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We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the authors and reviewers. Hopefully Allure Journal can be useful and able to improve the quality of research of the academic community.

Semarang, 31 January 2026

Editor in Chief

Dr. Sukma Nur Ardini, S.S., M.Pd.

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Exploring Secondary School English Teachers' Knowledge of the Genre-based Approach: Insight into Concept and Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) has been widely implemented in national curricula to support students' writing development through the scaffolded stages of the Teaching and Learning Cycle. Despite its prominence, limited research has explored teachers' understanding of GBA from both conceptual and practical perspectives. This descriptive qualitative study aims to investigate how four Indonesian secondary school English teachers understand the principles and implementation of GBA in teaching writing. The participants were purposefully selected from junior and senior high schools and represented varied levels of teaching experience as well as different degrees of exposure to formal GBA training. This variation allowed for a comparative understanding of how training and experience shape teachers' interpretations and classroom use of GBA. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews that explored teachers' conceptual knowledge of GBA, their understanding of the Teaching and Learning Cycle, instructional strategies across its stages, and assessment practices in genre-based writing instruction. The findings reveal that teachers who had received formal GBA training demonstrated stronger theoretical understanding of how to implement the Teaching and Learning Cycle systematically. In contrast, teachers without formal training tended to rely more on experience-based practices, often focusing on surface features of texts. Although all participants recognized the benefits of GBA for students' writing development, they also reported common challenges, including limited instructional time, diverse student proficiency levels, and restricted teaching resources. These findings highlight the importance of ongoing professional development and sustained institutional support to enable teachers to implement GBA more effectively in secondary school classrooms.

Keywords: Genre-based approach; secondary English teachers; writing instruction

INTRODUCTION

The development of students' English language skills has long been a national priority for the Indonesian government as part of broader efforts to prepare young citizens for participation in an increasingly globalized world. This commitment has been reflected in several curriculum reforms, including the 2004 Competency-Based Curriculum, the 2006 School-Based Curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum, and the current Merdeka Curriculum. Across these reforms, English is positioned as a crucial subject for developing communicative competence, with writing identified as one of the key productive skills essential for academic achievement and professional communication. Writing enables learners to express ideas, organize arguments,

and engage in meaningful communication across contexts and audiences (Bora, 2023). Writing, in particular, enables individuals to articulate and organize their thoughts more effectively than spoken communication (Asyifa & Daulay, 2024).

To support these goals, the Genre-Based Approach (hereafter GBA) has been adopted as a recommended framework for English writing instruction in Indonesia (Emilia & Hamied, 2015). Rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL), a framework developed by Halliday (Rohmatunnazilah, 2025), GBA views language not merely as a set of grammatical rules but as a social semiotic system, that is a resource for making meaning within specific social and cultural contexts (Halliday, 1994; Sinurat, 2019). This theoretical foundation links linguistic features to communicative purposes, emphasizing that texts are shaped by context, audience, and purpose (Hyland, 2007). In line with this view, writing instruction in GBA explicitly teaches how texts are organized and how language choices achieve meaning in particular genres (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Cheng, 2019). The pedagogical model most widely used in GBA is the Teaching and Learning Cycle (hereafter TLC) (Derewianka, 1990), consisting of four scaffolded stages: Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF), Modeling of the Text (MoT), Joint Construction of Text (JCoT), and Independent Construction of Text (ICoT). Within this cycle, scaffolding plays a pivotal role, as teachers act as expert guides who provide support to help students gradually master increasingly complex language skills (Gibbons, 2015; Emilia, 2011).

Through this cycle, students gradually develop control over a target genre, from exploring content and analyzing model texts to jointly and independently constructing their own writing (Chen, 2021; Emilia, 2011; Ueasiriphan & Tangkiengsirisin, 2019). Across all stages of the cycle, students' topical knowledge is continuously developed through a range of instructional activities, which supports their understanding of both the content and the language features of the genre (Kindenberg, 2021). This approach guides students to produce writing that is not only structurally sound but also socially and contextually appropriate (Pham & Bui, 2021). Research has demonstrated that the TLC effectively enhances students' understanding of text structure, coherence, and genre awareness (Xiaoxiao & Ibrahim, 2023).

Numerous studies in Indonesia have supported the effectiveness of GBA in improving students' writing skills. Studies by Ahmad (2018), Kamaliah and Apsari (2022), Hardiningsih et al. (2024), and Saputri (2021) found that GBA improved students' understanding of text organization, confidence in English use, and ability to compose various genres, including recounts, procedures, narratives, and descriptive texts. These findings affirm that when properly implemented, GBA provides a powerful framework for fostering learners' literacy development.

However, the effectiveness of GBA depends strongly on teachers' understanding and pedagogical decisions. According to Neumann et al. (2019), successful implementation requires harmony between "knowing" (conceptual understanding) and "doing" (classroom practice). Teachers' understanding of genre theory, text types, and the TLC stages is essential for making appropriate instructional decisions (Worden, 2018, 2019). Similarly, Faradina and Gandana (2024) emphasize that teachers' mastery of GBA principles shapes their ability to scaffold students' learning and to integrate genre, language, and context meaningfully.

In international contexts, researchers such as Johns (2015), Hedgcock and Lee (2017), Tardy et al. (2018), and Liu and Chen (2022) have examined teachers' conceptual and practical understanding of genre pedagogy. These studies consistently reveal that teachers often struggle to connect linguistic features with communicative purposes, resulting in limited or formulaic genre instruction. For instance, Liu and Chen (2022) reported that pre-service teachers found it difficult to link form, meaning, and context, and rarely provided explicit linguistic guidance.

Such findings highlight a widespread gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice, even in well-resourced contexts. In EFL settings like Indonesia, these challenges are intensified by limited professional development and the theoretical complexity of GBA, particularly its foundation in SFL (Cheng, 2019; Johns, 2011). Moreover, teachers face difficulties balancing genre knowledge, language instruction, and time constraints in test-oriented classrooms. Studies by Li et al. (2020), Tardy et al. (2018), and Liu and Chen (2022) suggest that without sustained institutional support, teachers may apply GBA focusing only on text structure without addressing meaning-making and language use. These limitations underscore the need for research that explores how teachers understand GBA within their specific educational contexts.

In addition, assessment practices within GBA are an integral yet sometimes neglected component. Effective genre pedagogy involves formative assessment throughout the TLC, using observation, questioning, and peer or self-evaluation to monitor student progress and inform instruction (Emilia, 2011). Hitimala et al. (2024) found that ongoing, integrated assessment significantly improved students' genre awareness and text organization, while rubrics aligned with genre objectives supported greater learner autonomy (Coffin et al., 2005). However, many teachers continue to rely on summative assessments, overlooking the formative and diagnostic potential of GBA assessment principles.

Overall, while GBA has proven conceptually strong and pedagogically effective, its success in practice depends on teachers' depth of understanding. Yet, there remains limited research focusing on how Indonesian secondary school English teachers conceptualize and apply the GBA in writing instruction. Most existing studies center on students' writing outcomes rather than teachers' pedagogical knowledge and interpretations. This gap limits understanding of how GBA is enacted in real classrooms and what professional development is needed to strengthen implementation.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining Indonesian secondary school English teachers' understanding and implementation of GBA in teaching writing. Specifically, it investigates how teachers interpret the theoretical foundations of GBA and how they comprehend the pedagogical enactment of its stages. To guide this inquiry, the study is framed by two central research questions: in what ways do secondary school English teachers conceptualize GBA, and how do they perceive its application in writing instruction.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically a descriptive qualitative design, to explore secondary school English teachers' knowledge and perceptions of GBA in writing instruction. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of how teachers conceptualize and describe their knowledge of GBA, based on their own words and teaching experiences.

Descriptive qualitative research aims to present a rich, detailed, and straightforward account of participants' perspectives, staying close to their actual expressions. This design is particularly suitable for educational research where the goal is to describe and understand how a concept is experienced and explained by practitioners in real-world contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In this study, the descriptive qualitative design allows for the investigation of how teachers understand the principles of GBA, the types of texts they typically teach, and how they

perceive instructional components such as the teaching cycle, classroom activities, and assessment strategies. Since the focus of the research is on teachers' knowledge and perceptions rather than evaluating classroom practices, qualitative description provides an appropriate framework for capturing the depth and diversity of teacher voices.

PARTICIPANTS

Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants with relevant experience in English language teaching at the secondary level, aligning with the aims of qualitative research focused on specific pedagogical frameworks such as GBA (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Four English teachers from public junior and senior high schools in Riau and West Java participated in the study. With teaching experience ranging from 2 to 15 years, they represented both early-career and seasoned educators. All had taught under the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, both of which promote the use of GBA in writing instruction. Given this curricular exposure and their professional backgrounds, the participants were well-positioned to offer insights into their conceptual understanding and practical implementation of GBA in secondary school classrooms.

A summary of the participants' educational backgrounds, school levels, teaching experience, and involvement in GBA-related training programs is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Profile of the participants

NO	Participant	Formal Education Level	School Level	Teaching Experience	GBA Related Training Program
1	Teacher 1	Bachelor	Junior High School	15 years	Yes
2.	Teacher 2	Bachelor	Senior High School	2 years	No
3.	Teacher 3	Bachelor	Senior High School	6 years	Yes
4.	Teacher 4	Bachelor	Junior high school	6 years	No

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A semi-structured interview was used to gather data. There were 18 questions developed based on key literature on the key concept and implementation of GBA (Emilia, 2011). The first set of questions focused on exploring teachers' understanding of GBA, specifically their knowledge on the concept, the provision of the texts including genre awareness, and the teaching principles. The second set of questions explored how teachers understand the implementation of GBA in writing instruction, including how they comprehend the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), their classroom practices, assessment strategies, and the challenges they faced. Questions related to participants' teaching experience and educational background were also included to provide context for their responses. The interviews were recorded using audio recordings to

DATA ANALYSIS

The interview data were analyzed in several steps based on Creswell (2018). First, the audio recordings were transcribed into written text. The transcripts were then read carefully to understand the teachers' views on GBA and how they implement it to teach writing. Important statements were highlighted and coded. These codes were grouped into themes. Thematic patterns were developed to reflect both the conceptual understanding and practical experiences

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of the four teachers. The analysis was informed by theoretical concepts from the GBA framework to ensure the interpretations were based on the literature. Teachers' direct quotations were included to support and illustrate the emerging themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data were presented aligned with the research questions stated in the introduction and analyzed thematically as described in the method section. Based on thematic analysis, two major themes occurred from the interview data: (1) Teachers' Understanding of the Concept of GBA, and (2) Teachers' Understanding of the Implementation of GBA. Each theme was further divided into sub themes to highlight key patterns in participants' responses. This section begins by presenting the first theme.

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF GBA

The data indicate that the four teachers' understanding of GBA varies considerably, largely depending on whether they have received formal training. Teachers who had undergone formal training demonstrated a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of GBA. They clearly recognized its theoretical foundation in SFL and its dual emphasis on text structure and social purpose. For example, Teacher 1 explained, "SFL is the foundation of GBA because, in GBA, a text must be taught as a whole in order to convey meaning. Each text serves a different function, which aligns with the principles of functional grammar in SFL." Her response reflects a strong understanding of how SFL underpins GBA, emphasizing that GBA is not merely about teaching structure, but also about addressing the social context and communicative purposes of specific texts.

Similarly, Teacher 3 also showed a clear view of GBA's focus on text types and their communicative purposes. She explained:

"GBA is a teaching approach that focuses on understanding specific text types (genres). In the context of writing, students are taught the structure, purpose, and linguistic features of particular texts so they can write more effectively and appropriately."

She further elaborated on the theoretical link between GBA and SFL, noting that both view language as functional and shaped by context. Her responses indicate not only an understanding of genre pedagogy but also an appreciation of the importance of equipping students with knowledge of how texts operate in real-world communication.

In contrast, Teacher 2, who had not received formal training, conveyed a more intuitive and less theoretically grounded understanding of GBA. Her explanation suggested that GBA involves using texts as the primary material, though she was less certain about its linguistic foundation. She remarked, "In my opinion, GBA is more about how we teach language by starting from a text... so, the context comes directly from the text." While this perspective touches on the surface principles of GBA, it lacks the deeper conceptual clarity evident among trained teachers. This gap became more apparent when she reflected on her limited knowledge of Systemic Functional Linguistics, noting, "I only heard about SFL during university... maybe that's how it connects to GBA." These comments reveal a limited and fragmented grasp of the theoretical underpinnings of GBA.

Teacher 4 displayed the most limited understanding of the approach. She offered a very general explanation that emphasized its practical aim without referencing any theoretical framework. She stated, "A method that focuses on teaching various text types to help students

develop writing skills.” Her response reflects a superficial grasp of GBA. Moreover, she acknowledged unfamiliarity with SFL, suggesting that her knowledge was derived more from classroom experience than from formal academic training.

Regarding text provision and genre knowledge, the study found that all four teachers acknowledged the importance of introducing various text types in writing instruction. However, the depth of their genre knowledge varied considerably.

Teacher 1, for instance, emphasized the functional dimension of genre, stating that:

“Text types that are requested in Junior High School are descriptive, narrative, recount, procedure. The communicative purpose means that a text always has a purpose, and each genre has its own characteristics, marked by its structure and the linguistic features that often appear in particular texts.”

This statement reflects an understanding consistent with SFL perspectives, which view language as a tool for achieving social purposes and position genre as a means of organizing meaning in context. Similarly, Teacher 3 provided a detailed description of two genres and linked each to its defining features. She explained: “Narrative texts aim to entertain, with a structure of orientation, complication, and resolution. Their language features include the use of past tense, action verbs, and adverbs of time.” This response demonstrates more than surface-level familiarity, showing a clear conceptual grasp of how GBA supports students in producing contextually appropriate and communicatively effective texts.

In contrast, the responses of Teachers 2 and 4 indicate a more procedural and less confident understanding of genre. Teacher 2, for example, listed a few genres and offered a hesitant explanation of descriptive texts: “The text types include report, descriptive, and procedure texts. These help students describe and recognize objects that they see every day. As for the structure of descriptive text, it has identification... and for language features, it uses proper nouns, if I’m not mistaken.”

The phrase “if I’m not mistaken” signals uncertainty, suggesting that her knowledge is still developing and largely shaped by practical experience and textbook exposure. Similarly, Teacher 4 provided a formulaic definition of descriptive text, stating: “Descriptive text is used to describe an object in detail, whether it’s a thing, person, place, or event. Its structure includes: Identification, about identifying the object; Description, about describing the characteristics in detail. Language features include adjectives to describe objects, nouns and noun phrases.”

Although technically accurate, her explanation seemed memorized and did not extend to the broader communicative purpose or contextual function of the genre. In other words, she described the structural and linguistic features correctly but overlooked how genres operate as tools for meaning-making in social contexts and how they guide students toward effective communication.

Regarding the basic principles of GBA, particularly scaffolding, explicit instruction, and contextual grammar, Teachers 1 and 3 demonstrated a strong, theory-informed grasp. Teacher 1 stated: “The main principles of GBA are scaffolding and explicit teaching so that students can reach their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). GBA also follows the principle of equity...” This response reflects her understanding of GBA as both inclusive and developmentally supportive. She further emphasized grammar as a meaning-making tool, taught contextually through model texts.

Teacher 3 similarly highlighted that “the main principles include social context-based learning, scaffolding, and explicit exploration of text structure and language.” This illustrates her focus on function and clarity in writing, with grammar instruction aligned to GBA’s emphasis on meaning-making.

Teacher 4, by contrast, did not refer to specific GBA stages but described a sequential approach to teaching genre. She explained: “Descriptive text is used to describe an object in detail... Its structure includes: Identification... Description, ... model texts help students understand grammar in context.” While accurate, her explanation appeared more practice-oriented than theoretically grounded. Unlike Teachers 1 and 3, who had received training and explicitly mentioned GBA principles, she did not articulate these underlying concepts.

Teacher 2 offered a more intuitive explanation: “The principle is that students should first explore the text... Before I give them a list of unfamiliar vocabulary, I usually provide space for them to write down which words are new... Grammar is taught from the text.” These responses suggest that Teacher 2 adopted a contextual and experience-based approach to GBA. However, her explanations lacked clear and explicit connections to its established principles, indicating reliance more on practical teaching experience than on a formal theoretical understanding of genre pedagogy.

TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING OF GBA IMPLEMENTATION

In terms of understanding the cycles of GBA, all four teachers demonstrated familiarity with the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), although their levels of understanding varied. Teachers 1 and 3, who had formal training, showed a clear grasp of the four stages: BKOF, MoT, JCoT, and ICoT, as well as their instructional purposes. Teacher 1 explained:

“I start with building knowledge to explore students’ prior understanding of the topic and introduce key expressions. Then I provide model texts... we write a text together... and finally, they write their own texts individually.”

Her explanation demonstrates not only a practical understanding of classroom procedures but also an awareness of the theoretical foundations of GBA. By explicitly outlining each stage, she shows how instruction is scaffolded to support students’ gradual development of genre knowledge, which indicates that her teaching practice is grounded in both pedagogical theory and informed training.

Similarly, Teacher 3 stated: “I usually follow the four stages: BKOF, MoT, JCoT, and ICoT. Each stage helps prepare students gradually to write on their own.” This response reflects a confident and systematic understanding of GBA as a scaffolded model of instruction. Her explanation shows awareness of how each phase builds upon the previous one to support students’ development, suggesting that the implementation is intentional and rooted in a clear understanding of genre pedagogy.

Teacher 4, although lacking formal training, described a similar process: “I start with introducing the topic, then we read examples, write together, and at the end, students write by themselves.” This explanation generally aligns with the stages of the TLC within GBA. However, the use of non-technical terms such as “introducing the topic” and “read examples” suggests a more practice-based understanding rather than one informed by theoretical knowledge. The absence of explicit reference to key stages such as Building Knowledge of the Field implies that her implementation is guided more by classroom experience than by formal pedagogical training.

In contrast, Teacher 2 showed a fragmented view, stating: “I usually begin by giving them the text or reading aloud together... after that, I show them a list of keywords... then they make outlines and write based on different topics.” This response suggests that her implementation relies more on classroom practices than on a clear understanding of the theoretical framework underpinning genre pedagogy. While some components of GBA are

present, the absence of clearly defined stages points to the need for further professional development in aligning practice with theory.

Regarding instructional strategies in implementing GBA, all four teachers used approaches consistent with GBA, particularly scaffolded instruction, model texts, and gradual release. However, their depth of understanding and theoretical framing varied. Teacher 1 demonstrated a clear, structured application of the TLC, explaining:

“I start with building knowledge to explore students’ prior understanding of the topic and introduce key expressions. Then I provide model texts so students can recognize the structure and language features. After that, we write a text together, and finally, they write their own texts.”

This explanation demonstrates a clear understanding of the TLC, with each stage deliberately applied. The structured sequence reflects strong theoretical grounding and purposeful integration of genre pedagogy into classroom practice.

Similarly, Teacher 3 showed confidence and precision, stating: “In the BKOF stage, I hold discussions or show videos. Then in modelling, we read and analyze a sample text. During joint construction, we write together on the board. Finally, students write individually.” This response highlights not only her understanding of GBA principles but also her ability to apply them through interactive and student-centered strategies. The integration of multimodal resources and collaborative writing reflects an informed and practical approach to scaffolded instruction.

Teacher 4 followed a similar instructional flow but used more general terms: “I help students learn vocabulary and structure using pictures or videos, then give them a text example. After that, we write together, and then they write on their own.” While her teaching aligns with GBA practices, the absence of theoretical references suggests familiarity grounded more in practical experience than in conceptual understanding.

Teacher 2 described a less structured process: “We usually start with reading aloud and writing down unfamiliar words. Then I give them a list of useful vocabulary. After that, we talk about the structure and make outlines before writing.” While this approach includes aspects of modeling and support, it lacks clear alignment with the TLC stages and reflects a developing understanding of GBA.

Regarding assessment, all four teachers applied practices that reflected their GBA knowledge and experience. Teacher 1, with formal training, stated: “I have to prepare a rubric first. It usually contains aspects like text structure, grammar, and content. The most important parts are structure and grammar.” This response reflects a theory-based approach to assessment aligned with GBA principles. The use of rubrics highlights her focus on clarity and consistency, emphasizing key genre elements and reinforcing assessment as an essential part of the teaching process.

Teacher 3 also used a rubric but with broader focus: “I use a rubric that includes five aspects: text structure, grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and mechanics. Each is scored from one to five.” This response indicates that she demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of how to assess both structural elements and functional effectiveness of student writing, aligning with genre-based assessment practices.

