs are feasible and effective (Sakti et al., 2024; Wahyuni et al., 2025a). Overall, the evidence supports positioning topic interest as a malleable, classroom-proximal driver of affective/motivational and cognitive engagement, theoretically grounded (Dörnyei & Henry, 2022; Pekrun, 2024; Renninger & Hidi, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2018) and aligned with Indonesian schooling (Zein, 2017a, 2017b). Accordingly, this study traces how topic interest relates to engagement across instructional cycles in ordinary classrooms.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods, classroom-embedded longitudinal correlational design to examine links between topic interest (TIE) and engagement—cognitive (CEG), behavioural (BEG), and motivational (MOT)—across one semester in Indonesian primary EFL classrooms. Teaching followed the regular timetable and curriculum (no experimental treatment). Data were collected over five instructional cycles (~4–5 weeks apart), each tied to a teacher-planned topic, with qualitative observations and interviews complementing the measures.

A. Participants and Setting

The study took place in a Cambridge Curriculum International school with 101 Grade 5 pupils (ages 10–11; ~50% girls) and four English teachers. All pupils assented, parents and teachers provided consent, and pseudonyms were used to protect confidentiality (see Ethics).

B. Measures

The Topic Interest and Engagement Questionnaire (TIEQ) is a 20-item Likert-type instrument for young EFL learners, developed from interest development theory (Renninger & Hidi, 2016), self-determination theory (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), and contemporary frameworks of student engagement. Items were adapted from a previously validated instrument with established construct validity and reliability (Wahyuni et al., 2025b). In the present sample, all subscales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.80$).

TIEQ comprises four 5-item subscales: Topic Interest and Enjoyment (TIE; situational value/enjoyment), Cognitive Engagement (CEG; curiosity, strategy use, effortful processing), Behavioral Engagement (BEG; participation, attention, visible effort), and Motivation for Future Learning (MOT; intention to keep exploring the topic, treated as motivational engagement rather than achievement). Items used age-appropriate wording (checked against the Oxford 5000) and were rated on a five-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree), supported by emoji anchors (🙄–😞–😏–😁–😄). Example items include “I like learning about this topic” (TIE1), “I ask questions because I want to understand better” (CEG3), “I try my best when doing tasks on this topic” (BEG3), and “Learning about this topic will benefit me in the future” (MOT5). Subscale scores were computed as item means, with higher scores indicating higher topic-specific interest, cognitive engagement, behavioural engagement, and motivation for future learning. The instrument was administered at the end of each cycle’s focal lesson to capture topic-specific responses.

C. Data Collection and Management

Each instructional cycle centred on a co-planned, locally relevant topic and included one ~75-minute focal lesson. During these lessons, trained observers conducted 10–15-minute sweeps of the whole class using a brief, structured protocol to record on-task behaviour, participation, help-seeking, strategy talk, visible curiosity, and key teacher moves (e.g., prompts, feedback). Topical anchors (e.g., foods, local places) were noted to support later interpretation.

At the end of each focal lesson, all students completed the TIEQ (~10–12 minutes). After selecting lessons across cycles 2–5 and 7–10, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive subsample of pupils spanning observed engagement levels. Interviews probed perceived topic value, moments of curiosity, and reasons for participating or holding back. Sessions were audio-recorded in English or Indonesian (as appropriate) and summarised immediately. Observation sheets and interview notes were anonymised and indexed by cycle.

D. Data Analysis

TIEQ responses were range-checked; item missingness $\leq 10\%$ was handled via ordinal multiple imputation ($m = 5$, MAR); otherwise, complete-case analysis was used. Subscale scores were computed as item means (minimum three items required).

Quantitatively, we first described mean levels of topic interest and engagement by cycle, then estimated cycle-specific Spearman correlations between TIE and each engagement strand (CEG, BEG, MOT) to provide simple snapshots of their association over time. Because data were ordinal and repeated within students, primary associations were estimated using repeated-measures correlations (rmcorr), which aggregate within-person covariation across cycles. To examine whether the interest–engagement link strengthened across the semester, we fitted linear mixed-effects models of the form Outcome (CEG/BEG/MOT) $\sim$ TIE (person-mean centred) + Cycle (1–5) + TIE $\times$ Cycle, with random intercepts for students (and class where identifiable). Robustness checks were repeated on these models using imputed and complete-case datasets, and ordinal models were fitted as a sensitivity test. Observation indicators were treated as auxiliary correlates rather than covariates to avoid over-control.

Qualitatively, observation and interview excerpts were coded for value signals (e.g., topical resonance, choice moments) and engagement evidence (e.g., visible curiosity, persistence). A joint display aligned these qualitative patterns with the quantitative trajectories by cycle, supporting a convergent mixed-methods interpretation.

E. Ethics and Approvals

School permission and informed consent/assent were obtained. Participation was voluntary (with withdrawal permitted at any time), no grade-linked incentives were offered, data were de-identified with code keys stored securely, and procedures complied with the institution’s (BRIN - Indonesia) guidelines for minimal-risk classroom research with minor participants.

III. RESULT

Across five waves ($N = 101$ per cycle), we described scale ranges and trends, examined cycle-wise correlations, estimated within-student coupling via repeated-measures correlations, and fit mixed-effects models to test and visualise whether the interest–engagement link strengthened over time.

A. Descriptive Profile and Cycle-Wise Associations

Across the five instructional cycles, mean scores on topic interest (TIE) and all three engagement strands (CEG, BEG, MOT) were high at the outset ($M_s \approx 4.5$ – 4.8 on the 1–5 scale) and declined modestly toward the end of term ($M_s \approx 3.7$ – 3.9 by Cycle 5), indicating generally positive but slightly softening responses (Table 1). Cycle-wise Spearman correlations showed that interest and engagement increasingly moved together over time: for CEG, ρ rose from .51 at Cycle 1 to .93 at Cycle 5; for BEG, from .40 to .87; and for MOT, from .59 to .79 (all $p < .001$). These patterns suggest a progressively stronger coupling between topic-specific interest and how students think, behave, and plan for future learning in this course.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (M, SD) BY SUBSCALE AND CYCLE

Cycle	N	TIE (M)	TIE (SD)	CEG (M)	CEG (SD)	BEG (M)	BEG (SD)	MOT (M)	MOT (SD)
1	101.0	4.79	0.25	4.58	0.31	4.58	0.43	4.74	0.25
2	101.0	4.69	0.31	4.52	0.4	4.49	0.42	4.59	0.35
3	101.0	4.21	0.45	4.06	0.44	4.23	0.38	4.16	0.45
4	101.0	3.92	0.64	3.72	0.55	3.8	0.53	3.80	0.5
5	101.0	3.78	0.66	3.74	0.67	3.83	0.62	3.71	0.58

B. Within-Student Coupling Across the Semester

The repeated-measures correlation (rmcorr) compacts all waves to estimate the within-student association. When a student reported higher-than-usual interest in a given cycle, that cycle also tended to show higher engagement relative to their own average: TIE–CEG $r_{rm} = .88$, 95% CI [.86, .90]; TIE–BEG $r_{rm} = .80$, 95% CI [.76, .83]; TIE–MOT $r_{rm} = .83$, 95% CI [.79, .86]; all $p < .001$, based on 505 observations from 101 students across five cycles. The rmcorr panels visually depict this idea by centring each student’s scores and overlaying per-student fits that share a common slope (Figure 1).

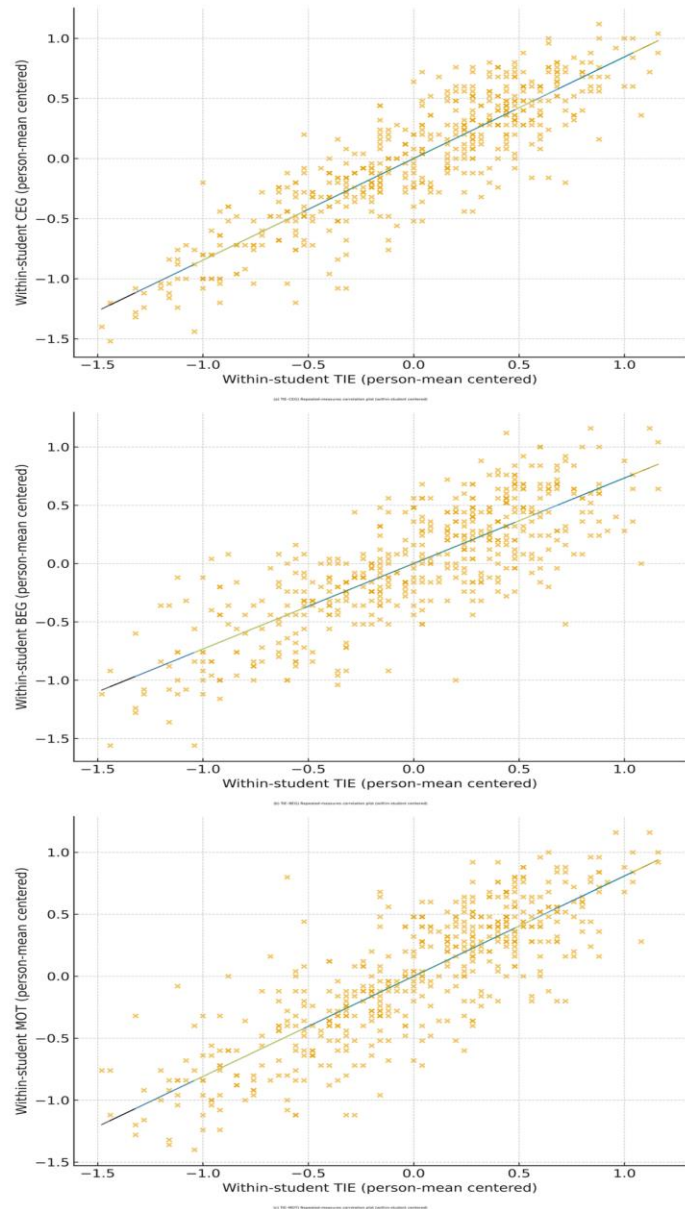


Figure 1. Repeated-Measures Correlation Plots (Panels: TIE–CEG, TIE–BEG, TIE–MOT)

C. Change in the Interest–Engagement Link Across Cycles

Linear mixed-effects models predicted each engagement strand from person-mean-centred topic interest (TIE), cycle (1–5), and their interaction, with random intercepts for students. Across outcomes, cycles in which a student reported higher-than-usual interest were also cycles with higher-than-usual engagement: TIE positively predicted cognitive ($\beta = 0.56$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < .001$), behavioural ($\beta = 0.31$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .002$), and motivational engagement ($\beta = 0.31$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < .001$). Small negative main effects of the cycle indicated that mean engagement tended to soften slightly over the semester.

Crucially, the $TIE \times \text{cycle}$ interaction was positive for all three outcomes (CEG: $\beta = 0.07$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .002$; BEG: $\beta = 0.10$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$; MOT: $\beta = 0.08$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the payoff of interest increased as the program unfolded. As shown in Figure 2, predicted slopes of engagement on TIE are relatively shallow at Cycle 1 but progressively steeper by Cycle 5, meaning that the same one-point increase in topic interest yields larger gains in cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement later in the semester than earlier. Intraclass correlations ($ICC = .27-.46$) indicated that a substantial proportion of variance remained within students over time, aligning with the study's focus on within-person change.

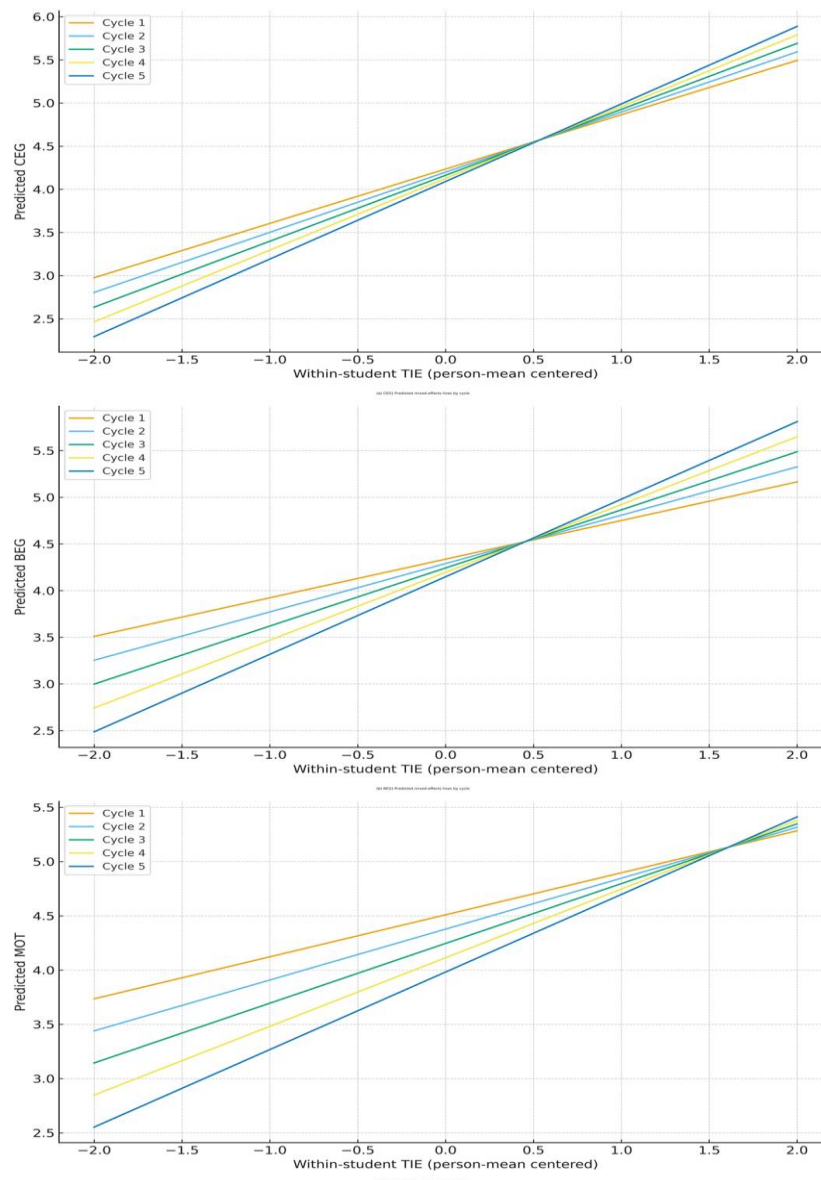


Figure 2. Predicted Mixed-Effects (LME) Lines by Cycle for Cognitive, Behavioural, and Motivational Engagement (CEG, BEG, MOT) as a Function of Person-Mean-Centred Topic Interest (TIE); Lines Show Fixed-Effect Predictions From the Linear Mixed-Effects Models

D. Robustness Checks

Sensitivity analyses compared (a) linear mixed-effects models estimated on complete cases, (b) the same models with imputed data, and (c) pooled proportional-odds (ordinal) models using rounded 1–5 categories for each outcome.

Across all specifications and engagement strands, topic interest (TIE) remained a positive predictor, and the $TIE \times \text{cycle}$ interaction stayed positive and statistically significant, indicating a strengthening interest–engagement link over time. Complete-case and imputed LME estimates were essentially identical, reflecting near-zero missingness across cycles. Ordinal models yielded convergent patterns with slightly attenuated but still robust effects. These checks suggest that the main findings are not sensitive to missing-data handling or to treating the Likert responses as approximately continuous.

Across descriptive trends, cycle-wise snapshots, within-student correlations, and mixed-effects estimates, a consistent pattern emerges: topic interest is strongly and positively associated with cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement, and the strength of this association grows over cycles as classroom work organises around evolving topics and supports. This provides a quantitative basis for the qualitative patterns—in topic selection, scaffolding, and bounded autonomy—that are elaborated in the subsequent section.

E. Interviews and Observations

Classroom observations and brief, targeted interviews were used to illuminate how topic interest surfaced in day-to-day lessons and how it related to cognitive, behavioural, and affective/motivational engagement among primary EFL learners.

In Week 2, a unit on “My Favourite Food”—selected after a short class poll—prompted visibly higher behavioural and affective engagement. Multiple students volunteered during pair-to-whole speaking; turn-taking accelerated without teacher prompting. Hanif (10) brought a drawing from home and expanded beyond sentence frames to describe ingredients and family routines. Asked what made the lesson enjoyable, he said, “My mom often bakes cookies and cakes, and we talked about it in the lesson today. It was fun!” The episode showed affective resonance (enjoyment, pride) together with behavioural initiative (unprompted contribution) and early signs of cognitive elaboration as he connected vocabulary to everyday practices.

Teacher accounts echoed this pattern. Ms Dian noted that traditional foods generated “more active than usual” participation, including show-and-tell artefacts students sourced at home. She contrasted this with a less familiar topic, such as global warming, where contributions slowed unless background knowledge or interest in science was present. Observational field notes from her lesson recorded denser peer-to-peer questions and more sustained on-task time when topics were familiar and concrete, suggesting that recognition and relevance lowered entry costs for participation and supported strategic talk (e.g., asking for clarification, expanding on a peer’s example).

A Week 4 lesson on “Our Carbon Footprint” initially showed weaker engagement, as two of the five focal students were distractible during small-group writing. When the teacher reframed the task through local experience—inviting examples from home and neighbourhood—participation recovered. Hana (11) linked the theme to a community clean-up with her mother and later reflected, “I liked writing about my experience helping the community... I like to remember when learning about our carbon footprint at school and how much our community project actually helps save our earth.” This pivot illustrates how value cues anchored in lived experience can convert an abstract theme into affectively meaningful work and re-engage cognitive effort (planning and revising a short text).

The highest observed engagement occurred in Week 5 during a student-driven mini-project with bounded choice over presentation topics. One student selected his pet cat, integrating teacher-provided vocabulary with hand-drawn visuals to create a personalised representation. Peers spontaneously asked follow-up questions, and several students stayed after class to refine their posters. The classroom teacher commented, “This was the most focused I have seen them all semester.” In field notes, this lesson concentrated on multiple indicators: behavioural persistence (time on task beyond the bell), cognitive investment (organising information, monitoring language accuracy), and motivational energy (visible enthusiasm, peer encouragement). The choice structure appeared to amplify the payoff of interest—once students owned a topic, they invested more effort in planning, practising, and presenting.

Across classrooms and weeks, three patterns were consistent: 1) topical resonance (food, pets, neighbourhood routines) boosted participation and enjoyment, especially at openings and whole-class sharing; 2) clarifying scaffolds (brief exemplars, checklists, rehearsal) converted interest into planning, elaboration, and self-monitoring rather than fleeting enthusiasm; and 3) bounded autonomy (choosing subtopics or artefacts within a shared theme) increased ownership and persistence, with students extending work time and offering deeper explanations.

These qualitative patterns align with the quantitative picture reported above: when topic interest is surfaced through resonance, structured supports, and bounded choice, engagement rises not only in level but in quality—from volunteered turns to sustained strategy use. The vignettes illustrate how interest cues were enacted moment by moment, complementing the observed strengthening of interest–engagement coupling over the five cycles.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationship between topic interest (TIE) and cognitive (CEG), behavioural (BEG), and motivational (MOT) engagement in Indonesian primary EFL classrooms, and whether this relationship strengthens over the course of a semester. Across analyses, a consistent picture emerged. Cycle-wise Spearman coefficients increased from moderate to powerful magnitudes, repeated-measures correlations (rmcorr) indicated large within-student coupling, and mixed-effects models showed positive TIE main effects together with positive $TIE \times \text{Cycle}$ interactions, implying

that the payoff of interest rises over time (see Table 1; Figures 1–2). Qualitative episodes—familiar themes like ‘My Favourite Food,’ a reframed Carbon Footprint lesson, and bounded-choice mini-projects—showed how topical resonance, clear criteria, and rehearsal, along with small but meaningful choices, channel interest into strategic effort, participation, and persistence. These findings accord with accounts of interest development in which value cues trigger and maintain interest (Renninger & Hidi, 2016), multi-component views of engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004, 2016), L2 motivation research on ownership and vision (Dörnyei et al., 2015), and control–value perspectives linking perceived control and value to activating emotions (Pekrun, 2024) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (Dewaele et al., 2023b). In young-learner EFL contexts, the fit between topic and lived experience is a well-established catalyst of participation (Pinter, 2017; Zein, 2017a). The present data quantify the evolving power of this catalyst over the course of a semester.

Focusing first on the relationship between interest and each engagement strand, the evidence shows that when the same learner reports higher-than-usual interest, the cycle tends to exhibit higher engagement across cognitive, behavioural, and motivational dimensions (Figure 1). This within-student pattern is significant because it reduces the likelihood that results are driven by stable dispositional differences (e.g., trait enthusiasm) and instead indicates a process: interest fluctuates with topic and task design, and engagement fluctuates accordingly. In classroom terms, familiar, concrete themes accelerated volunteered turns and joyful talk (affective/motivational engagement), scaffolding that made aims and criteria visible routed energy into elaboration and monitoring (cognitive engagement), and brief feedback loops consolidated time on task and peer follow-ups (behavioural engagement). The sequence—value → positive emotion → strategy and participation—aligns with interest development (Renninger & Hidi, 2016) and control–value theory (Pekrun, 2024) and with classroom work showing that clarity and progress markers support strategic effort (Andrade & Heritage, 2017). For young-learner EFL specifically, centring content in children’s lived worlds has long been recommended (Philp & Duchesne, 2016); the present estimates quantify its continuing role in routine lessons.