Teacher 4, without formal training, described: “I use a rubric with components like structure, topic relevance, vocabulary, grammar and spelling, coherence between sentences and paragraphs, and language style.” Although her explanation lacks reference to theoretical frameworks, it demonstrates an intuitive understanding of key genre elements. Her rubric covers both micro-level features such as grammar and vocabulary and macro-level aspects such as coherence and text structure. This suggests that her assessment practice, while experience-

based rather than theory-driven, still reflects awareness of what constitutes effective writing within a genre, shaped by practical classroom engagement and observation.

Teacher 2, the least experienced, focused mainly on coherence: “I use a rubric, like scoring different aspects, but the most important part is coherence, which is how the ideas connect.” Her response suggests a narrow focus on one aspect of writing, with limited attention to other genre-specific features such as structure, language use, or purpose. While coherence is indeed a crucial component of effective writing, the lack of reference to a broader set of criteria indicates a more practice-driven than theory-informed approach. This limited perspective may stem from her minimal experience and lack of formal exposure to GBA principles, highlighting the importance of targeted professional development in assessment literacy within genre pedagogy.

Regarding the perceived benefits and challenges of implementing GBA, all four teachers acknowledged both its strengths and limitations, although their responses varied in depth and emphasis. Teacher 1 reported that GBA made her teaching more structured and goal-oriented. Her understanding of the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) supported more systematic lesson planning, as reflected in her statement: “I feel that my teaching becomes more organized because I become more aware of what I need to do at each stage in GBA.” However, she also noted that GBA is time-consuming and requires creative strategies to maintain student engagement across all stages of the cycle.

Teacher 2 highlighted that GBA helps students internalize grammar rules more naturally through contextualized texts. She explained, “It helps them differentiate sentences and understand grammar rules implicitly.” Despite this benefit, she identified vocabulary development as an ongoing challenge in genre-based writing activities.

Teacher 3 offered a more comprehensive perspective, observing that GBA supported students in writing more clearly and critically. She noted improvements in students’ ability to organize ideas and understand the purposes of different genres. At the same time, she pointed out practical constraints, particularly limited instructional time and varying levels of student ability, which made full implementation of the Teaching and Learning Cycle difficult.

Similarly, Teacher 4 emphasized that GBA increased students’ awareness of different text types and contributed to overall improvement in writing quality. Although she did not explicitly refer to theoretical concepts, her explanation reflected a practical understanding of genre instruction. Nevertheless, she encountered common challenges, including limited class time, diverse student proficiency levels, and difficulties in motivating students to engage in writing tasks.

Overall, these findings suggest that while GBA is viewed as a valuable framework for teaching writing, its effective implementation in the classroom is influenced by teachers’ conceptual understanding, instructional strategies, and their ability to address contextual constraints.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that the four teachers brought different levels of knowledge and confidence in applying GBA. A key factor behind these differences was whether they had received formal GBA training. Teachers who were trained tended to make stronger connections with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), viewing writing not only as organizing grammar and structure but also as creating meaning for real purposes, audiences, and contexts (De Oliveira, 2023; Martin & Rose, 2008). Because of this perspective, their teaching was more intentional and closely aligned with genre pedagogy. This understanding reflects Hyland’s (2019) view that teachers who adopt a genre-oriented approach look beyond content and grammar to see

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writing as an act of communication aimed at achieving particular purposes and conveying meaning to readers.

In contrast, teachers without formal GBA training tended to focus more on surface features of texts, such as grammar and structure, and relied largely on personal teaching experience and textbook instructions (Emilia, 2011; Ur, 2019). This orientation suggests a more limited view of writing, in which communicative purpose and audience receive less emphasis, as described by Hyland (2019).

These contrasts became especially clear when teachers described how they conducted lessons. The trained teachers confidently followed the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), carefully moving from building knowledge to independent writing, and using scaffolding so students gradually took more responsibility (Suharyadi & Basthomi, 2020). They were also creative in selecting materials such as videos, group tasks, and guided text analysis to support learning (Nugraha et al., 2024). On the other hand, teachers without training sometimes used similar activities but were not always aware that they belonged to specific TLC stages, a gap between what teachers do and the theory behind it, as Gebhard (2009) also observed.

Assessment practices also revealed clear differences. Teachers with training designed rubrics that closely followed the features of each genre, which helped students understand what was expected in their writing (Hitimala et al., 2024). Those without training tended to use more general scoring that did not always highlight which aspects students needed to improve (Suharyadi & Basthomi, 2020). This limited feedback may slow students' progress, especially when learning more complex genres at the secondary level.

Despite their different levels of knowledge, all teachers agreed that GBA has helped students write more clearly and more confidently. They also shared many of the same obstacles: limited class time, students with very different English abilities, and maintaining motivation during longer writing tasks, the issues commonly reported in EFL classrooms (Liu & Chen, 2022). Interestingly, teachers with training seemed more prepared to adapt and make adjustments, showing that knowledge empowers practice.

This study highlights how deeply teacher understanding influences the success of GBA in the classroom. Even teachers who are motivated and positive about GBA still need proper training, ongoing support, and opportunities to learn together. As Tardy et al. (2018, 2022) remind us, effective genre pedagogy develops not only from knowing the features of texts but also from continuously learning how to teach writing in meaningful ways. Strengthening both theoretical understanding and classroom practice is essential for ensuring that GBA truly benefits students' writing development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that secondary school English teachers demonstrate varying levels of conceptual and practical knowledge of GBA. Teachers who have received formal training showed a stronger understanding of the theoretical foundation of GBA, particularly its basis in Systemic Functional Linguistics, the role of genre in meaning-making, and the importance of scaffolding and explicit instruction through the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC). They also implemented GBA more systematically in the classroom, including the use of appropriate learning stages and genre-based assessment rubrics. In contrast, teachers without formal training tended to rely on intuition and textbook guidance, resulting in a more limited focus on text structure and language forms rather than genre purpose and context.

Despite these differences, all teachers recognized the benefits of GBA in supporting students' writing development, particularly in helping them organize ideas and understand text features. However, challenges such as limited time, diverse student proficiency levels, and maintaining engagement were commonly experienced. These findings indicate that while GBA is valued in practice, teachers still require stronger theoretical grounding and support to fully implement genre pedagogy effectively.

Therefore, this study recommends strengthening professional development programs to ensure continuous and comprehensive training on GBA principles and classroom implementation. Providing guidance on genre-based assessment, collaborative teacher learning communities, and adequate resources such as model texts and classroom time allocation can also improve the quality of teaching. By enhancing both knowledge and support systems, teachers will be better equipped to apply GBA consistently and meaningfully, resulting in more effective writing instruction in Indonesian secondary schools. Future research should expand the scope by involving a greater number of schools and incorporating classroom observations to better capture how teachers' knowledge is reflected in actual instructional practices.

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EFL Students' Pronunciation in Indonesia and Thailand: Exploring Differences and Errors

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ABSTRACT

Studies comparing language proficiency and errors in pronunciation are mostly an under-researched area in EFL environments. The present study intends to explain the differences and errors in pronunciation found among the students from Indonesia and Thailand. This quantitative study employed comparative design. The participants were sixty-two public secondary schools in Indonesia and Thailand. The research instruments used were pronunciation tests and close-ended questionnaires. Data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential analyses. The results showed that there was a significant difference in English pronunciation between the two groups of students, Indonesian and Thai. The Indonesian students made erroneous pronunciations of vowels /ɑ:/, /æ/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, /əʊ/, and the consonants /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʒ/. Contrary to this, the Thai learners could not pronounce correctly the vowels sound /ɑ:/, /æ/, /i:/, /ɒ/, /ɜ:/, /əʊ/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ/, /ɔ:/, /ɪ/, /eə/ and the consonants /d/, /g/, /p/, /r/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, /v/, /z/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/. Language exposure, the learners' native language, language anxiety, and phonological knowledge were identified as major factors influencing pronunciation errors. The findings point out that the Indonesian and Thai students produce different patterns of English pronunciation errors linguistically and non-linguistically influenced.

Keywords: differences; EFL student, errors; phonological interference; pronunciation

INTRODUCTION

In this current era, English is the official language of almost 70 sovereign countries. Three hundred seventy-five million people are native English speakers, while over 750 million people use English as a second language, and a smaller number of use English as a foreign language (Rao, 2019). English is taught in schools in Indonesia and Thailand as a foreign language. In Indonesia, English has been made a crucial subject from the elementary school level to facilitate the learning of the English language. On the other hand, the primary schools in Thailand nowadays conduct science, math, and physical education classes in English (Peerachachayanee, 2022).

In the context of ASEAN integration, English is getting increasingly important as the working language for education, mobility, and regional cooperation. The ASEAN Economic Community and the increasing number of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programs are recent factors that have played a major role in making English a functional language in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Thailand (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Macaro et al., 2018). These changes are primarily going to put a higher demand on students' language abilities

including, among others, correct pronunciation, which is one of the factors that affect intelligibility in intercultural communication (Bashori, et al., 2024). Furthermore, even though there is a growing regional interest in this area, the number of comparative studies that have been conducted to compare the pronunciation patterns of ASEAN learners is still limited. Indonesian and Thai secondary school students are being the only two groups under the contrasting conditions of having different historical, sociolinguistic, and educational backgrounds (Idrus, 2025; Novika, 2025).

Moreover, Indonesia and Thailand have very different language policies, curriculum orientations and levels of English exposure. While Indonesia has a foreign-language curriculum that gives priority to communicative competence, Thailand has come to use bilingual and EMI programs in primary education but still has learners who have problems with the basics of phonology (Jenkins, 2020; Liao et al., 2025). These dissimilarities underscore the necessity of studying both segmental (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, intonation) features to ascertain how learners' linguistic backgrounds and learning environments impact their pronunciation. A more precise interpretation of these theoretical constructs is also necessary for pinpointing the research gap that is characterized by the lack of empirical, cross-country comparisons that depict differences between Indonesian and Thai learners in terms of error patterns and the factors influencing them. Hence, the current research is aimed at providing a comparative view and justifying its importance for EFL pedagogy in Southeast Asia which in turn will help in the expansion of the existing knowledge.

Pronunciation is one of the most important elements that determine the overall English language proficiency and the ability to communicate effectively. For non-native speakers, pronouncing words correctly might be especially difficult because of the different sounds in their phonological systems and English. To illustrate, Indonesian and Thai students have great difficulties because their languages do not have some important English consonants which cause them to have specific problems with pronunciation (Alfarina & Hartono, 2025). Moreover, besides those differences in languages, pronunciation is also a result of social, cultural, and individual factors such as motivation, anxiety, and exposure to the English language. Geographic, social, historical, and individual traits are among the factors that cause differences in pronunciation (Adeline, 2020). Identification of these factors is a prerequisite for the development of effective teaching strategies that consider the needs of individual students and assist them in improving their pronunciation in a foreign language context (Susanto, et al., 2024).

Pronunciation errors have attracted many researchers to explore (Al-Hamzi et al., 2021; Anam, 2018). Errors in pronunciation are related to segmental and suprasegmental aspects which are influenced by linguistics, psychology, and cognition (Shak, et al., 2016). Although many studies have investigated pronunciation errors in EFL setting, only a few focus on comparing errors in two different settings (Hamzah et al., 2017; Muna, 2015; Rafael, 2019). Concerning the problem explained, this study attempts to answer the following research objectives: 1) to examine whether there is any significant difference in pronunciation between Indonesian and Thai students; 2) to identify the pronunciation errors are made by Indonesian and Thai students; 3) to analyze the factors influence pronunciation errors made by Indonesian and Thai students.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative approach. Quantitative research aims to examine the theories by examining the relation between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design used in this research was comparative design because this study compared two issues in different settings. The researcher conducted this study at two public secondary schools in fall

semester. The Indonesian school was located on Jalan Magelang 7, Purworejo, Central Java, Indonesia and the Thai school was in Ban Thung, Koh Lanta District, Krabi, Thailand. The research participants were sixty-two secondary school students in Indonesia and Thailand.

The researcher employed a simple random sampling technique to reduce data bias. Simple random sampling is a method of sampling that gives each member of the population an equal probability of being selected for the sample (Kothari, 2004). A total of thirty-one test results from Indonesian and Thai students were used by the researcher as research samples. Data were collected through pronunciation tests and close-response questionnaires. Pronunciation tests containing forty-four words and twenty sentences were used to assess students' pronunciation and to find significant differences between two groups of students. Also, the pronunciation tests were utilized to identify vowel and consonant errors among students. The validity of the instruments was tested before their distribution to the respondents. Furthermore, the questionnaires consisting of ten statements were utilized to analyze factors influencing pronunciation errors. The influencing factors consisted of language exposure, learners' native language, and language anxiety and phonological knowledge. The questionnaires employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1).

Prior to data collection, informed consents were obtained from all respondents. The researcher employed pronunciation test where all students were asked to read and pronounce the words. The test was conducted in online mode for one hour. Furthermore, the students were administered to fill out online questionnaires through Google Form.

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential analysis through SPSS 23 program. The student voice recordings of the pronunciation test were assessed through a five-aspect scoring rubric. Afterwards, pronunciation errors concerning vowels and consonants were calculated to find students' differences and errors. Also, the responses from the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed using a descriptive statistic to calculate the frequency and percentage of each item.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

COMPARISON OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION BETWEEN INDONESIAN AND THAI STUDENTS

The researcher took pronunciation test outcomes from Indonesian and Thai students who were in the second year of senior high school. Segmental aspects (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental aspects (word stress, sentence stress, and intonation) were all analyzed. A scoring rubric was used to carry out the assessment. Each of the five different aspects could get a maximum score of 5 points, which makes up a total of 25 points. However, since the scale value that the research employed is 100, the total score is multiplied by 4.

Based on the provided data, it is evident that the cumulative score of Indonesian students was 2296. The maximum score was 96, and the minimum score was 40. Meanwhile, the sum of the Thai students' scores was 1932, with a maximum score of 80 and a minimum score of 40. After describing the data, the researcher analyzed the data using statistical calculations.

TABLE 1. Descriptive and inferential analyses of students' pronunciation results

Groups	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Indonesian students	74.62	15.69	3.59	0.63
Thai students	62.25	11.44		

This research employed two stages of analysis. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential analyses. The researcher used the independent sample t-test to test hypotheses using SPSS. The T-test of Independent Sample examines the comparison hypothesis of two independent samples when the data type is interval or ratio (Rao, 2009). The independent sample t-test is employed when the two sample groups are unrelated.

The hypothesis test results showed a significance of 0.001. A significant difference occurs when the p-value is <0.05. If the p-value >0.05, there is no significant difference between the means of the two samples (Field, 2017).

LEARNERS' PRONUNCIATION ERRORS ON VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

To address the second research question, which is about English pronunciation errors made by Indonesian and Thai students, the researcher analyzed students' voice recordings. This study's analysis of pronunciation errors focused on identifying errors involving vowels and consonants.

TABLE 3. Indonesian students' phoneme errors

	V	Words	Correct Pronunciation	Common Errors	C	Words	Correct Pronunciation	Common Errors
Indonesian Students	/ɑ:/	rather	'rɑ:ðər	reðər	/d/	address	'ə dres	atres
	/æ/	alcohol	'ælkəhɔ:l	alkɔ:hɔ:l	/g/	begin	bɪ'gɪn	bɪkɪn
	/i:/	heathen	'hi:ðən	hedən	/p/	compress	kəm'pres	kəmres
	/ɔ:/	August	ɔ:'gʌst	augus	/ʃ/	English	'ɪŋlɪʃ	ɪŋlɪs
	/ʊ/	woman	'wʊmən	wɔ:mən	/θ/	thingking	'θɪŋkɪŋ	tɪŋkɪŋ
	/ɒ/	offer	'ɒfər	aufər	/ð/	although	ɔ:l'ðoʊ	a:ltog
	/ɜ:/	worthy	'wɜ:rði	wɔ:rti	/j/	Europe	'jʊrəp	europ
	/eɪ/	nation	'neɪʃən	nation	/z/	decision	dɪ'sɪʒən	dɪsɪʃən
	/əʊ/	sofa	'səʊfə	sofa	/tʃ/	kitchen	'kɪtʃən	kɪʃən
	/ʊə/	insecure	ɪn'sɪkjʊə	ɪnsɪkjʊr	/dʒ/	general	'dʒenərəl	genərəl
	/aɪ/	divide	dɪ'vaɪd	divɪd				
	/aʊ/	anyhow	'eni haʊ	enihoʊ				
	/ɪə/	appear	ə'piə	əpər				
/eə/	careful	'keəfl	kerful					

TABLE 4. Thai students' phoneme errors

Thai Students	/ɑ:/	rather	'rɑ:ðər	reðər	/d/	address	'ə dres	ændres
	/æ/	alcohol	'ælkəhɔ:l	akɔ:hɔ:l	/f/	office	ɔ:fəs	ɔ:wəs
	/e/	jealous	'dʒeləs	ʃelɔ:ŋ	/g/	begin	bɪ'gɪn	bɪk ^h ʌɪn
	/i:/	heathen	'hi:ðən	hentən	/k/	country	'kʌntri:	k ^h ʌnti:
	/ə/	among	ə'mʌŋ	əmɔ:ŋ	/l/	believe	bɪ'li:v	bɪwi:v
	/u:/	improve	ɪm'pru:v	ɪmpɔ:w	/ŋ/	hungry	'hʌŋɡri:	hʌŋɡri:
	/ɒ/	offer	'ɒfər	oʊwa	/p/	compress	kəm'pres	komfɪs
	/ɜ:/	worthy	'wɜ:rði	wɔ:ʃi	/r/	relation	rɪ'leɪʃn	lɪ'leɪʃn
	/əʊ/	sofa	'səʊfə	soʊfa	/s/	stupid	'stu:pɪd	tu:pɪd
	/ʊə/	insecure	ɪn'sɪkjʊə	ɪnsekeə	/ʃ/	English	'ɪŋlɪʃ	ɪŋlɪt
	/ɔɪ/	employ	em'plɔɪ	empɔl	/t/	teller	'telər	t ^h ewə
	/ɪə/	appear	ə'piə	empe	/θ/	thinking	'θɪŋkɪŋ	t ^h ɪŋkɪt
	/eə/	careful	'keəfl	kewl	/ð/	although	ɔ:l'ðoʊ	ɔ:ltog
					/v/	very	'veri:	weri:
					/j/	Europe	'jʊrəp	europ
				/z/	amazing	ə'meɪzɪŋ	ameɪʃɪŋ	
				/z/	decision	dɪ'sɪʒən	desɪʃən	
				/tʃ/	kitchen	'kɪtʃən	kɪʃən	

The researcher analyzed phoneme errors that Indonesian and Thai students frequently made. After identifying errors in vowels and consonants, the researcher counted the number of errors in each phoneme. The number of errors was calculated to determine the frequency of students' errors on certain phonemes.

TABLE 5. Frequency of students' phoneme errors

	Vowels	Frequency	Consonants	Frequency
Indonesian Students	/a:/	18	/d/	7
	/æ/	25	/g/	12
	/i:/	14	/p/	3
	/ɔ:/	15	/ʃ/	28
	/ʊ/	8	/θ/	26
	/ɒ/	6	/ð/	29
	/ɜ:/	18	/j/	13
	/eɪ/	4	/ʒ/	27
	/əʊ/	11	/tʃ/	9
	/ʊə/	6	/dʒ/	5
	/aɪ/	10		
	/aʊ/	17		
	/ɪə/	12		
/eə/	10			
Thai Students	/a:/	23	/d/	18
	/æ/	27	/f/	5
	/e/	13	/g/	16
	/i:/	16	/k/	3
	/ə/	11	/l/	2
	/u:/	14	/ŋ/	9
	/ɒ/	26	/p/	22
	/ɜ:/	27	/r/	19
	/əʊ/	20	/s/	7
	/ʊə/	28	/ʃ/	21
	/ɔɪ/	15	/t/	2
	/ɪə/	16	/θ/	30
	/eə/	16	/ð/	23
			/v/	28
			/j/	9
		/z/	16	
		/ʒ/	27	
		/tʃ/	29	

The data showed that Indonesian learners tend to pronounce the vowel /a:/, /æ/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, /aʊ/ and the consonant /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʒ/ incorrectly. Meanwhile, the vowel /a:/, /æ/, /i:/, /ɒ/, /ɜ:/, /əʊ/, /ʊə/, /ɔɪ/, /ɪə/, /eə/ and the consonant /d/, /g/, /p/, /r/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, /v/, /z/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ were frequently mispronounced by Thai students.

FACTORS INFLUENCING PRONUNCIATION ERRORS

The indicators that impact students' pronunciation consist of the interference of the mother tongue, phonological language, language exposure, and language anxiety. The researcher constructed a questionnaire of 10 statement items based on the indicators. The questionnaire was closed-ended questions. A total of 62 respondents filled out the questionnaire with a total of ten items. A Likert scale which consisted of *strongly agree* (5), *agree* (4), *neutral* (3), *disagree* (2), and *strongly disagree* (1), was used as the questionnaire response model.

TABLE 6. Questionnaire responses

No	Statements	Responses				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	My native language significantly impacts my English pronunciation	30	34	8	0	0

2	The accent and dialect of my native language affect my ability to imitate English accent and intonation	23	32	7	0	0
3	I have a good understanding of English pronunciation	2	12	31	14	3
4	My understanding of English vowels and consonants enables me to prevent pronunciation errors	9	32	18	3	0
5	My comprehension of English accent and intonation improves my pronunciation accuracy	12	34	15	1	0
6	I primarily use my native language for communication due to the lack of English speakers in my environment	31	27	4	0	0
7	My English pronunciation is affected by the limited chances to converse with native speakers or individuals with good pronunciation	17	36	9	0	0
8	Limited access to English audio materials or pronunciation resources impacts my English pronunciation	15	34	13	0	0
9	I am less confident in speaking English	24	20	11	6	1
10	I am obstructed by insecurity or fear of making mistakes when speaking English	21	27	12	2	0

Furthermore, the researcher calculated each statement item's percentage, mean value, and standard deviation. The percentage of each item was calculated using the $P = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$ formula. Each item's mean value and standard deviation were calculated by frequency analysis using SPSS 23.

TABLE 7. The percentage of questionnaire responses

No	Statements	Percentage	
		IS	TS
1	My native language significantly impacts my English pronunciation	80%	87.7%
2	The accent and dialect of my native language affect my ability to imitate English accent and intonation	83.9%	86.4%
3	I have a good understanding of English pronunciation	59.4%	58%
4	My understanding of English vowels and consonants enables me to prevent pronunciation errors	76.8%	73.5%
5	My comprehension of English accent and intonation improves my pronunciation accuracy	80.6%	76%
6	I primarily use my native language for communication due to the lack of English speakers in my environment	92.2%	85.2%
7	My English pronunciation is affected by the limited chances to converse with native speakers or individuals with good pronunciation	82.6%	82.6%
8	Limited access to English audio materials or pronunciation resources impacts my English pronunciation	84.5%	76.8%
9	I am less confident in speaking English	81.9%	76.8%
10	I am obstructed by insecurity or fear of making mistakes when speaking English	82.6%	80.6%

TABLE 8. The mean value of each indicator

No	Indicators	Items	Mean Values
1	The interference of the mother tongue	My native language significantly impacts my English pronunciation	4.19
		The accent and dialect of my native language affect my ability to imitate English accent and intonation	4.26
		I have a good understanding of English pronunciation	2.94
2	Phonological knowledge	My understanding of English vowels and consonants enables me to prevent pronunciation errors	3.76
		My comprehension of English accent and intonation improves my pronunciation accuracy	3.92
3	Language exposure	I primarily use my native language for communication due to the lack of English speakers in my environment	4.44

	My English pronunciation is affected by the limited chances to converse with native speakers or individuals with good pronunciation	4.13
	Limited access to English audio materials or pronunciation resources impacts my English pronunciation	4.03
	I am less confident in speaking English	3.97
4	Language anxiety	
	I am obstructed by insecurity or fear of making mistakes when speaking English	4.08

Some factors, such as the interference of the mother tongue, phonological knowledge, language exposure, and language anxiety, can lead to pronunciation problems. The researcher employed a questionnaire to determine which factors most significantly affect students' pronunciation errors. Based on the analysis of the four factors that influence pronunciation errors, language exposure has the greatest influence on language exposure. Followed by the interference of the mother tongue, language anxiety, and phonological knowledge.

Indonesian learners achieved the highest score of 96 and the lowest score of 40. The average score of the Indonesian students was 74.06. The calculated standard deviation was 15.69275. In the case of Thai students, the highest score was 80, while the lowest score was 40. The average score of the Thai students was 62.32. The calculated standard deviation was 11.44374. Based on the analysis, the evaluator concluded that Indonesian learners were more proficient in English pronunciation than their Thai counterparts. This conclusion was also reached by some other researchers (Kalaldehy, 2016; Setiawan, 2016). Setiawan's research compared the English pronunciation of Javanese, Sundanese, Thai, and Thai-Malay students. The results indicate that the Thai and Thai-Malay students made a lot of mistakes, whereas the Sundanese and Javanese students made very few mistakes (Octaviana, 2019).

After comparing English pronunciation of Indonesian and Thai students, the researcher conducted an analysis of the students' pronunciation errors. This study focus was the vowel and consonant aspects of the sound. Table 3 presented the error frequency for each of the phonemes analyzed. From the table, it can be inferred that the vowel /a:/ was the most pronounced incorrectly by Indonesian students with a frequency of 18, followed by consonant /æ/ of frequency 25, vowel /ɔ:/ frequency 15, vowel /ɜ:/ frequency 18, glide /aʊ/ frequency 17, consonant /ʃ/ frequency 28, voiceless /θ/ frequency 26, voiced /ð/ frequency 29, and /ʒ/ frequency of 27. On the other hand, Thai students were found to be more prone to mispronouncing the vowels in the phoneme /a:/ occurring 23 times, /æ/ 27 times, /i:/ 16 times, /ɒ/ 26 times, /ɜ:/ 27 times, /əʊ/ 20 times, /ʊə/ 28 times, /ɔɪ/ 15 times, /ɪə/ 16 times, /eə/ 16 times, consonant signals /d/ occurred 18 times, /g/ 16 times, /p/ 22 times, /r/ 19 times, /ʃ/ 21 times, /θ/ 30 times, /ð/ 23 times, /v/ 28 times, /z/ 16 times, /ʒ/ 27 times, and /tʃ/ 29 times. Students seem to be quite unsure when it comes to the pronunciation of vowel phonemes (Maiza, 2020; Pratiwi & Indrayani, 2021).

On the other hand, while pronouncing consonants, students are more likely to swap the English consonant sounds by sounds in their mother tongue, for example swapping /l/ with /w/, swapping /k/ with /kh/, swapping /v/ with /w/, and swapping /θ/ and /ð/ with /t/. The researcher also compared this study with others conducted previously. It was found that Thai speakers have a hard time with particular allophones such as /z/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /v/, /tʃ/, /b/, /dʒ/, /d/, /l/, /t/, /s/, /k/, and /b/. In a similar vein, Indonesian speakers encounter the same difficulty with sounds like /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /v/, /tʃ/, /z/, /dʒ/, /k/, /w/, and /g/ (Febrianto, 2021; Yusriati & Hasibuan, 2019).

It was also found that language exposure has the most significant impact, especially on statement 6. This factor is followed by the interference of the mother tongue, language anxiety, and phonological knowledge. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Sukarni et al., which states that students have limitations in learning correct pronunciation related to the infrequency of schools that recruit English native speakers. Therefore, students' pronunciation is influenced by lack of exposure. Other factors contributing to pronunciation errors include

the influence of the mother tongue, intralingual errors, learning strategy, and students' attitudes (Sukarni et al., 2020). In addition, many researchers explained that pronunciation errors are most often influenced by native language and social background factors (Febrianto, 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings indicate a statistically significant difference in English pronunciation proficiency between Indonesian and Thai students. Indonesian students achieve better pronunciation than Thai students. The results also reveal that Thai students demonstrate higher pronunciation error than Indonesian students. The occurrence of pronunciation errors might be attributed to many variables. Several factors have been identified as influential in the occurrence of pronunciation errors, namely language exposure, interference from the mother tongue, language anxiety, and phonological understanding.

Based on these findings, English teachers should create effective learning instruction by considering learners' linguistic background and affective factors to minimize errors and enhance language proficiency. Also, learners are encouraged to develop their pronunciation problems awareness by constant practice, taking instructors' feedback, and listening to authentic English input like movies, podcasts, and chatting with fluent speakers. This research involved just two non-native student groups from two countries in South-East Asia and did not take into account the factors that might have affected the results. Future research may take into consideration differences of individual students in cognitive, affective, and psychological aspects.

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Framing Analysis of the News of King Charles after the death of Queen Elizabeth in French Media Le Figaro

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Le Figaro, a prominent French media outlet, framed King Charles III in the aftermath of Queen Elizabeth II's death. While numerous studies have examined the British monarchy's representation in Anglophone media, there is a scarcity of research exploring how republican media in non-English speaking contexts construct royal narratives during pivotal power transitions. Adopting a qualitative approach based on the framing analysis model by Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, this research analyzes two key articles published on September 12 and 19, 2022. The analysis applies four structural dimensions: syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical. The results show that Le Figaro employed a hierarchical syntactic structure to emphasize King Charles III's evolution from a figure previously regarded with lesser favor to a potential leader capable of steering the monarchy forward. The script structure selectively prioritized emotional resonance and societal implications, using 5W+1H elements while downplaying geographical specifics. The thematic analysis uncovered a narrative of transformation, blending past critiques of Charles with a growing public acceptance, while the rhetorical strategies served to humanize him through evocative language and metaphors. Theoretically, this study contributes to cross-cultural media studies by demonstrating how a conservative republican media outlet negotiates the tension between institutional tradition and modern expectations. These findings highlight the unique role of ideological orientation in shaping the perception of a foreign monarch.

Keywords: British monarch; Charles III; framing analysis; French media; Le Figaro

INTRODUCTION

Online media has become a primary source of information, playing a pivotal role in constructing public perception of global events. Scholars argue that news is not merely a neutral reflection of reality but a product of ideological construction, where language and discourse serve as instruments to shape meaning (Eriyanto, 2002; Fowler, 1991). Consequently, the representation of a public figure often varies significantly across different media platforms, depending on the ideological lens through which the news is produced (Pawito, 2014; Rahmasari & Munandar, 2025). This perspective rejects the notion of objective reporting,

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positing instead that every news story is an interpretation of reality tailored to specific viewpoints.

(Febriyanti & Karina, 2021:136) In the operational context, media outlets exercise the power to influence how audiences interpret information through specific mechanisms. Through the process of framing, they select, emphasize, and organize specific aspects of reality while obscuring others to align with their institutional values and editorial policies (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Sobur, 2001). These strategies are not arbitrary but are intricately tied to the stages of news production, conceptual frameworks, and the routine practices of media organizations (Febriyanti & Karina, 2021:136). By emphasizing or excluding certain details, media organizations effectively direct the public's focus toward specific agendas.

Discourse analysis is a method for identifying and understanding the values, ideas, motives, interests, and ideologies embedded in or hidden behind communication messages. These messages can take the form of conversations, such as a journalist's interview with a political elite, or written texts, such as opinion articles in newspapers. Researchers position these communication messages as texts to be interpreted, allowing them to uncover the ideas or ideologies contained within (Pawito, 2014). In analyzing news discourse, van Dijk (1988) introduces three interconnected levels of discourse structure: macrostructure (main theme), superstructure (text framework or organization), and microstructure (choices of words, sentences, or other details). These elements collectively shape narratives that influence public opinion on specific issues, depending on the media presenting them. Each media outlet offers different representations of issues, reflecting its ideological and institutional interests, which in turn shape public interpretation of those issues. One approach within discourse analysis is framing analysis, used to examine how media text's structure and frame reality. As explained by Goffman (1974) through Sobur (Sobur, 2001:162), frames are conceptual tools that guide individuals in interpreting reality by providing standard categories that organize views on politics, policies, and discourses.

Framing, a concept widely utilized in communication and linguistics, describes how media select and emphasize specific aspects of reality to shape public perception (Sobur, 2001:161-162). Various models of framing analysis have been developed, including those by Robert N. Entman, William A. Gamson, Murray Edelman, and Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki (Eriyanto, 2002). On September 8, 2022, at 3:10 PM UK time, Queen Elizabeth II passed away at Balmoral Castle in Scotland at the age of 96, following a period of declining health after the death of her husband. The official announcement of her passing was made later that evening, ending her historic reign (BBC News, 2022a; Murray, 2022). Prince Charles immediately succeeded her as King Charles III, assuming leadership of the United Kingdom and fourteen other Commonwealth realms (BBC News, 2022b). His ascension, however, has raised concerns about the future of the Commonwealth, with predictions of potential fragmentation and the abolition of monarchies in former British colonies. These challenges reflect the complex dynamics King Charles III must navigate as he begins his reign, balancing the legacy of the monarchy with the evolving political and cultural landscapes of the Commonwealth (Berita Satu, 2022; France Bleu, 2022).

King Charles III has been at the center of various controversies both before and after ascending to the throne. Notable incidents include his affair with Camilla and accepting funds from Osama bin Laden's family (Pogrund, 2022). After becoming king, he proposed amending

royal laws and removing Prince Harry and Andrew as state counselors, which some referred to as a "royal cleanup" (Okezone, 2022). Additionally, his public gestures, such as his frustration over a cluttered desk or ink stains, drew criticism for lacking the poise expected of a monarch (Liputan6.com, 2022). Some perceive him as blunt and unrefined, leading to debates over his leadership and calls for certain Commonwealth countries to leave (Berita Satu, 2022). Media coverage of Charles III has been polarized; while outlets like the BBC and *The Guardian* emphasize his intellect and environmental advocacy (Coughlan, 2022; Booth, 2022), others, such as *The Express* and *Reader's Digest*, highlight his perceived shortcomings, such as impulsiveness and lack of charisma (Clase, 2022; Newsday, 2022).

French media offers a distinct perspective on King Charles III, influenced by historical rivalries and shared cultural moments, such as their admiration for Princess Diana (Allen, 2022). French outlets, including *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *L'Humanité*, frame Charles differently based on their ideological leanings, ranging from center-left to far-left socialism, reflecting their broader stance on monarchy (France Bleu, 2022). This research examines how these framings align with or diverge from British media narratives, which themselves are diverse. For instance, BBC depicts Charles as approachable and knowledgeable (Coughlan, 2022), while critics question his readiness for the throne (The Postpedia, 2022). By analyzing French media's ideological framing of King Charles III during this pivotal monarchical transition, this study aims to provide Indonesian readers with deeper insights into the linguistic and discursive construction of royal narratives in a cross-cultural context complementing existing research on the representation of local political figures (Rahmasari & Munandar, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using the framing analysis method developed by Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki (1993). This constructivist paradigm is chosen to dissect how media discourse organizes reality and shapes public perception through specific narrative structures.

The data source for this research is the digital platform of *Le Figaro* (lefigaro.fr), a prominent French conservative newspaper. The data collection focused on news articles published in the immediate aftermath of Queen Elizabeth II's death, spanning from September 8, 2022, to September 19, 2022. Through a purposive sampling technique, two primary articles were selected for in-depth analysis based on their relevance, depth of coverage regarding King Charles III, and high reader engagement. The selected articles are:

1. Article I: "Quelle sorte de roi sera Charles III ?" (What kind of king will Charles III be?), published on September 12, 2022.
2. Article II: "Royaume-Uni : le «soft power» du roi Charles III en action" (United Kingdom: King Charles III's 'soft power' in action), published on September 19, 2022.

The analytical method used in this research is framing analysis, specifically adopting the model developed by Pan and Kosicki (1993), which is further elaborated by Eriyanto (2002). This model examines four structural dimensions of news texts: syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical

TABLE 1. The framing analysis devices of Pan and Kosicki's scheme

Structure	Framing devices	Observed unit
Syntactical (How the journalist arranges the issues)	News Schemes	Headline, lead, background, quotes source, statement, closing
Script (How the journalist narrates the facts)	The completeness of the News	5W+1H
Thematic (The journalist's way of writing facts)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Details 2. Coherence 3. Sentence form 4. Pronouns 	Paragraph, propositions, sentences, relationships between sentences.
Rhetorical (The way journalist emphasizes facts)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lexicon 2. Graphic 3. Metaphor 	Words, idioms, pictures/photos, graphics

Source: Framing Analysis (Eriyanto, 2002)

The syntactic structure focuses on how the news content is organized, analysing components such as headlines, leads, background information, quotations, and statements. The script structure explores the narrative pattern within the news coverage and identifies the actors involved in the events. The thematic structure reveals the central themes that emerge throughout the reporting. Lastly, the rhetorical structure investigates the use of language, including metaphors and other rhetorical devices that may influence the portrayal of King Charles III. Data were collected through documentation techniques by selecting, classifying, and analysing news texts related to the transition of power in the British monarchy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 2. Le Figaro I "*Quelle sorte de roi sera Charles III?*" (Le Figaro, 2022a)

Structure	Framing devices	Observed unit
Syntactical	Headline, lead, background, quotes source, statement, closing	The headline, " <i>Quelle sorte de roi sera Charles III?</i> " ("What kind of king will Charles III be?"), evokes curiosity and reflection. The lead highlights Charles' transition from <i>mal aimé</i> (unloved) to a respected monarch. Quotations from historians offer perspectives on his institutional challenges.
Script	5W+1H	Focuses on "What," showcasing Charles' transformation into a more accepted figure, and "Why," linked to his ambition to reform the monarchy. "Where" receives less emphasis.
Thematic	Paragraph, propositions, sentences, relationships between sentences.	The overarching theme portrays leadership transition, emphasizing Charles' past unpopularity and efforts to reform his public image. Information is cohesively structured to present a comprehensive narrative.
Rhetorical	Words, idioms, pictures/photos, graphics	Lexicon such as <i>mal aimé</i> (unloved) and metaphors like <i>imprimer son sceau</i> (leave his mark) depict Charles as a leader trying to establish a positive legacy. Visual elements, such as interactions with the public, emphasize his human side.

The syntactic structure demonstrates a hierarchical arrangement, emphasizing key narrative elements such as the headline, lead, background information, quotations, statements, and conclusion. The headline, "*Quelle sorte de roi sera Charles III?*" ("What kind of king will

Charles III be?"), effectively frames the article with a succinct and reflective question, inviting curiosity while avoiding unnecessary elaboration. The lead provides an overview of Charles III's transition, portraying him as a previously unappreciated figure who has begun to gain recognition during his early reign. Background information situates this portrayal within the broader context of a nation navigating between historical continuity and the future, emphasizing both the challenges and symbolic nature of the monarchy. Quotations from sources like historian Frank Prochaska and others reinforce the narrative, offering insights into the balance Charles must strike as a monarch within a constitutional framework. Statements and opinions throughout the article reflect Charles' previous image as "*mal aimé*" ("less loved") while highlighting his efforts to reframe public perception through his actions. The conclusion subtly invites readers to reflect on Charles III's potential legacy, demonstrating how *Le Figaro* constructs its narrative to engage readers critically and thoughtfully.

The script structure of *Le Figaro I* applies the 5W+1H framework to present the news comprehensively, though certain elements are more emphasized than others. The "What" focuses on Charles III's successful initial steps as a monarch, portraying him as a figure transforming from being "*mal aimé*" (unloved) to capable and competent. The "When" situates the events temporally, highlighting key moments like his first public speech 24 hours after Queen Elizabeth II's passing. However, the "Where" remains less detailed, with locations such as Clarence House mentioned superficially. The "Why" and "How" elements are given particular prominence, discussing Charles' ambition to reform the monarchy and the narrative of his evolving public image. This emphasis reflects *Le Figaro's* focus on the socio-political implications of Charles' actions rather than merely documenting events. The use of this framework ensures a balanced yet analytical approach to framing Charles III's early reign, catering to readers' interest in both factual updates and reflective insights.

The thematic structure of *Le Figaro I* is centered on presenting Charles III as a figure navigating public perception and institutional expectations. The main theme is the transition following Queen Elizabeth II's death, framed through Charles' efforts to assert his leadership. Detailed information includes his past unpopularity, the public's mixed opinions, and his actions post-accession. The text predominantly uses active voice to position Charles as the central subject, although passive constructions are also present to reflect broader institutional or societal views. Temporal framing varies, with a mix of past and present tense to connect historical context with current developments. This thematic approach highlights both Charles' personal challenges and the symbolic evolution of the monarchy, creating a reflective and multifaceted narrative.

The rhetorical structure of *Le Figaro I* employ a combination of lexicon, graphics, and metaphors to frame Charles III as both a reformist and a relatable monarch. The lexicon is carefully chosen to evoke emotional responses, using terms like *réussi* (successful), *mal aimé* (unloved), and *rassembleur* (unifier) to illustrate Charles' journey from a controversial figure to a unifying monarch. Graphics, such as images of Charles engaging with the public or fulfilling royal duties, reinforce his dedication and accessibility. Metaphors play a critical role in shaping his narrative; for example, phrases like *jardinier inspiré qui parle à ses arbres* (an inspired gardener who talks to his trees) personify his environmental commitment, while *imprimer son sceau* (to leave his mark) signifies his impact as a leader. These rhetorical

strategies collectively aim to humanize Charles, highlight his transformation, and engage readers on both emotional and intellectual levels, presenting a nuanced image of his monarchy.