Turning to how the relation develops across cycles, mean scores on some subscales softened toward the term’s end (Table 1)—a familiar seasonal drift in primary classrooms—yet the relationship between interest and engagement intensified. Linear mixed-effects models with person-mean centring yielded robust positive TIE effects and positive TIE × Cycle interactions for all outcomes, and predicted lines steepened from early to late cycles (Figure 2). Thus, an equivalent increment in within-student interest buys more engagement later than earlier. The trajectory is coherent with interest-development theory: repeated value signals sustain situational interest and render its cognitive consequences more reliable (Renninger & Hidi, 2016). It also fits control–value reasoning, whereby clarity and manageability amplify activating emotions that facilitate strategy use (Andrade & Heritage, 2017; Pekrun, 2024). Observationally, once a stable “task grammar” (brief model → guided practice → share → reflect) is internalised, cognitive friction drops; value cues translate more efficiently into behavioural persistence and deepening explanations. Bounded autonomy further amplifies ownership without fragmenting instruction, echoing L2 motivation frameworks that link self-concordant choices to sustained engagement (Dörnyei et al., 2015).

Finally, the practices that surfaced and sustained interest in ordinary lessons matched what the models captured. Topics anchored in children’s worlds (foodways, pets, neighbourhood routines) reliably lowered participation thresholds and lifted enjoyment and willingness to try (Dewaele et al., 2023a; Renninger & Hidi, 2016; Zein, 2017b). Scaffolding that made goals feel manageable—utilising visible criteria, mini-exemplars, brief rehearsal, and timely feedback—converted value into cognitive work and steadier behavioural engagement (Andrade & Heritage, 2017; Pekrun, 2024). Small, coherent choices within a shared format increased ownership and persistence without compromising coherence (Dörnyei et al., 2015). As these moves co-occurred more predictably across weeks, the quantitative models captured a tightening interest–engagement coupling, while the vignettes provided the classroom texture of that shift (Figures 1 and 2). The result is a process-sensitive account of engagement in young-learner EFL that is rooted in classroom-proximal design, rather than one-off novelty (Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Zein, 2017a), and is consistent with contemporary views that teacher mediation and value-focused design are central to sustained participation.

In synthesis, three contributions follow. *First*, repeated-measures evidence demonstrates that interest is a tractable, within-student driver of cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement—an effect visible in ordinary primary EFL lessons (Fredricks et al., 2016; Renninger & Hidi, 2016). *Second*, the marginal impact of interest strengthens as routines stabilise and choice is bounded and purposeful (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). *Third*, pairing rmcrr and LME with targeted vignettes yields a process-sensitive account that moves beyond between-student averages (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Practically, curating resonant topics, making progress visible and manageable, and embedding minor choice points are low-cost moves that increase the likelihood and durability of engagement over a semester (Pekrun, 2024; Zein, 2017b).

V. CONCLUSION

Three conclusions emerge. *First*, topic interest and engagement were positively related at every cycle and strongly coupled within students: when a learner reported higher-than-usual interest, that cycle typically showed higher cognitive, behavioural, and motivational engagement. *Second*, the payoff of interest increased over time: mixed-effects models

indicated that the same increment in within-student interest produced larger gains in engagement in later cycles, suggesting that stable routines and clear expectations help convert perceived value into sustained effort. *Third*, classroom vignettes illustrated the mechanism in everyday practice: topical resonance made activities meaningful, scaffolding rendered goals manageable, and bounded autonomy lifted ownership—together making engagement more likely and more durable.

The practical contribution is straightforward. To strengthen engagement across a semester, teachers can curate themes connected to children's lives; make progress visible and manageable through brief modelling, explicit criteria, rehearsal, and concise feedback; and embed small but genuine choice points within shared task formats. These moves require minimal resources, fit typical curricula, and appear to gain impact as cycles unfold.

The study has several limitations. The single-site, single-grade study employed Likert measures with high means; sensitivity checks supported the claims, although models that account for ordinal structure with random effects would extend the analysis to provide further insights. Mixed-effects fits sometimes showed near-zero random-intercept variance after person-mean centring, so random-effect inferences warrant caution, even as fixed-effect results were stable. The qualitative corpus was intentionally compact and explanatory, designed to illuminate mechanisms rather than achieve thematic saturation.

Future studies are recommended. Replicate across schools and grades; use designs that vary in topical resonance, scaffolding, and autonomy to estimate separate and interactive effects; and develop lightweight tools (topic polling, checklist scaffolds, and bounded-choice templates) to operationalise these levers and track engagement trajectories.

In summary, aligning classroom work with what matters to children—and structuring it so that goals are clear, progress is visible, and choices are purposeful—makes engagement more likely and more durable throughout the semester.

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Beyond Traditional Teaching: A Systematic Review of Research on the Role of Technology in Teaching English Language Skills for Saudi University Students

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Abstract—This systematic review analyses the influence of technology on the teaching of English language skills to Saudi university students, emphasizing digital technologies, pedagogical frameworks, contextual variables, and research quality. Using PRISMA guidelines, 17 empirical research published between 2021 and 2025 were examined. The results show that Learning Management Systems (like Blackboard), mobile-assisted language learning tools (like WhatsApp), multimedia resources, and new artificial intelligence (AI) applications like automatic writing evaluation systems are all being used by the language teachers. Technology integration yielded primarily advantageous results, particularly in enhancing speaking, reading, and writing skills; nevertheless, grammar and pronunciation were insufficiently examined. The review emphasizes that the efficacy of technology is significantly influenced by institutional infrastructure, the digital proficiency of instructors, and access to specialized professional development. In terms of approach, the majority of studies utilized mixed-methods and perception-based designs, exhibiting a scarcity of experimental and longitudinal research. There were substantial gaps found in skill-specific methods, AI integration beyond writing, and rigorous outcome measurement. The study signifies that integrating technology-enhanced EFL instruction with evidence-based instructional methods and continuous institutional support is vital for attaining measurable language gains and supporting Saudi Vision 2030's goals of digital transformation and human capital development.

Index Terms—EFL teaching, digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), English language skills, systematic review

I. INTRODUCTION

The significance of English language instruction in Saudi universities is paramount. As the global landscape continues to evolve, English has emerged as a dominant lingua franca in business, science, and technology (Mehridinovna, 2025; Hasanova & Abdullayeva, 2025; Al-Seghayer, 2023; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016). For students in Saudi Arabia, mastery of English is essential for academic achievement and improving employability in a competitive labor market (Al-Amri & Awaji, 2023; Melibari, 2025). In light of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 plan, which seeks to diversify the economy and enhance diverse areas such as tourism and technology, the demand for English-speaking experts is anticipated to increase (Banafi, 2025). Consequently, providing pupils with robust English language proficiency can greatly enhance their engagement in international discourse and commerce, fostering both personal and national growth (Ndiaye et al., 2024; Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023; Althobaiti, 2025; Ismail & Namaziandost, 2025). Additionally, training in the English language acts as a way to gain access to a vast array of academic materials and research (Tulasi et al., 2025). Students who are able to grasp the language are able to engage with modern research and advancements in their particular sectors, which allows them to enhance both their academic knowledge and their practical skills (Harerimana et al., 2024). Not only do these exchanges improve the experiences of individual students, but they also contribute to the overall improvement of the educational system within the Kingdom. Singh et al. (2022) underscored the essential function of education and training in promoting economic growth in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Saudi Vision 2030. Additionally, the development of English language programs in Saudi colleges helps to promote cultural interchange and understanding among a variety of different communities (Aldawood & Almeshari, 2019). Not only does this exposure enhance the quality of the educational experience, but it also helps pupils develop a sense of awareness and responsibility toward the world. Through this experience, they gain an appreciation for diversity and acquire a broader worldview, both of which are vital in the interconnected society of today (Al-Wossabi, 2016). In light of this, the role of English language teaching in Saudi universities extends beyond the simple acquisition of a language; rather, it is a means of preparing students to thrive in a global environment that is both diverse and dynamic.

In order to improve the efficiency of English language instruction, educational institutions have the opportunity to investigate novel pedagogical approaches, which include the use of technology and interactive methods that are designed to accommodate a variety of learning styles (Alruwaili, 2024). It is essential for educational institutions to evaluate and modify their course offerings in order to cater to the requirements of their students as educational practices continue to undergo change (Hameed, 2024). It is possible to further ensure that the teaching that is offered is in line with the best practices that are used internationally by participating in continual professional development for educators. In the end, giving English language instruction a higher priority in Saudi universities would not only give students more academic power, but it will also contribute to the Kingdom's larger socio-economic goals (Ismail & Namaziandost, 2025).

In this time of swift technological progress, the field of education is undergoing notable transformations, especially in the area of language acquisition (Al Fraidan & Alaliwi, 2024; Bejaković & Mrnjavac, 2020; Donoso et al., 2020). For Saudi university students studying English, the incorporation of technology has gained significant importance, providing innovative approaches to improve language learning and proficiency (Banafi, 2025; Noorwali & Sabir, 2025). While traditional teaching methods hold significant value, they may not completely accommodate the varied learning styles and needs of contemporary learners (Almohideb, 2025). Because of this, teachers need to learn how to use digital tools in the classroom. This knowledge is necessary for helping students become more tech-savvy and literate, which will help them deal with future problems and take advantage of possibilities in a tech-driven world (Ma & Ismail, 2025). Several studies underscore a transition from conventional education to online learning, accentuating the significance of English proficiency and digital literacy as crucial EFL competencies for effective global communication and information access (Hemajothi & Jain, 2022; Kumbo et al., 2023; Murcia et al., 2018).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An increasing number of studies highlight how important technology is to improve English language instruction and learning for Saudi Arabian university students. The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching has emerged as a hallmark of contemporary pedagogical innovation in Saudi Arabia, primarily influenced by national educational reforms in accordance with Vision 2030. Previous syntheses of Saudi EFL research indicate a significant focus on higher education and writing proficiency, with quantitative approaches prevailing in the discipline. For example, Al-Nafjan and Alhawsawi (2022) did a scoping review of 133 studies on tertiary EFL writing in Saudi Arabia. They found that most of the research focused on undergraduate students, their perceptions, and computer-assisted language learning. There was not much research that used qualitative methods or theory-informed designs. This disparity underscores the necessity for more pedagogically informed research, especially in nascent fields like AI-mediated language learning.

The swift transition to online English language instruction in Saudi institutions amid the COVID-19 pandemic exposed both structural obstacles and revolutionary prospects that directly influence ongoing discussions around AI inclusion in Saudi EFL settings. According to Al-Samiri (2021), Saudi universities were somewhat ready for digital migration through platforms like Blackboard. However, the change brought up big problems with student motivation, digital readiness, internet connectivity, and the validity of assessments.

Alsowat (2017) noted that Saudi EFL research predominantly focuses on reading and writing skills, while speaking, listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary receive scant attention. The majority of studies were executed at the university level, resulting in little exploration of school situations. These findings indicate that despite English proficiency being regarded as a national priority, empirical data is still incomplete, resulting in a deficiency in comprehending how modern technologies—particularly AI—can facilitate holistic language development across several skills.

In this changing world, digital transformation has been recognized as a driver of long-lasting English language learning in Saudi higher education. Al Fraidan and Alaliwi (2024) stressed that digital platforms like Madrasati and Blackboard Collaborate have improved evaluation methods, teamwork, and fairness in education. Their review shows that using technology in the classroom helps students learn in a way that works for them and gives them constant feedback. This aligns English education with goals for national growth and getting students ready for the workforce. Even while digital technologies are becoming more common in Saudi classrooms, frameworks for teaching AI are still not very well defined.

Recent systematic reviews underscore the growing significance of AI in EFL education. Alshumaimeri and Alshememry (2024) recorded the use of machine learning, speech recognition, intelligent tutoring systems, and generative AI in EFL classes, finding that AI applications can enhance language proficiency through adaptive feedback and personalized learning pathways. Still, they also found big problems, such as ethical issues, teacher preparation, and the chance of becoming too dependent on technology. This shows how important it is to have appropriate integration plans that are specific to Saudi Arabian schools.

ChatGPT has become a game-changing AI tool for teaching English. Al-khresheh (2024) discovered that ChatGPT helps students become more independent, motivated, involved, and fluent by giving them rapid feedback and chances to practice speaking. The review, however, does point out some possible problems, such as cheating in school, relying too much on content made by AI, and not developing critical thinking abilities as well. These worries show how important it is for teachers to be involved and for AI literacy to be structured so that it is used in a way that is good for learning.

Faisal (2024) showed that ChatGPT may improve teaching, research writing, inclusivity, and student involvement in Saudi higher education. This helps achieve the Vision 2030 goals of academic excellence and preparing students for the future workforce. Faisal also stressed, though, that institutional rules and professional growth are important to get the most out of AI while reducing its hazards, especially in language learning situations where independent thinking and real conversation are important.

In addition to language outcomes, the emotional aspects of AI-assisted EFL learning have garnered heightened interest. AlTwijri and Alghizzi (2024) stated that AI technologies enhance learners' motivation, engagement, and attitudes while alleviating anxiety. Their systematic analysis indicated that empirical data on affective components is still few and methodologically inconsistent, necessitating further rigorous investigations to demonstrate causal relationships between AI integration and emotional involvement in Saudi EFL classes.

Zakaria et al. (2025) investigated the influence of generative AI on the critical thinking and writing abilities of ESL learners at the cognitive level. AI tools were discovered to improve writing quality and analytical skill; nevertheless, overdependence on AI correlated with reduced autonomous learning. The authors promote explicit AI literacy programs to balance technology support with the development of higher-order thinking abilities. This suggestion is especially pertinent for Saudi EFL situations, where academic integrity and learner autonomy are important educational goals.

Ismail and Namaziandost (2025) identified EFL education as a strategic catalyst for the transformation of Saudi Arabia's digital economy from a broader policy standpoint. Their review connects English language skills to digital literacy, job readiness, and long-term development. It stresses the necessity for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and industry-aligned curricula. They say that good execution of EFL policy can speed up the growth of human capital, which supports the idea that AI-enhanced language instruction can help achieve Vision 2030 goals.

In order to uncover recurring themes and approaches, Başar et al. (2022) examines recent research (2016–2020) on the use of technology in teaching English as a second language. Suyo-Vega et al. (2024) synthesize innovative pedagogical practices in higher education and emphasize the significance of integrating technology to improve teaching efficacy. Their findings indicate a consistent focus on technological tools as means to enhance language instruction. Similar to this, AlHarbi (2022) examines how machine learning is used in English language training, highlighting the variety of uses and the potential of AI-driven techniques to improve and customize language learning. Although there is hope in these technical developments, the literature also emphasizes the need for more study into successful teaching methods. More context-specific research is needed, as Sabiri's (2019) comprehensive review on ICT in EFL education highlights current gaps, especially in the context of Middle Eastern nations like Saudi Arabia. Pedagogical strategies like Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) have been thoroughly examined in larger contexts, with Song et al. (2024) and Mudinillah et al. (2024) highlighting their beneficial effects on critical thinking abilities and language proficiency. Their findings indicate possible application and the need for localized study to effectively adapt these approaches within Saudi EFL classrooms, despite the fact that these reviews are not Saudi-specific.

From the viewpoint of EFL instructors in Saudi universities, the literature indicates that artificial intelligence—especially tools like ChatGPT—presents considerable pedagogical potential to improve students' language proficiency, motivation, engagement, and writing quality through tailored feedback and adaptive learning opportunities. Teachers are getting more help from AI-supported instruction to deal with problems that keep coming up, like huge class numbers, short contact hours, and different needs of students. Digital platforms also make it easier to assess students in real time and work together to learn in line with Vision 2030 goals. Educators, on the other hand, are concerned about the over-reliance that students have on artificial intelligence (AI), the potential threats to academic integrity, and the potential damage to students' ability to think critically and write independently. Furthermore, current research underscores deficiencies in teacher preparedness, inconsistent focus on speaking and listening skills, and an absence of context-specific pedagogical frameworks for AI integration. The literature underscores the necessity for Saudi EFL teachers to receive specialized professional development, explicit institutional policies, and training in AI literacy to ensure technology acts as pedagogical support rather than a substitute for instruction, allowing educators to harmonize innovation with human oversight while promoting sustainable language learning outcomes.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study carefully looks at the current studies on how technology affects the teaching of English language skills to university students in Saudi Arabia. It follows PRISMA principles for methodological rigor (Page et al., 2021). The review process had a number of structured steps, including figuring out the study's goal, coming up with research questions, creating a review procedure, doing a thorough search of the literature, systematically screening and selecting studies, pulling out useful data, and putting together the results. Each step was about making sure that everything was consistent, reliable, and in line with the study's goals.

A. Research Problem

This systematic review seeks to thoughtfully explore the current body of research regarding the influence of technology on the instruction of English language skills among university students in Saudi Arabia. The aim is to shed light on the advantages and obstacles related to technological tools, evaluating their influence on different facets of

language teaching, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Therefore, the primary goals of the study are to address the following research questions.

1. What types of technologies and digital tools have been used to teach English language skills to Saudi university students?
2. What theoretical frameworks and pedagogical approaches underpin these technology-mediated interventions?
3. What are the reported effects of these technologies on English language skill outcomes (listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation)?
4. What contextual factors (e.g., institutional infrastructure, instructor training, cultural attitudes, language policy) influence technology effectiveness in Saudi universities?
5. What methodological approaches and quality levels characterize the empirical research in this area?
6. What are the gaps and recommendations for future research and practice?

B. Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of the present study–

- Systematically identify empirical studies that investigate the use of technology for teaching English to Saudi university students.
- Appraise the methodological quality of retrieved studies.
- Synthesize findings about types of technologies, pedagogical approaches, and outcomes across studies.
- Identify contextual enablers and barriers specific to Saudi higher education.
- Produce evidence-based recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

C. Search Strategy

The goal of this step was to find the databases that were most important for this systematic review. We used a number of databases for the search, such as ERIC, Google Scholar, Wiley Online Library, Web of Science, Taylor & Francis, Springer, Scopus, and Sage Journals. We tried several different research methods, such as looking at the abstracts, adding or removing different research terms (such as variations, synonyms, and hyponyms), and searching manually. Studies published in English from 2021 to 2025 (the last five years) that present empirical data (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodologies) were accepted for review. These studies used combinations of terms related to Saudi Arabia, English language instruction (EFL/ESL), technology (AI tools, CALL, MALL, LMS, apps, YouTube, podcasts), and language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation).

D. Eligibility Criteria

After implementing the original search technique, the studies to be incorporated into the keyword map were selected based on the subsequent inclusion and exclusion criteria. This framework maintained methodological rigor and relevance across the whole evaluation process. The review's inclusion criteria mandated empirical research studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods) within educational contexts pertaining to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Digital skills, digital literacy, ICT integration, educational technology, and AI practices in EFL settings were some of the main topics. The main focus was on teaching English as a foreign language, with a focus on digital skills, design of curriculum, teaching methods. Research published for five years from 2021 to 2025 was considered, indicating progress in the incorporation of digital skills in Saudi Arabia. To keep the focus on empirical investigations, non-empirical works like conceptual papers and literature reviews were not allowed. In addition, studies that were not written in English and those that did not expressly address digital skills or technology use in an English as a Foreign Language environment were not included. Furthermore, publications that were only available in abstract form and did not provide access to the full text were not considered for complete data extraction and analysis.

E. Screening Process

The systematic review adhered to PRISMA principles, commencing with a search that yielded 310 documents. After removing duplicates and for other reasons, 260 records were checked for their relevance to EFL teaching utilizing digital skills in Saudi Arabia. This led to 100 articles being eligible. A full-text review eliminated 83 papers without empirical evidence, a distinct EFL focus, teachers' perspective or sufficient digital skill integration. A total of 17 empirical studies shown in Table 1 fulfilled the inclusion criteria and responded to the research questions. Fig. 1 shows the steps taken to find and choose the literature used in this investigation.

TABLE 1
REVIEWED ARTICLES

Author(s) & Year	Methodology	Technology / Tool	Category	Targeted Skills	Pedagogical Purpose	Key Findings
Albatti (2022)	Qualitative interviews	Institutional e-learning platforms	LMS / E-learning	Integrated skills	Online course delivery	Supported continuity of instruction
Al-Khresheh et al. (2025)	Qualitative	LMS + educational apps	Digital integration	Integrated skills	Curriculum delivery	Dependent on teacher competence
Alsalem (2024)	Mixed methods	CoGrader	AI-based assessment	Writing	Automated feedback	AI assisted but did not replace teachers
Khafaga (2021)	Mixed methods	Blackboard Collaborate	LMS / Virtual classroom	Integrated skills	Synchronous teaching	Flexible learning with technical challenges
Al Mahmud (2022)	Mixed methods	Blackboard Collaborate	LMS	Speaking	Speaking practice	Improved motivation and interaction
Alshraideh (2021)	Mixed methods	Online videos	Multimedia	Listening, vocabulary	Skill reinforcement	Increased engagement
Albogami & Algethami (2022)	Mixed methods	WhatsApp	MALL	Speaking	Asynchronous speaking	Reduced anxiety
Sarhandi et al. (2022)	Mixed methods	Mobile phones	MALL	Integrated skills	Mobile instruction	Effective but underutilized
Alshammari et al. (2021)	Case study	iPads	Tablet-based	Integrated skills	Interactive learning	Engagement improved
Alzamil (2021)	Quantitative	Online platforms + email	Online communication	Speaking	Feedback	Preference for face-to-face
Algethami (2022)	Survey	Online platforms	E-learning	Integrated skills	Remote instruction	Assessment concerns
Metwally & Bin-Hady (2025)	Mixed methods	AI tools	AI integration	Integrated skills	Teacher training	Strong need for AI training
Alshaie et al. (2025)	Mixed methods	AI technologies	AI competence	Integrated skills	Teaching quality	Moderate improvement
Alasmari (2021)	Quasi-experimental + interviews	Internet Reciprocal Teaching via Blackboard	Online reading strategy	Reading	Online reciprocal teaching	Significant gains in reading comprehension
Aldayel (2024)	Qualitative interviews	Online teaching platforms	Emergency online learning	Integrated skills	Pandemic teaching	Engagement and communication challenges
Albaqami & Alzahrani (2022)	Mixed methods	Online platforms (LMS)	Online transition	Integrated skills	Emergency remote teaching	Positive attitudes but low readiness
Alshehri (2024)	Quantitative survey	LMS, presentation software, online assessment tools, video conferencing tools, multimedia resources	Technology integration / Professional development	Integrated skills	Enhancing engagement, assessment, content delivery, feedback, collaboration, and course management	extensive use of LMS and digital tools but viewed professional development as inadequate and expressed mixed perceptions about its impact on students' language skills.

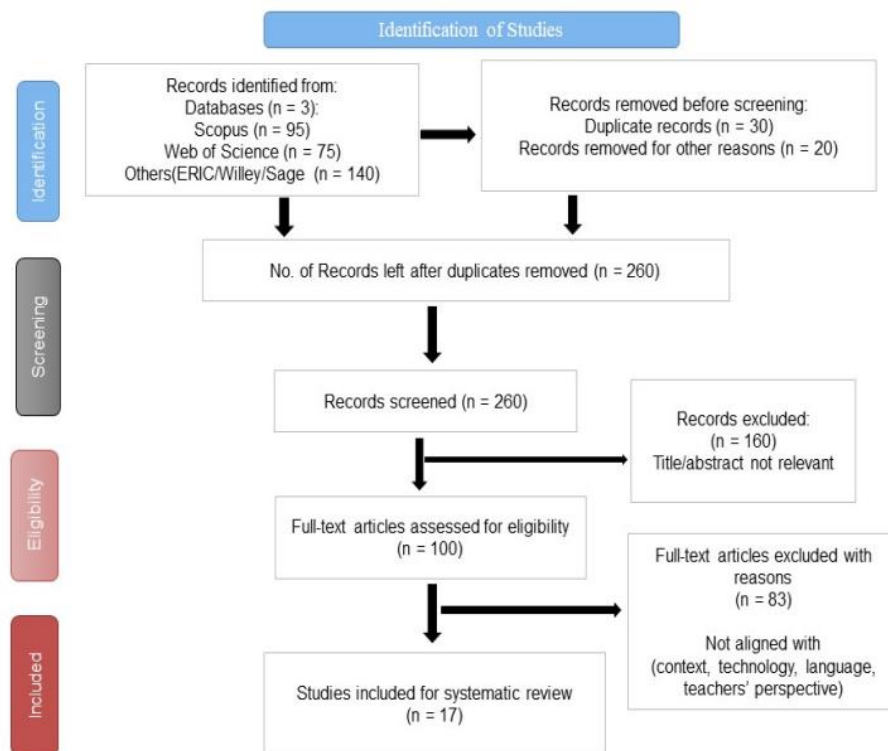


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart Depicting the Process of Article Retrieval and Screening

F. Coding Reliability

To keep the review process consistent and open, a single reviewer used a structured coding framework based on the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria at all stages of screening and data extraction. Articles were coded based on important factors like the type of research design, the type of technology used, the type of educational setting, and the English language skills that were targeted. To improve coding reliability, the reviewer repeatedly checked the extracted data and eligibility choices at every step of the PRISMA workflow to make sure they were in line with the research goals. Inter-rater reliability could not be determined due to the presence of a single reviewer; however, internal consistency was enhanced through the repeated validation of coding decisions and the systematic documentation of exclusion justification. This reflective coding process helped reduce personal bias and made sure that the method was rigorous, even though there was only one reviewer.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This systematic review examined 17 empirical studies focused on the use of digital technologies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction within Saudi higher education. The studies, released between 2021 and 2025, utilized diverse methodologies and identified 2022 as the year with the most publications (6 studies) and 2021 as the year with the second most (5 studies). This shows that more and more academics are interested in how digital technologies can be used in education since educational institutions switched to online classes during or after the COVID-19 lockdown. In 2024 and 2025, there were only three studies each year, which showed that people were less interested in this area. Surprisingly, in 2023, there were no publications about how teachers in Saudi higher education use digital technologies to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Figure 2 shows the trend of publications over the years in more detail.

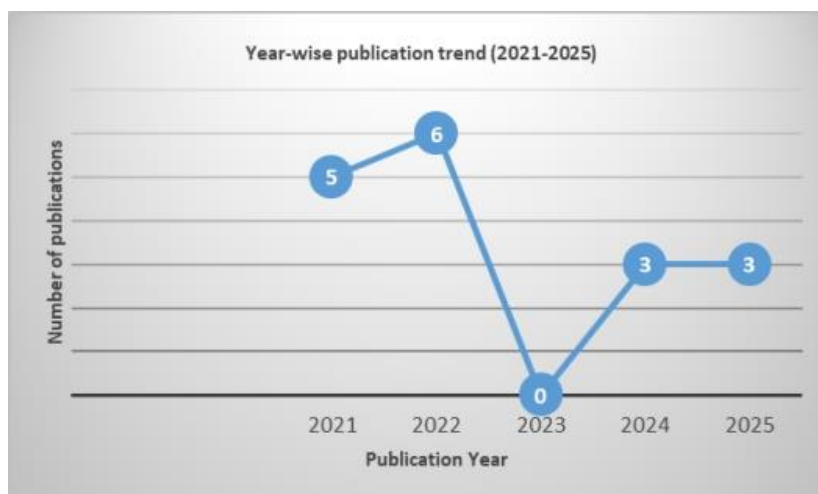


Figure 2. Year-Wise Publication Trend of Studies on Use of Digital Technologies in EFL Instruction Within Saudi Higher Education From the Teachers' Perspective

The evaluation procedure for this study entailed synthesizing findings to tackle six distinct research questions, each of which is examined and explored individually in each of the following sections.

A. Digital Tools and Technologies Employed in EFL Instruction at Saudi Universities

The studies that were examined show that Saudi universities have used a wide range of digital technologies in their EFL classes. Learning Management Systems (LMS), especially Blackboard Collaborate, have become the most popular tools for teaching, testing, and interacting in the present moment (Khafaga, 2021; Al Mahmud, 2022; Albaqami & Alzahrani, 2022). During the shift to COVID-19, online teaching platforms became the primary means to deliver courses. However, teachers said they had problems with engagement and digital readiness (Aldayel, 2024; Albaqami & Alzahrani, 2022). People often used mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), which includes WhatsApp and smartphone-based instruction, to help them practice speaking and study on their own (Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Sarhandi et al., 2022). Online videos and other multimedia technologies were used to help students improve their listening skills, learn new words, and stay motivated (Alshraideh, 2021). Recently, tools based on artificial intelligence (AI), like CoGrader, have been developed to help with writing assessment and feedback. However, these tools are more like helpers than replacements (Alsalem, 2024; Alshaie et al., 2025; Metwally & Bin-Hady, 2025). Structured online pedagogical techniques, such as Internet Reciprocal Teaching (IRT), exhibited substantial improvements in reading comprehension when utilized through Blackboard (Alasmari, 2021). Overall, the results show that Saudi higher education EFL contexts are moving away from emergency remote instruction and toward more varied digital ecosystems that include LMS platforms, mobile apps, multimedia materials, and new AI technologies. This discussion answers the first research question.

B. Theoretical Frameworks and Pedagogical Approaches

The second research question assesses the theoretical frameworks and pedagogical approaches underpinning these technology-mediated interventions. The technology-mediated interventions examined exemplify learner-centered and interaction-focused pedagogical methodologies rooted in constructivist, sociocultural, and communicative language teaching concepts. Learning Management Systems and virtual classrooms (e.g., Blackboard Collaborate and institutional e-learning platforms) facilitated synchronous instruction, collaboration, and the continuity of learning, highlighting social interaction and scaffolded knowledge construction (Albatti, 2022; Khafaga, 2021; Albaqami & Alzahrani, 2022). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning tools, such as WhatsApp and cellphones, made it easier for students to practice speaking and learn on their own by letting them do asynchronous speaking activities, which lowered emotional obstacles like fear (Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Sarhandi et al., 2022). Multimedia materials and tablet-based training facilitated active engagement and multimodal learning in accordance with constructivist principles (Alshraideh, 2021; Alshammari et al., 2021). AI-based tools like CoGrader and other AI technologies were used in formative assessment and teacher-support systems. They focused on learning through feedback instead of automating instruction (Alsalem, 2024; Alshaie et al., 2025). Internet Reciprocal Teaching using Blackboard and other strategy-based online teaching methods put cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies into practice, which led to significant improvements in reading comprehension (Alasmari, 2021). These approaches collectively exemplify a hybrid pedagogical framework that integrates digital delivery, communicative practice, assessment-driven instruction, and strategy-oriented learning, emphasizing the pivotal role of teacher competence and professional development in facilitating technology efficacy (Al-Khresheh et al., 2025; Alshehri, 2024).

C. Effects of Technology on English Language Skill Outcomes

The third research question evaluated the effects of technology on English language skill outcomes. Technology-mediated education was found to have varying effects on various English language abilities across all of the research that were examined. Speaking was found to be the skill that was improved the most consistently. Learning management systems (LMS) and mobile-assisted language learning tools (like Blackboard Collaborate and WhatsApp) were found to facilitate increased interaction, reduced anxiety, and improved learner motivation through synchronous and asynchronous speaking practice (Al Mahmud, 2022; Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Alzamil, 2021). Structured online pedagogies, such as Blackboard-delivered Internet Reciprocal Teaching, improved reading comprehension (Alasmari, 2021). AI-based automated feedback systems like CoGrader improved writing growth by providing timely formative assessment, although instructor judgment was still needed (Alsalem, 2024). Multimedia, including online videos, improved participation and receptive skills in listening and vocabulary (Alshraideh, 2021). Conversely, grammar and pronunciation results were hardly explicitly addressed, highlighting significant deficiencies in skill-specific digital intervention. Although numerous studies indicated enhancements in integrated language skills via LMS and online platforms, educators exhibited ambivalent views concerning technology's overall influence on students' language proficiency, primarily crediting efficacy to pedagogical integration and instructor expertise rather than technology in isolation (Al-Khreshah et al., 2025; Alshehri, 2024).

D. Contextual Factors Influencing Technology Effectiveness

The fourth research question evaluated the contextual factors influencing technology effectiveness. In Saudi universities, the success of technology-mediated English instruction was greatly affected by things like the institution's infrastructure, how well-prepared the teachers were, and the availability of professional development. Learning Management Systems and online platforms facilitated the continuity of instruction during emergency remote teaching; however, various studies indicated technical difficulties and concerns regarding assessment reliability that hindered pedagogical effectiveness (Khafaga, 2021; Algethami, 2022; Albaqami & Alzahrani, 2022). Instructor competency proved to be a critical determinant, with effective digital integration predominantly reliant on educators' technological proficiency and pedagogical preparedness, rather than mere platform accessibility (Al-Khreshah et al., 2025; Alshehri, 2024). While educators usually exhibited favorable attitudes towards technology use, restricted access to customized professional development and inadequate institutional support diminished the efficacy of digital technologies on language learning outcomes (Aldayel, 2024; Alshehri, 2024). Cultural preferences for face-to-face interaction additionally affected student engagement in online speaking activities (Alzamil, 2021), while the rapid COVID-19–driven transition showed gaps between national digital objectives and classroom-level preparation. These findings collectively demonstrate that technological efficacy in Saudi EFL contexts is influenced by systemic support frameworks, teacher training initiatives, and existing pedagogical standards, highlighting the necessity for synchronized institutional strategies that align with language policy goals.

E. Methodological Approaches and Research Quality

The fifth research question examined the methodological approaches and research quality. The empirical literature on technology-mediated EFL instruction in Saudi universities predominantly employs mixed-methods and descriptive research designs, with a majority of studies utilizing questionnaires, interviews, and perception-based measures instead of controlled experimental methodologies. Mixed-methods designs were predominant, combining surveys and interviews to assess both attitudinal and instructional aspects (e.g., Khafaga, 2021; Albaqami & Alzahrani, 2022; Alshehri, 2024), whereas qualitative studies concentrated mainly on teacher experiences and institutional preparedness (Albatti, 2022; Aldayel, 2024). A small number of research utilized quasi-experimental designs with quantifiable learning outcomes, namely Alasmari (2021), which exhibited statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension. Sample sizes were highly variable and frequently tiny, predominantly relying on convenience sampling, which limited generalizability. Outcome measures often prioritized perceptions, involvement, and self-reported efficacy, with a limited number of research offering skill-specific achievement data. In general, the research that was reviewed gives useful background information, but the methods used weren't always very rigorous. This shows that more long-term, experimental, and skill-focused studies are needed to make stronger evidence-based claims about how well technology works in Saudi university EFL settings.

F. Research Gaps and Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

The sixth research question analyzed the existing knowledge gaps and proposed recommendations for future research and practice. The literature assessment identifies significant deficiencies in research design and instructional application. Empirical data is inconsistent across language skills; speaking and integrated skills are the most studied, but grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary development are seldom analyzed through focused digital interventions. Most studies use perception-based data and short-term designs, which shows that there is a need for long-term and experimental research that examines at skill-specific learning effects. Also, low institutional support and professional development that wasn't personalized enough always made technology less successful. This shows how important it is to keep training teachers in a way that meets their EFL teaching demands. The latest AI applications are still not being fully explored besides writing assessment. This shows that there are still chances to look into how they could be used for individualized feedback and help with pronunciation. Future study should utilize rigorous mixed or experimental

approaches, include larger and more varied samples, and investigate culturally responsive digital pedagogies. From a practical standpoint, Saudi institutions would gain from coordinated institutional strategies that incorporate infrastructure development, ongoing professional learning, and technology use integrated with the curriculum to guarantee that digital advances result in quantifiable language improvements.

G. Aligning Research Gaps With Saudi Vision 2030

The deficiencies recognized in the existing corpus of Saudi EFL technology research—specifically the scarce application of experimental methodologies, inconsistent representation of language competencies, and inadequately customized professional development—underscore a discordance between classroom practices and the overarching educational reform objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. National policy stresses digital innovation, human capital development, and global competitiveness. However, the studies we looked at show that technology integration is still mostly based on perception, with mixed evidence of measurable language gains and ongoing problems with teacher readiness and institutional support. The lack of grammar, pronunciation, and AI-enhanced tailored learning shows that there are even more chances to use new technology to help people learn certain skills. To achieve the goals of Vision 2030, future research needs to go beyond emergency adoption and focus on evidence-based digital pedagogy through longitudinal and experimental studies. At the same time, universities need to invest money into long-term, EFL-specific professional development and technology strategies that are in line with the curriculum. To make sure that digital transformation leads to real improvements in English proficiency and job preparedness, it is important to strengthen the link between research, practice, and policy.

V. CONCLUSION

This review indicates that Saudi university EFL contexts have adopted a diverse array of digital tools—including LMS platforms, mobile applications, multimedia resources, and emerging AI technologies—resulting in favorable outcomes, especially in speaking, reading, and writing, while grammar and pronunciation remain relatively underexamined. The efficacy of these technologies is consistently influenced by contextual factors, including institutional infrastructure, instructor preparedness, and access to EFL-specific professional development, with much of the current evidence depending on perception-based and short-term methodologies. These data indicate a disparity between swift technological integration and enduring educational effectiveness. In accordance with Saudi Vision 2030's focus on digital transformation and human capital enhancement, forthcoming initiatives should highlight stringent, skill-oriented research methodologies in conjunction with cohesive institutional strategies that unify curriculum, technology, and ongoing teacher development. Enhancing this association is crucial to guarantee that digital innovation results in quantifiable improvements in English proficiency and aids in the development of internationally competitive graduates.

A. Findings

The review shows that Saudi universities are using more and more digital tools in their EFL classes. These tools include Learning Management Systems (like Blackboard), mobile-assisted language learning tools, multimedia resources, and new AI applications like systems that automatically grade writing. These tools have mostly had good effects, especially on improving speaking, reading, and writing skills, getting students more involved, and making them less anxious about communicating. But grammar and pronunciation are still not well-studied areas of technology-mediated learning. The success of these technologies depends a lot on the context, such as the school's infrastructure, the teacher's digital skills, and the availability of focused professional development. AI technologies are also usually employed as support systems for teaching rather than as independent systems, especially when it comes to writing assessment. Most studies use perception-based, mixed-methods designs with little experimental or longitudinal evidence, which makes it harder to apply the results to other situations and makes them less reliable. Overall, integrating technology into the classroom is in line with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, but there is still a gap between using technology and seeing quantitative improvements in language acquisition.

B. Implications

The findings have a great deal of significant pedagogical, institutional, and policy implications. In terms of teaching, the integration of AI and digital tools necessitates a shift toward learner-centered, interactive, and feedback-driven teaching approaches that combine technology with sound instructional strategies rather than relying on tools alone. Teachers are very important when it comes to using technology because they make sure that AI improves cognitive engagement and critical thinking instead of replacing them. The effectiveness of technology-enhanced EFL instruction relies on ongoing investment in infrastructure, dependable digital access, and constant, context-specific professional development for educators. Advanced technology, including AI tools, may not be used effectively if there aren't enough training and support mechanisms. From a policy perspective, aligning EFL instruction with Saudi Vision 2030 requires coherent strategies that integrate curriculum design, digital innovation, and workforce-oriented language skills. The findings also show that there is a gap between technological innovation and evidence-based educational practices to ensure that digital transformation leads to tangible improvements in English proficiency and employability outcomes.

C. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research must emphasize more stringent and theory-based approaches, such as experimental, quasi-experimental, and longitudinal designs, to ascertain causal links between the use of technology and language acquisition outcomes. There is a distinct necessity for targeted inquiries, especially concentrating on under-explored domains such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary enhancement in AI-assisted contexts. Furthermore, subsequent research should investigate the extensive uses of AI beyond writing, encompassing its potential in speaking assessment, training in pronunciation, and adaptive learning systems. Extensive studies with varied samples from multiple Saudi universities are crucial for improving generalizability. Research must also investigate the influence of AI literacy, teacher training frameworks, and culturally relevant pedagogies on the enhancement of technology integration. Finally, it is advisable to pursue interdisciplinary research that connects EFL instruction with employability, digital competencies, and the objectives of Vision 2030, to guarantee that forthcoming innovations significantly enhance both educational quality and national development goals.

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The Discourse of Trauma and Representations of Resilience: A Semiotic and Discursive Analysis of the Film *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege*

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Abstract—This study examines the documentary film *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege*, focusing on how it frames a discourse of marginalization and resistance through linguistic and visual techniques. Employing a qualitative approach that draws on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993) and multimodal semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Aiello, 2020), the study reveals how spoken testimonies and visual imagery collaborate to expose institutional neglect and convey stories of resilience. Key findings include the film's satirization of the "absent authority" through the foregrounding of infrastructural collapse and its reimagining of victims as subjects of moral resilience. Visual signs, such as malnourished children, bombed-out classrooms, and operating room teamwork, are texts fraught with ethical and political meaning. The paper argues that the film is not only a documentary but also a semiotic intervention that disrupts language, images, and power relations. It is an indictment of injustice and a validation of silenced voices in a forgotten war zone.

Index Terms—Critical Discourse Analysis, social semiotics, documentary film, Nuba Mountains, trauma

I. INTRODUCTION

In zones of conflict, where truths disappear amid battles and human voices are lost in the uproar of the global image industry, documentary cinema becomes an urgent necessity. It is not merely a means of presenting truth but also of shaping consciousness and building conscience. Those in the Nuba Mountains suffer added forms of marginalization simply for being part of a country that dismisses their voices. In this regard, the documentary film *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege*, by Carl Gierstorfer and Laura Salm-Reifferscheidt (Deutsche Welle), is an audiovisual scream in terms of both imagery and language. It restores presence to these muted voices.

The documentary offers a raw portrayal of daily life at Cap Anamur Hospital, which is the only connection to the outside world for an isolated community. The story focuses on flesh-and-blood individuals, including surgeon Joseph Yacoub and his tiny medical team, who are the last line of defense against death. The harrowing footage of war survivors with festering injuries, emaciated children, and women giving birth in hellish conditions is offset by images of hope and resilience. These include the procedure that saved the life of a woman who needed a C-section, a rebel fighter

exchanging bullets for medical supplies, Nidal Devan, a surgical assistant who insists on learning despite breaking social codes by pursuing an education, and Aziz Burma, a man who transitioned from being a fighter to a life-saving medic. The film bracingly and frankly addresses the scarcity of resources and the neglect that has been endemic to the hospital. For example, at the beginning of the crisis, mudslides cut off vital shipments. The film is also full of heroic everydayness, as represented by the doctors, nurses, and patients. Recent multimodal studies of documentary and conflict narratives similarly show how linguistic and visual resources co-construct experiences of trauma and resilience in war-torn communities (Mansoor & Amjad, 2024; Saleh et al., 2022).