TABLE 3. Le Figaro II “Après la mort d’Elizabeth II, la popularité de Charles bondit” (Le Figaro, 2022b)

Structure	Framing devices	Observed unit
Syntactical	Headline, lead, background, quotes source, statement, closing	The headline, “Après la mort d’Elizabeth II, la popularité de Charles bondit” (“After the death of Elizabeth II, Charles’ popularity soars”), is direct and positive. The lead emphasizes the dramatic rise in his approval ratings. Quotations provide contrasting views, balancing criticism and praise of Charles’ leadership style.
Script	5W+1H	Focuses on "What" with Charles’ increased popularity and "Why," linking it to public empathy after the Queen’s death. The "How" highlights his solemn demeanor and accessibility, which resonated with the public. Spatial details ("Where") are minimal.
Thematic	Paragraph, propositions, sentences, relationships between sentences.	Themes center on Charles image transformation, combining past controversies with current public acceptance. The narrative emphasizes emotional appeal and continuity in leadership. Coherence is achieved through logical connections between public sentiment and Charles’ actions.
Rhetorical	Words, idioms, pictures/photos, graphics	Lexicon such as <i>solennel</i> (solemn) and <i>rassembleur</i> (unifier) highlight Charles’ evolving public persona. Metaphors like <i>éclipsé par l’aura de Diana</i> (eclipsed by Diana’s aura) underline his struggle and redemption. Visuals depicting Charles’ engagements with the public reinforce his humanizing efforts.

The syntactic structure of *Le Figaro II* highlights a distinct arrangement comprising the headline, lead, background information, source quotations, statements, and conclusion. The headline, “Après la mort d’Elizabeth II, la popularité de Charles bondit” (“After the death of Elizabeth II, Charles’ popularity soars”), captures attention with a direct and positive framing. The lead provides a concise summary of the public’s changing perception of Charles III, noting a significant shift in approval ratings from 32% in May to 63% after his ascension. The background information contextualizes this popularity shift by reflecting on Charles’ historically low favourability due to being overshadowed by Diana’s legacy and his perceived detachment. Source quotations are strategically used to present contrasting opinions, with critics describing him as “self-centred” and “uncompromising,” while supporters emphasize his modern and reformist character. Statements and opinions throughout the text discuss his evolving image, highlighting his past controversies while also acknowledging his efforts to rebuild trust. The conclusion reaffirms Charles’ potential as a transformative leader, focusing on his ability to adapt to modern expectations of the monarchy.

The script structure of *Le Figaro II* uses the 5W+1H framework but places emphasis on specific elements to frame the narrative. The “What” highlights Charles III’s rise in popularity, moving from being overshadowed by Princess Diana to achieving a 63% approval rating, a significant increase from 32% in May. The “When” provides a temporal context, referencing his public proclamation as king shortly after the death of Queen Elizabeth II on September 8. However, the “Where” is notably less detailed, as the focus is more on the broader implications of these events rather than specific locations. The “Why” delves into the emotional impact of the Queen’s passing, portrayed as a turning point that shifted public opinion in favour of Charles. The “How” emphasizes his demeanour during key events, describing him as

solemn, unifying, accessible, and visibly moved by his mother's death, qualities that resonated with the public. This focus on emotional and societal dynamics over spatial specifics reflects *Le Figaro's* approach to framing Charles as a figure of transformation and relatability.

The thematic structure of *Le Figaro II* focuses on presenting King Charles III's evolving popularity and the public's shifting perceptions. Details such as his historical unpopularity due to Diana's legacy and recent polling data showing a rise from 32% approval in May to 63% after his proclamation are emphasized. The themes address societal perceptions of Charles, contrasting past criticisms with his growing acceptance. The narrative employs both explicit and implicit meanings, using statements to highlight his qualities like solemnity and accessibility during key moments, such as his proclamation as king. The article maintains thematic cohesion by interweaving public sentiments, statistical insights, and Charles' personal characteristics, framing him as a modernizing figure within the monarchy. Active sentence constructions dominate, portraying Charles as a dynamic and central figure in the narrative, with a varied use of tenses to connect past challenges to present accomplishments and future expectations.

The rhetorical structure of *Le Figaro II* employs a combination of lexicon, graphics, and metaphors to shape Charles III's narrative. The lexicon emphasizes contrasting characterizations, such as *mal aimé* (unloved) and *avoir changé la donne* (changed the situation), reflecting his transformation in public perception. Terms like *solennel* (solemn), *accessible* (approachable), and *rassembleur* (unifier) highlight his adaptability and dedication to unity, while phrases such as *sa liaison secrète* (his secret affair) and *entachée* (tarnished) recall past controversies, showcasing his complexity. Metaphors like *éclipsé par l'aura de Diana* (eclipsed by Diana's aura) underline his struggle to emerge from his late wife's shadow, reinforcing the narrative of redemption. The graphics and visual elements in the article complement this framing by portraying Charles in moments of public engagement and solemn reflection, enhancing the emotional resonance of the text. These rhetorical devices collectively frame Charles III as a figure of personal and institutional transformation, balancing his past challenges with his evolving role as a modern monarch.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The framing of Charles III in *Le Figaro* following Queen Elizabeth II's death reflects a transformation narrative, emphasizing his evolution from a historically unappreciated figure to a promising monarch. Through the application of Pan and Kosicki's framing analysis, it is evident that the media outlet utilized a sophisticated combination of syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures to guide the audience's interpretation of the new monarch.

Syntactically, the news texts employed a hierarchical structure that prioritized the King's transformation over his past controversies. By utilizing reflective headlines and placing validating quotations from historians and experts in high-salience positions, *Le Figaro* effectively steered the discourse away from gossip and towards a serious analysis of constitutional continuity. The script structure complemented this by employing a selective 5W+1H framework that emphasized the "Why" and "How" of Charles's actions, specifically

his emotional connection to the public and his commitment to duty, while downplaying geographical or logistical details that offered less narrative weight.

Thematically and rhetorically, the analysis reveals a deliberate effort to humanize a figure previously seen as distant or controversial. The recurrent themes of "evolution" and "modernity within tradition" suggest that *Le Figaro* is mediating a reconciliation between the King and the public. Rhetorical devices, particularly metaphors likening his reign to "gardening" or emphasizing his role as a "unifier," serve to reframe his eccentricities as virtues of a visionary leader. This framing strategy aligns with *Le Figaro*'s ideological stance as a conservative, center-right newspaper that values institutional stability, heritage, and order. Despite operating within a republican context, the newspaper demonstrates a discursive alignment with the British monarchy's need to preserve tradition while adapting to the 21st century.

Theoretically, this research reinforces the constructivist view that news is an ideological product. The findings demonstrate that *Le Figaro* did not simply mirror the reality of the succession; it curated a specific version of reality that favored stability over conflict. This study highlights how media in a non-monarchical state can play a pivotal role in shaping the international reputation of a foreign sovereign, navigating the tension between republican values and the fascination with royal symbolism.

However, this study is not without limitations. The research focused exclusively on *Le Figaro*, representing a specific conservative segment of the French media landscape. Consequently, these findings cannot be generalized to all French media outlets. Future research would benefit from a comparative analysis, juxtaposing *Le Figaro*'s framing with left-leaning publications such as *Le Monde* or *Libération*, to understand how divergent political ideologies construct contrasting narratives of the same historical event. Additionally, examining audience responses to these frames through comment analysis could provide further insight into the effectiveness of these media strategies.

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Cultural Contestation and Power in the Novel *Kubah* by Ahmad Tohari

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ABSTRACT

*This study is based on culture ideally should be a noble guideline that unites and elevates human dignity, but in practice it becomes a source of conflict between people. Culture is not a static entity, but rather an arena in which society assigns value and meaning. The purpose of this study is to reveal the contestation of culture and power in the novel *Kubah*. The theory used is Raymond Williams' Cultural Materialism, which focuses on the analytical framework of dominant, residual, and emergent cultures. This study uses a qualitative method with a textual analysis approach to the novel *Kubah*. The main objective is to classify and analyze how these three cultures interact, clash, and shape the social landscape as embodied by the characters and main figures in the novel. The steps involved briefly consisted of reading the novel in depth, then classifying words, phrases, sentences, and quoted discourse related to cultural contestation. The data was then analyzed by interpreting the meaning of how the characters and narratives in the novel reflect and maintain their respective identities amid cultural tensions in society. The results of the study show that Karman, as the main character, was alienated by the dominant culture that destroyed communal relations in his village as a result of the events of 1965. However, he found acceptance again through residual culture, namely Javanese traditions and religious values. Karman created new meaning for himself, opening up a space for existence outside the pressures of dominant and residual culture.*

*Keywords: contestation; culture; *Kubah*; power; Raymond Williams*

INTRODUCTION

Culture ideally should be a noble guideline that unites and elevates human dignity, but in practice it becomes a source of conflict between people (Shi, 2010; Mh, 2024). Culture is not a static entity, but rather a dynamic arena of contestation (Hassoun & Wong, 2012; Nguyen, 2024). Identity, values, and social meaning are never completely fixed, but are constantly negotiated by society in accordance with the historical, political, and social contexts that surround them (Collier, 2009; Moran, 2018). This process of negotiation and contestation involves relationships between power, collective experience, and conflicting interests, so that culture becomes an arena for the struggle for meaning that determines how individuals and groups understand themselves, others, and social reality (Brett, 2000; Gunia et al., 2016). Through these dynamics, culture acts as a means of forming and testing human values in communal life. In the process of forming these values, on the one hand, those in power (the dominant group) play an important role in shaping and even controlling the main narrative and

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determining the important values in society (Mumby, 1993). However, on the other hand, shared experiences also empower small (subordinate) groups to challenge and change these narratives and dominance. Different interests create tensions that drive cultural change. Through this process, culture helps shape humanistic values. Culture becomes a vessel in which ideas about equality, justice, and human dignity are tested (Mattson & Clark, 2011). This process shapes individual and group identities, as well as influencing broader social structures. In this context, understanding cultural dynamics is crucial for overcoming social conflict and creating a more dignified and inclusive society (Lüders et al., 2024). One novel that strongly depicts cultural contestation, power, and negotiation is *Kubah* by Ahmad Tohari.

Ahmad Tohari's novel "Kubah" strongly indicates the existence of fierce cultural competition through the development of each character. How the main character Karman becomes central to this cultural contest (Djenar, 2016). How a young man living in a religious environment becomes an atheist and chooses the ideology of the communist party. How does Karman's inner turmoil position him in the existing cultural struggle? This cultural competition is also depicted through conflicts between other characters. How does the conflict and opposition between the main character Karman and Hasyim represent a clash between communist and traditional-religious ideologies? These questions and indications are interesting to explore and discuss. In addition, there are three aspects of the novel *Kubah* that are interesting to examine. First, the historical context after 1965. This novel contains an epic contestation of political events in Indonesia. In the novel, the tragedy or events of 1965 are indicated not only as a political conflict, but also as a deep moral, ideological, and social contestation. How did the regime in power at that time, the New Order, construct a single anti-communist hegemonic narrative, stigmatize groups that opposed or disagreed with it, and attempt to erase different collective memories (Eddyono, 2023). The novel *Kubah* provides an overview of how dominant groups are opposed by presenting perspectives from below and within. It shows the differences and clashes between state ideology and traditional values and individual humanity at the grassroots level. *Kubah* reflects the complexity of how political power is used to control the cultural sphere and public consciousness (DeMarrais et al., 1996).

Second, cultural elements conflict and negotiate with each other. The novel *Kubah* describes how political ideologies (between nationalism, communism, and religion) clash. This novel also describes how value systems battle between modernity and traditionalism, between the sacred and the secular. It also depicts the competition between memory (official history) and narrative (life experience). Through his characters, Ahmad Tohari illustrates how conflicts destroy social order, cause division, and breed mistrust (Srikandi, 2018). On the other hand, he (the author) also shows how people resist, adapt, and search for new meaning from the remnants of the old heritage. *Kubah* not only portrays or reflects on competition, but also explores the potential for reconciliation and cultural recovery through the main character, Karman. Third, social class contestation framed by cultural conflict. The *Kubah* strongly suggests how cultural contestation becomes an arena and a means of raising issues of social class conflict (Falah, 2017). This social group has the potential to be controversial and can lead to hegemony (Falah, 2018). How characters are portrayed and experience conflict from the individual to the ideological realm, as shown by the characters Karman and Haji Bakir (Jarness et al., 2019). How these conflicting characters then play a role in propaganda, hegemony, and even oppression. The character Karman represents the occurrence of cultural contestation from the personal to the communal realm. Karman is not a passive individual; he is caught up in various cultural forces that pull, shape, and transform him. Analyzing Karman's position allows us to understand how cultural contestation not only occurs at the macro level but also internalizes itself at the personal level.

Research on Ahmad Tohari's novel *Kubah* using Raymond Williams' cultural materialism approach, based on a literature review, has not been systematically developed. This research

gap is a strong reason for a critical study examining how cultural and power contests are reflected in one of the most important literary works discussing the post-1965 period in Indonesia. Most previous studies tend to place *Kubah* in a religious, humanistic, or historical trauma context, so that the cultural aspect as an arena of material power relations has not been studied in depth.

Prakoso (2022), through a study of female characters' life choices and Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis, highlights the limitations of women's agency in patriarchal social structures, while Yulisetiani (2020) emphasizes prophetic ethics and the wisdom of Banyumas women as moral values that persist in society. Research on the negotiation of social sanctions against the character Karman focuses on stigma and social acceptance as ethical issues, while Sahliyah (2017), using a new historicism approach, places *Kubah* in the historical, economic, and cultural context of the post-1965 era. On the other hand, comparative studies, gastronomy, and translations of Tohari's works emphasize thematic representation, cultural identity, or linguistics. Although their contributions are significant, these studies have not explicitly viewed culture as an arena of material contestation of power involving dominant, residual, and emergent cultures. The absence of Raymond Williams' cultural materialism framework in reading the dynamics of values, ideologies, and social practices presents a gap in research. Therefore, this study offers a critical reading of *Kubah* as a space for negotiation and the struggle for cultural meaning, while also revealing the power relations that operate symbolically in society. This study uses Raymond Williams' theory of cultural materialism.

Raymond Williams (1977), a leading cultural theorist, developed the idea of cultural materialism, which critically highlights the interdependence between cultural formation and the material conditions and history of society, rejecting static or idealistic views of culture. Within his framework, Williams identifies three main categories that operate simultaneously and interact in every cultural formation. First, dominant culture refers to the organized and powerful system of values, meanings, and practices at a given time, which actively shapes individual consciousness and experience. This category is often closely related to hegemonic ideologies that seek to normalize and legitimize existing power structures, reflecting the interests of dominant groups (Olwell, 2015). Second, residual culture consists of elements from the past, practices, beliefs, and values that, despite having been formed in previous social structures, are still active and influential in contemporary or ongoing cultural processes (Cardinal & Loughmiller-Cardinal, 2025). Although no longer dominant, residual cultures can be a source of alternative values or even opposition to the dominant culture, preserving different memories and practices. Third, emergent cultures describe new forms of meaning, values, and practices that are constantly being created, often in response to changing material conditions or as a challenge to the dominant culture. Emergent cultures can arise from new groups or new experiences, and have the potential to become dominant cultures in the future or offer radical alternatives. Williams emphasizes that these three categories do not operate in isolation, but rather in constant interaction and contestation, reflecting the complexity and constant change in the cultural landscape (Olwell, 2015). This framework critically enables an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of power and change in cultural production, linking cultural phenomena to the underlying material conditions and social structures, including in the novel *Kubah*.

Within the framework of cultural materialism theory proposed by Raymond Williams, culture is broadly defined as “the whole way of life” of a society, encompassing social practices, institutions, values, and meanings that are historically produced and reproduced (Williams, 1977). This definition goes beyond “high” art and intellectualism, encompassing all forms of human experience and expression related to material conditions and power structures. From this definition emerges the concept of contestation (Kustantinah et al., 2025), which refers to the ongoing struggle in the production, distribution, and reception of meaning and

value in the cultural sphere (Peist Rojzman, 2022). Contestation is not merely a surface conflict, but rather a struggle for power to define reality, establish norms, and shape collective consciousness, which is inherently linked to social and political dynamics (Hall, 1997). Contestation also refers to the social process in which various actors or groups compete, negotiate, and debate meaning, value, and legitimacy within a cultural context or discourse. According to Bourdieu (1991), Fairclough (1995), and Williams (1977), contestation emphasizes that cultural meaning is always produced through dynamic and historical power relations. Contestation is defined as a dynamic and ongoing struggle over meaning, interpretation, and the distribution of power within a social system (Smith, 2023). This includes the rejection or challenge of dominant narratives, norms, or established hegemony (Jones, 2022), as well as the struggle for legitimacy over the definition of reality (Brown, 2021). Its boundaries span from the symbolic to the material, highlighting the non-static nature of culture.

In the novel *Kubah*, cultural and power contests are analysed as a dynamic struggle over meaning, values, and narratives that shape social reality after 1965. Power, whether repressive or hegemonic, seeks to control and stigmatize, while culture becomes an arena for resistance and negotiation. This analysis reveals how the dominant culture of the New Order interacts with values that still persist and the emergence of a new culture that offers new hope and meaning, especially through the journey of the character Karman.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative descriptive study that focuses on literary text analysis (novels). The purpose of this study is to reveal cultural and power contestations in the novel *Kubah*. The material object in this study is the novel *Kubah* by Ahmad Tohari. *Kubah* strongly indicates that it contains socio-political representations in Indonesia after 1965. The selection of the novel *Kubah* as the material object is based, among other things, on the existence of cultural contestation, power, norms, and values in a fragmented society. The formal object in this study is the contestation and power reflected in the narrative of *Kubah* through each character. Regarding these material and formal objects, the relevant perspective used is Raymond Williams' cultural materialism. This cultural materialism perspective focuses on three categories: dominant culture, residue, and emergence. This perspective is used to identify and reveal the deeper meaning in *Kubah*. How the ruling ideology (dominant), practices and values of the past that are still embraced and survive (residue), and new forms of meaning and life (emergence). Data collection was carried out through an in-depth reading of the novel *Kubah*. The research data consisted of words, phrases, sentences, and discourses related to the contestation of the three cultural categories. The research data was carefully read, then the text or quotations relevant to the research problem were identified and marked. The collection process required a deep understanding of the concepts being studied, namely cultural contestation. Then the data was classified. At this stage, the data was grouped based on the predetermined research question, namely how cultural contestation occurs in the *Kubah*. In this classification stage, elements of narrative, dialogue, description, or events in the novel that reflect cultural conflicts or struggles between characters or social groups are identified and separated. The analysis focuses on interpreting the meaning within the structure of the story, events, dialogue, and relationships between characters related to cultural contestation, rather than being based on quantitative measurements. Then, character analysis. Characters in novels are positioned as narrative subjects who have certain ideological positions in cultural contests. The final stage of analysis is carried out through interpretation and inductive conclusions drawn from research data found in *Kubah* using Raymond Williams' cultural materialism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a comparison of recent research results (within the last 2-3 years), research trends on both the novel *Kubah* and Ahmad Tohari's other works tend to focus on issues of local tradition representation, Banyumasan identity, and gender politics. Bugov (2024) maps the variations in the performance of *Lengger Banyumas* as a cultural practice that continues to evolve, while Nurdiyanto et al. (2023) shows how Banyumas toponymy reflects the memory and identity of local communities. Arif, Faiqbal, and Fariz (2025) highlight the process of iconization of Banyumas local culture in the context of development, showing how local culture can be packaged and directed by the dominant agenda. Then, in the realm of text transformation, Windari and Hayati (2024) analyze the adaptation of Tohari's short stories into drama performances, marking a research interest in the circulation and pedagogy of Tohari's works in new media.

Another growing trend is the reading of gender and power in texts and performing arts related to Tohari's world. Muqit and Polii (2024) examined *Berkisar Merah* and found that women's struggles move between the drive for emancipation and the trap of patriarchal structures. Wardani et al. (2023) identify hegemonic masculinity in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* as a mechanism of power that normalizes subordination, while Meiliana (2023) finds cultural violence in *ronggeng* art through a feminist analysis of the power relations between the body, the stage, and the community. Similarly, but in the ethnographic realm, Marwah, Ramadhanti, and Pratiwi (2025) interpret *Sintren* dance as a space for contestation of gender and power, affirming traditional art as an arena for identity negotiation.

These studies generally highlight value conflicts and experiences of powerlessness and resistance, but often tend to stop at themes (gender/identity) without systematically mapping the logic of cultural hegemony. In addition to identity and gender, there has been a noticeable expansion of perspectives to include ecology, postcolonialism, and social disorganization, but these studies still rely on thematic readings. Efendi et al. (2025) use ecopostcolonialism to highlight local voices and ecological narratives as resistance to dominant ideologies, to see how local traditions become a battleground for discourse. Romala (2023) traces religious searches through folk songs in various versions of *Bekisar Merah*, showing the mobility of meaning (folk, national, global) in Ahmad Tohari's texts. Aribowo (2024) interprets *Jegingger* as a renarrative related to sacredness and social disorganization, asserting that Tohari's text can be read as a critique of the breakdown of the communal order. Meanwhile, Madyananda et al. (2023) show eroticism in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* as a symptom of changing cultural views, but have not linked it to the configuration of social forces that have the potential to create change and conflict.