When communities such as those in the Nuba Mountains are caught up in war and armed conflict, their voices are often drowned out by marginalization and injustice. Their stories go unreported in the global media. In this context, the documentary showcasing life at the Nuba Mountains hospital becomes a form of media resistance and a voice takeover. It gives the people a voice to speak out against the difficulties suffered by the inhabitants and the medical community, in contrast to a scene of silence and passivity. The film perfectly captures the intersection of difficulties ranging from war and the scarcity of resources to institutional neglect. It commemorates the everyday heroism and resilience shown by the staff and their patients, who display an unbreakable spirit.

However, despite this collection's influence, Election TV's deep discursive organization encourages critical analysis of its text. This analysis focuses on the efficacy of its linguistic and visual means of representing the local area and shaping viewers' awareness of power and human anguish. Thus, one of the main research questions explored in this paper is: To what extent do the linguistic and visual techniques in the Nuba Mountains hospital documentary contribute to constructing a discourse of marginalization and resilience? What effect do these techniques have on how audiences infer power relationships and human suffering in conflict areas according to theories of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993) and linguistic semiotics (Halliday & Hasan, 1989)?

This study seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the processes involved in using language, imagery, and text to construct documentary narratives about humanitarian crises. The study aims to demonstrate how these narratives inform audiences about the mundane experiences of people in fragile contexts and enrich academic literature by critically appraising state-of-the-art language philosophy and critical discourse analysis (CDA) theories of contemporary semiotic trends.

II. TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE NUBA MOUNTAINS DOCUMENTARY

According to Halliday and Hasan (1989), "the significance of a message is not only a function of what is said but also of how it is combined with the relevant social, visual, and auditory contexts" (p. 12). The juxtaposition of these two approaches is analytically rich. Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis, which focuses on the linguistic manifestations of reproduced power inequalities and the distribution of suffering, semiotics invites readers to understand how words and images are interrelated and mutually influential in the creation of meaning. Consider the warning issued by nurse Hasna Khojaly: "If you wait to come to the hospital with your child, they will either die or be paralyzed." Such verbal warnings are deliberately juxtaposed with imagery, such as close-ups of emaciated children or shots of worried mothers sitting in dingy hallways. This calculated intersection of linguistic and visual signs considerably heightens the film's emotional impact, aligning with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) observation in multimodal semiotics that "visual and verbal signs together create an intersemiotic dynamic..." (p. 38), and with more recent work on visual semiotics and multimodal documentary discourse (Aiello, 2020; Saleh et al., 2022). Thus, the film's discourse is not merely reportage but also a significant tool for influencing public consciousness regarding marginalization and resilience, rousing empathy and social mobilization on issues of conflict. As Robinson (2020, p. 76) notes, "Documentary films that draw on language and images are not simply documents of reality; they are acts of resistance, movements against, and questions of prevailing narratives. They give voice to marginalized people".

The genuine power of the documentary film *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege* does not merely derive from the shocking imagery it portrays, but fundamentally from the intricate discursive structures woven through its characters' testimonies. To understand these structures, it is crucial to view language not as a neutral vehicle for conveying facts, but as a complex "social practice," as conceptualized by Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk. Through precise linguistic strategies, the documentary transforms individual testimonies into coherent political and humanitarian arguments that expose power relations and shape viewers' consciousness.

According to Fairclough (1995), discourse is a social practice in which language is strategically employed to reveal the concept of an "absent authority." This concept is exemplified by state neglect, which is manifested through infrastructural collapse and service inadequacies. This concept is vividly articulated by Dr. Joseph Yacoub, a surgeon, when he describes the difficulty of transporting supplies (at 1:15): "This is the only road leading to the Nuba Mountains, through which aid and medicine come from South Sudan. Some tractors carrying supplies and medicine to the Nuba Mountains are stuck here, unable to cross. Some of these tractors have been waiting here for two or three weeks." The deliberate choice of the word "only" is not neutral. It linguistically constructs a narrative of isolation and neglect, implicitly reflecting the failure of authority to provide viable alternatives. Furthermore, the passive voice in "stuck" obscures the responsible party, making neglect seem inevitable—a process Fairclough describes as "ideological normalization" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 27).

This linguistic strategy is also evident in the testimony of Nurse Hasna Khojaly (at 07:53), who shifts the blame for

child deaths. "Many of us have lost our children due to health neglect, disease, and malnutrition. We want a future where no child is lost." Rather than attributing child mortality solely to natural causes, Khojaly emphasizes "health neglect," a politically charged term that shifts the cause from the medical to the structural domain. This discourse of neglect expands further into a discourse on future devastation, as exemplified by surgical assistant Nidal Devan at the 46:18 mark: "I fear the coming rainy season because most people have not been able to plant their fields. If the situation remains the same, it will worsen." This discourse culminates dramatically in the scene of the destroyed school described by teacher Ahmed Azraa at 38:59: "Yes, when they heard the plane, they ran out. A girl went out with a teacher, and both were cut in half... Shrapnel pierced the wall and struck students inside the classroom." This narrative does not merely recount physical destruction. Rather, it symbolizes the assassination of the classroom as a social institution designated for building the future. In doing so, it exposes how authoritative violence targets not only human bodies but also hope for knowledge and progress (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

The film reveals the "absent authority" and skillfully uses language to construct identities and assign moral roles. This can be effectively interpreted through van Dijk's (1993) "ideological square" framework. This approach is strikingly evident in the testimony of displaced resident Rashida Muhammad at 25:31, which epitomizes the "negative representation of the other": "All my neighbors who remained there were killed. If we hadn't left early, we wouldn't have survived. They don't distinguish between women and men. If they find a little girl, they rape her. Killing is their method. They killed all my neighbors' children." By describing the perpetrators' actions in generalized and brutal terms, the narrative constructs a mental model of the adversary as devoid of humanity (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250).

Conversely, "positive self-representation" strategies highlight resistance and identity formation. An example is surgical assistant Nidal Devan at 13:55: "We have a saying: 'Boys learn, but girls don't.' People think educating girls is pointless because when girls grow up, they marry and follow their husbands. But I was among the girls who refused this. I told my family I didn't want to marry; I wanted to learn." Here, Nidal engages in counter discourse, challenging social authority and reconstructing a new identity. Identity formation also encompasses role transformation. Surgical assistant Aziz Burma illustrates this concept by narrating his transition from fighter to medical caregiver: "I was trained as an opposition fighter. But I was wounded in a military operation. Eventually, they told me, 'Aziz, next time we'll lose you for nothing. We need to find you another job that will bring you comfort instead of fighting.'" This discourse signifies identity reconstruction, transitioning from "fighter" to "healer" and reshaping one's value within the community (van Dijk, 1998). Similar patterns of reconstructing agency and identity under conditions of war-related trauma have been documented in recent multimodal analyses of conflict and terrorism narratives (Khasawneh et al., 2025; Mansoor & Amjad, 2024).

This discursive strategy culminates in Dr. Joseph's final testimony (51:11), which abstractly frames the political "other." "Therefore, I have no hope for the future of Sudan yet. As long as they don't change their mentality, I have no hope. I'm certain that when they finish there, they'll turn on us." Here, the "other" is defined not by individuals but by a "political mindset." This portrays conflict as perpetual and reinforces the "us" identity as perpetual victims facing immutable evil (van Dijk, 2008).

A thorough linguistic discourse analysis of the film ultimately reveals its cohesive and logical structure. Using Fairclough's framework, the film explicitly exposes power through linguistic implications, transforming daily problems into structural issues. Using van Dijk's analytical tools, the film intricately constructs a sharp polarization between "us," the resilient victims, and "them," the absent or oppressive authority. Thus, language in this film serves as the primary battleground for constructing meaning, assigning blame, and legitimizing resistance. This renders the documentary a profound critical argument that shapes viewer consciousness (Wodak & Meyer, 2015; van Leeuwen, 2008).

III. VISUAL IMAGE ANALYSIS AND SEMIOTIC SIGNIFICATIONS

The film's visual power emerges not only from its depiction of events but also from its ability to establish a system of signs that together constitute a highly expressive visual language. According to the framework of social semiotics established by Halliday and Hasan (1989), we can view images not as windows on the world but as visual texts constructed within particular social environments. Any text (written or visual) can only be understood by referencing its "context of situation": Field, Tenor, and Mode. This analysis always takes place in the ESP classroom and can ultimately be completed using the grammar options in the page settings.



Figure 1. The Body as Evidence: When the Infant's Body Becomes a Text Inscribed With the Marks of War and Political Neglect, Turning Suffering Into a Visual Indictment of Silence

The image of the malnourished baby at 5:44 (Figure 1) in the documentary *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege* is one of the densest and most potent visual signs in the documentary. To understand it, it must be unpacked as a visually dense text. A sociosemiotic approach, blending with critical political philosophy and visual ethics, should be applied.

In terms of Halliday and Hasan's (1989) "context of situation," the field projects the social action symbolized as an immediate humanitarian disaster, accentuating the biological collapse through violence. The tenor creates an asymmetrical subject-object relationship by portraying the helpless infant victim and the viewer as a witness, confronting the viewer with the infant's suffering and requiring them to take on emotional and moral responsibility. The mode, a close-up shot from a high angle, reinforces the feeling of helplessness by placing the baby in the center as the absolute victim.

However, this is not merely a question of semiotics but also an engagement with political philosophy, as mediated by Agamben's (1998) theorization of "bare life." The baby's delicate body literally represents this idea: outside of state protection, its biological existence is in jeopardy. This suffering is not only a health issue but also political evidence of the authorities' willful neglect in protecting citizens. As such, the image transcends sadness, offering a damning indictment of how life in contexts of war and marginalization exposes the human body to violence and reduces it to a mere biological entity devoid of political and social significance.

This political manifestation of pain raises important ethical questions about the ethics of looking, an issue that Sontag (2003) thoroughly explores in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Although the director tries to elicit sympathy through this image, Sontag argues that incessantly displaying suffering can make us apathetic rather than sympathetic.

Therefore, the picture of the baby is a "multisemiotic text" (Halliday & Hasan, 1989) and powerful political evidence of dehumanization (Agamben, 1998), as well as an ethical challenge to the beholder (Sontag, 2003). A close analysis reveals it to be a montage that incites consideration of the power that creates this tragedy and the moral responsibility of spectators toward such suffering.

A sign outside the hospital reads, "No Weapons Allowed." At 3:18, a still image conveys dense semiotic significance, or a "sign," which goes beyond its informational value. It is a rich text full of meaning, social, and philosophical subtexts. Interpreted through Halliday and Hasan's (1989) system, the field enforces law to shape social behavior not bound by wartime law. The tenor establishes a contemporary ethical authority structure between the protective hospital institution and its visitors, as its presence demands an end to violence. The mode is a medium in which language and symbols combine as a multimodal text with the haptic feel of the handmade, suggesting fragile social agreements rather than the state's stentorian orders.

Building on this interpretation, we can view the hospital as a "heterotopia," according to Foucault (1986)—a space within society that operates under its own set of rules. The hospital is quintessentially heterotopic in that it takes the external wartime logic and turns it inward for the purpose of healing. The threshold signifies the separation of violence outside and healing inside, communicating the opposite: "Here, the outside law ceases; ours begins." The sign engages in "impression management," as defined by sociologist Goffman (1959), by shaping personal identity at the entrance. Fighters who disarm themselves relinquish their identity as warriors and may assume a new role as patients or visitors while still managing the interaction in a way that requires the hospital to follow its script of care and healing.

Ultimately, this unadorned visual indicator of complexity obscures the complex reading of regulatory texts (Halliday & Hasan, 1989), the heterotopian gateway (Foucault, 1986), and the device for managing identities (Goffman, 1959). It represents the conscious struggle of humans to improve their spaces and lead meaningful lives amid chaos.



Figure 2. Semiotic Sign at the Threshold of Hope, Where the Law of Humanity Confronts the Law of War

The wide shot of the operating room at the 28:12 mark best encapsulates *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege*. According to Halliday and Hasan, the field represents a patterned scientific endeavor amidst wartime confusion, the tenor represents the reciprocal relationships between medical personnel and patients, and the mode, through the long shot, represents the institution's unwavering faith.

Further analysis using the notions of "habitus" and "field" (Bourdieu, 1990) provides insight into the social factors that allow the hospital to endure. The operating room is a social world with its own logic: scientific healing opposed to the logic of external warfare. The medics who act as a team, efficiently performing under extreme circumstances, embody professional habitus—shared dispositions for calm responses to chaos. Their coordinated movement and flawless execution of protocol reflect the cultural and social capital necessary to navigate this perilous realm safely. This professionalism is performed, as conceptualized by Butler (1990). "Ritual practices—such as sterilizing instruments and operating—reinforce the scientific and safe aspects of the operating room during times when violence is being symbolically battled in the surrounding environment".

The director's decision to use a wide-angle shot visually portrays the collective performance and the idea that resilience is a practice, a discipline, and a social project. Accordingly, the operating room is more than just a room; it is a dense semiotic and social text representing order against disorder (Halliday & Hasan, 1989), a professional habitus field (Bourdieu, 1990), and a *mise-en-scène* reaffirming life values against death. The scene's power lies in displaying resilience as disciplined, collective, and embodied practices of everyday life.



Figure 3. In This Room, Operations Extend Beyond Bodies—Daily Rituals Reaffirm Order Amid Chaos

At the heart of the documentary *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege* is the relationship between what we hear and what we see. No description of the film can replace an embodied engagement with it. This dynamic, multimodal discourse, as theorized by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and further developed in recent work on auditory meaning-making in documentary discourse (Pan, 2025), highlights the fact that linguistic and visual elements work together to establish deeper levels of meaning.

In a montage scene, for example, we hear the spoken version of surgical assistant Nidal Devan's story of personal struggle: "I told my family I didn't want to marry; I wanted to learn," while we see her performing complex medical

tasks with great confidence and precision despite overwhelming pressure. A double sign is formed here: the distinction is realized symbolically through the verbal articulation of inner resistance and resolve, as well as the visual representation of hard work in difficult conditions. Devan's lyrical testimony tells the story of her historic battle against oppressive powers, paired with visuals illustrating her victory. The result is a powerful mixed message—a potent potion of hope and hurt.

This process of making meaning is reiterated in Aziz Burma's testimony as he describes his transformation from combatant to nurse. We hear his voice as he explains his history: "I was trained as an opposition fighter. But I was injured... They said, 'We've got to get you into another line of work that's a little more comfortable than combat,'" while visuals show him calmly and skillfully assisting in surgery. The contrast between the narrated past and the visual present, with its apocalyptic and symbolic images, creates an aura of transformation and identity restructuring. The oral narrative describes a body removed from the battlefield, and the images reflect that the body has been reimagined for saving lives. The discrepancy between words and actions, between the past and the present, conveys an ambiguous message about society's capacity to transform weapons into instruments of healing (van Leeuwen, 2008).

This push-pull is a perfect metaphor for a larger tragedy and its impact on the architecture of society and the future. Teacher Ahmed Azraa's mournful voice-over—"Shrapnel penetrated the walls and hit students inside the classroom"—is intercut with a tour of the ruined school at that moment (38:59): broken walls, empty classrooms, and a blackboard with an incomplete math lesson still on it. This juxtaposition of sound and image creates ironic meaning: the sound describes violence, but the image reveals its permanence—the education and hope for the future were cut short. A chalkboard with an incomplete lesson is an iconic visual reminder of a suddenly interrupted existence (Sontag, 2003).

Similarly, the film powerfully illustrates the link between cause and effect, most notably in scenes depicting malnutrition. As Khamis Ismail, the father, succinctly says, "There is no food. No one has enough food." This grim verbal portrayal is visually juxtaposed with his daughter, Shishia, being measured for bicep circumference with her severely atrophied arm in a red-marked malnutrition tape [09:41]. This medical evidence materializes the father's words about his personal suffering and establishes the connection between the verbal narrative and the visual image. This kind of integration is unequivocal, and the scene becomes a forceful representation of an argument against those responsible for causing famine (Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

A critical semiotic analysis would expose the film's discursive construction as purposeful and intricate—that is, resulting from the complex interaction of language, visuals, and social situations. Oral histories articulate distinct frameworks for marginalization, resilience, and resistance, providing an intellectual genealogy. In turn, the visuals deepen and flesh out these meanings, prompting raw emotional responses from the audience, who become both witnesses and participants. The film creates a discursive effect by combining verbal and visual elements to reshape awareness of an overlooked humanitarian disaster. It also critiques resilience versus neglect and violence (Fairclough, 1995; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

IV. CONCLUSION: THE SEMIOTICS OF RESILIENCE AGAINST MARGINALIZATION

In concluding this analysis of the ways visual and linguistic discourses co-construct *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege*, we argue that the documentary is more than just documentation. It is a complex semiological and discursive system that attempts to reshape unsuspecting viewers through its macrosemiotic functions regarding a forgotten human crisis. Our analysis of the film, which is based on critical discourse and semiotic analyses, reveals that the work's emotional power does not stem from isolated stories or images. Rather, it comes from a richly entwined weave of personal stories and visual images that create a layered discourse on marginality and resistance.

Our study demonstrates that, as discussed by Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (1993), language as discourse consists of two interrelated dimensions. First, it constructs a political case around "absent authority," as represented by stories of systemic neglect, such as blocked roads and a lack of supplies, transforming everyday deprivation into structural abandonment. Second, the film establishes a moral universe through ideological polarization between "us" (victims and resisters) and "them" (aggressors and political powers), as illustrated by displaced people's narratives portraying the aggressor as an inhumane "other." Conversely, caregiver narratives reinforce resistance and strength.

In contrast, Halliday and Hasan's (1989) semiotic analysis is driven by the idea of recognizing visuals as autonomous "visual texts" that run parallel to linguistic stories. The malnourished child's body becomes a symbolic condemnation of war, the "No Weapons Allowed" sign becomes a symbol of a safe space, and the surgeons' teamwork visually demonstrates ordered resilience in the face of chaos. Every visual image, framed and composed, conveys significance and elicits an emotional response from the viewer. In Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2001) sense, the brilliance of the film reaches its peak in the organic integration of language and image. Stories of verbal rebellion are supported by visual evidence of the ability to perform surgical functions with ease and competence. "Famine, described in words, becomes manifest through an emaciated child's arm." This fusion of oral storytelling and visual imagery gives the documentary a strong emotional and intellectual impact.

This analysis showcases how critical linguistic and semiotic tools can be utilized in studying media discourse on humanitarian crises, providing suggestions for future research. One approach could involve conducting a comparative discourse analysis of documentaries on other conflict regions to unveil similarities and differences in narrative construction strategies. Additionally, I propose utilizing reception studies to analyze the documentaries' impacts on

public knowledge and perception of humanitarian issues.

In conclusion, this study argues that *Sudan: A Hospital Under Siege* effectively constructs a discourse of marginalization and resilience through two intertwined strategies: exposing structural authority mechanisms that contribute to suffering and simultaneously instilling stable victim identities with embedded resistance. The film goes beyond shock value and delves into the root causes of the crisis. It amplifies the voices of the victims. Therefore, it transcends mere documentation to become an act of resistance itself, reshaping the relationships between image, language, and authority in one of the world's most overlooked regions, while also extending recent multimodal and visual-semiotic approaches to trauma and humanitarian crises (Aiello, 2020; Mansoor & Amjad, 2024; Pan, 2025).

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The Effect of TED Talk-Based Flipped Instruction on EFL Students' Discourse Management in Speaking Performance

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Abstract—This research examines the effect of the flipped learning approach with TED Talks support on discourse management, particularly thematic development, coherence, and cohesion in the EFL students' speaking performances at a Vietnamese university. Fifty-seven English-major participants who were divided into an experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG) completed pre- and post-speaking tests. The data were analyzed using independent and paired sample t-tests, as well as ANCOVA. The results showed significant improvements in the EG in all three dimensions of discourse management, with high effect sizes, confirming the pedagogical value of using authentic input in combination with active and learner-centered practices. The study additionally proposes practical implications for curriculum design and language teaching as well as limitations and recommendations for future studies.

Index Terms—coherence and cohesion, discourse management, speaking performance, TED Talk-based flipped instruction, thematic development

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an essential skill that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners need, particularly in academic and professional settings that require proficient control over discourse coherence and cohesion (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Richards, 2008; Zheng et al., 2025). Discourse management that involves rational organization of ideas, use of themes, and the maintenance of coherence and cohesion are essential for the presenter to package the ideas in such a manner that keeps the listener informed and this is very crucial for effective communication (Khameneh & Faruji, 2020; Nguyen, 2023). However, these features of spoken discourse are problematic for the majority of EFL learners, as they are not exposed to the target language in the actual context; they do not have enough meaningful opportunity for these practices (Amiryousefi, 2019; Safa & Zareian, 2022).

Flipped instruction is a new pedagogical paradigm that emerged within the last few years in which learning content is moved outside of the traditional classroom environment allowing for an abundance of in-class time to focus on in-class learning and interaction (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). The model has proven successful in enhancing language skills, particularly speaking, by providing learners with more opportunities to practice and receive feedback (Safa & Zareian, 2022). At the same time, TED Talks have established their reputation as a source of applicable, authentic materials that introduce learners to natural discourse in the form of rhetorical patterns, pragmatic cues, and speech acts, as elaborated by proficient speakers (Kraisriwattana & Poonpon, 2020; Naderifarjad & Niknia, 2024; Uicheng & Crabtree, 2018). Using the TED Talks in terms of flipped classrooms creates a unique opportunity to scaffold learners' discourse management abilities by giving them a complete high-quality input in combination with interactive training (Al-Siyabi & Al-Aliyani, 2024). However, despite these developments, a gap remains in studies that empirically investigate TED Talk-based flipped teaching, which is explicitly aimed at discourse management in the performance of speaking in EFL. Previous research has focused on the benefits of flipped learning and the pedagogical value of TED Talks separately; however, few research has attempted to research the synergies effect of flipped learning with TED Talks on thematic development, coherence and cohesion in speaking. Moreover, most existing studies on individual differences in speaking focus on general speaking competence rather than the multidimensional construct of discourse management, which results in a need to address these important components.

Therefore, this research sought to solve the above research gap by examining the effect of TED talk-based flipped instruction on the discourse management and speaking performance of EFL students. Specifically, it discussed the usefulness of this integrated approach in making significant contributions to the effectiveness of learners in developing themes and maintaining cohesion and the use of cohesive devices. This study examined university-level English major

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students, and its findings are expected to be significant for higher education settings where advanced spoken proficiency skills are crucial.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Discourse Management in EFL Speaking Assessment*

Discourse management is of vital importance in speaking competence in EFL contexts which shows the competence in ability to organize and produce proper spoken language coherently and cohesively (Taylor, 2003). Contrary to the single isolated linguistic accuracy, the global structuring of speech is highlighted by such aspects as ensuring the relevance of topics, logical development of ideas, and the overall flow of communication (Luk, 2010). This dimension is critical in speaking assessment as it assesses linguistic competence and communication effectiveness, which is required in honest communication. Discourse management includes the strategic use of language to construct meaningful and well-organized responses to facilitate understanding of the listener (Amiri et al., 2025). Moreover, it includes interactional skills such as turn-taking and managing appropriate responses in conversation, which helps to give more naturalness and coherence in a speech (Luk, 2010). Therefore, discourse management links linguistic knowledge and pragmatic communication skills and thus is an important area of study, teaching, and speaking assessment. Discourse management includes the strategic use of language to construct meaningful and well-organized responses to facilitate understanding of the listener (Amiri et al., 2025). Moreover, it includes interactional skills such as turn-taking and managing appropriate responses in conversation, which helps to give more naturalness and coherence in a speech (Luk, 2010). Therefore, discourse management links linguistic knowledge and pragmatic communication skills. Thus, it is an important area of study, teaching, and speaking assessment.

Thematic development refers to the speaker's ability to introduce and develop topics spoken. It means introducing suitable content and developing it in such a logical way that it can fulfill the communicative needs. According to Nguyen (2023) an effective thematic development is an ability of the speakers as they weave a story or an argument, to make some sense and keep the audience attentive. Without a clear topical structure, speech becomes fragmented or superficial which can have a detrimental effect on understanding and the quality of speech performance. Similarly, Luk (2010) stresses that thematic development is an inherent part of the development of oral proficiency because it indicates the ability of a speaker to deal with discourse genres and expectations in test or real-life situations. They also have a stronger tendency in oral presentations to achieve higher scores, since thematically developed oral presentations are considered deeper and exert a greater degree of organizational design.

Coherence is the logical and semantic relationships that occur in spoken discourse, making the discourse comprehensible. It ensures that ideas flow and that the listeners pick up the speaker's reasoning. Taylor (2003) identifies coherence as one of the basic criteria of standardized speaking tests; that is, coherent speech is characterized by the adequate continuity of focus throughout the discourse, and no abrupt topic changes occur. Indeed, Amiri et al. (2025) set an example of amicability which entails a macro-level organization (e.g., generally organization and depicted idea stream) yet micro-level consistency (e.g., referential coherence). Coherent speakers intelligently get listeners to follow them in utterance as suits listeners in terms of understanding and effectiveness in communication.

Cohesion refers to the linguistic devices that link sentences and ideas explicitly that speakers employ, e.g., conjunctions, pronouns, and repetitions of lexis. It plays the role of the "glue" that holds utterances together, related to a smooth transition from one thought to the next. Khameneh and Faruji (2020) concluded that teaching discourse markers has an important impact on the positive effects of cohesive devices on the learners, especially on fluency and speech clarity. Moreover, the coherence is provided by cohesion (Nguyen, 2023). For example, the cohesive tie "however" can cause the listener to expect the discourse's direction and anticipate the speaker's intent. Lack of cohesivity results in incoherent speech, which makes it difficult for the person's message to communicate the overall message.

B. *Linking Discourse Management to Flipped Learning and TED Talks*

(a). *Flipped Learning and Discourse Management*

Flipped learning has been widely acknowledged as an effective pedagogical means to improve EFL learners' speaking performance with improved discourse management. This method, which reverses traditional classroom teaching by providing content delivery outside the classroom but interactive activities in class time, must support learners with the development of thematic development, coherence, and cohesion in their spoken discourse. Amiryousefi (2019) concluded that flipped learning environments lead learners to be more prepared and more into a deeper level of speaking tasks, enabling them to organize their ideas better and manage the discourse elements, such as the progression of the topics and joining the ideas coherently. The pre-class exposure to materials helps the learners internalize the vocabulary and markers of discourse, which are important in controlling the cohesion in the speech. This scaffolding effect helps the learners to produce more fluent and coherent oral output during class discussion or presentation. Safa and Zareian (2022) focused on using discourse markers in flipped classes. They noted that flipped learning significantly enhanced EFL learners' use of cohesive devices, which united ideas and kept the discourse flowing. The study highlighted that the interactive nature of flipped classrooms, coupled with their collaborative nature, offered learners authentic contexts to exercise and receive feedback on their discourse management skills, resulting in their oral performance.

(b). TED Talks as a Resource to Enhance Discourse Management

In terms of thematic development, a number of studies have shown that TED speakers use coherent strategies for introducing, developing, and polishing topics that bring about the foregrounding of the main point of the speaker's talk and guarantee intelligibility to a wide variety of audiences. Kraisiwattana and Poonpon (2020) showed this structurally, that their move and step analysis showed that TED talks usually foregrounded Topic Introduction in their opening, elaborated Topic Development in the body of their speeches (usually topical, though the body might also be a narrative or problem/ solution), and brought the talk together with Acknowledgment in the conclusion. This rhetorical macro-organization enabled the development of a framework for thematic movement, which the listeners could anticipate where a talk is going and how subtopics would be linked to the main point (Kraisiwattana & Poonpon, 2020; Nederifarjad & Niknia, 2024). Uicheng and Crabtree (2018) complemented this by identifying recurring macro-markers and idea-signaling devices (many of which explicitly contained "idea") that made new thematic units salient to listeners; such markers functioned like explicit thematic anchors, helping listeners to track shifts in concepts. Hamdi (2020) also introduced a micro-pragmatic observation that one-word topic shifters (i.e. 'so', 'now', 'ok') which were shown to have a limited presence in the pedagogic literature were extremely important in indicating a thematic shift. Together, these findings suggested that TED Talks employed both structural planning (rhetorical moves) and fine-grained discourse cues (macro- and micro-markers) to achieve deliberate thematic development.

Coherence in TED Talks resulted from an interaction between the macrostructure and localized, organized transitions. The analysis of the moves by Kraisiwattana and Poonpon (2020) showed that the predictable progression of rhetorical moves (introduction, development, acknowledgment) developed global coherence, which helps listeners maintain a mental model of the talk. At the same time, two studies that focused on topic changing by using inventories of idea-markers (Uicheng & Crabtree, 2018) and topic-shifting markers (Hamdi, 2020) indicated mechanisms that speakers used to maintain local coherence: explicit signaling to the audience when a new idea was being introduced or when the discourse was shifting focus. Interestingly, Hamdi (2020) observed that topic-change was often preceded by pauses; these prosodic pauses did provide multimodal cues with the lexical markers to indicate boundary points in the discourse. Therefore, coherence in TED Talks was not exclusively a function of macrostructure, but instead based on a constellation of linguistic and paralinguistic resources that worked in conjunction to manage the flow of information and meet the expectations of listeners.

Cohesive linking in TED Talks involved a complex use of lexical markers, anaphora, and formulaic connectors that either explicitly tagged relations among propositions (e.g., "the reason is...", "the idea is...") or did pragmatic work (e.g., "so", "okay") to mark inference, elaboration, or transition. Uicheng and Crabtree (2018) proved that TED speakers often used lexical patterns with the word "idea" to introduce a new proposition, to add more semantic relationships between each move. Hamdi (2020) claimed that types of discourse markers in textbooks (e.g., anyway, by the way) were poor when compared with the inventory of the discourse markers used in real spoken discourses, especially those high in frequency and shorter in length which acted as cohesive pivots. The use of explicit idea-marking devices and a pattern of repeating important lexical items across moves produced surface cohesion that is well served by the deeper thematic connections established through rhetorical organization.

C. Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

The framework operationalized discourse management in three key components: thematic development, coherence, and cohesion. Each aspect corresponded to important aspects of the organization of spoken discourse and communicative effectiveness. The primary research question investigated the overall impact of this instructional intervention on discourse management, with sub-questions focusing on the specific effects of this intervention on thematic development, coherence, and cohesion.

Research question: To what extent does TED Talks-based flipped instruction affect EFL students' discourse management in their speaking performance?

Sub research questions:

- To what extent does TED Talks-based flipped instruction affect EFL students' thematic development in their speaking performance?
- To what extent does TED Talks-based flipped instruction affect EFL students' coherence in their speaking performance?
- To what extent does TED Talks-based flipped instruction affect EFL students' cohesion in their speaking performance?

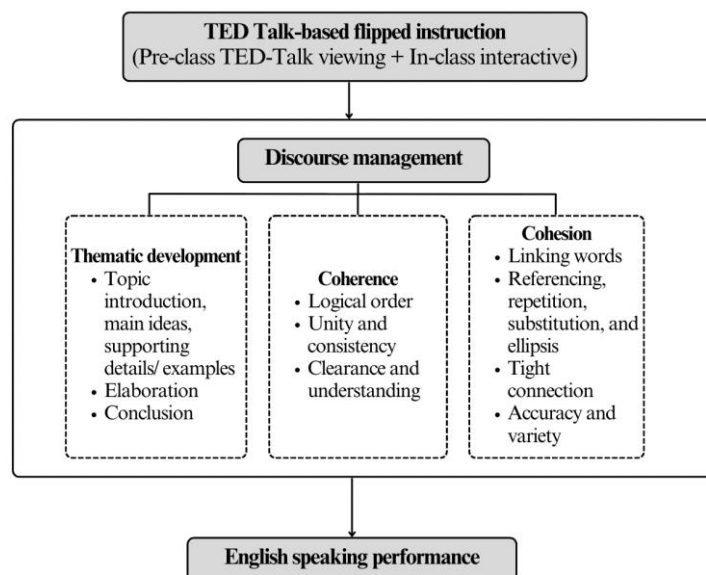


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was based on examining the effect of TED Talk-based flipped instruction on the discourse management of EFL students in speaking performance (Figure 1). The central concept of the framework was the combination of real and exciting input from TED Talks and the pedagogical concept of the flipped classroom, which focused on pre-class time to engage in learning materials and in-class time to practice through interaction.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The recent study involved 57 English-major students. Using random sampling, 32 students were grouped into the experimental group (EG) and 25 into the control one (CG), with females comprising 72% and 78% in each group, respectively. Moreover, the EG demonstrated more empathy toward their younger peers, with 80% of students between 18 and 20 years of age, while in the CG, 61% were in the 21-23 age range. This age cohort of students tends to embrace digital learning resources and may even prefer digitally oriented pedagogical approaches, like the flipped classroom. This might explain the difference in attitudes toward the experimental conditions. In both groups, the students had a strong foundation in English; over 60% had studied the language for over 8 years. This shared linguistic background indicates that variations noted in the current study are less likely to result from disparities in basic English proficiency, making it possible to focus better on the effects of the instructional intervention. However, distinct differences existed in patterns of English use and digital engagement. Students in the EG reported more frequent use of English for daily communication, with 24% who reported speaking English daily as opposed to 6% in the CG. Moreover, no EG students selected "rarely speak English, while 11% of CG students chose that option. This implies that the EG students may have had a higher chance or incentive to actively practice English, which could increase their acceptance of the TED Talk-based flipped teaching.

B. Data Collection Instrument

The data collection in the present study was pre- and post-tests, which were employed exclusively to measure discourse management in speaking performance. These tests concentrated on three aspects, namely thematic development, coherence and cohesion - these being commonly accepted as fundamental elements of the practical oral discourse (Luoma, 2004). Pre-test and post-test have been widely used in the research of language assessment to assess the performance of the learners after instructional interventions (Skehan, 1998; Norris & Ortega, 2000).

The thematic development criterion evaluated the effectiveness of student development and organization of the central theme of their presentations. Meaningfully, students had to present the presence of a clear opening, well-articulated main ideas, supporting details or examples, and a conclusive ending. The content was expected to be logically developed, consistent with the central topic, balanced across the different sections, and supported by relevant evidence to reinforce the main message.

The coherence criterion assessed the coherence and clarity of ideas throughout the presentation. The ideas should be arranged logically for the listeners to follow easily without being disturbed or lacking unity and consistency. Smooth transitions between the introduction, the body, and the conclusion help to convey a clear and comprehensible message to the listeners.

The cohesion criterion quantified the correct use of cohesive devices such as linking words (e.g., however, moreover, therefore), referencing, repetition, substitution, and ellipsis to make effective connections between ideas/sentences.

Sentences and sections are to be closely knitted to avoid fragmentation, with cohesive devices used appropriately and with variety to ensure a flawless flow of discourse.

Each of the criteria was scored on a defined scale, which contributed to the total score for the discourse management, which was categorized into levels from poor to excellent. This detailed evaluation framework gave room for thorough evaluation of students' ability to control the structure of discourse, maintain logical flow, and establish good links between ideas in their spoken language. As such, it revealed important information about the effectiveness of instruction in enhancing oral communication skills.

By providing these tests, this study aimed to document the variations in the discourse management skills of the students after the exposure to the flipped class approach with the TED Talk. The emphasis on thematic development, coherence, and cohesion enabled a thorough assessment of students' organizational and linguistic competencies in spoken English, which are very important for their communication in the academic and real world (Luoma, 2004).

C. Procedure

The intervention procedure was implemented in eleven weeks to enable systematic data collection and respect ethical codes. Initially, all participants were informed of the study's purpose, rights, confidentiality provisions, and the groundwork for trust and ethical adherence. The pre-test in Week 2 made it possible to determine a baseline of discourse management in terms of thematic development, cohesion, and coherence. This baseline was needed to compare the EG and CG before the intervention. The intervention occurred between Weeks 3 and 9, with the EG in a weekly flipped speaking class based on TED Talks and the CG in a traditional speaking class. This design allowed for a planned comparison of pedagogical approaches. Reliable data were obtained from the week 10 post-test, which was given under the same conditions as the pre-test, to evaluate the intervention's effect on learners' discourse management. Finally, the tests were evaluated and given (sub)scores in Week 11. This rigorous procedural design enabled the study of the efficacy of the flipped classroom in improving students' discourse management.

Figure 2 illustrates the steps of utilizing TED Talks in flipped speaking classes to promote students' discourse management in the EG.

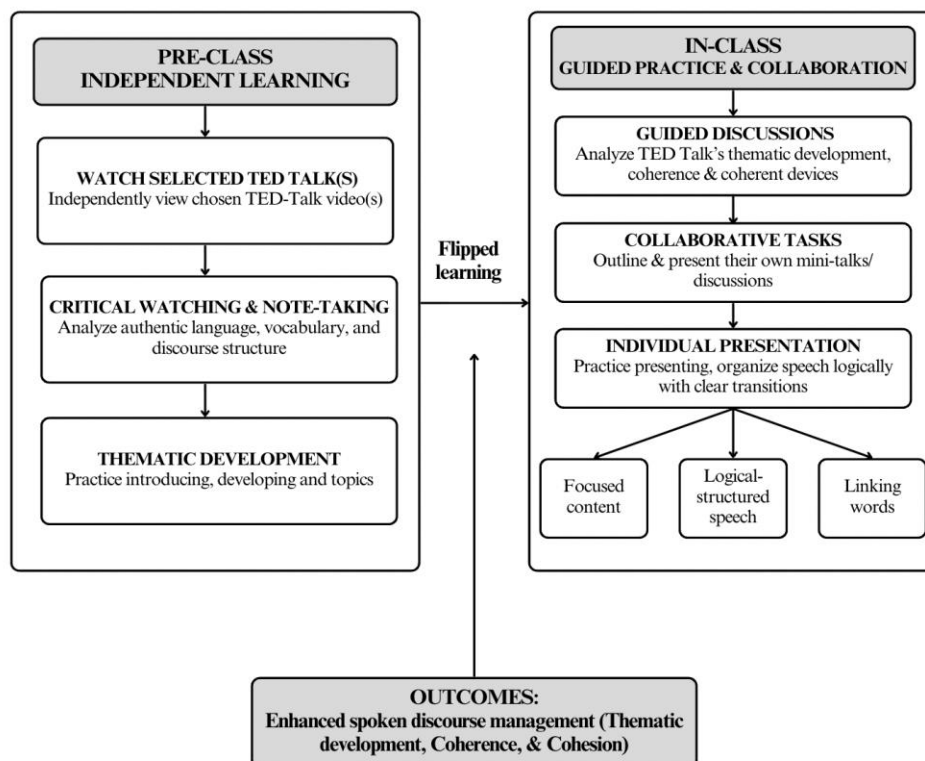


Figure 2. The Implementation of TED Talks in Flipped Speaking Classes Among the Experimental Students

In the intervention, before class, students watched chosen TED Talks in order for them to become familiar with the authentic use of language, different lexical resources, and effective discourse structures. This pre-class exposure helped facilitate active engagement and critical listening, equipping students for deeper in-class activities. During the face-to-face sessions, students engaged in guided discussion and cooperative activities that emphasized the analysis of the thematic unfolding of the talks, picking out how speakers introduce topics, flesh out ideas with supporting details, and effectively conclude, thereby, improving skills in thematic development. Activities also emphasized coherence by encouraging students to practice organizing their own speech logically, using clear transitions, and organizing the unity of their presentations. Furthermore, particular exercises focused on cohesion using the strategic use of linking devices,

referencing, and repetition, similar to what was seen in TED Talks using cohesive devices. By blending real, inspiring content with structured practice in a flipped model, this approach enriched lexical knowledge and systematically developed students' ability to control discourse well in spoken communicative situations.

D. Data Analysis

The evaluation of the discourse management of students in this study was carried out following a detailed scoring rubric, which evaluates three criteria: Thematic Development (4 points), Coherence (3 points), and Cohesion (3 points), for a total of 10 points possible. The scoring ranges of the rubric are well defined within the criteria, enabling precise discrimination of levels of students' performance. For example, Thematic Development scores on a scale from 0 (No thematic development is evident) to 4 (Fully-developed theme with clear organization and supporting evidence). Similarly, Coherence and Cohesion are rated from 0 to 3 concerning the logical flow of ideas and effective use of cohesive devices, respectively. To ensure reliability and validity in scoring, two evaluators with rigorous training and certification attained during the standardized speaking and writing evaluation course of Vietnamese Standardized Tests of English Proficiency (VSTEP) conducted at the University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Hanoi National University, were responsible for a separate, independent assessment of the presentations. This calibration process is consistent with best speaking assessment practices to reduce subjective bias (Luoma, 2004; Hughes, 2003).

For statistical analysis, the statistical package, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0, was used to conduct a one-way repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), comparing the total scores of students in discourse management along with the sub-scores concerning the thematic development, the coherence, and the cohesion before and after the intervention. ANCOVA enabled the potential covariates to be controlled, which would help increase the precision of estimating the intervention effects. This approach aligns with previous research investigating the effect of instructional interventions on speaking proficiency. The repeated-measures design allowed for the detection of within-subject changes over time, allowing for high levels of evidence of the effectiveness of the flipped TED Talks intervention on the enhancement of discourse management. Findings from such analyses are generally very positive in all three sub-criteria, showing the pedagogical value of incorporating authentic materials with structured speaking tasks.

IV. RESULTS

A. The Effect of TED Talk-Based Flipped Instruction on EFL Students' Overall Discourse Management

The results in Table 1 show a statistically significant improvement in the overall discourteous management of EFL students who participated in the TED Talk-based flipped instruction.

TABLE 1
PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES IN THE PRE- AND POST-TEST OF DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT BY THE EG AND CG BEFORE AND AFTER THE INTERVENTION

		Paired differences				
		M	SD	t	p	Cohen's d
Pair 1	EG_Post_Average & EG_Pre_Average	0.765	1.379	3.140	.004	1.379
Pair 2	CG_Post_Average & CG_Pre_Average	0.360	0.995	1.809	.083	0.995

*Note: EG_Post_Average = the overall score of discourse management in the post-test of experimental students; EG_Pre_Average = the overall score of discourse management in the pre-test of experimental students; CG_Post_Average = the overall score of discourse management in the post-test of control students; CG_Pre_Average = the overall score of discourse management in the pre-test of control students

Specifically, in this study, the EG showed a mean improvement of 0.765 points ($t(31)=3.140$, $p=.004$), which is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05 for statistical significance. This implies that the flipped approach to instruction with TED Talks was effective in facilitating an increase in students' ability to structure and control discourse in speaking performances. In addition, the large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.379$) further supported the practical significance of this improvement, indicating a significant educational impact of the intervention.