At this stage and in this context, research on the novel *Kubah* offers an important opportunity to fill a gap: recent research has touched on socio-political trauma and the psychological impact of post-1965 through the character of Karman (e.g., Uluwwi et al., 2024), but has not sufficiently mapped how this trauma functions as a cultural contestation between dominant values (state discourse/post-event normalization), residues (moral-religious values, village solidarity), and emergences (new forms of consciousness, reconciliation). Harding & Pribram (2002) then place emotion as the key to understanding the dynamics of power, the basis for reading fear, shame, guilt, hope, and alienation in *Kubah* as social phenomena that have not been fully institutionalized. Thus, the position of this research is to shift the focus from thematic readings (trauma/gender/identity) to hegemonic mapping and Raymond Williams' cultural materialism: explaining how *Kubah* is not only a narrative of historical wounds, but also reveals the battle of values and ways of life (dominant, residual, and emergent) that reshape subjects, communities, and future opportunities after 1965.

This study systematically describes the contestation of culture and power in Ahmad Tohari's novel "Kubah." The analysis uses Raymond Williams' framework of cultural materialism, which distinguishes between dominant, residual, and emergent cultures. The main focus is on Karman's dynamic position in facing and responding to these three cultural categories. Each category is supported by specific narrative evidence from the novel, illustrating how Karman becomes an arena for cultural struggle and synthesis. The following are the results of the study in Table 1 and the discussion in the next subsection.

TABLE 1. Cultural contestation and power

The Contestation Of Culture And Power In The Novel Kubah		
Cultural Categories (Raymond Williams)	Karman's Position In Kubah	Evidence In The Novel Kubah
1. Dominant	The New Order Comes To Power; Anti-Communist Ideology; Karman's Position: Labeled An Ex-Pki Member, Persecuted, Imprisoned.	1 Arrest, Torture, And Imprisonment On Charges Of Involvement With The Pki; The Stigma Attached To Being An Ex-Pki Member.
2. Residual	Traditional Islamic Values; Past Cultural Practices; Solidarity; Karman's Position: Rooted In Identity And Preservation.	He Has Strong Islamic Beliefs, Which He Had Abandoned But Regained After Prison; Memories of Village Solidarity and Humanitarian Values Before Ideological Divisions.
3. Emergen	Self-Reconciliation; Synthesis of Life Experiences; Building A Mosque Dome; Karman's Position: Searching For New Meaning And Reflecting.	Building A Mosque: A Symbol of Spirituality, Hope, And Recovery; Forms of Resistance And Preserving Memory Differ from The Official Narrative.

DOMINANT CULTURE: KARMAN AS A VICTIM OF POST-1965

Dominant Culture In Raymond Williams' cultural materialism, dominant culture is defined as a system of values, meanings, and social practices that are legitimized by power to maintain ideological hegemony in society. The dominant culture operates not only through state apparatus, but also through language, social norms, and collective consciousness that shape what is considered normal, reasonable, and right. In the novel Kubah, the post-1965 dominant culture is strongly depicted by the power of the New Order. This power functions through the repressive anti-communist ideology of the state, which structures all aspects of social life. The state and the people in this context experience conflict. The character Karman becomes a central figure who shows how the dominant culture systematically produces victims.

"Dan tamat sudah kisah pelariannya, karena seorang gembala kerbau melihat segala gerak-geriknya. Di siang itu beberapa orang pamong desa datang ke Astana Lopajang. Karman ditangkap dalam keadaan sakit payah. Boleh jadi karena keadaannya itulah orang tidak tega menghabisi nyawanya". (Kubah, 2012)

This quote sharply illustrates the competition for power and dominant culture after 1965, when the stigma of the PKI was so deeply ingrained in public consciousness that even a shepherd acted as an agent of surveillance. Karman's arrest while seriously ill shows how relentless the hunt for those labeled as "ex-PKI" was, confirming that their existence was considered a threat that had to be eliminated. The phrase "people couldn't bring themselves to take his life" ironically highlights the extreme dehumanization that occurred, where Karman's survival was a rare exception amid a wave of violence. Karman is not just an individual who has suffered political defeat, but a subject whose humanity has been reduced by the

mechanisms of the dominant culture. Karman is under the shadow and pressure of ideological stigma attached by the state and reproduced by the village community. From Williams' cultural materialism perspective, this condition shows the success of cultural hegemony, when dominant values are no longer imposed openly but accepted as common sense. In this context, in the community's memory, who is part of and who is against the country is very clear. The community does not question the injustice experienced by Karman, because the anti-communist discourse has formed a rigid moral boundary between what is right and what is wrong.

The dominant culture in the Kubah functions through discourse control. Karman is portrayed as the opposition or antithesis of the dominant state/culture. Karman's identity has been defined by the state, thus depriving him of the opportunity to define himself. It is not physical or visible crimes that get Karman tried and punished, but rather simplified ideological consequences. This is where symbolic power comes into play: ideological language and labels replace individual humanity. Society does not think logically and fairly, and the state does not need to be physically present, because control has been internalized by society and by Karman himself in the form of fear and alienation. In the context of Kubah, it is clear that the dominant culture not only oppresses structurally, but also destroys social relationships and communal solidarity. The kinship that was originally the basis of village society has turned into a space of surveillance and moral judgment. In Williams' terms, the dominant culture successfully regulates people's life experiences to suit the interests of power. Karman lives as "the other" in the midst of his own community, alienated within a cultural structure that is supposed to protect him. However, Kubah does not stop at the reproduction of hegemony and negotiation. By presenting Karman's inner suffering in a human way, this novel implicitly challenges the legitimacy of the state's dominant culture. The author opens up a space for critical reflection on how an ideology that claims to maintain stability actually results in dehumanization. Thus, Kubah functions as a cultural text that reveals the dark side of the dominant culture after 1965 and asserts that culture, when co-opted by power, can become the most effective tool of symbolic oppression.

RESIDUAL CULTURE: THE ROOTS OF IDENTITY AND MORAL RESILIENCE KARMAN

The novel "Kubah" by Ahmad Tohari not only presents a powerful story about the destruction caused by the events of 1965, but also highlights the extraordinary resilience of cultural values and practices that have survived. Within the framework of cultural materialism proposed by Raymond Williams (1977), Karman, as the central character, becomes a real figure of how residual culture, values, and cultural practices from the past, especially those that are religious and communal in nature, serve as a foundation that supports him amid the destruction. There is a tension between residual and dominant cultures. Residual culture is not completely lost and is rediscovered by him, becoming an important source of strength and identity. Williams (1977) defines residual culture as elements of the past, practices, values, and beliefs, which, although formed in previous social structures and no longer dominant, remain active and have a significant influence on current cultural processes. There is a space for cultural dialectics. In the context of the cultural Kubah, this residual culture became the antithesis of the dominant anti-communist culture of the New Order, which sought to impose a single narrative and eradicate all forms of deviation from the dominant ideology. For Karman, this residual culture is rooted in his childhood in the village of Pegaten, an environment steeped in traditional Islamic values and strong communal ties. Uncle Hasyim and Haji Bakir consistently demonstrate their adherence to inherited religious values. Examples include the way Hasyim gives advice to Karman and Haji Bakir's belief in destiny.

“Karman, aku tak bisa mengerti mengapa kau meninggalkan nikmat itu, nikmatnya orang yang melaksanakan kewajiban. Apakah kau belum bisa merasakan kepuasan jiwa selagi kau bersujud, sehingga kau menganggap kewajiban itu hanya sebagai pikulan yang menindih pundakmu? (Kubah, 2012).

The quote shows Uncle Hasyim describing to Karman the traditional religious values that remain and provide a deep framework of meaning. Hasyim expresses his surprise at Karman leaving behind the spiritual “pleasure” of worship, emphasizing that these practices are not only a burden, but also a source of spiritual satisfaction inherent in the culture. The comparison between the “spiritual satisfaction” of prostration and the “oppressive burden” critically highlights Karman's past failure to understand the essence of this residual culture, which later became the basis for his spiritual recovery after the collapse of the dominant ideology. Thus, Hasyim's advice serves as a reminder of the resilience and relevance of inherited values, which are capable of providing moral and spiritual footing amid social turmoil.

Before becoming involved with the PKI, Karman was part of a social structure filled with local wisdom, neighborly solidarity, and religious devotion. Karman's journey through PKI ideology and his bitter experiences in prison were attempts by the dominant culture to destroy his identity and sever his ties with his residual heritage. However, it was precisely when his personal destruction reached its peak, after experiencing both physical and mental oppression, that Karman slowly rediscovered strength in these residual values. This residual culture made Karman return to a more psychologically rooted existence in the village environment. Narrative evidence shows that the traditional Islamic beliefs he had held since childhood, although he had abandoned or ignored them during his involvement with the PKI, once again became his spiritual compass after his release from prison. Meetings and guidance from figures such as Haji Bakir, who consistently represented steadfastness in pure and humanistic religious values, were important for Karman. Haji Bakir was the living embodiment of residual culture; he was not involved in politics, but was steadfast in moral principles that transcended ideological conflicts. Through Haji Bakir, Karman was reminded of the essence of faith, which offers forgiveness, hope, and meaning in the midst of despair. This shows that religious values, as part of residual culture, have extraordinary resilience and can be a source of moral strength that resists the dehumanization promoted by the dominant culture.

Karman, despite having been gone for a long time and returning with the stigma of being a former political prisoner, was warmly welcomed by the people of Pegaten. This attitude demonstrates the cultural resilience of solidarity and forgiveness that has become an inherent trait of the village community.

“Karman sedang dirubung oleh para tamu, tetangga-tetangga yang sudah amat lama ditinggalkan. Ia merasa heran dan terharu, ternyata orang-orang Pegaten tetap pada watak mereka yang asli. Ramah, bersaudara, dan yang penting” (Kubah, 2012).

This quote clearly reveals the resilience of residual culture in society, where communal values such as hospitality and brotherhood remain intact even though Karman has long been negatively labeled by the dominant culture. Karman's surprise and emotion show that he himself did not expect these traditional human bonds to still be so strong, transcending fear and political divisions. This confirms that residual culture is a source of enduring strength and identity, providing Karman with acceptance and hope amid the destruction caused by the ruling ideology.

In addition, memories of village solidarity and humanitarian values that existed before the ideological split are also important elements of the residual culture that supports Karman. Although the Pegaten community is divided and surrounded by fear, memories of harmony, togetherness, and family ties remain, even if they are often hidden. This has a significant impact on Karman, on how society should function, and forms the basis for hopes of recovery. In this

context, this residual culture functions as a remnant that refuses to be completely erased, constantly intervening in a reality dominated by violence and mistrust. Residual culture not only functions as a defense mechanism for Karman, but also as a form of passive resistance against attempts at homogenization and the erasure of identity by the dominant culture (the state). With his principles based on the values of the past, Karman implicitly rejects the dominant narrative that seeks to claim him entirely as an “ex-PKI” who had no place in society at that time.

For Karman, residual culture provides a moral and spiritual foundation for rebuilding his shattered identity, for surviving and finding meaning amid the destruction. This legacy proves that culture cannot be completely controlled or erased by dominant powers; there are elements that have inherent resilience, which can be a source of strength for individuals and communities to remain steadfast and even become the seeds for the emergence of new forms of culture, as represented by Karman.

EMERGENT CULTURE: THE SEARCH FOR NEW MEANING AND ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF LIFE KARMAN

The novel *Kubah* by Ahmad Tohari presents a profound story of destruction and recovery, which intensively explores cultural contestation in Indonesia after 1965. Within the framework of cultural materialism proposed by Raymond Williams (1977), the journey of the main character, Karman, brilliantly illustrates the concept of cultural emergence: a search for new meaning and the development of alternative ways of life in response to trauma and pressure from the dominant culture. This is not merely a return to the past, but rather a new synthesis of his complex life experiences, offering a critical perspective on the dynamics of cultural change.

Williams (1977) defines emergent culture as new forms of meaning, values, and practices that are constantly being created, often in response to existing conditions or as a challenge to the dominant culture. Emergent culture can originate from new groups or new experiences, and has the potential to become the dominant culture in the future or offer radical alternatives. In the context of *Kubah*, Karman is the living embodiment of this emergent process. After experiencing brutal oppression by the dominant culture of the New Order—arrest, torture, imprisonment, and stigmatization as an “ex-PKI”—Karman was faced with the total destruction of his identity and existence. The PKI ideology he once believed in had collapsed, and the traditional values he had left behind were no longer accessible in the same way. In this void, Karman was forced to create something new.

Karman's search for new meaning does not simply mean returning to the remaining culture, even though the remaining values, such as traditional Islamic teachings and communal solidarity, are indeed important foundations. However, his traumatic experiences have fundamentally changed him, so that he cannot simply return to his old beliefs or practices without critical reflection. Karman's faith after leaving prison became more personal, profound, and reflective. It was a “new spirituality” that emerged from suffering, an attempt to find the essence of faith that transcended mere ritual or dogma, and which was able to provide comfort and purpose amid destruction. This process is a synthesis of his life experiences: he does not erase his past as a former member of the PKI, but rather integrates it into a new understanding of justice, suffering, and forgiveness. It is a complex form of self-reconciliation, in which he tries to understand how he got to that point and how he can move forward. The most symbolic act of Karman's new culture is the rebuilding of the mosque dome.

Karman did not build the dome carelessly. He devoted all his expertise, perseverance, and artistic sense to create a masterpiece. This reflects his sincerity in redeeming his past and giving his best to the community.

“Maka Karman bekerja dengan sangat hati-hati. Ia menggabungkan kesempurnaan teknik, keindahan estetika, serta ketekunan. Hasilnya adalah sebuah mahkota mesjid yang sempurna. Tidak ada kerutan-kerutan. Setiap sambungan terpatris rapi. Kerangkanya kokoh dengan pengelasan saksama. Leher kubah dihiasi kaligrafi dengan teralis” (Kubah, 2012).

The quote describes Karman's new culture through meaningful acts of creation, in which he combines technical perfection and aesthetics with deep perseverance in response to past trauma. The construction of the “perfect mosque crown” symbolizes the synthesis of his life experiences, transforming destruction into a symbol of hope, spiritual recovery, and community rebuilding. This is a form of strong silent resistance, in which Karman creates an alternative narrative of dignity and sustainability, challenging the stigma and destruction imposed by the dominant culture.

The destroyed dome is not only a symbol of physical damage, but also of spiritual and communal destruction caused by ideological conflict. The rebuilding of the dome, which Karman did with his own hands, is an act that goes beyond mere physical restoration. It is a spiritual act, a concrete manifestation of hope, recovery, and an effort to rebuild the community not the same community as before, but one that has learned from tragedy and is trying to heal. The construction of the dome has become a symbol of a “new culture” emerging from the ruins, a culture that values hard work, perseverance, deep faith, and reconciliation.

Karman's emergent culture in Kubah presents a critique of the dominant culture. Although he does not openly engage in political resistance, his existence and actions constitute a powerful form of silent resistance. By finding new meaning, rebuilding, and living with dignity amid stigma, Karman implicitly challenges the dominant narrative that seeks to erase and stigmatize him completely. He demonstrates that humans have the ability to create new meanings and forms of life even under the most extreme pressure. Karman's emergent culture reveals that from trauma and oppression, new awareness, more authentic spirituality, and hope for a future that, while imperfect, offers the possibility of healing and sustainability can emerge. This proves that culture is not static, but is constantly being created and recreated, even under the shadow of the most oppressive power.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Culture in Ahmad Tohari's novel Kubah is not a static entity, but rather a dynamic arena filled with struggles and negotiations, reflected or depicted through the journey of the main character, Karman. Using Raymond Williams' framework of cultural materialism, Karman's position can be effectively analyzed in three categories: dominant, residual, and emergent culture. Karman is the main character (subject) who is stigmatized and oppressed by the dominant culture. Karman became a victim of the New Order's hegemony with its repressive anti-communist ideology. Karman suffered greatly; he was arrested, tortured, and imprisoned on charges of involvement with the PKI. Karman's social and economic life was destroyed because he was stigmatized as a former PKI member and because the dominant power controlled discourse, identity, and ideological compliance. However, amid this dominant cultural pressure, Karman has communal solidarity and traditional religious values that function as residual culture. Although he was once alienated, his humanity and spirituality were formed from the bonds of village society and Islamic teachings before the political division, and have now become his foundation once again. Karman is supported by the figure of Haji Bakir to reinforce the values of the past in order to preserve humanity amid dehumanization.

The culmination of Karman's journey, and his most dominant position within Williams' framework, is his attempt at reconciliation and finding new meaning and hope that represent the culture of emergence. Karman did not simply return to the past; he also transformed

himself. His more personal and profound spiritual search after leaving prison, his efforts to make peace with his dark past, and his actions in rebuilding the dome of the mosque are powerful symbols of recovery and the creation of meaning from a dark period. In short, Karman shows that in the midst of oppression, rediscovering one's essence, rebuilding community, and fostering new hope can continue to emerge, challenging the dominant narrative and opening up opportunities for a different future. This study is limited to examining the Kubah from the perspective of cultural contestation. Further research is needed from other perspectives, such as social dimensions, psychology, collective memory, trauma, hegemony, and character education.

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A Narrative Review of English Language Learning and Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

With the introduction of digital technology and artificial intelligence, learning English is changing dramatically. By combining the results of the previous ten years of research, this study, which is being conducted using the narrative review method, aims to fill these gaps by offering a thorough grasp of the present trends, difficulties, and potential future directions in the use of AI to English language learning. The majority of current research is on the effectiveness of certain AI technologies, paying little consideration to the long-term impacts on learners' sociocultural competency, language ability, and retention. Furthermore, the majority of research to far has focused on English as a foreign language, with little attention paid to how AI can facilitate multilingualism or the acquisition of English as a second language in various sociocultural contexts. We present GenAI technology in English learning as a novelty of the research. Studies examining the pedagogical, cultural, and ethical ramifications of widespread AI deployment in language instruction, particularly in non-Western contexts, are also lacking. This study using narrative review methods and highlights both the exciting promise and the difficulties of integrating GenAI technology, providing insightful information about the changing field of AI use in English learning. Conducting empirical research on the principles in this study is one suggestion for future research.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; English language learning; narrative review

INTRODUCTION

Learning English is being transformed by artificial intelligence (AI), which provides individualized, flexible, and engaging experiences. AI-powered solutions that address individual needs, offer real-time feedback, and encourage engagement through gamification include chatbots, intelligent tutoring systems, and language learning applications (Anh, 2024; Ulfa, 2023). In addition to increasing instructor effectiveness, these technologies improve student competency, autonomy, and learning outcomes (Umar, 2024). But there are issues with algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the possible loss of human engagement in language acquisition (Umar, 2024; Viktorivna et al., 2022). High levels of knowledge and anxiety regarding AI in language acquisition were found in a study of university students in Ukraine, especially with relation to cyberattacks and the lack of spontaneity (Viktorivna et al., 2022).

Collaborative efforts between educators, legislators, academics, and technology developers are required to address these issues and fully utilize AI in English language instruction while ensuring its responsible and fair application (Umar, 2024).

With the introduction of digital technology and artificial intelligence, English language instruction is changing dramatically (Wang et al., 2024). AI has become a powerful force that has the potential to transform education because of its ability to mimic human intelligence and adjust to the unique learning requirements of each student (Sun et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020). Personalized and contextually relevant language learning possibilities, like those in out-of-class learning environments, could be greatly aided by generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), a subset of artificial intelligence that involves the synthesis of material by machines (Shinde et al., 2021). A trend and calculated reaction to the changing demands of language learners in a digitally linked society is the use of AI in these settings (Godwin-Jones, 2019). Research indicates that learners' motivation (Ebadi & Amini, 2024), engagement (Huang et al., 2023), and language competency (Tai, 2024) have all significantly improved when AI techniques are incorporated into language learning programs. A more dynamic and captivating language learning experience is made possible by GenAI's capacity to offer real-time language practice, adaptive learning paths, and quick feedback (Ai, 2017).

Traditional learning paradigms have changed as a result of AI's integration into education, especially when it comes to language acquisition. Given the significance of English as a lingua franca around the world, its role in English language acquisition has drawn the most attention among the many uses of AI in education. From language learning applications to intelligent tutoring systems, AI-powered tools and platforms present exciting chances to improve learning outcomes, increase engagement, and customize instruction. Though AI's potential in this area is well acknowledged, there is still continuous discussion about its precise effects and effectiveness in enhancing language proficiency.