By contrast, the comparison group involving traditional teaching showed a smaller mean difference in scores ($M=0.360$; $t(24)=1.809$; $p=.083$). Although this suggests a positive trend, this change was not statistically significant. The effect size for the CG (Cohen's $d = 0.995$) was moderate, indicating to some extent the improvement as compared to the experimental group; however, it was not substantial. This difference serves to emphasize the added value of the flipped classroom approach, especially when authentic materials, such as publicly available TED Talks, are integrated, as opposed to conventional teaching methods.

B. The Differences in the Pre- and Post-Test of Discourse Management Compared Within the EG and CG Before and After the Intervention

In the analyzed pre-test illustrated in Table 2, there was no significant difference between the groups ($t(55)=1.231$, $p=.223$), with an intermediate effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.137$). It implies that the two groups had a similar level of competency in speaking prior to the intervention. Levene's test showed there was no significant difference in the variance of both the pre-test results ($F=2.181$, $p=.223$) and post-test results ($F=0.024$, $p=.041$). Assuming homogeneity, the t-tests for comparison of groups were appropriate.

TABLE 2
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES IN THE PRE- AND POST-TEST OF DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT COMPARED WITHIN THE EG AND CG BEFORE AND AFTER THE INTERVENTION
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

	F	t	p	M	Cohen's d	Sig.
Pre-test	2.181	1.231	.223	0.951	1.137	1.659
Post-test	0.024	2.087	.041	0.545	1.249	1.707

Note: Pre-test = the overall score of speaking test before the intervention; Post-test = the overall score of speaking test after the intervention

Contrastively, the difference between the two groups was significantly different as per post-test results ($t(55)=2.087$, $p=.041$) with EG scoring higher than CG in the skills of general discourse management. The above-mentioned mean difference ($M=0.545$) and large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.249$) indicate that the TED Talk-based flipped instruction significantly influences the improvement of management of student's discourse.

The combination of results showed the flipped instructional model had a positive contribution to improving the discourse management and was higher compared to the traditional method of teaching. The large positive effect on the scores in the post-test phase of the EG is attributed to the pedagogical impact of using authentic video resources in TED Talks and the use of active learning techniques in favor of the improvement in better thematic development and cohesion and coherence in the EFL speaking performance.

C. The Differences in Specific Dimensions of Discourse Management of the Pre- and Post-Test Between the EG and CG Before and After the Intervention

(a). Thematic Development

Differences in the development of thematic management between the EG and CG before and after implementing TED Talk-based flipped instruction were analyzed in Table 3, using a one-way ANCOVA, controlling for possible covariates.

TABLE 3
DIFFERENCES IN THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE EG AND CG BEFORE AND AFTER THE INTERVENTION

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.883 ^a	2	1.942	5.952	.009
Intercept	1.197	1	1.197	3.670	.068
V1	3.130	1	3.130	9.596	.005
V9	0.275	1	0.275	0.843	.368
V19	0.000	0			
Error	7.177	22	0.326		
Total	276.750	25			
Corrected Total	11.060	24			

a. $R^2 = .351$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .292$)

The results showed a statistically significant difference in the thematic development between groups ($F(2, 22)=5.952$, $p=.009$), which shows that the intervention had a significant effect on the students' ability to produce the themes in spoken discourse. Specifically, the covariate V1 presumably representing EG's thematic development score had a significant effect ($F(1, 22)=9.596$, $p=.005$), but V9 about CG's one did not come close to significance ($p=.368$). The model explained approximately 35.1% of the variance in thematic development ($R^2 = 0.351$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.292$), indicating moderate explanatory power. These results indicated that the TED Talk-based flipped teaching had a substantial positive impact on thematic development in the EG, compared with the CG, and supported the intervention effect by improving important aspects of discourse management.

(b). Coherence

A one-way ANCOVA was conducted and is demonstrated in Table 4 to compare the differences in coherence between the EG and CG before and after the flipped instruction with TED Talk. Homogeneity of variances was checked and met the requirements for ANCOVA.

TABLE 4
DIFFERENCES IN COHERENCE BETWEEN THE EG AND CG BEFORE AND AFTER THE INTERVENTION

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1.560 ^a	2	0.780	4.354	.026
Intercept	1.414	1	1.414	7.898	.010
V2	1.444	1	1.444	8.064	.010
V10	0.016	1	0.016	0.087	.771
V19	0.000	0			
Error	3.940	22	0.179		
Total	115.750	25			
Corrected Total	5.500	24			

a. $R^2 = .284$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .218$)

Analysis of variance between the treatment groups revealed a statistically significant difference in coherence scores ($F(2, 22)=4.354, p=.026$). It indicated a positive effect of the intervention on improving students' coherence in spoken discourse. The only significant covariates were V10 for CG's coherence ($p=.771$), and V2 for EG's one ($F(1, 22)=8.064, p=.010$). The model accounted for approximately 28.4% of the variance in scores of coherence functioning ($R^2 = .284$, Adjusted $R^2 = .218$), indicating a moderate effect. Therefore, it is suggested that the flipped instructional design, with the help of TED Talks, was able to make the EFL learners' discourse much more cohesive than traditional instruction would have been. Consequently, it can be concluded that such an intervention would have succeeded in improving discourse management.

(c). *Cohesion*

A one-way ANCOVA in Table 5 was performed to study the differences in the cohesion between the EG and CG before and after the TED Talk-based flipped instruction. The assumptions of ANCOVA were satisfied.

TABLE 5
DIFFERENCES IN COHESION BETWEEN THE EG AND CG BEFORE AND AFTER THE INTERVENTION

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1.554 ^a	2	0.777	4.377	.025
Intercept	1.214	1	1.214	6.838	.016
V3	1.064	1	1.064	5.995	.023
V15	0.104	1	0.104	0.584	.453
V19	0.000	0			
Error	3.906	22	0.178		
Total	109.500	25			
Corrected Total	5.460	24			

a. $R^2 = .285$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .220$)

The results of the statistical analysis showed a significant difference in the scores of cohesion between the groups ($F(2, 22)=4.377, p=.025$), indicating that the intervention is effective in enhancing aspects of students' cohesion in spoken discourse. Both the covariate for the experimental cohesion, V3 of the EG's cohesion score, was significant ($F(1, 22)=5.995, p=.023$), and the covariate for the control cohesion, V15 of the CG's one, was not significant ($p=.453$). The model accounted for approximately 28.5% of the variance in cohesion scores ($R^2 = .285$, Adjusted $R^2 = .220$), indicating a moderate impact of the intervention. These results suggested that the TED Talk-based flipped instructional approach improved cohesion in the EG compared to the CG, which played a role in enhancing this important aspect of discourse organization.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the present study revealed a statistically significant improvement in the management of discourse among EFL students as a result of implementing TED Talk-based flipped instruction. This improvement remained evident in all three core aspects of discourse management: thematic development, coherence, and cohesion. These findings supported the previous research which stated the pedagogical benefits of the flipped learning environments in terms of enhancing speaking performance and discourse skills (Amiryousefi, 2019; Safa & Zareian, 2022). However, the shift in thematic development alleviated Nguyen (2023) that the role of effective thematic development was to keep test-takers engaged by creating proper sequencing of the ideas in a logical way. The flipped classroom approach, by exposing students to real TED Talks beforehand, likely scaffolded students' ability to internalize the structures of the theme themselves, which in turn allowed for more coherent and well-developed oral presentations. Moreover, the substantial increases in coherence in this study supported the emphasis on the interaction between macrostructural organization and localized discourse cues in the conceptual framework, as found in TED Talks (Kraisriwattana & Poonpon, 2020; Uicheng & Crabtree, 2018). The flipped learning model allowed students to preview and manage shifts in topic and transitions better-in other words, students mimicked the rhetorical techniques or shifts. This finding, regarding the research gap in the practical use of TED Talk discourse strategies in EFL speaking pedagogy, suggested that such authentic materials can be used successfully to improve learners' global and local coherence in speaking discourse. In terms of cohesion, the findings confirmed the need to teach cohesion devices within communicative settings, as emphasized by Khameneh & Faruji (2020) and Nguyen (2023). The increased use of lexical markers, conjunctions, and referencing in the experimental group indicated that the activities developed in the flipped classroom succeeded in stimulating the strategic deployment of cohesion, which is fundamental for fluent and clear speech. This result supported the findings of Safa and Zareian (2022), which demonstrated that flipped learning can significantly enhance the use of discourse markers. Specifically, their combination with TED Talk materials yielded a measurable and pedagogically meaningful effect on cohesion. Importantly, the large effect sizes and statistically significant differences between the EG and CG provided empirical support for the proposition in the conceptual framework that incorporating authentic input from TED Talk, as well as the flipped instructional design, improved discourse management more effectively than using traditional teaching methods. This confirmed the hypothesized synergy between real-life exposure to authentic language and active in-class practice, which might lead to a greater depth of language and pragmatics competencies among EFL learners.

While the present study provides valuable insights into the effect of TED Talk-based flipped teaching in addressing the discourse management, several limitations are worth noting. First, despite being large enough to detect significant effects the small sample class of fifty-seven students makes it difficult to generalize the results to other EFL populations. The participants were English majors with relatively strong English backgrounds and were highly proficient in English, which may have influenced their receptiveness to the flipped instructional model and authentic materials. Future research needs to address larger and more diverse samples (with different proficiency levels and educational backgrounds) in order to increase external validity. Second, the intervention spanned eleven weeks, a reasonable timeframe for observing short-term improvements, but does not reflect long-term retention or transfer of discourse management skills. Longitudinal studies cannot be avoided in order to examine whether the achievements made in the terms of thematic development, coherence and cohesion are retained in the post-test and to evaluate the consequences for the real-world communicative ability outside the classroom. Third, the current study included a pre-test and post-test speaking evaluation, based mainly on scores of trained assessors, in accordance with an elaborate rubric. While this approach has ensured reliability and validity, the type of analysis that can be made of honest communication may not fully reflect the dynamic and interactive nature of spoken communication in a real communication environment. The addition of qualitative data, such as learners' reflections, classroom observations, or discourse analysis of spontaneous interactions, could lead to a deeper understanding of how flipped instruction impacts discourse management in a real-life context.

Despite the shortcomings, though, the study has important pedagogic implications. The important gains discovered showed that the use of authentic materials from the TED Talk website in promoting a flipped classroom model presents as a viable approach to help in improving key elements of spoken discourse in EFL learners. Teachers are encouraged to use multimodal and learner-centered approaches in order to promote active engagement, critical listening and structured speaking practice. Moreover, the study also emphasizes the importance of an emphasis on explicit teaching and feedback on the development of theme, coherence and cohesion which are often lacking in conventional speaking curricula. Additionally, the results suggest that curriculum designers include authentic, real-world materials that expose learners to discourse and pragmatic cues found in the natural context. In this way, EFL programs can be better equipped to meet the academic and professional demands for students' communication skills. Future instructional designs would also consider incorporating other authentic video resources and digital tools to shape discourse management teaching further.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this study, the impact of a flipped classroom practice using a TED Talk on the management of discourse in the speaking performance of EFL learners, in terms of thematic development, coherence, and cohesion, was compared. The findings indicated that students showed significant improvement in running discourse organization and delivery through the flipped instruction model, using authentic materials from TED Talks, compared to traditional teaching, in terms of lessons learned. The improvements in all three macro-discursive domains support the pedagogical value of integrating authentic input with learner-centered and communicatively active classroom practice. Findings support the gap between theoretical aspects of discourse control and language training, as well as their practical application, by providing empirical evidence for the use of new instructional ideas to develop higher-order speaking skills in EFL learners.

Based on the study's findings and limitations, some recommendations are offered to enhance EFL speaking teaching and provide teachers with a direction for further investigation in this field. Firstly, it is suggested that educators use authentic video content in the models of a flipped classroom. This criterion ensures that learners are exposed to meaningful input of natural discourse structures and pragmatic strategies outside the classroom, and that classroom time is focused on interactive exercises explicitly designed to prompt learners to engage in thematic mapping, coherence, and cohesion. Such guided practice can be of enormous value in raising students' speaking performance. Secondly, curriculum designers should consider promoting flipped learning methodologies and incorporating authentic resources into the speaking curriculum in a more systematic manner. As a consequence of this integration, learners receive proper preparation before class and have rich classroom sessions, where they can experience more involvement in discourse management than in traditional EFL classrooms. Thirdly, future research would benefit from replicating this study by using longitudinal designs and with larger and more diverse samples of learners. This would provide insight into the long-term effects and generalizability of a TED Talk-based flipped instruction. Furthermore, qualitative methods such as discourse analysis and learner self-reflection could be employed in the study to gather more detailed information on how learners internalize and apply discourse management strategies in communicative discourse. Finally, the use of information technologies and software is proposed as a way to provide access to the real resources and virtual practice for speaking. Furthermore, it would allow for more learner autonomy and make the flipped learning experience richer still, making discourse management training even more effective, engaging, and enjoyable.

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The Legacy of Transgenerational Trauma: A Qualitative Study of Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees*

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Abstract—Elif Shafak is regarded as one of the most acclaimed authors of the twenty-first-century Turkish literature. Her works are authentic and distinctive, and most of her characters personify the enigma of displacement and the ensuing trauma—an experience that Shafak herself encountered. The protagonist of the novel, Defne, grapples helplessly with her past after being uprooted from her motherland, and this hinders her ability to live a pleasant life in the present. Defne, a native of the war-torn Cyprus, is burdened by displacement, and she bears the brunt of the past that ruthlessly infiltrates her present. Another appalling impact of displacement is that not only does the victim undergo the traumatic trials but the repercussions are also transferred to the succeeding generations. This paper tries to explore the magnitude of such an impact as well. Taking recourse to the metaphor, “the Sword of Damocles,” which exactly expresses the emotional turmoil that endangers Defne’s life, this paper examines how the past wreaks havoc on her existence and how her tribulations are transferred to the succeeding generation, Ada, her daughter. Though Defne wrestles with her daunting images and emotions of the past, helplessly anticipating recovery, the octopus-like grip of the past crushes and suffocates her to death. In the light of the novel’s events, the paper chronicles the interconnected sequences of forced displacement, the gradual but lethal progression to the disruption of one’s self, and the culmination in the form of the disintegration of her mind and body.

Index Terms—displacement, uprooted, repercussions, tribulations, trauma

I. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘transgenerational trauma’ refers to the instances whereby the traumatic events are passed down from directly traumatized generations to their offspring who have not been exposed to the initial traumatic event. If a person has gone through a devastating past of genocide, famine, or forced migration, the children might inherit the same stress response. The effects of trauma are physiological and psychological, resulting in vulnerability to physical and mental health issues. The repercussions, in the form of stress responses, invariably dismantle the affected person’s demeanour, spur stress disorders, and cause social disputes. Ultimately, the affected person becomes socially vulnerable and reclusive, retreating into a shell of isolation. Literature serves as a powerful tool in reflecting this traumatic state by linking the characters to the incident that changes their entire life. Through the characters, the writer projects how this trauma transcends from one generation to the next and explores its consequences.

Elif Shafak’s novel *The Island of Missing Trees*, published in 2021, is a captivating and sweeping novel about love and loss, identity and displacement, and trauma and renewal. At once heart-breaking and hopeful, traumatic and tranquilizing, the story spans several points in time, taking the readers from the beauty of the island of Cyprus to the brutal destructions caused by the military presence and from there to London. The story goes on to explore personal trauma on an intimate scale and collective trauma on a larger scale in countries divided by conflicts, through the character Ada. Ada carries with her a sadness that is not quite her own and grapples with an inner rage, loneliness, and a sense of trauma that makes her feel as if she does not belong anywhere. Against this background, the novel presents the traumatic state across generations and its consequences.

The novel *The Island of Missing Trees* is the best illustration of traumatized generations as the author effectively presents this concept through the realistic portrayal of major characters. Set against the historical and political turmoil of Cyprus, which forms the foundation of the narrative, the novel weaves together themes like war, exile, memory, love and reconciliation. It reveals the inherited trauma of the protagonist and her generation, highlighting its impact on relationships and personal identities. Through the platform of displacement and rootedness, the author provides insight into the impacts and implications of transgenerational trauma. This paper examines how the novel represents the continuation of trauma across generations, the force that stimulates its transmission, and the psychological consequences.

II. DISCUSSIONS

A. Displacement and Trauma

The bond with one's motherland is pristine and perpetual, and closely intertwined with one's physical and psychological existence. The motherland is a sublime emotion that takes root at birth, and gradually the bond grows so deep that any attempt to uproot it results in inexplicable trauma. The harrowing experiences of dislocation, disintegration, and displacement occur in different parts of the world in different forms. Displacement is a scar that can never be healed, a wound that can never be soothed, and a bleed that can never be stopped. The trauma of displacement is the scar of disintegration, a wound of dislocation, and a bleed of dissection. The demands of life, such as scouting for means of sustenance, may force one to endure such hardships, but the heart will always long for the solace and soothing spirit of the motherland. This is the reason why many people, who have migrated to other countries, searching for better pastures or a better life, yearn to return to their motherland in the twilight of their lives.

Even in the twenty-first century, conflicts continue to force people flee from their countries as refugees or displaced persons, which leaves a permanent scar on their minds that affects subsequent generations. Even though technology and economic development have made migration easy, and enabled the migrants to stay in touch with the family and roots, the effect, the impact, the consequences, and the conflict that migration inflicts have always been persistent and permanent, creating confusion and tension not only in migrants but also in the subsequent generations. Migrants constantly feel nostalgic for their homeland, from where they were uprooted, and find themselves in a new land with their pain, agony, and lost identity. As migrants, they have to cope with other issues like cultural, social, and psychological hurdles, which make them feel alienated. The recent aggression of Russia on Ukraine can very well be cited as an example. The desperate faces of people fleeing for their lives, the helpless victims queuing up and begging for one square meal a day, and the heart-wrenching cries of people for help have fallen on deaf ears. Though these victims are able to take asylum in other countries, the wounds inflicted on them from being uprooted from the lap of their motherland can never be healed and will have lifelong implications. The pulse of the motherland is strongly and innately cemented as a life-nourishing and life-supporting source, so any forced uprooting and replanting will have disastrous consequences, as reflected in *The Island of Missing Trees*. This is why the roots of existence in an alien country cannot derive nourishment from the foreign soil and always yearn for the flourishing in the native soil.

B. Memories of Homeland

Memories of a person are like echoes, resurfacing whenever an object or individual triggers them. Such memories often occur when one is far from a place or moment, repeatedly flashing in the mind like reminders. For immigrants, these memories are inseparable as they adapt to an entirely different environment. This leads to several problems such as identity crises, the search for roots, alienation, stress, and trauma. For those who eventually return to their homeland, these problems may diminish. However, for those who continue life in a new land, the challenges can become overwhelming. In *The Island of Missing Trees*, the major characters, Defne and Kostas, illustrate this experience, while their daughter Ada embodies its lasting impact through transgenerational trauma.

The plot of the novel moves between Cyprus and London. Defne and Kostas secretly meet at a bar called Happy Fig, which gets its name from a large, thriving fig tree standing tall adjacent to it. As Defne is Turkish and Kostas is Greek, their love is prohibited in a setting where both ethnicities are at odds with one another. As the civil war breaks out, Panagiota, Kostas's mother, decides to send him to live in London under her brother's control. With the expectation of returning within a few days, Kostas departs without realizing that his stay away will have no end. He leaves a note for Defne, but it is not received by her. Meanwhile, her family discovers that she is pregnant. Defne initially goes to British gynaecologist, Dr. Norman, who offers to assist her in getting an abortion. But unable to carry out her plan, she gives birth to a child and gives it up for adoption. Unfortunately, the infant passes away from malaria at the age of one.

Dr. Norman contacts Kostas who goes on to become a well-known botanist and ecologist. He writes to Defne often after arriving in London, but she never replies. Determining to visit Cyprus 25 years later, he discovers that Defne is employed by the Committee for Missing Persons (CMP), a UN organization dedicated to locating those who went missing during the conflict in Cyprus. They reunite and move to London. Before leaving, they visit the tavern and take the remains of a fig tree and replant it in their home in London. "The tree thus becomes a silent spectator to their relationship", say Nikita and Porselvi (2024, p. 151).

After their daughter Ada Kazantzakis's birth, Defne returns to work in the CMP in London. Both Kostas and Defne make a conscious decision to cut all ties with their motherland and also not to tell their daughter about their life in Cyprus. "I don't want Ada to be burdened by the things that hurt us. I want you to promise me, Kostas. You won't tell her much about our past" (Shafak, 2021, p. 317). Later, Defne's work with CMP triggers her haunting memories of her homeland, and, being unable to shed the garb of her past memories, she takes recourse in drinking, and gradually develops an excessive drinking habit. "...whether it's your own memory or your parents' or your grandparents,' this fucking pain becomes part of your flesh. It messes up your psychology and shapes how you think of yourself and others" (Shafak, 2021, p. 317).

Later, due to an alcohol overdose, Defne falls into coma and eventually passes away. Defne's death was the result of her haunting memories of her homeland. She struggled to establish herself in London but failed miserably as she was

heavily weighed down by the intensely nostalgic memories of her past. Her funeral is not attended by any of Defne's family members. Ada was conceived in Cyprus but was born and brought up in London. She has never visited her home country or met any of her relatives, and has never spoken either of her parents' languages, Turkish or Greek. Ada once had a close bond with her father, but Defne's death creates a distance between them. Though Ada mourns for her mother and longs for her presence, she develops a sense of anger towards Defne, believing that her mother's death was caused by her own selfish behaviour, as her happiness rested solely on returning to her homeland rather than being with her daughter in London, which contributed to the manner of her death. Ada believes that her mother's death has been caused by the haunting memories of her homeland. The traumatic life journey of Defne and Kostas as depicted in the novel cannot be viewed as a fictitious one or a figment of the writer's imagination.

The character of Ada slowly unravels under the burden of the tragic death of her mother, Defne. The increasing distance in her relationship with her father, and the estrangement from their family in Cyprus, who didn't even attend her mother's funeral, bring subtle and multifarious impacts on Ada's character. Ada was not told much about her past because her parents did not want her to be affected by the sorrows of their past. They never informed her about the island of Cyprus, to which they belonged. But Ada had always been curious and sensed the troubles of her shrouded past from absences and silences.

C. *The Inheritance of Transgenerational Trauma*

According to numerous studies, trauma affects at least one-third of the population in cases of displacement. The emotional need to return home- the place where one no longer belongs, and yet the place which is always carried within oneself as a dear emotion and the preceding and trailing trauma branching therefrom, is common features of displacement, whether forced or voluntary. In this age of political unrest and conflicts, marred by the angst of Manipur Ethnic Violence, the uncertainty of Israel-Palestine conflict, and the anxiety of Rohingya Refugees, the term 'Transgenerational trauma' has gained prominence arousing widespread deliberations about its premises. The biological and psychological components of this trauma are interconnected, as trauma begins when a parent experiences it. If these patterns are not processed and treated, the triggers of trauma will transit from parents to children and impact across generations. As generally viewed, the life experiences of parents' shape who they are, and, in turn, they influence the way their children develop.

In the novel *The Island of Missing Trees*, Ada is bound by the same spirit that ties her parents to their heritage. Defne and Kostas take pieces of the island with them such as the branches from the withering fig tree, when they move from Cyprus to London, which they plant in their household. Their daughter Ada had already been conceived in Cyprus. It is no wonder that Ada, who grows up in a house inundated with the remnants of her parents' Cyprus clutch, is inadvertently tailored to absorb the spirit of Cyprus. Ada has inherited her mother's sadness, which Shafak makes evident at the outset, even though Defne strives hard to keep it away from her daughter. Ada is caught in an inextricable maze of confusion, scouts helplessly for solace, not knowing how to unearth the root cause of her melancholy. "They ooze down slowly, a flow so slight as to be imperceptible, moving across time and space, until they find a crack in which to settle and coagulate. The apathy of an inherited trauma is random: you never know who might get it, but someone will" (Shafak, 2021, p. 128).

Ada's feelings of alienation and the frustration of adolescent life, intensified by her mother's death, build up over time and unexpectedly explode in the classroom. Ada was asked to share her opinions on family customs and memories during a class session. Ada found it difficult to reply because she did not know much about her family history. Consequently, Ada's most peculiar reaction—shrieking in frustration at the top of her voice, while the teacher and the students stared in horror, was the result of the humiliation of being exposed in front of the class as someone without a strong family history and strong family bonds. Ada screamed in frustration and was not sure why she was screaming. With family secrets fiercely kept from her and silences firmly preserved, this scream seems to be a symbolic verbalization of suppressed trauma. Ada released the feelings that had been accumulating inside her through this turbulent action. As there was no narrative, Ada was unable to relate to her past or her parents' home country, which was the cause of her outburst and tears. This finally thrust her feelings into an identity crisis. She unleashed her emotions that have been building up inside her through her scream that rattled her surroundings. Though the readers know that the obliterated past is the underlying cause of her trauma, there is none to unravel it until her Aunt Meryam steps in. Bharathi and Parameswari (2024) examine that "...the characters are experiencing emotional conflict in positioning the present that is very much burdened by their past" (p. 24).

When Meryam arrives during Ada's winter break, she becomes a means through which Ada expresses her frustration, inquisitiveness, and the desire for connection. Ada loves to listen to Meryam's accounts and starts to learn more about her parents' past in Cyprus and gradually gets reconciled with her past. Though a large portion of the novel recounts the tale of Defne and Kostas, it is Ada who is instrumental in unraveling the occurrences and obligations of the realm of transgenerational trauma. In Turkish, the name Ada means 'Island.' The choice of this name for their daughter itself reflects the couple's devotion to their native country and their attachment to their homeland. When Ada bears the name that her parents are inexorably linked to, it becomes a conjuring agent of the memories of their Cyprus past. O'Neill (2023) comments, "The novel suggests that the traumas of the past, embodied in the recovery of those disappeared in the conflict, resurface in second and third generations" (p. 798).

In this novel, Defne's inability to escape from her pain, her psychological suffering, and the dreadful reality of her affliction were passed on to the subsequent generation, as her daughter Ada also inherited them. It is through the character of Ada, that Shafak establishes the theme of 'transgenerational trauma', which is the key tone of the novel. Though Ada did not personally experience the agony and anguish of displacement, the trauma of her mother was passed on to her. To convey the magnitude of the suffocating and strangulating pain of Defne, Shafak uses the metaphor of the fig tree, which marvellously depicts the precarious and fragile balance of life that she struggled to establish in London. The roots of fig trees are deep and spread broadly in soil. When trees are uprooted and replanted, profuse care must be given to enable them to adapt to their new environment. And even with extreme nurturing, most of them fail to survive the displacement. The image of fig tree runs as an undercurrent throughout the novel explicating the trauma that Defne goes through. The novel portrays Defne's silence as a protective barrier against the potential, psychological and emotional damage that could have been caused by the disclosure of their experiences such as extramarital affair, the death of her unborn sibling, the separation, and the pain, suffering, and trauma.

D. Overcoming Transgenerational Trauma

In real life, unlike in history books, stories come to us not in their entirety but in bits and pieces, broken segments and partial echoes, a full sentence here, a fragment there, a clue hidden in between. In life, unlike in books, we have to weave our stories out of threads as fine as the gossamer veins that run through a butterfly's wings. (Shafak, 2021, p. 262)

With transgenerational trauma evolving as a universal phenomenon, escaping from its clutches needs a strong supporting system and proper channeling of emotions to mitigate the catastrophic effect. Ada had bottled up her emotions until she reached the verge of explosion and the external exhibition of trauma signs. "Through the preservation, transformation, and transmutation of traumatic memory, children of survivors strive to assimilate, redeem, and transform their tragic historical legacy" (Adelman, 1995, p. 365). The scream let out by her in the classroom signified the magnitude of the weight that she was carrying within herself. To release her from the jail of emotions, there was the therapeutic intervention of her Aunt Meryam, which resulted in her catharsis.

Ada knew that something was troubling her, but did not know how to articulate it until her mother's sister Meryam came to visit her. It was through Aunt Meryam that Ada realised much of her lineage, which no one had shared with her, the undisclosed trauma of her mother, and how the trauma had impacted Ada and imprisoned her present life as well. The revelations about her past and the unravelling of reasons which led to the tragic death of her mother had a tranquilizing effect on Ada. She underwent a purgation of pent-up emotions which had been corroding her life and eroding her existence. Eventually, Meryam's conversations with Ada about her mother and her life in Cyprus helped Ada to re-establish a connection with her parents' past. The dents in her personality, induced by the blow of Defne's painful past, were sealed. By giving Ada, the history of Cyprus and her parents' background, Meryam fills the gap in Ada's life and acts as a surrogate mother, helping her to mend the wounds. Sabbah and Ayuningtyas (2022) say, "...Meryam appears to be the character that challenges those who seem to be lost between past-present" (p. 68). Releasing herself from the deafening silence that had been strangulating her, Ada is free to move on with her life.

Liberated from her worrisome past and wilting pain, Ada steps into the bright horizon of cheer and contentment. She starts a new chapter of happiness in life and goes back to school without being loaded with the baggage of apprehension and ambiguity. However, the yearning to walk on the soil trodden by her mother, to relish the fragrance of the air so cherished by her mother, and to be soothed by the breeze which her mother always pined for, had always been throbbing in her as a flicker of light that refused to be extinguished. Ada's happiness knew no bounds when her father promised to take her to Cyprus to experience the island, which she knew would enrich her future and embolden her foundation. When Ada says, "I'll come to the Island, I just want to meet islanders, like myself" (Shafak, 2021, p. 338), the readers can experience the profuse gush of suppressed desires being given an outlet.

E. Psychic and Physical Implications of Trauma

If the psychological exertion of trauma is disastrous, its physiological exertion is equally perilous. While the psychological impact is more on a personal level and the grip is mostly subjective, the effects of the physiological impact are more outward and ostensible for the family and society, prompting them to be active participants in the process of recovery of the affected. Atkinson (2017) suggests that trauma is a "complex, repetitive structure of feeling that actively organizes the present" (p. 1).

The help and moral support extended by outside agents such as family members, friends and relatives go a long way in speeding up the reconciliation process. To navigate further into the intricacies involved, it will be instructive to cite a few man-made disasters such as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, and the Chernobyl disaster. Turning the pages of history since then, it has been accurately documented that the physical deformities, genetic disorders, and neurological impairments are permanently stamped on these hapless victims of the aforementioned tragedies. The hard-hitting reality is that the vicious air of man-induced calamities is still and will forever be, permeated by man's avarice and animosity, so that generations born thereafter breathe in that air.

When a person is born with physical deformities as a result of the distortive forces that have been passed through generations, no explanation and no argument can give a convincing answer to the victim when a legitimate question is raised on who is responsible for his physical trauma. As the physiological trauma is extremely explicit and cannot be

blanketed by the suppression of one's feelings internally, it is inevitable that along with the victims, the people surrounding them also walk through the lanes of trauma while watching them being in a crippled state. "Traumatic affect rumbles, spills, bursts forth, erupts, leaks, emits, fumes, whispers, screams, and acts from its restless grave, because at the deepest level it seeks recognition. It demands witnessing and memorial and it haunts until it gets it" (Yusin, 2017, p. 131).

It is inferred that both physiological and psychological trauma are two sides of the same coin. The degree of grip may vary: sometimes the psychological trauma will be ruling the personality and sometimes the physiological one. In some other cases, both will crush the victim mentally and physically. In the backdrop of the events in the novel *The Island of Missing Trees*, the psychological facet of trauma is unravelled through the victim Ada, though the same doesn't inflict the violation of her physicality. "Physically fit but mentally unfit" can be the summing-up statement of Ada's personality. Though the varying magnitude of invasion in the varying altitudes of psychological and physiological spheres can be the feature of trauma, the crushing effect in both the cases will be ferocious and far-reaching.

III. CONCLUSION

"Is it really difficult to shed the weight of one's troublesome past?" "How does one navigate through the remnants of the past without being choked by its pressure?" These are two poignant questions that Defne's life raises before the readers. Though the binding thread of the novel is rooted in transgenerational trauma and is embodied by Defne, the readers have more encounters with Kostas than Defne. Defne is given a more subdued presence in the novel, maybe to figuratively implicate that the burden of past breaks one's confidence, pulling one into a trench of torments. While following the progression of the story line, it is brought to notice that the character Defne is mostly hidden under various masks of vulnerability, disappointment, detachment, dejection and death. On gaining further insights into the novel, the readers can conclude that the different character shades painted on Defne are an effective writing mechanism adopted by Shafak to forcefully convey her mental struggle. This technique comes across as an effective writing tool and is more powerful than words, as the readers get to inhale the intricacies of her character and feel along with her.

Generational trauma, like an untended wound, does not go away on its own, and unresolved trauma gets worse over time. Prolonged exposure to trauma can also put a person at the risk of mental and physical derailment. Even though the shock waves left by traumatic experiences can continue beyond a lifetime, coping strategies and effective supportive mechanisms will regulate emotions and manage stress. The novel *The Island of Missing Trees* amazingly addresses the topic of transgenerational trauma and sets the ground for constructive and productive discussions about this reality and the related coping mechanisms. In a world of escalating violence, this book is the harbinger of hope, reassuring the people around the world affected by the trauma of displacement that they can come out of the dim alleys of isolation and shield their successive generation from the scorching heat of trauma.

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Ethnopoetic Codes in Kazakh Media: Transformations of Proverbs, Mythologemes and Zhyrau Poetry

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Abstract—A comprehensive examination of the use of linguistic units with national-cultural content in contemporary media and the disclosure of their pragmatic dimension are of both theoretical and practical importance. The article explores the function of language as a cultural code representing national identity, as well as the manifestation of linguo-cultural units and ethno-poetic codes in the language of the modern press. From a linguo-cultural perspective, the study analyzes the paremial repertoire, mythologemes, and the transformation of zhyr traditions (*zhyrau tolgau*) in contemporary discourse. Such linguo-cultural units, being core objects of national artistic creativity, today serve as key instruments in identifying ethno-poetic codes. The research employs textual analysis, comparative-historical methods, as well as linguo-cultural and cultural studies interpretation, allowing for a comprehensive investigation of their semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic functions. The collected materials reveal the ethno-poetic foundations of linguistic creativity in Kazakhstani press and highlight new dimensions in transmitting national worldview and cultural memory.

Index Terms—ethno-poetic code, media space, zhyrau poetry, proverbs and sayings, mythologeme

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a means of communication but also a reflection of the spiritual and cultural life of a people. The everyday life, worldview, and cognitive system of each nation are clearly manifested in its language. Therefore, understanding the nature of a language is equivalent to understanding the essence of the people themselves.

In modern linguistics, the anthropocentric paradigm has significantly expanded the understanding of language as a cultural and cognitive phenomenon. Within this framework, language is viewed not merely as a communicative system but as a repository of collective memory, cultural experience, and national identity. Linguocultural units embedded in language preserve the historical experience, value system, and symbolic worldview of a nation. These units function as carriers of ethnopoetic meaning, reflecting deep cultural structures formed over centuries and transmitted through linguistic tradition.

In contemporary society, media discourse has become one of the primary environments in which linguocultural units are actively used, transformed, and reinterpreted. This transformation is closely linked to a growing societal awareness of the cultural and communicative value of the Kazakh language (Aldash et al., 2025, p. 860), which has stimulated renewed interest in the preservation and reinterpretation of ethnopoetic codes within modern media discourse. Media texts do not simply convey factual information; they also shape cultural perception and influence the cognitive and emotional responses of readers. In this context, ethnopoetic codes such as mythological images, proverbs, aphorisms, and poetic structures derived from traditional oral literature play a crucial role. Their use enhances the expressive potential of media language and strengthens its pragmatic and persuasive functions by activating shared cultural knowledge.

Despite the increasing scholarly interest in media linguistics and linguocultural studies, the transformation and pragmatic functions of ethnopoetic codes in modern Kazakh media discourse remain insufficiently investigated. In

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particular, the mechanisms through which traditional ethno poetic structures are adapted to contemporary communicative contexts require systematic analysis. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the transformation of ethno poetic codes in Kazakh media discourse and to identify their semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic functions in shaping cultural meaning and influencing readers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

At all stages of linguistic scholarship, studies of language have consistently emphasized its connection with the nation, culture, and society. The national teacher A. Baitursynuly notes that throughout the long course of their existence, every people develops habitual words, established patterns of combining those words, and a distinctive internal structure and logic. Just as each people differs in its way of life, customs, and character, its language likewise reflects those differences (Baitursynuly, 2009, p. 6). His statement that a people who speak and write in their native language never lose their national identity further demonstrates that language is the primary force in preserving the nation (Baitursynuly, 2009, p. 4).

In the works of Professor K. Zhubanov, language is also regarded as an indicator of a people's historical and cultural development. By revealing the social nature of language, he considered it a phenomenon that develops together with society (Zhubanov, 1933, p. 34).

According to the scholar E. N. Zhanpeisov, the national language is a reflection of the entire life of a people and an archive in which the full intellectual and cultural heritage of a highly developed and conscious society is preserved (Zhanpeisov, 1989).

Academician R. Syzdyk identified the role of language as a national cultural code. In her view, language is the force that transforms an individual into a full member of their people and serves as a key instrument in shaping national consciousness. Thus, language is the fundamental factor that forms the spiritual essence of a nation (Syzdyk, 2010).

The linguist N. Uali emphasizes that language is one of the most important instruments of human communication, thought, and culture, and a powerful means of life. As it is increasingly used in communication, its flexibility develops and becomes more refined (Uali, 2007, p. 54).

These statements confirm the nature of language as a social, cultural, and spiritual memory. The growing relevance of such fields as linguoculturology, linguo-country studies, and ethnolinguistics within the anthropocentric paradigm of modern linguistics is also directly connected with the intrinsic nature of language.

Linguoculturology is an important branch of philology that studies the relationship between language and culture and examines the national cultural content reflected in language. According to the central premise of this field, the language of each nation serves as a repository of its cultural code and a key to its spiritual heritage. The history, worldview, traditions, and behavioral patterns of a people leave their imprint in language.

According to A. Islam, who conducted in-depth research on the relationship between language and culture, language is an inseparable component of culture and is understood in linguoculturology as a form of spiritual existence. In language, the worldview of a nation, its customs, traditions, and the distinctive features of its national culture are reflected as manifestations of spiritual life (Islam, 2004, p. 22).

Linguocultural units in the language of each people reflect the specific ways in which that nation perceives the surrounding world, its values, and its cognitive model of reality. In this regard, A. Islam states that the linguistic picture of the world represents a system of knowledge accumulated in language on the basis of collective national cultural experience shared by representatives of a particular nation and its socio-cultural community (Islam, 2004, p. 29). Therefore, since the linguistic picture of the world constitutes a system of knowledge formed through national cultural experience, the primary linguistic evidence that defines its structure is linguocultural units.

Linguocultural units include stable elements at all levels of language that reflect national specificity. These include proverbs, aphorisms, phraseological units, mythological images and symbols, ethnographic terms, and linguistic formulas associated with traditions and customs.

In media communication, linguocultural units perform several important functions. First, they express national identity by presenting elements of national mentality and worldview, thereby creating resonance in the reader's consciousness. Second, they perform a cognitive function, as they enable readers to recall or newly comprehend aspects of their own cultural heritage.

Third, they perform a pragmatic function of influence. Such units evoke emotional responses, shape the reader's emotional state, and may contribute to the formation of evaluative attitudes.

III. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative linguocultural and discourse-analytical approach to examine the transformation of ethno poetic codes in contemporary Kazakh media. The research material consists of media texts published in national newspapers and online media platforms, including Egemen Kazakhstan, Zhas Alash, Aikyn, and Abai.kz. The analysis integrates textual analysis, comparative analysis, and linguocultural interpretation to identify ethno poetic elements such as mythologemes, proverbs, aphorisms, and structures derived from zhyrau poetry. These units were examined in terms of their semantic transformation, stylistic modification, and pragmatic function within media discourse. This

methodological framework enables a comprehensive investigation of how ethnopoeitic codes are preserved, adapted, and function as mechanisms for transmitting cultural memory and influencing readers in modern communication.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguocultural units represent a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Their systematic classification and comparative analysis undoubtedly contribute significantly to the development of linguistic science. As the scope of this field expands, the range of research questions requiring scholarly attention also increases. In this regard, in the process of analyzing linguocultural units, it is necessary to give special consideration to the issue of the ethnopoeitic code.

The concept of ethnopoeitics has emerged relatively recently. According to the Russian scholar Zakharov, among the various disciplines that begin with the prefix *ethno*, one essential field has long been absent, namely ethnopoeitics. This field is intended to study the national specificity of each literature and its place within the global artistic process (Zakharov, 2012, p. 9).

The contemporary understanding of ethnopoeitics does not fully correspond to this original idea. Dennis Tedlock offers a concise and insightful formulation, stating that any poetics is inherently ethnopoeitics (Tedlock, 2020). This perspective demonstrates that the concept of ethnopoeitics serves as a foundation for the emergence of diverse theoretical approaches.

The theoretical foundations of this field have been extensively examined in studies devoted to the analysis of the poetics of national literatures, their genre structures, and the manifestation of national character and cultural codes (Likhachev, 1967, 1973, 1984, 1993; Averintsev, 1977; Gachev, 1988; Lossky, 1957; Sheshunova, 2005, 2008, 2017; Smykovskaya, 2016; Zyryanov, 2019; Zinnatullina, 2010; Matuzkova, 2013; Trykov, 2017). A significant contribution to the development of the theoretical and methodological foundations of ethnopoeitics has been made by I. A. Esaulov, whose works systematically examine the national specificity of literature, cultural and religious archetypes, conceptual structures, and the artistic representation of cultural consciousness (Esaulov, 1995, 2004a, 2004b, 2012, 2015). In addition, within ethnopoeitic analysis, the concept is regarded as a central category, and its role in shaping cultural codes, national worldview, and collective consciousness has been clearly established (Stepanov, 2004; Lukov & Lukov, 2008, 2013). According to scholars, concepts and ethnopoeitic structures ensure the interconnection between language, literature, and culture, reflecting the spiritual experience, value system, and cultural memory of a people (Tolstoi, 1995; Tolstaya, 1996; Tabakova, 2014; Zakharov, 1985, 1994, 1998, 2012). From this perspective, ethnopoeitics is regarded as an important field of research that reveals the nature of language as a cultural code and explains the mechanisms through which national worldview and cultural meanings are manifested in linguistic and poetic structures (Hymes, 1994).

Thus, the ethnopoeitic code constitutes the underlying creative foundation and core of linguocultural units. Each proverb, phraseological unit, or figurative expression may represent an individual manifestation of a particular ethnopoeitic code. For example, the image of the whip in Kazakh culture symbolizes power and valor, which has given rise to comparative expressions associated with brevity, strength, or intensity. In this sense, the ethnopoeitic code represents an integrated system of cultural meanings, while linguocultural units function as its concrete linguistic representations.