By highlighting significant trends, obstacles, and opportunities for future advancements, this narrative review seeks to offer a thorough synthesis of the body of research on the application of AI in English language acquisition. Examining the body of research on AI's effects on language acquisition, its pedagogical implications, and its ethical considerations is imperative given how quickly the subject is developing. By combining the results of several studies carried out over the past ten years, this review aims to draw attention to current gaps in the literature and offer insights that can guide both scholarly research and real-world applications for teachers and students everywhere.

The significance of this study stems from the ability to overcome language competence gaps among a variety of student populations as well as the quick development of AI tools in educational settings. Learner autonomy, teacher preparation, and curriculum design are all significantly impacted by our understanding of how AI can be used to improve English language acquisition. Furthermore, in order to prepare students to interact meaningfully with digital tools, it is essential to comprehend how AI technologies function in language acquisition as they become more and more integrated into everyday life.

INFORMAL DIGITAL ENGLISH LEARNING

Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) is defined as self-directed, informal digital English learning that is not dependent on formal contexts. It is based on Benson's (Benson, 2011) out-of-class learning framework, which elaborates on "formality," "location," "pedagogy," and "locus of control" (Lee Ju Seong & Dressman, 2018). According to this concept, self-directed language learning activities that take place outside of regular classroom settings are referred to as out-of-class learning. This framework built by expanding the dimensions and presenting a more complex identification of IDLE (Reinders, 2020). They

divide it into two categories: "extra-curricular IDLE," which is linked to formal education (e.g., using digital dictionaries for vocabulary learning) and "extramural IDLE," which is characterized by a lack of connections to teacher-based formal instruction and/or standardized tests. This advanced classification acknowledges the various relationships between IDLE activities and educational settings. Furthermore, IDLE activities have separated into two groups: "receptive" and "productive" (Lee & Drajati, 2019). While the latter focuses on students producing digital content in English, the former describes activities where students use digital inputs to learn English independently. A nuanced viewpoint on how students engage in IDLE activities is provided by this dual classification. In an attempt to improve these dimensions and give a more thorough explanation of IDLE practices, researcher adds a dichotomy to IDLE activities, "synchronicity," "flexibility," "setting," and "grouping" to the matrix (Lee, 2019). For a more thorough characterization of IDLE practices, apply the terms "grouping," "setting," "flexibility," and "synchronicity" to the matrix.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH GENAI

GenAI is characterized as a system that, after being educated on large amounts of data, can use a large language model to communicate with human users. The most popular kind of autonomous, self-directed GenAI usage is AI chatbots, which is a productive and responsive IDLE activity (Yang et al., 2022). Whether chatbots are employed or not, GenAI is a prompt-based interaction system that requires EFL students to read or listen to the generated contents (the receptive side) and give written or spoken prompts (the producing side) during human-machine interaction (Pack & Maloney, 2023). The interactions could occur with or without official incorporation into the school system (Zhang, 2022). For example, it has been found that students utilize GenAI to compose English for extracurricular activities related to formal education taught by teachers (Barrett & Pack, 2023; Rad et al., 2024). Furthermore, students use GenAI to help them socialize by facilitating cross-cultural communication (Mahboob et al., 2024). Due to its unclear relationship to learning goals, the latter in particular is seen as extra mural activities (Lee & Sylvén, 2021). Therefore, although some research, such as Liu & Ma (2023), suggests that GenAI usage may be "self-motivated autonomous English learning activities in the broader extramural digitalized learning ecology," research (Barrett & Pack, 2023) has shown that GenAI usage could also become an extracurricular activity used for educational purposes (G. Liu & Ma, 2023).

EDUCATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in educational contexts is growing, presenting both enormous obstacles and transformative opportunities. AI technologies, including machine learning, speech recognition, natural language processing (NLP), and adaptive learning systems, have been used in language learning to establish customized learning environments. These systems can simulate interactions that resemble language use in the actual world, offer real-time feedback, and evaluate learner data to customize material (X. Liu et al., 2025). AI has emerged as a viable technology for improving language instruction worldwide due to its ability to process enormous volumes of data and modify learning experiences according to individual needs.

AI-POWERED RESOURCES FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

A number of AI-based resources and platforms have become major forces in the English language learning market. AI algorithms are used by well-known systems like Duolingo and HelloTalk to provide immediate feedback on grammar and pronunciation, customize learning

paths, and suggest lessons based on user progress (Khasanah et al., 2025). Similarly, by offering instantaneous remedial feedback, speech recognition software like Apple's Siri and Google Assistant has proven essential in helping students with their listening and pronunciation.

AI is used by adaptive learning platforms, like those created by Pearson and other educational technology firms, to modify the level of difficulty of lessons and the way that content is delivered in accordance with the needs of each individual student. Additionally, conversational practice is made easier by AI-powered chatbots and virtual instructors, like those found in language learning applications and websites, which give students the opportunity to have meaningful conversations outside of the traditional classroom (Rachmawati et al., 2025).

AI'S ADVANTAGES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

There are numerous important advantages to incorporating AI into English language instruction. First, by offering personalized, adaptive, and interactive learning experiences, AI can raise learner motivation and engagement. AI solutions keep students engaged in the learning process by providing instant feedback and encouraging a sense of advancement. Second, particularly in settings with limited access to qualified language teachers, AI-based systems aid in bridging the gap between students and teachers. Third, by offering on-demand, round-the-clock practice chances, AI technologies can help extend language practice outside of the classroom. This is particularly beneficial for self-directed learners and those studying English in non-English speaking contexts.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Despite these advantages, the application of AI in English language learning is not without its challenges. One major issue is the reliability and accuracy of AI-driven feedback. While AI tools have made significant strides in assessing language proficiency, errors in speech recognition or incorrect grammar corrections can lead to frustration and confusion for learners (C. Liu et al., 2023). Moreover, AI systems often lack the nuanced understanding that human instructors bring to language teaching, particularly when it comes to idiomatic expressions, cultural context, and the subtleties of tone and emotion in communication (Godwin-Jones, 2019).

Another key challenge is the equity of access to AI-based learning tools. While AI has the potential to democratize language learning, the availability of high-quality AI-powered tools is still heavily dependent on access to technology, such as smartphones, reliable internet connections, and advanced computing systems. Furthermore, privacy concerns regarding the data collected by AI systems-particularly in relation to student performance, language use, and personal information, remain an important issue that needs to be addressed.

PEDAGOGICAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Significant pedagogical and ethical issues are also brought up by the extensive usage of AI in English language instruction. The possibility that AI systems would take the role of human teachers raises serious concerns since it would limit the amount of time that students and teachers can engage, which is crucial for encouraging motivation, social learning, and emotional support (Winkler et al., 2020). Furthermore, rather than helping students acquire the ability to speak critically and freely, the automation of some language learning processes may unintentionally encourage them to become unduly dependent on technology.

THE LITERATURE'S GAPS

There are still a number of gaps in the growing corpus of research on AI in language acquisition. The majority of current research is on the effectiveness of certain AI technologies, paying little consideration to the long-term impacts on learners' sociocultural competency, language ability, and retention. Furthermore, the majority of research to far has focused on English as a foreign language, with little attention paid to how AI can facilitate multilingualism or the acquisition of English as a second language in various sociocultural contexts. Studies examining the pedagogical, cultural, and ethical ramifications of widespread AI deployment in language instruction, particularly in non-Western contexts, are also lacking. By combining research findings from the past ten years, this narrative review will attempt to fill in these gaps and offer a thorough grasp of the current trends, difficulties, and potential paths in the use of AI to English language acquisition.

GAPS OF THE RESEARCH

Even while artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming more and more popular as a tool for learning English, there are still many unanswered questions about the full extent of its effects, difficulties, and future development potential. Although a large amount of research has looked at specific AI tools, like speech recognition software, intelligent tutoring programs, and language learning applications, very few studies have offered a thorough analysis of how these tools work together to support English language learning. Furthermore, a large portion of the literature to far has concentrated on the efficacy of AI in particular, isolated circumstances, ignoring wider educational, ethical, and cultural ramifications.

The dearth of long-term research investigating the long-term effects of AI on language learners' competency is one significant gap. Less is known regarding the long-term effectiveness of AI-based platforms and whether or not these gains translate into meaningful, real-world language use, despite the fact that many of them claim positive short-term improvements in vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Additionally, the majority of the current research on AI in language learning is focused on high-income, Western nations, leaving the potential advantages and drawbacks of these technologies in diverse, non-Western, and low-resource contexts largely unexplored.

The inadequate examination of the pedagogical and ethical issues related to AI in education is another significant gap. Although they are frequently debated separately, topics like algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the possibility that AI will eventually replace human teachers are not thoroughly examined in relation to language learning. Additionally, little is known about AI's pedagogical role, especially in connection to its incorporation into conventional classroom environments and its effects on student autonomy, teacher-student interactions, and sociocultural learning experiences.

By providing a comprehensive, narrative synthesis of recent AI applications in English language acquisition, this review aims to close these gaps by highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of these technologies. By doing this, the review will offer a more sophisticated comprehension of the function of AI in language learning, its constraints, and possible future paths for both practice and research. The following research questions will direct the examination of the body of literature on the application of AI in English language acquisition in light of the review's objectives: (1) to identify the AI tools and technologies most commonly utilized in English language learning today; (2) to examine the extent to which AI-based tools improve learners' English language skills; (3) to analyze how the use of AI in English language instruction affects pedagogy, ethics, and culture; (4) to explore the potential effects of artificial intelligence on language learners' long-term memory and usage of English.

METHODOLOGY

We carry out narrative reviews (Hadjipanayi et al., 2025), which investigate the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the study of English language learning. Narrative reviews provide a flexible and rigorous approach to analyzing and interpreting literature on a chosen topic (Sukhera, 2022). Key steps in conducting narrative reviews include establishing a clear rationale, defining boundaries and scope, justifying inclusion criteria, and ensuring reflexivity (Sukhera, 2022). While narrative reviews have been criticized for lacking synthesis and rigor compared to systematic reviews, they allow for broader scope and the ability to raise questions and stimulate further research (Sarkar & Bhatia, 2021). To improve the quality of narrative reviews, peer reviewers should consider the needs of both expert and non-expert readers, ensuring reliability and accessibility (Byrne, 2016). Despite their limitations, narrative reviews remain valuable in helping researchers make sense of the growing scientific literature (Byrne, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionize English language learning for both teachers and students by providing scalable, data-driven, and customized approaches to improve language acquisition. Nevertheless, a thorough and methodical evaluation that summarizes the available data and highlights the advantages and disadvantages of AI technologies is still required, even in light of their quick spread in educational settings.

The development of the "thinking machine" program by Newell and Simon, which attempted to replicate human cognitive abilities to solve complicated problems, marked the beginning of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in 1956 and a watershed in the history of technology ((McCarthy, 2007; Newell & Simon, 1956). This finding gave rise to the field of AI in Education (AIED), which seeks to apply AI technology to improve decision-making, teaching, and learning. By creating intelligent tutoring systems, adaptable learning resources, and sophisticated advising platforms, AIED aims to deliver personalized educational experiences while boosting the efficacy of learning interventions (Chiu et al., 2023). These advancements represent a paradigm shift away from only technical innovations and toward more responsive, adaptable, and inclusive teaching strategies. However, incorporating AI into education necessitates a thorough examination of ethical concerns, data protection, and the potential to maintain existing inequities. The field of AIED must advance with a commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and learner autonomy to ensure that AI serves as a catalyst for transformative teaching practices.

The application of GenAI to English language training has spurred scholarly research into how educators and learners adapt to and perceive this technological innovation. Studies by researchers (Kohnke et al., 2023; Moorhouse et al., 2024) specifically examined how prepared language instructors at Hong Kong institutions were to use GenAI tools in their instruction. These studies demonstrate a critical relationship between educators' confidence and proficiency with GenAI technology and the difficulties and worries they encounter throughout adoption attempts. According to the findings, faculty proficiency with GAI has to be improved immediately through ongoing professional development and specialized institutional support—a support system that is noticeably absent across the range of international higher education institutions (Moorhouse et al., 2024). Research within Vietnamese and Saudi Arabian academic contexts have revealed a reluctance among faculty to integrate GenAI tools into their teaching, largely due to a lack of familiarity with these technologies and concerns over academic integrity (Alammari, 2024).

Several innovative uses of GenAI have been investigated in previous studies, each of which is appropriate for a particular aspect of language learning. By giving the students, a virtual environment where they can practice speaking through interactive dialogues, Call Annie is a tool that can be used to enhance conversational practice (Wan & Moorhouse, 2024). ChatGPT could be utilized to enhance students' written communicative abilities and foster development in written expression and comprehension by providing real-time feedback and developing writing prompts that assess students' language use (Wan & Moorhouse, 2024). Quizizz AI gives students the ability to take charge of their education by customizing quizzes to each student's learning preferences and pace (Anggoro & Pratiwi, 2023). In order to enhance cognitive engagement, researchers (M. Liu et al., 2024) investigated the use of AI-facilitated digital multimodal compositions, which blend several media kinds. Students benefit from improved language comprehension and longer retention as a result. Through the introduction of more individualized, captivating, and responsive educational experiences in the field of language learning, these varied implementations not only demonstrate GenAI's adaptability to educational needs but also its potential to revolutionize conventional learning paradigms.

GenAI has the potential to assist language learners in developing critical thinking skills, which are essential to language training, since it pushes students to analyze, assess, and synthesize content (Chan & Lee, 2023; Dai et al., 2026). GAI tools assist with this by providing students with difficult language challenges that need higher-order cognitive skills. For instance, ChatGPT can include writing exercises that assess students' understanding of difficult language ideas or questions that encourage them to take part in thought-provoking conversations (Tran & Tran, 2023). Educational organizations are tasked with integrating artificial intelligence as a secondary tool to conventional pedagogy, ensuring that intellectual honesty and analytical reasoning remain paramount (Nguyen, 2025). Successful implementation relies on the synergy between humans and AI, alongside the provision of inclusive access for all students, and a focus on ethical standards, data security, and AI proficiency is vital to protect student welfare and equip the academic community for a shifting technological environment (Nguyen, 2025).

Along with enhancing language proficiency, this skill prepares students for real-world communication scenarios where critical thinking is essential. However, there are disadvantages to employing GenAI in English language training, particularly with regard to the academic integrity and originality of student work. GenAI can affect research originality that students' reliance on AI-generated information may impair their ability to produce authentic work (Hutson, 2024). This concern is shared by Alasadi and Baiz (2023), who argue that while GenAI can aid in learning, students may become less engaged in language activities if they rely too heavily on it to generate content. Thus, educators need to find a balance between ensuring that students are actively engaged in the language learning process and using GenAI to help them.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study highlights both the exciting promise and the difficulties of integrating GenAI technology, providing insightful information about the changing field of AI use in English language learning. Conducting empirical research on the principles in this study is one suggestion for future research.

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Conceptual Metaphors in Perfume Product Reviews on the TikTok Online Platform

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of conceptual metaphors in perfume product reviews on the TikTok platform, focusing on gender-based representational differences. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected from six TikTok accounts three male and three female perfume reviewers based on video content published between May and June 2025. The data consist of verbal expressions used to describe fragrance characteristics, performance, and experiential impressions, which were transcribed and analyzed through conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual blending theory. The findings indicate that female reviewers predominantly employ emotional, narrative-driven metaphors that construct imaginative and atmospheric representations of perfumes, emphasizing mood, aesthetics, and sensory imagination. In contrast, male reviewers tend to use metaphors centered on functionality, projection, strength, and situational suitability, frequently drawing on source domains related to physical force, sound, and performance. These patterns demonstrate how metaphor functions as a cognitive mechanism that enables reviewers to conceptualize and communicate abstract olfactory experiences that cannot be directly accessed through digital media, rather than merely serving decorative linguistic purposes. Furthermore, the interaction of sensory, emotional, and cultural domains highlights the role of conceptual blending in generating novel meanings in digital fragrance discourse. The study also reveals that reviewers' metaphorical choices, evaluative focus, and communicative tone reflect gender identity, indicating a close relationship between metaphor usage and identity performance in online environments. Overall, this study enriches cognitive linguistic research on digital discourse, provides insights into gendered language practices in social media marketing, and deepens our understanding of non-visual sensory product representations on online platforms.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, digital discourse, gender representation, social media marketing, sensory communication

INTRODUCTION

Within the context of digital communication, social media has emerged as a pivotal platform through which users accomplish diverse plans, needs, and objectives, while simultaneously serving as an effective and contributory medium for the development of language and vocabulary skills, owing to its high accessibility, universal reach, and ease of use (Domingo, 2021). According to (Azhari, 2025) Through user-generated content and social proof, social media radically alters consumer behavior and marketing tactics in the digital age. This shift is evident through the emergence of various new trends that influence different groups and how society interacts with marketing strategies presented in the form of products and services by

reviewers. This phenomenon illustrates how social media is a multimodal discourse arena where language, visual signals, sound, and cultural context rather than just text interact to create meaning (Kress, 2010; Zappavigna, 2012).

One of these new trends is the product review trend, which continues to evolve. It is widely recognized among social media users and reflects changes in digital life, no longer just exchanging information but also serving as a transaction tool. Various media, including visual, audio, text, or even a combination of all these, are used to present product reviews in an engaging and convincing manner to achieve the best results in terms of audience engagement and even purchases. Often, reviewers focus on the theme of the product being reviewed, such as food, skincare products, household items, accommodations, cosmetics, perfumes, or even all products, especially when a social media user already has a stage name. As a result, the ease of using the internet allows anyone to access any human need with just a smartphone in hand.

Through his research, (Smith, 2020) states that digital platforms, in addition to being a communication tool aimed at providing information to consumers, also serve as a marketing and online transaction tool beneficial to producers. Online marketing activities presented through reviews in an engaging manner have the power to influence consumer purchasing decisions through a persuasive process involving trust, experience, and presentation style. From the standpoint of consumer psychology, these persuasive effects are intimately linked to the cognitive framing and emotional language communication of sensory sensations (Krishna, 2012). The findings of (Kusumasari, 2024) Consumer purchasing decisions are greatly impacted by online reviews and ratings since favorable reviews can boost prospective customers' confidence and support opinions about the quality of the goods. As a result, there are two benefits of product review content: updating marketing appeal and providing useful explanations for the audience.

In the context of digital marketing phenomena, there are unique challenges when presenting reviews for sensory and non-visual products like perfume. Because olfactory sensory experiences are mapped to abstract concepts through language rather than directly through the feelings themselves, the perception of scent is conceptually understood and articulated through metaphors (Alqarni, 2022). One of the main characteristics of perfume, its fragrance, cannot be adequately conveyed through digital media. In this context, reviewers must develop ideas and concepts to use language that captures attention, evokes emotions, and stimulates the audience's senses to imaginatively convey the olfactory experience of a content creator reviewer. Therefore, a communication strategy is needed that is not only informative but also creative and intellectually expressive, so that what is created does not bore the audience but instead generates interest and attracts more people, especially social media users.

One strategy frequently used by reviewers on TikTok is the “Top 5 Perfumes” approach. In this format, reviewers present a list of their top five perfume choices based on personal experience. This format leverages the power of rhetoric and narrative to engage the audience, while presenting information in a structured and easily understandable manner. The hierarchy or order of perfume values in this structure creates a social narrative that facilitates comparison, selection, and evaluation of scents. Additionally, this style uses a “hook,” a strategy proven to significantly increase video reach by capturing viewers' attention within the first few seconds of the video (IDwebhost, 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that perfume reviews on TikTok are a planned, artistic, and strategic linguistic practice.

Metaphors are often used in perfume reviews. Metaphors are not only a creative way to express oneself but also show how individuals connect abstract concepts such as fragrances with concrete experiences. According to (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), metaphors are part of a cognitive framework that allows people to connect source and target domains to understand and interpret the world. Metaphor is a potent tool for describing abstract sensory domains like smell since these conceptual mappings are not universal and are influenced by cultural

background, emotional experience, and social environment (Kövecses, 2010). By using metaphors, perfume reviewers may describe scents as feelings, attitudes, places, or even events, which influence the audience's affective and sensory perceptions.

Furthermore, metaphors are not used in isolation in perfume reviews but are typically integrated into a narrative framework and develop through a process of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2008). This process enables the creation of new meaning by combining sensory and symbolic aspects with domains of emotion, mood, place, or personal experience. Multimodal components that accelerate meaning formation, such as intonation, gesture, and visual imagery, frequently promote this blending process in digital environments (Forceville, 2008).

Interestingly, the portrayal of perfume in digital culture is also linked to the development of gender identity. Scents are often associated with stereotypes of masculinity or femininity. Examples of gender representations embedded in language include terms such as “strong and bold scent” and “soft and feminine scent.” Reviewers on TikTok express their identities, including gender expressions, in addition to conveying information through word choice, tone, speaking style, and metaphors. In this context, metaphors function as cognitive tools and social symbols that support the formation of gender identity.