When examining the types of ethnopoeitic codes, mythological, epic, and ritual-based plots and motifs are particularly significant. In linguistic usage, these elements appear in the form of proverbs, epithets, metaphors, and figurative expressions.

A. Transformation and Pragmatic Functions of Mythological Ethnopoeitic Codes in Media Discourse

The personification of the Earth as Mother Earth reflects a mythological worldview in which the Earth is perceived as a nurturing and life-sustaining entity. This representation appears in media discourse in expressions such as Mother Earth also longs for care, Will you forgive us, Mother Earth, and If neglected, even Mother Nature loses its vitality and value. In these examples, ecological issues are conveyed through mythopoeitic conceptualization, which strengthens both the emotional and cultural resonance of the message.

Similarly, the concept of Zheruyik represents an important ethnopoeitic code in Kazakh cultural consciousness. In media discourse, this term is often used in a metaphorical sense. Examples include titles such as Zheruyik in Zhezkazgan and Zheruyik of the Scandinavian Peninsula (Egemen Kazakhstan, 2020, 2022). The concept of Zheruyik refers to an idealized and harmonious land. By employing this term, authors evoke cultural memory and emotional engagement, guiding readers toward the intended meaning of the text. This represents an effective pragmatic strategy. Furthermore, the use of the term Zheruyik automatically activates associations with the utopian vision of Asan Kaigy in the reader's cultural consciousness, thereby enhancing the interpretive depth of the message.

The headline Why Has the K k B r  Disappeared (Egemen Kazakhstan, May 17, 2023) at first glance appears to be a simple question about the disappearance of the gray wolf. However, the term *k k b r * carries a much deeper cultural meaning. In ancient Turkic mythology, the *k k b r * represents a totemic wolf regarded as the mythical ancestor of the Turkic people. In Kazakh cultural tradition, this image has been widely used in heroic epics and in expressions conveying valor and strength. In everyday usage, the term may also denote a wolf in its literal sense. In the referenced article, the decline in the wolf population in Kazakhstan's natural environment is discussed. This example demonstrates that, in order to enhance the expressive impact of the text, the author deliberately replaces a neutral lexical unit with a mythologically and culturally marked designation. The use of the term *k k b r * instead of the neutral word *wolf* evokes a stronger emotional and cultural response in the reader. While the statement the wolf population is declining would be perceived

primarily as ecological information, the phrase the *kök börü* is disappearing may activate associations with national symbolism, cultural loss, and collective concern. Thus, the pragmatic function of the linguocultural unit *kök börü* is to convey ecological information while simultaneously embedding it within a national and cultural framework, thereby producing both aesthetic and ideological effects.

Another important feature of the ethnopoetic code is the implicit representation of mythological elements. This phenomenon is clearly observable in contemporary media discourse. For example, the headline *A Country Deeply Gripped by the Pandemic* (Egemen Kazakhstan, August 13, 2020) evokes associations with the mythical figure *Zheztynraq* from Kazakh folklore. Although not explicitly mentioned, the semantic element associated with claws in the collective cultural consciousness is linked to a destructive supernatural force, thereby conceptualizing the pandemic as an agent of harm through mythopoetic imagery.

Similarly, the expression *Wherever You Go, There Is Cigarette Smoke* (Egemen Kazakhstan, March 11, 2022) implicitly recalls the well-known cultural narrative associated with *Korkyt*. Although the figure of *Korkyt* is not directly mentioned, the phrase *wherever you go* activates the cultural memory of the traditional expression *Wherever you go, you encounter Korkyt's grave*. This association symbolically conveys the inevitability of death and transfers this existential concept into the context of a contemporary social issue. In such cases, mythological meaning is realized at the intertextual level and depends on the reader's background cultural knowledge. The expression *Knowing Where the Wind Will Carry and Where It Will Settle* (Qazaq, January 26, 2021) likewise relies on the reader's cultural competence for its full interpretation.

In the example *Whom Do We Call Wealthy Today, Those Who Join the Ranks of Shygaibai and Pursue Wealth Only for Themselves* (Atyrau Newspaper, October 14, 2021), the cultural image of *Shygaibai* is used to interpret the concept of wealth. This reference activates a well-established literary and cultural image in the reader's consciousness and applies it to contemporary social reality. The pragmatic effect of this strategy is evaluative. It encourages readers to morally assess modern wealthy individuals by comparing them with culturally familiar archetypes. In Kazakh cultural consciousness, the concept of wealth carries both positive and negative connotations. The figure of *Atymtai Zhomart* represents generosity and moral virtue, whereas the image of *Shygaibai* symbolizes greed and selfishness.

Mythological figures are also frequently employed in media discourse through metaphorical and allegorical strategies. For example, the headline *A Descendant of Aldar Kose Was Detained in Shymkent* (Egemen Kazakhstan, February 25, 2019) may initially appear to refer to an actual descendant of the folkloric character *Aldar Kose*. In reality, the journalist uses this culturally familiar image metaphorically to describe a person who committed fraud or deception. Although the expression carries an element of humor, it also conveys negative evaluation. While *Aldar Kose* is traditionally regarded as a clever and resourceful folk character, his defining trait is deception. By applying this image to a contemporary individual, the journalist creates an evaluative and culturally resonant characterization. The reader easily understands this reference because the image of *Aldar Kose* exists at the level of shared cultural precedent.

B. Transformation of Proverbs and Aphorisms as Ethnopoetic Codes in Media Discourse

In contemporary media space, proverbs and traditional expressions are also widely used as an effective means of influencing the audience. In journalistic discourse, proverbs may appear in their original form or in modified and creatively adapted versions. Their use in headlines and article titles is particularly effective, as it immediately captures the reader's attention and activates cultural memory, thereby enhancing both the expressive and pragmatic impact of the media text.

As noted by Akhmet Baitursynuly, a proverb represents an expression of folk wisdom and may be defined as a statement that conveys truth derived from experience (Baitursynuly, 2009). This definition demonstrates that proverbs generalize life experience and communicate it in a form that is clear, accessible, and persuasive for the wider public. According to Academician R. Syzdyk, proverbs and phraseological expressions constitute a linguistic heritage preserved over centuries, and this heritage must be treated with care and responsibility rather than being distorted or misused (Syzdyk, 2010).

As emphasized by the scholar, the issue of inaccurate or unjustified use of proverbs in contemporary press language remains highly relevant. Such cases represent an independent subject and require separate scholarly investigation. Therefore, in the present study, particular attention was given to selecting media texts in which proverbs are used in a contextually and pragmatically justified manner (Tables 1 and 2).

TABLE 1
TRANSFORMATION OF PROVERBS IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA DISCOURSE AND THEIR TRADITIONAL FORMS

Transformation of Proverbs	Traditional Form
A corrupt official for a naïve people (Egemen Kazakhstan, 03.08.2021)	A corrupt mullah for a naïve people
Those with connections have chances (Egemen Kazakhstan, 01.02.2021)	Those with an elder brother have support, Those with a younger brother have strength
There is no friendship in politics (Abai.kz, 07.02.2023)	A just judge has no relatives
Do not say there is no terrorist, danger may be near (Zhas Alash, 02.04.2024); Do not say there is no enemy, the North may still pose a threat (Zhas Alash, 11.03.2020)	Do not say there is no enemy, danger may be near
At the table of good food, good people gather (Zhas Alash, 16.08.2024)	At the beginning of a good undertaking, good people gather
From the akim's step (Zhas Alash, 28.09.2021)	From the bride's step and the shepherd's staff
Without compromise, there can be no unity (Egemen Kazakhstan, 28.04.2020)	Without a home, there is no well-being
Without proper schools, there can be no quality education (Egemen Kazakhstan, 21.08.2023); Without equality in the family, there can be no equality in society (Egemen Kazakhstan, 09.12.2019); Without a home, there can be no well-being (Egemen Kazakhstan, 21.02.2019)	Without unity, there is no life
The beauty of a girl is her traditional headdress (Egemen Kazakhstan, 19.03.2024); The beauty of the mountains is the snow leopard (Egemen Kazakhstan, 29.11.2022)	The beauty of speech is the proverb
A daughter is the beginning of prosperity (Egemen Kazakhstan, 16.03.2020)	Unity is the beginning of prosperity
Let both trees and wealth remain after you (Egemen Kazakhstan, 21.10.2012)	Better to leave a tree than livestock to your descendants
One dead lion is better than a million living mice (Zhas Alash, 27.07.2021)	A living mouse is better than a dead lion
Not only millet, but domestic poultry may dream of abundance this year (Aikyn, 23.10.2019)	Millet appears in the dreams of chickens
Even if his speech is flawed, let the official's son speak (Aikyn, 19.10.2024)	Even if his speech is flawed, let the rich man's son speak
One thinks of Byron, another thinks of ayran (Zhas Alash, 12.10.2017)	One worries about wealth, another about life; One is short in stature, another is short in thought

An analysis of the collected examples demonstrates that many proverbs have been revitalized and adapted to reflect contemporary social realities. For example, the traditional proverb *A corrupt mullah for a naïve people* appears in modern media discourse as *A corrupt official for a naïve people*, thereby becoming an effective instrument for exposing corruption. In this case, the structural framework of the proverb is preserved, while only the key referential element is replaced. From a pragmatic perspective, this modification creates a striking effect for the reader and conveys a socially relevant issue in a vivid and expressive manner.

Similarly, the traditional proverb *Those with an elder brother have support, those with a younger brother have strength* has been transformed into the modern expression *Those with connections have chances*. In this example, the loanword *chance*, borrowed from English, is integrated into the proverb's structural model. From the standpoint of language culture, the use of such borrowed elements, particularly those with colloquial or informal connotations, cannot always be considered normatively appropriate. Nevertheless, this phenomenon represents a characteristic form of linguistic modification frequently observed in media discourse.

The traditional proverb *Do not say there is no enemy, danger may be near* appears in contemporary press language as *Do not say there is no enemy, the North may still cause regret*, thereby indirectly referring to geopolitical realities. In this case, the pragmatic function lies in encouraging the reader to evaluate current circumstances through the lens of historical experience.

As the analyzed examples demonstrate, the transformation of proverbs in media discourse performs three primary functions:

- a) attracting the reader's attention;
- b) conveying social issues in a sharp and impactful manner;

c) activating national consciousness.

All of these transformations rely on the established position of proverbs within cultural memory. Because readers are already familiar with the original forms, they are able to immediately recognize the modified versions, compare them with the traditional structure, and interpret the implied meaning. From this perspective, proverbs function as ethnopoetic codes that activate collective consciousness and reinforce shared cultural knowledge.

Similarly, aphoristic expressions in media discourse represent important linguistic units that reflect the national worldview. These expressions also belong to the paremiological corpus, but their distinctive feature lies in the fact that their authors are known or that they originate from literary works. For example, several issues of the newspaper *Egemen Kazakhstan* feature a series of headlines constructed according to the model *If you want to be a nation, correct your...: If you want to be a nation, correct your demography* (*Egemen Kazakhstan*, March 5, 2021), *If you want to be a nation, correct your cybersecurity* (*Egemen Kazakhstan*, October 27, 2020), and *If you want to be a nation, correct your screen* (*Egemen Kazakhstan*, April 25, 2019). These headlines are derived from the well-known aphorism by Mukhtar Auezov, *If you want to be a nation, correct your cradle*.

In these examples, the original component cradle has been replaced with words corresponding to the specific issue addressed by the author, such as demography, cybersecurity, and screen. As a result, the headlines become immediately clear and meaningful to the reader. Upon encountering a familiar proverb or aphorism, the reader instantly recalls its conceptual and ideological foundation and readily understands what aspect the author is urging society to correct. For instance, the headline *If you want to be a nation, correct your demography* directly implies that population growth and demographic stability are essential conditions for national continuity. The author conveys this important message effectively without extensive explanation, relying instead on the structural model of a culturally familiar expression.

Similarly, the variations *correct your cybersecurity* and *correct your screen* point to pressing contemporary issues in the fields of digital security and media content. These transformed aphorisms possess strong pragmatic impact. When readers encounter such headlines, they first recognize the original expression and then focus their attention on the modified element. This process encourages reflection on the question of what exactly needs to be corrected. As a result, readers engage intellectually and emotionally with the author's message and are more likely to accept or consider the proposed viewpoint. This may be described as an interactive effect, in which the author relies on the reader's prior cultural knowledge and guides them toward a renewed interpretation within a modern context.

C. Transformation of Zhyrau Poetic Structures and Their Pragmatic Role in Contemporary Media Discourse

One of the major sources through which the ethnopoetic code is realized in media discourse is the use of excerpts drawn from the poetic reflections of the *zhyraus*. The tradition of *zhyraus* poetry is one of the most significant and enduring elements of Kazakh folk literature. (Sultan et al., 2024, p. 124). In contemporary journalistic discourse, authors creatively adapt and reinterpret the aphoristic expressions found in *zhyrau* poetry, integrating them into modern communicative contexts.

Zhyrau poetry represents one of the richest layers of Kazakh spiritual heritage. It encapsulates the worldview of the people, their perception of life, and their attitudes toward social relations in a condensed and artistically expressive form. The ideas, figurative expressions, and metaphors found in *zhyrau* reflections have been preserved in the national consciousness for centuries and continue to retain their relevance in the present day.

In modern media space, well-known lines and symbolic images from classical *zhyrau* poetry are revitalized within new contexts and transformed into effective pragmatic instruments of journalistic language. Through this process, traditional ethnopoetic meanings are preserved while simultaneously being adapted to contemporary communicative and ideological needs.

TABLE 2
TRANSFORMATION OF STABLE STRUCTURES FROM KAZAKH ZHYRAU POETRY IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

Transformation in Media Language	Traditional Form
How will the village survive without water? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 30.11.2023)	How will the kulan survive without its tail and mane?
How will the people survive without pasture and land? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 01.02.2022)	(Asan Kaigy)
How will the country survive without independent media? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 26.07.2021)	
How will the nation survive without livestock and fertile land? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 21.04.2021)	
How will the stadium survive without quality football? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 12.04.2017)	
This era is the era of corruption, not of justice (Aikyn, 31.05.2025)	This era is not the era of the poor, but the era of the wealthy (Asan Kaigy)
The people who have reached the land... (Egemen Kazakhstan, 20.10.2022)	Father, grandfather, ancestors, people, Who defended the sacred land (Kaztugan Zhyrau)
What is the benefit of gold mines if they do not serve the people? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 28.09.2021)	What is the benefit of wealth if it does not serve the people?
What is the benefit of weeping? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 03.08.2021)	(Shalkiiz Zhyrau)
What is the benefit of a blue dome if prayer is not performed? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 19.06.2018)	
Oh Bidayik, where are the days when paths were safe? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 05.02.2024)	Oh Ak Zhaiyk, where are the days when horses grazed freely?
Where are the leaders who governed the people? (Zhas Alash, 08.09.2022)	(Dospambet Zhyrau)
Where are the days when snow fell in abundance? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 12.11.2020)	
Where are the days when kulan roamed freely? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 20.12.2022)	
Where is the danger coming from? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 04.08.2023)	Where does the kulan roam?
Where does the reverse direction lead? (Egemen Kazakhstan, 18.07.2018)	(Bukhar Zhyrau)
If the nation's name is Kazakh, should the land's name not also be sacred? (Turkistan newspaper, 25.04.2019)	If the horse is called noble, should there not be at least one noble rider? (Bukhar Zhyrau)

Let us consider the headline presented in Table 2, *If the nation's name is Kazakh, should the land's name not also be meaningful?* At first glance, this sentence appears to introduce a discussion about Kazakh geographical names. However, its syntactic structure closely resembles the line from Bukhar Zhyrau's well-known poetic reflection, *Even if there are six in the nest, will not only one among them be truly capable?* Although the author does not preserve the original rhyme or metrical pattern, the rhetorical structure ending in *should it not be* reflects the stylistic model of Bukhar Zhyrau. Readers familiar with the stylistic features of zhyrau poetry readily recognize this parallel, and as a result, the headline acquires greater expressive weight and authority.

Similarly, the modern media expressions *How will a village survive without water?* and *How will the people survive without pasture and land?* represent contemporary transformations of Asan Kaigy's rhetorical question, *How will the kulan survive without its tail and mane?* Semantically, these transformed expressions preserve the original conceptual meaning, which emphasizes the impossibility of survival in the absence of essential conditions. In the original poetic context, the kulan symbolizes a living being inseparably connected with nature. In contemporary media discourse, this symbolic image is replaced by social and economic entities such as villages and communities, thereby adapting the traditional formula to modern realities.

The stylistic innovation of this transformation lies in the adaptation of a universal rhetorical model to contemporary social conditions. In the original poetic context, the figurative image symbolically conveys the impossibility of existence. In journalistic discourse, the same structural model is used to highlight specific economic and social problems, such as water scarcity and land shortage. Despite this shift in referential meaning, the linguistic and stylistic parallelism remains intact.

Likewise, Asan Kaigy's poetic reflection *In this era, who is truly destitute? The noble one in the white city is destitute* represents a classical example of traditional poetic thinking. Its artistic structure is based on repetition and parallelism. The repeated use of the word *destitute* at the end of each line creates compositional cohesion and emotional intensity.

In contemporary media discourse, the expression *In this era, the greatest disgrace is corruption* preserves the same structural principle. The phonetic parallelism created through the repetition of the suffix forming the words *disgrace* and *corruption* replaces the repetitive function of the key lexical element in the original poetic structure.

At the semantic level, the transformation is equally evident. For Asan Kaigy, the concept of destitution symbolized the erosion of traditional values and moral order. In contemporary media discourse, the pairing of *disgrace* and *corruption*

refers to a concrete social problem that hinders societal development. Thus, the traditional poetic structure is preserved, while its semantic content is adapted to reflect modern social realities.

Similarly, Kaztugan Zhyrau's historically charged line *Ancestral land where my noble people once settled* is reinterpreted in contemporary media headlines such as *The people who have reached their land*, preserving the structural and emotional resonance of the original while adapting it to a modern national context.

The aphoristic line by Sherniyaz Zharylgasuly, *What is the use of flowing water if it cannot quench thirst?*, is likewise transformed into modern journalistic expressions such as *What is the use of gold mines if they do not benefit the people?* and *What is the use of the blue dome if prayer is not performed?* In these examples, the structural parallelism based on the rhetorical question *What is the use?* is preserved, while the semantic content is adapted to contemporary social, economic, and spiritual concerns.

The poetic reflection by Dospambet Zhyrau, *Oh Ak Zhaiyk, when will the day come when horses roam freely?*, is similarly transformed into modern expressions such as *Oh Bidayik, when will the day come when distant paths can be reached?* and *Where are the leaders who will govern the nation?* In these cases, the traditional poetic structure becomes a figurative instrument for expressing political and social concerns.

Likewise, Bukhar Zhyrau's line *Do not say the barren steppe will never flourish, nor that the kulan will never roam there* is revitalized in contemporary media discourse in expressions such as *When will the kulan roam the barren steppe?* and *Do not say danger will not arise*. These examples demonstrate that ethnopoetic structures preserved in collective cultural memory continue to function as powerful expressive and pragmatic resources in modern journalistic language.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, language is the primary indicator of a nation's spiritual essence and cultural memory. The results of this study demonstrate that the transformation of linguocultural units in contemporary media discourse reveals national worldview and cultural codes at a renewed level. The use of mythological elements, proverbs, aphorisms, and stable structures derived from zhyrau poetry with new semantic content in journalistic language is grounded in their established position within collective cultural memory. This phenomenon provides readers with cultural and cognitive orientation, enables the figurative representation of social issues, and enhances the pragmatic impact of media texts.

Ethnopoetic codes form the cultural and cognitive foundation of communication in the media space and respond to the spiritual demands of modern society. They are not merely poetic relics of the past but function as mechanisms that revitalize national worldview and strengthen ideological and aesthetic influence in the contemporary information environment. Therefore, the comprehensive study of linguocultural units and ethnopoetic codes makes a significant contribution to the development of anthropocentric research directions in Kazakh linguistics.

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- Description of the topic area to be focused upon and justification
- Review process for the selection and rejection of papers
- Name, contact, position, affiliation, and biography of the Guest Editor(s)
- List of potential reviewers if available
- Potential authors to the issue if available
- Estimated number of papers to accept to the special issue
- Tentative time-table for the call for papers and reviews, including
 - Submission of extended version
 - Notification of acceptance
 - Final submission due
 - Time to deliver final package to the publisher

If the proposal is for selected papers of a conference/workshop, the following information should be included as part of the proposal as well:

- The name of the conference/workshop, and the URL of the event.
- A brief description of the technical issues that the conference/workshop addresses, highlighting the relevance for the journal.
- A brief description of the event, including: number of submitted and accepted papers, and number of attendees. If these numbers are not yet available, please refer to previous events. First time conference/workshops, please report the estimated figures.
- Publisher and indexing of the conference proceedings.

If a proposal is accepted, the guest editor will be responsible for:

- Preparing the “Call for Papers” to be included on the Journal’s Web site.
- Distribution of the Call for Papers broadly to various mailing lists and sites.
- Getting submissions, arranging review process, making decisions, and carrying out all correspondence with the authors. Authors should be informed the Author Guide.
- Providing us the completed and approved final versions of the papers formatted in the Journal’s style, together with all authors’ contact information.
- Writing a one- or two-page introductory editorial to be published in the Special Issue.

More information is available on the web site at <http://www.academypublication.com/tpls/>