Linguistic research that considers gender variables when using metaphors is important because men's and women's communication styles often show differences in relational orientation, emotional intensity, and word choice (Tannen, 1990). Gendered language use is performative and socially produced, formed by identity negotiation within certain discourse groups, according to more contemporary gender linguistics viewpoints (Eckert & McConnell, 2013). By analyzing metaphor usage based on the gender of reviewers, this study not only maps conceptual patterns in aroma descriptions but also demonstrates how social and cultural meanings are expressed in video-based digital discourse.

The significance of communication techniques and figurative language styles in sensory product evaluation has been emphasized in previous studies. Research by (Nurbani & Barlian, 2022) found that ontological metaphors with concrete-to-abstract meanings were the most dominant form in ILM Covid-19 headlines, indicating a creative scheme to help the public understand concrete and familiar language. Research on HMNS perfume marketing strategies on Instagram found that the use of visual narratives enhances product image and significantly increases audience emotional engagement, without using excessive or overly forceful language (Mutia & Sari, 2024). Creative reviews on social media platforms like Instagram and X that use sensory metaphors have a significant impact on consumers' perceptions of the quality of local perfumes (Suci Niswatussolihah et al., 2023). Based on the two studies above, it is known that when reviewing a product, the language used can directly influence or persuade the audience and shape their perceptions in interpreting information through the narratives presented. These findings indicate that there are still gaps in the cognitive field regarding the study of the structure, patterns, and explanations of fragrances using metaphors, as well as gender differences in reviewing various product scents in perfumes. This presents an opportunity for researchers to conduct further in-depth and modern research on digital discursive practices. Based on the above description, the purpose of this study is to describe how the meaning of metaphors in perfume product reviews forms new meanings through the combination of concepts and to explore how gender representation constructs meaning.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to examine metaphorical meaning construction in TikTok perfume reviews, emphasizing in-depth interpretation of language use

in its natural digital context rather than statistical measurement (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data sources in this study come from the online platform TikTok, selected based on gender. Therefore, the data participants were selected from female users, with the first account being @cringylemoncake. The second participant is a perfume reviewer with the username @meisyaontheinternet, and the third participant is @abglraisaa. Meanwhile, the participants from the male gender were selected based on their gender, with the first account user being @kent.hadi. The second perfume reviewer has the account name @riidh0, and @hiskiamjesty is the third perfume reviewer.

The data in this study consists of statements made by the three informants regarding perfume reviews collected between May and June 2025. The research instrument used is the observation guideline technique of free-flowing conversation and the note-taking technique. The data collection technique used is the observation guideline by observing the statements made by the informants, which are then transcribed into written format. After that, the data is identified based on its metaphor type using linguistic evidence and its references.

The data analysis technique used in this study was the data analysis technique proposed by (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 1994) which involves data reduction by sorting the data obtained and categorizing it into three problem formulations: describing how metaphors emerge through the relationship between the source and target domains, forming new meanings through the combination of concepts, and exploring how gender representation constructs meaning. Then, the data presentation is done by presenting the results of the data that have been collected using several instruments based on the three problem formulations, how metaphorical meaning is conveyed in perfume reviews, how new meaning is formed through the combination of concepts, and how gender representation is explored in constructing meaning. The data presentation took the form of an analytical table using a cognitive linguistic approach, with the results of the analysis presented in the perfume reviews. Finally, drawing conclusions/verification requires consideration of several criteria, namely the topic, research objectives, problem-solving of research data, analysis results, and theory. According to (Kövecses, 2010) in (Afriansyah & Zakiyah, 2022), conceptual metaphors are metaphors that seek to explain one field through another. This theory is also referred to as a metaphor developed by linguists such as (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) (Afriansyah & Zakiyah, 2022), through the book *Metaphor We Live By*, which argues that metaphors represent cognitive maps of a domain in a comparative manner across different genders.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1. Conceptual metaphors in perfume product reviews on the Tiktok online platform for women

No	Review Sentence	Source Domain	Target Domain
1	<i>Satu-satunya</i> perfume <i>Kunti</i> core dari Hint of You yang varian Noble	Mystical figure (<i>Kuntilanak</i>) Noble perfume	Noble perfume
2	<i>Kalau ini tuh</i> vibes <i>Kuntilanak</i> yang <i>siang-siang chill gitu loh</i>	Mystical figure (<i>Kuntilanak</i>) Perfume scent	Perfume scent
3	<i>Itu wangi melatinya tuh</i> nggak yang <i>mistis, horror banget</i>	Horror/mystical impression Perfume scent	Perfume scent
4	<i>Utopia tuh</i> vibes <i>Kuntilanak</i> yang <i>estetik gitu loh</i>	Mystical creature (<i>Kuntilanak</i>) Utopian perfume type	Utopia perfume type
5	<i>kalau bisa dibandingin</i> Noble-nya Hint of You tuh kayak <i>Kuntilanak</i> yang <i>easygoing</i>	Mystical creature nature	Sociable nature
6	<i>di koleksi gue</i> ada loh <i>parfum fresh</i> yang juga <i>SPL-nya dar-der dor</i>	Weapon sound effect	Perfume effect
7	<i>Wanginya</i> creamy milky kayak <i>susu karamel</i> yang <i>dikasih biskuit</i>	Food type with a sweet taste like (Caramel milk and biscuits) Perfume scent	Perfume fragrance

8	<i>dia tuh kayak agak crispy gitu. Nah, nanti lama-lama baru mulai manis, creamy.</i>	Food texture	Perfume scent	Perfume fragrance
9	<i>ini tuh kayak mengingatkan lo dengan Thai Tea yang dijualnya di Thailand</i>	Authentic	“Thai Tea” Perfume scent beverage	Perfume scent
10	<i>dia manis ya, kayak manis vanilla karamel. Tapi tuh kayak rempah rempahannya juga cukup kuat di sini</i>	Blend of sweet and spicy flavors	Perfume aroma	Perfume scent
11	<i>wangi utamanya raspberry yang super-duper seger ada sedikit manis, sedikit asem juga wanginya bener-bener fun, bright, ceria tapi masih ada aspek seksinya</i>	Raspberry fruit type	Perfume aroma	Perfume scent
12	<i>parfum white floral anomaly karena gak ada parfum white floral yang sekencang ini tapi</i>	Organic compound strength	Floral perfume type	Floral perfume type

Based on the findings in Table 1 above, the meaning of metaphors in perfume product reviews on the TikTok Online Platform for females is as follows.

In data number 1, there is a review of the only Kunti core perfume from Hint of You, the Noble variant. In this review, the word *kuntulanak* is used as a linguistic marker. The reviewer analogizes one of the soft and elegant *kuntulanak* perfumes. Through this analogy, the reviewer describes certain characteristics of the perfume worn by the mystical creature *kuntulanak*.

In data point 2, there is a review stating, “This is the vibe of *Kuntulanak*, chill during the day.” In this review, the word “*kuntulanak*” symbolizes a figure wearing perfume suitable for a relaxed daytime atmosphere.

In data point 3, there is a review stating, “The scent of melati isn't mystical; it's super horror.” In this review, the phrase “not mystical” conveys the impression felt when using the perfume.

In data point 4, there is a review stating, “Utopia has that aesthetic *Kuntulanak* vibe, you know?” In this review, the word *kuntulanak* means a mystical creature that is suitable when using the Utopia perfume, making it look aesthetic.

In number 5, there is a review that says, “If you can compare Noble's Hint of You, it's like a laid-back *Kuntulanak*.” In this review, the word *kuntulanak* means a mystical figure that has a sociable nature when using the perfume criteria.

In data number 6, there is a review stating that in my collection, there is a fresh perfume with a SPL of dar-der dor. In this review, the term dar-der dor refers to shooting activities using a firearm.

In data number 7, there is a review stating that the scent is creamy and milky, like caramel milk with biscuits. In that review, the term “creamy milky” refers to a food with a sweet texture and taste.

In data point 8, there is a review stating, “It's a bit crispy at first. Then, it gradually becomes sweet and creamy.” In that review, the term “crispy” refers to a crisp texture, akin to a food item.

In data number 9, there is a review that says it reminds you of Thai Tea sold in Thailand.

In that review, the term “Thai Tea” refers to a tea drink mixed with milk and has a scent similar to perfume. In data number 10, there is a review that says it's sweet, like vanilla caramel. But the spices are also quite strong here. In the review, the term “vanilla sweetness” refers to the aromatic properties of the perfume contained within it, which can be perceived through the sense of smell.

In data point 11, the expression “the main fragrance is raspberry, super-duper fresh, with a hint of sweetness and a touch of tartness, the scent is truly fun, bright, and cheerful, yet still has a sensual aspect” is used. In this description, the word “raspberry” refers to the characteristic of the perfume's aroma, which is fresh and sweet like raspberries. In data point 16, the phrase “white floral anomaly” is used because there is no other white floral perfume as

strong as this one, but it's on steroids. In this description, the word “steroids” refers to the strength of the perfume's ingredients, which are similar to organic compounds.

TABLE 2. Conceptual metaphors in perfume product reviews on the TikTok online platform for males

No	Review Sentence	Source Domain	Target Domain
1	<i>Ini rosenya yang pekat gitu dan bercampur dengan segemnya lychee gitu ya</i>	Lychee fruit and intense perfume characteristics	Fresh Fresh and intense fragrance characteristics
2	<i>Ini wanginya beneran kenceng dan nyebar kayak it's almost impossible that you pass by someone and they don't smell you</i>	Aroma strength intensity	Perfume Fragrance intensity
3	<i>SPL-nya wanginya dar-dar-dor banget. Nyebar, mampus</i>	Shooting sound diffusion	aroma Aroma diffusion
4	<i>Ini tuh adalah variannya The Bodytell yang paling dar-der-dor SPL-nya di kulit gue</i>	Perfume variant perfume quality on the skin	Strong Strong fragrance quality on the skin
5	<i>Typical wangi yang tebal, bulet. Emang buat parfum malam sih</i>	Thick fragrance for nighttime	Suitability Suitability for evening wear
6	<i>Gue berasa wanginya tuh fresh banget sama bikin kayak mood lo tuh excited gitu ya</i>	Mood Aroma effect	Aroma effect
7	<i>Ini kecil-kecil cabai rawit guys. Wanginya tuh unik banget</i>	Chili pepper vegetable type aroma uniqueness	Uniqueness of the aroma
8	<i>Wanginya woody, powdery, tapi tidak mencolok di hidung gitu</i>	Woody and powdery Characteristic softness of the aroma	Distinctive softness of the aroma
9	<i>ini tuh wanginya bener-bener lemony banget, fresh banget. Ada sedikit manisnya</i>	Lemon-type fruits of the aroma	Freshness Freshness of the aroma
10	<i>wanginya juga universal banget masuk ke dalam acara-acara gue seperti kantor dan juga after work event</i>	Event Universal aroma	Universal Universal aroma
11	<i>Wanginya tuh floral sedikit citrus, tapi nggak kecut.</i>	Floral and citrus the aroma	Balance of Balance of the aroma
12	<i>memakai white floral membawa scent yang cukup light untuk everyday perfume.</i>	White floral activities	Light Lightweight activities for

In data number 1, there is a review that says the scent is strong and mixed with the freshness of lychee. In this review, the word lychee refers to the characteristic of the fruit contained in the perfume fragrance.

In data number 2, there is a review that says the scent is really strong and spreads so much that it's almost impossible to pass by someone without them smelling you. In this review, the word “strong” refers to the intensity of the fragrance, which is powerful and has a high intensity when inhaled.

In data number 3, there is a review that says the fragrance is “dar-der-dor” (spreading everywhere). In this review, the word “dar-der-dor” refers to the sound of gunfire spreading everywhere, like the scent of perfume.

In data point 4, there is a review stating, “This is the variant of The Bodytell with the strongest SPL on my skin.” In this review, the term “The Bodytell” refers to a variant contained in the perfume that has good benefits for the skin.

In data point 5, there is a review stating, “Typical thick, round scent. It's meant for nighttime use.” In the review, the word “thick” means the scent lasts long when worn at night.

In data point 6, there is a review that says, “I feel the scent is super fresh and makes you feel excited.” In the review, the word ‘mood’ describes the enthusiastic mood when inhaling the fragrance.

In data point 7, there is a review that says, “These are tiny chili peppers, guys.” The scent is really unique. In this review, the word chili peppers describe the perfume's small size but unique scent, which cannot be underestimated despite its small packaging.

In data number 8, there is a review that says, “The scent is woody and powdery, but not too strong.” In this review, the words “woody” and ‘powdery’ describe the perfume's very distinctive and strong scent.

In data number 9, there is a review that says, “The scent is really lemony and very fresh.” There is a slight sweetness to it. In this review, the word “lemony” describes the freshness of lemons, giving the fragrance a distinctive lemon aroma.

In data number 10, there is a review that says, “The scent is also very universal and fits into my activities, such as the office and after-work events.” In this review, the word “work event” describes activities that are suitable for someone to wear to an event.

Then, in data number 11, there is a review that says the scent is slightly floral and citrusy, but not sour. In this review, the word “floral” describes a fragrance that resembles flowers. In data number 12, there is a review that says wearing white floral brings a scent that is light enough for everyday perfume. In this review, the word “light” describes a bright or light aroma suitable for daily activities.

TABLE 3. Results of conceptual blending in perfume product reviews on the Tiktok online platform for females and males

No	Review Data	Input Space 1	Input Space 2	Blending Space
1	<i>Satu-satunya parfum Kunti core dari Hint of You yang varian Noble</i>	<i>Kuntilanak</i> as a mystical figure	Classy perfume scents	It has elegant characteristics like a <i>kuntilanak</i> , yet it retains its essence and has a unique perfume image where the mystical side becomes an unexpected elegance.
2	<i>Di koleksi gue ada loh parfum fresh yang juga SPL-nya dar der-dor</i>	Technical aspects of perfume	Gunshots and shooting activities	A perfume with extremely strong performance and a scent that spreads as if exploding with its fragrance, embodying a technical concept with a dynamic image to emphasize strength.
3	<i>Wanginya creamy milky kayak susu caramel yang dikasih biskuit</i>	The scent and fragrance of perfume	Sweet foods and certain textures	The fragrance has a sweet character and a soft texture reminiscent of biscuit-like confectionery.
4	<i>Parfum white floral anomaly karena gak ada parfum white floral yang sekencang ini tapi on steroid</i>	Types of perfume with white scents	Unnatural performance concepts	A white floral perfume with strength and intensity surpassing normal expectations for this type of fragrance.
5	<i>SPL-nya wanginya dar-der dor banget. Nyebar, mampus.</i>	Sillage, projection	Gunshots	Emphasizing the extremely intense spread of the fragrance.
6	<i>Ini kecil-kecil cabai rawit guys. Wanginya tuh unik banget</i>	Physical size of perfume packaging	Spicy vegetables small	Despite its small size, the perfume has a very strong, unique, and undeniable aroma.

TABLE 4. Gender results from perfume reviews

No	Gender Female	Gender Male
1	Perfume reviews tend to be more emotional, narrative, and focused on character or experience. The metaphors used often alter and expand the original meaning of the source domain to create unique and interesting images.	Perfume reviews tend to focus more on the function, performance, and effectiveness of the perfume. Metaphors are often used to emphasize the projection, strength, and suitability of the perfume for specific situations.

This study analyzes how conceptual metaphors are used in perfume product reviews on the online platform TikTok, focusing on how reviewers of different genders construct the

meaning of scent. The results of the analysis clearly show that metaphors do not merely function as simple descriptive tools, but as complex and essential cognitive schemas for conveying non-visual sensory experiences such as the scent of perfume. Reviewers consistently project concepts from concrete and familiar domains, such as figures or mystical creatures, sounds, fruits, and foods, into the abstract domain of perfume scents. This process enables the concretization of abstract olfactory experiences, for example, by analogizing scents that “spread” or “sound like gunfire,” thereby providing a clear picture of the intensity and projection of the perfume. Additionally, metaphors are used to create “vibes” and “character,” as well as evoke feelings of “sweetness,” “softness,” and “elegance.” Furthermore, the conceptual blending process proves to be key in understanding how metaphors in perfume reviews can generate innovative meanings. Reviewers do not merely compare but actively combine elements from two input domains to create fresh new meanings. The most notable data is “Kunti Core perfume” or “the easygoing *Kuntilanak*,” where the concept of a mystical figure is combined with the fragrance characteristics of the perfume to produce new meanings. This bolsters the claim that metaphor serves as a cognitive organizing strategy for sensory experience, especially when direct awareness is not possible (Kövecses, 2010; Speed, L. J., O’Meara, C., Roque, L., & Majid, 2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study confirms that perfume reviews on the TikTok online platform are a highly strategic and artistic linguistic practice, where conceptual metaphors and conceptual blending serve as vital tools to overcome the limitations of digital media in conveying complex sensory experiences. Creatively, reviewers utilize diverse sources to concretize abstract scents and create fresh, rich new meanings through conceptual blending. Gender analysis reveals that female reviewers tend to use metaphors to build emotional narratives and characters. Meanwhile, men are more focused on performance and functionality reviews. These findings not only enrich our understanding of how language can shape sensory perception in a digital context, but also highlight the role of gender identity in communicating meaning in a review and may open up opportunities for further research in digital discourse.

Future research is advised to expand the scope of analysis by using a larger dataset, longer observation periods, or comparison studies across various social media sites including Instagram, YouTube, and X in light of the study's findings. Such extensions would provide a more thorough comprehension of the ways in which gender-based representations and conceptual metaphors function in various digital contexts. A deeper understanding of the efficacy and persuasive power of metaphorical language in digital product reviews may also be obtained by using mixed-methods approaches that integrate qualitative metaphor analysis with quantitative measurements, such as frequency analysis or audience reception studies.

Future study is encouraged to incorporate other sociolinguistic characteristics, such as age, cultural background, professional identity, or reviewer competency, to better understand how metaphor usage interacts with more general identity development in online discourse. Digital content creators and marketers may find it helpful to carefully employ metaphor and conceptual blending to effectively convey non-visual sensory experiences. An advanced understanding of gender representation and metaphorical patterns can help create more engaging, inclusive, and context-sensitive review content in digital marketing campaigns.

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Controls over Body: How Politics Operates the Body in *Vampire Academy* Universe

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ABSTRACT

The concept of body politics underpins the rigid, oppressive class system in Richelle Mead's Vampire Academy (VA) series, shaping how power is distributed and maintained across social groups. This study examines how power is enacted on individual bodies through mechanisms of regulation, control, and normalization that extend beyond formal authority. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Scheper-Hughes and Lock, particularly their notion of the body as a political and social reality, this research situates the body as a key site where ideology, morality, and power converge. Within this framework, social norms are shown to exert a disciplinary force that often surpasses the effectiveness of legal or institutional governance. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study examines narrative events, character interactions, and emotional responses within the Vampire Academy series, focusing on the lived bodily experiences of Moroi, Dhampir, and Humans. Special attention is given to how emotional regulation, physical discipline, and moral expectations are unevenly imposed across these groups. The analysis reveals that social stability in the VA universe is sustained by the interplay of religious morality and hierarchical class structures. Moral control manifests through the internalization of Christian-influenced ethical values, particularly those related to purity, sacrifice, and duty, which are reinforced through emotions such as guilt, fear, and obligation. At the same time, the class system dictates acceptable physical behaviour and bodily practices, especially in the militarization and instrumentalization of Dhampir bodies and the privileged protection of Moroi bodies. These dynamics demonstrate that power in the VA series functions most effectively not through overt violence alone, but through the internalization of norms that discipline both body and mind. Ultimately, the study argues that body politics in Vampire Academy serve as a critical mechanism for maintaining the existing social order by transforming domination into a normalized and emotionally accepted condition.

Keywords: body politic; control; Vampire Academy

INTRODUCTION

Bodily control and regulation serve as the basis for the rigid and hierarchical class system depicted in the *VA* series. Dhampir bodies are treated as military commodities, brutally trained from an early age to serve as instruments of defense for the Moroi. The "They Come First" ideology forces Dhampirs to suppress their survival instincts for the safety of their masters. In contrast, Moroi bodies are depicted as beautiful but fragile vessels of magic, making them

utterly dependent on their guardians. For Moroi, control is more internal, a struggle to master the elements of nature without losing their sanity. The biological aspect of a vampire bite, which releases endorphins, complicates this dynamic, resulting in an addictive form of control that binds humans and Dhampirs in a seductive, physical submission. However, in Strigoi form, the permanent loss of control over the soul is brought about by bodily transformation through murder, turning people into predators without ethics. Furthermore, the use of spirit magic enables control beyond the physical, including the mind and emotions. The boundaries of privacy between the protagonists, Rose and Lissa, dissolve through the psychic bond, demonstrating that complete control over oneself—both physically and mentally—is a luxury that remains elusive amid the demands of politics and magical destiny in VA. Those controls took over the body, compelled it to obey, and made it politics.

Body politics is a concept that links the body to power across domains such as anatomy, sexuality, gender, death, population, and race. This relationship is also about power and control. Scheper-Hughes and Lock cite Douglas (1966), who argued that when a community perceives a threat, it responds by implementing social controls that regulate group boundaries. External threats that attempt to infiltrate and pollute the group become the focus of regulation and surveillance. When the body is under threat of attack and vulnerable, a purge of traitors and social deviants occurs. Threats to a social group's existence can be real or imagined. Even when the threat is real but the attacker is unknown, witchcraft becomes a metaphor or cultural idiom for the crime (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). Scheper-Hughes's concept of threat resonates with Michael Taussig's (1984) notion of the body as a site of political signification through violence and terror. The body becomes a canvas on which power dramatizes its authority, instilling fear and obedience through the spectacle of pain and death. Taussig's "death chamber" illustrates how bodily suffering becomes a cultural tool for domination, a place where terror is not only physical but also epistemological—changing how the body is perceived and governed. This view aligns with Foucault's biopolitical framework but accentuates the emotional and symbolic dimensions of bodily violations.

In times of crisis, societies generally reproduce and socialize the bodies they desire. Culture becomes a discipline that provides codes and social scripts for the domestication of individual bodies in accordance with social and political needs and orders (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). In the medical world, Scheper-Hughes and Lock cite Foucault's analysis of the roles of medicine, criminal justice, psychiatry, and other social sciences in producing new forms of power/knowledge over the body. The proliferation of disease categories and labels in medicine and psychiatry stems from a limited definition of normal (thus creating a sick and abnormal/deviant majority). Sex and reproduction are also politically redefined, producing a gender hierarchy that naturalizes inequality. In line with Scheper-Hughes and Lock's arguments, Laqueur (1986) argues that even seemingly objective medical knowledge is rooted in ideological narratives that shape what bodies are and how they are permitted to function in society.

There is a strong relationship between the body and body politics that leads to considerations of regulation and control not only of individuals but also of populations, including sexuality, gender, and reproduction (what Foucault calls bio-power). Malthus, as quoted in Gallagher, Scheper-Hughes, and Lock (1986) on population, recast the equation of a healthy body with a healthy body politics, framing unfettered individual fertility as a sign of a weak social organism. State power depends on the ability to control physical potential and fertility. Thus, a healthy human body (including feelings and desires) becomes a problem and the center of control of human sexuality across various disciplines. Control over the body (individual and collective) becomes a central concept in body politics, as Scheper-Hughes and Lock argue that its stability lies in its ability to regulate society and discipline the physical body. Many institutions are used to control and institutionalize society, producing "tame"

bodies and minds to maintain collective stability, health, and social well-being. The ideas of Taussig, Laqueur, and Foucault reinforce Scheper-Hughes's work, developing a critique of how the body is transformed not only through personal experience or organic change, but also through systems of meaning, classification, and control. The body emerges as a site of power enacted and contested, where personal identity, social sense, and political structures converge. Drawing on Scheper-Hughes and Lock's postulates on body politics, this study reveals how power and control govern Moroi, Dhampir, and Human societies in Richelle Mead's *VA* series.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine body politics in the *VA* series, focusing on the body, power, and control within the fictional narrative. This methodology is based on Scheper-Hughes and Lock's theory of the political body, which states that the political body operates within the framework of control that governs the individual's body. The primary data sources for this study are the novel series *Vampire Academy* (VA), *Frostbite* (FB), *Bloodlines* (BP), and *Last Sacrifice* (LS) by Richelle Mead. The data consist of textual units that describe the behavior, emotions, and interactions of characters from three classes: Moroi, Dhampir, and Human. Overall, this methodology aims to uncover the rules and controls that govern society in this fictional world and to demonstrate how political stability depends on the system's capacity to discipline the physical bodies and minds of its members.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

MORALS

In *VA*, Moroi and Dhampir live in an area far removed from humans. They establish a small town in a remote part of America. Mead explains that the Moroi originally came from Eastern Europe, which accounts for the distinctive European surnames, such as Dragomir, Ozera, and Dashkov. Moroi built buildings with distinctive Gothic characteristics—stone structures with spacious rooms that resemble church architecture.

“This school wasn’t as old as the ones back in Europe, but it had been built in the same style. The buildings boasted elaborate, almost churchlike architecture, with high peaks and stone carvings.” (VA, 18)

Moroi still maintain Gothic architecture in their homes, schools, and administrative buildings, and, of course, in churches. Churches are important in Moroi life because they are orthodox. Through Moroi characters, Mead demonstrates religious control over their bodies. Within a spiritual framework, the body is regarded as a potential locus of sin, requiring moral discipline to control it. Moroi, as a group endowed with special abilities from birth, namely magical powers derived from their senses, cannot necessarily use them for pleasure or personal gain or display them publicly. The magical abilities inherent in Moroi bodies are controlled by rules to prevent misuse. This is evident in Lissa Dragomir's narrative, which holds that using her spiritual skills to eradicate Strigoi is wrong. Even Oksana, the Moroi whom Rose met in Russia while searching for Dimitri, who shared Lissa's spirit abilities, felt deeply guilty for using compulsion to learn why Rose had come to Russia.

“Those rules are stupid. If we used magic as a weapon instead of just for warm and fuzzy shit, Strigoi wouldn’t keep killing so many of us.”

*"It's wrong," she said firmly. "Magic is a gift. It's peaceful."
"Only because they say it is. You're repeating the party line we've been fed our whole lives." He stood up and paced the small space of the attic." (VA, 97)*

"I'm sorry," she said. "I hate doing this to people..." (BP, 403)

Oksana and Lissa's views on Moroi power reveal a hidden moral dimension. Ethics is defined as a set of moral principles (Merriam-Webster, 2004), and morality concerns the good and bad of human actions. Morality became the soul of the Middle Ages. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, polytheism in local gods was replaced by Christianity. Under the influence of Christianity, ethics and morality were brought into the social life of medieval society. Mead brings Christian morality to bear on the good and bad actions of characters from the Moroi, Dhampir, and human worlds. Christian morality centers on God's love. Love is the main principle of ethics, norms, and behavior, referred to as the Golden Rule (Fayzulloeva, 2022). Mead shows this love in the character of Lissa. Armed with spiritual abilities that can heal sick bodies and revive the dead, Lissa helps Rose after an accident that causes her death. Lissa uses her spiritual skills to restore Rose and even brings the Strigoi Dimitri back to life as a dhampir, a manifestation of her love for others. Mead presents Lissa as the savior and makes her the chosen character to lead the Moroi and dhampir nations in VA. Through Lissa's body, Mead shows that morality is not only understood as a guide to right and wrong but also as a socially constructed system for determining what is acceptable, who is legitimate, and who deserves to lead or is excluded.

Mead also depicts dhampirs like Rose and Dimitri as bodies subject to religious moral standards. Rose's grief and guilt after accidentally injuring and killing Victor Dashkov, a fugitive criminal, are conveyed when she says, *"Oh God. Oh God. All this time, I denied it, but it's true: I am a murderer."* *'Don't think about that yet,' said Sonya (LS, 305).* Moreover, Dimitri felt the same way the sorrow he experienced for having killed so many Strigoi to protect the Moroi he guarded.

*"Do you feel guilty about it?" "Hmm?"
"Killing them. You said in the van that it was the right thing to do, but it still bothers you. It's why you go to church, isn't it? I see you there, but you aren't really into the services."
He smiled, surprised and amused I'd guessed another secret about him. "How do you know these things? I'm not guilty exactly...just sad sometimes. All of them used to be human or Dhampir or Moroi. It's a waste, that's all, but as I said before, it's something I have to do. Something we all have to do. Sometimes it bothers me, and the chapel is a good place to think about those kinds of things." (VA, 240-241)*

The guilt and sadness felt by Dimitri and Rose stem from Christian morality's control over love for others, even though they killed criminals. Guilt is one of the strongest emotional responses an individual experiences after committing or believing they have committed a wrong. In the context of religious morality, guilt functions not only as a psychological reaction but also as an emotional regulatory system that connects the conscience to divine law. Guilt serves as a tool of inner correction and a mechanism of social and religious control. However, guilt is a social emotion shaped by the norms and expectations of a moral community. A person feels guilty not only for breaking God's law but also for failing to function socially, as Durkheim (1995) argued. This means that religion is not simply about the divine or the supernatural but is fundamentally about social cohesion. Durkheim saw religious beliefs and rituals as expressions of a community's collective consciousness of shared values and norms. Thus, guilt underpins religion by encouraging moral conformity and motivating believers to seek redemption and spiritual self-development.

Moral control also occurs in human groups, as exemplified by Sidney Sage, the alchemist. Mead offers a different perspective on Sidney Sage. Through Sidney, Mead situates

the Moroi and Dhampir in a supernatural context, characterizing them as dark creatures that should not be present in human life. According to Wotherspoon (2010), vampire legends arose from human fear of death or of what happens after death. This fear has led to the classification of creatures such as vampires as superstition since prehistoric times. Since the advent of Christianity and the church's efforts to spread its teachings among the people, almost all mythology and superstition from the pre-Christian era have been condemned as the work of the devil. Early Christian bishop, theologian, and philosopher Augustine of Hippo explained how demons use bodies for evil purposes, *"Just as [the demon] can from the air form a body of any form and shape, and assume it to appear in it visibly: so, in the same way he can clothe any corporeal thing with any corporeal form, to appear therein"* (Wotherspoon, 2010). Thus, the vampire myth became associated with being the enemy of the good and was disseminated to the public, leading people to view vampires as evil. Sidney adhered to this belief, even though his job required him to address the problem of Moroi in the human environment; he did so to protect humanity from the creatures of darkness. *"Because it's our duty to God to protect the rest of humanity from evil creatures of the night." Absentmindedly, her hand went to something at her neck. Her jacket mostly covered it, but a parting of her collar briefly revealed a golden cross.*" (BP, 29). The golden cross that Sidney wore around her neck symbolizes God's protection against creatures of darkness. Mead, through Sidney, presents a Christian view of vampires, adopting the demonization of vampires.

Religious morality in the *VA* series serves as a control that regulates the lives of moroi, dhampirs, and humans. At the same time, it frames spiritual danger and uses supernatural figures to reinforce worldly moral control. Fear of creatures perceived as originating from the world of darkness becomes a moral stage on which religious values are practiced, tested, and symbolically upheld. This demonstrates how deeply moral ideology can influence characters' behaviour in the *VA* series.

CLASS

Moroi, Dhampirs, and Humans are three distinct classes central to the *VA* series. The concept of class here is derived from Kerbo's (2012) Theory, which defines class as a grouping of individuals with similar positions and shared political and economic interests within a stratification system. Mead situates them within a hierarchical structure that the story's characters inhabit and adhere as seen in Kustantinah's findings (2025). Lissa Dragomir, Christian Ozera, Adrian Ivanskov, and Victor Daskov are members of the Moroi nobility; Rose Hathaway and Dimitri Belikov are dhampir guardians; and Sidney Sage and all the donors are human. Noble Moroi, the dominant class among dhampirs and humans, have rules that govern their behaviour and actions, as Lissa Dragomir experienced.

"The hell you do. Natalie stays out of that stuff."
"Natalie isn't going to inherit her family's title," she retorted. "I've already got it. I've got to be involved, start making connections. Andre"
"Liss," I groaned. "You aren't Andre." I couldn't believe she was still comparing herself to her brother." (VA, 49)

Lissa feels a responsibility to carry on her family's legacy as the sole surviving descendant after her parents and older brother died in a tragic accident. The word "must" she uttered reflected her awareness of the rules internalized in her mind and emotions. Unlike Lissa, Christian Ozera faced ostracism as a consequence of his parents' actions. Christian's parents were also among the leading Moroi nobles, but they chose to transform their bodies into Strigoi—another vampire body form forbidden by the Moroi. This decision led to their being hunted and killed. Their bodies were destroyed because they were considered a threat and a form of betrayal and

social deviance. The incident became a scandal and tarnished the Ozera family, leading to Christian's ostracization at St. Vladimir's.

"how hard it might be to be Christian. Most of the time, people treated him like he didn't exist. Like he was a ghost. They didn't talk to or about him. They just didn't notice him. The stigma of his parents' crime was too strong, casting its shadow onto the entire Ozera family." (VA, 55)

The stigma of his parents' crimes was too strong, casting a shadow over the entire Ozera family. Christian's friendlessness and inability to socialize were manifestations of the social sanctions imposed on him for his parents' violation of Moroi rules. Disobeying the body's rules was seen as a threat to other bodies. Dhampir bodies are also subject to regulations mapped onto their minds, behaviors, and actions. Through Rose's emotions, Mead shows how self-discipline is internalized in the body and mind.

*"The Strigoi would love to finish off the Dragomirs; you nearly enabled them to do it."
If she'd done her duty, she would have notified someone. If she'd done her duty, she would have kept you safe."
I snapped.
"I did do my duty!" I shouted, jumping up from my chair." (VA, 21)*

"The instinct to protect Moroi was so deeply ingrained in me that I couldn't even pause to worry about myself. Christian and Mia were the focus. They were the ones I had to get out of this mess." (FB, 206)

Rose's anger, as expressed by Mead in the text when she is deemed careless and not performing her duties as a guardian candidate properly, and her instinct to protect the Moroi when they are in danger demonstrate how Rose is politically constructed as a form of loyalty and obedience to the rules and forms of the body controlled by the royal power.

The same holds true for human characters. Mead represents the human class through Sidney Sage. He is depicted as an alchemist, a profession granted only to humans by the Moroi to serve their interests in the human world. Sidney is portrayed as an obedient, responsible alchemist.

"Look, you can't just do that, okay? Do you know what a pain in the ass it is for me to deal with? This internship is bad enough without you making a mess of it. The police found the body you left in the park, you know. You cannot even imagine how many strings I had to pull to cover that up". (BP, 20)

The anger Sidney displays toward Rose, who leaves the body of a Strigoi on the street in the quote above, is a form of resistance to the rules he must obey to protect the existence of Moroi and Dhampirs in the human world. Mead not only depicts Sidney as a submissive body but also evokes resistance to the ruling group's rules, indicating the tension within the political body. Class rules function as a mechanism of control within the body politic, internalized emotionally and mentally by Moroi, Dhampirs, and humans. The self-discipline and instincts experienced by Moroi, Dhampirs, and humans demonstrate that their bodies are controlled by the political interests of those in power. Disobedience to class rules is perceived as failure, a threat, and a social deviation. This leads to social sanctions, stigma, and even punishment.

CONCLUSION

The body politics in Richelle Mead's *Vampire Academy* series represent a complex manifestation of power that operates directly on individual bodies through processes of control, discipline, and normalization. Power within the narrative does not operate solely through

formal laws or institutional authority; it is deeply embedded in social expectations and cultural norms that shape how bodies are perceived, controlled, and valued. These norms often prove more effective than legal structures, as they are internalized by individuals and enacted voluntarily through everyday behavior. As a result, the body becomes a central site where political power is exercised and maintained. The political system in *Vampire Academy* is depicted as a stable and enduring structure in which religious morality and rigid social class hierarchies operate in tandem. Moral frameworks influenced by Christian ethics promote ideals of sacrifice, purity, and obedience, which are emotionally reinforced by feelings of guilt and duty. At the same time, class divisions determine bodily roles and functions, particularly in the expectation that Dhampir bodies exist primarily as instruments of protection for the Moroi elite. Through this synergistic relationship, power is sustained not only through overt violence or coercion but through the subtle internalization of values that discipline both the mind and the body. Consequently, individuals across all social groups—Moroi, Dhampir, and Humans—actively help maintain the established social order by regulating their own bodies and desires. This study highlights how domination becomes normalized and largely unquestioned within the narrative. Future research could extend this analysis by exploring intersections of body politics with gender, race, and sexuality, as well as through comparative studies with other vampire or dystopian texts. Such approaches would deepen understanding of how fictional representations of bodily control shape broader cultural perceptions of authority, morality, and resistance.

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Enhancing Critical Thinking in Speaking through Problem-Based Learning: A Classroom Action Research

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ABSTRACT

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) investigated the effectiveness of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing critical thinking skills within English speaking activities at Global Madani Senior High School. This study was conducted over two iterative cycles within a CAR framework. It employed a mixed-methods approach with 21 eleventh-grade students. Quantitative data, obtained from pre- and post-tests and analyzed using a paired sample t-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in the students' critical speaking skills. Their average score increased from 50.71 to 81.90, a gain that was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Qualitative data from observations, recordings, and student journals illustrated a clear developmental trajectory: initial engagement in Cycle 1 exposed deficits in argument structure and logical reasoning, prompting the introduction of targeted scaffolds—including explicit argumentation frameworks and peer feedback protocols—in Cycle 2. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data indicates that the effectiveness of PBL is significantly enhanced when integrated with responsive, reflective CAR cycles and structured linguistic-cognitive supports. The study concludes that embedding PBL within an adaptive CAR process fosters a synergistic environment where authentic problem-solving motivates communication, and deliberate scaffolding transforms engagement into disciplined, critical spoken discourse, offering a replicable model for enhancing higher-order thinking in EFL contexts.

Keywords: classroom action research; critical thinking; problem-based learning

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, the cultivation of critical thinking and communication skills has emerged as a central priority (Utama & Imansyah, 2022). Modern pedagogy recognizes that education's core mission extends beyond content delivery to fostering students' holistic intellectual, emotional, and social development, equipping them to become discerning and articulate citizens in a complex world (Rahmawati et al., 2021). This shift is a direct response to the demands of a global knowledge-based economy, where success increasingly depends on competencies in logical analysis, evidence-based reasoning, and persuasive expression across diverse contexts.

Despite this consensus, a significant pedagogical gap persists in many educational settings, including Indonesia. Traditional, teacher-centered instructional models, which often prioritize rote memorization and standardized testing, continue to dominate classrooms (Al-Shehri & Alaudan, 2024). These approaches inherently limit student agency and opportunities

for authentic intellectual engagement, thereby stifling the development of the very higher-order cognitive and communicative skills required for the 21st century (Kivunja, 2014).

In response, innovative and student-centered pedagogies like Problem-Based Learning (hereafter PBL) have gained substantial empirical support. PBL is an instructional methodology that actively engages learners in solving complex, real-world (or simulated) problems, typically within collaborative groups (Savery, 2015). This framework positions learning as an active process of inquiry, requiring students to critically analyze information, synthesize knowledge, and collaboratively construct solutions, thereby naturally fostering deep cognitive engagement and collaborative skills (Hmelo-Silver, 2014).

Within the specific domain of English as a Foreign Language (hereafter EFL) education, PBL offers a transformative potential for speaking instruction. Conventional EFL classrooms frequently emphasize grammatical accuracy and scripted dialogues, which can inadvertently inhibit communicative fluency and confidence (Richards, 2017). PBL, by contrast, creates a genuine, context-driven need for communication. Students use English as a tool to define problems, negotiate meaning, and justify solutions, thereby developing speaking competence through purposeful and meaningful discourse that enhances both linguistic resources and communicative strategic competence (Ansarian & Teoh, 2018).

English speaking is essential in English language learning, especially learning EFL context like Indonesia (Oktavia, 2025). Due to the central role of speaking skill and its escalating demands of instruction in various levels of education in Indonesia, a myriad of teaching approaches and strategies have been applied to equip learners with the competences enabling the development of this skill (Syarifudin 2019). It enables learners to express their ideas, thoughts, and opinions clearly and effectively in real-life communication. Despite its importance, speaking English is challenging for students, so they keep trying to master it well. Most of senior high school students have problems with confidence, fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary when expressing themselves in English.

The local context for this study is Global Madani Senior High School, where a significant gap has been observed between students' analytical knowledge of English and their ability to deploy it critically in authentic discourse—such as constructing reasoned arguments, evaluating perspectives, and solving problems through dialogue. This disconnects between declarative linguistic knowledge and procedural critical use underpins the institutional need to enhance both critical thinking and speaking proficiency in an integrated manner (Hidayatullah & Magdalena Sidabalok, 2024). Current instructional practices, while effective in building foundational knowledge, often reflect a more conventional approach that can separate linguistic form from communicative function (Setyarini & Ling, 2019). Consequently, students may possess grammatical knowledge but demonstrate hesitancy or underdeveloped skills in unstructured, critical spoken discourse, highlighting a gap between language knowledge and language use for critical purposes (Hung, 2016).

While international literature robustly supports PBL's efficacy in fostering critical thinking (Paçaci, 2022), and regional studies in Indonesia affirm its positive impact on general learning outcomes (Saputro et al., 2020), its targeted application and measurable impact within the Indonesian senior high school EFL *speaking* classroom remain relatively underexplored. The unique sociocultural and educational dynamics of this context necessitate localized investigation to understand the specific mechanisms and adaptations required for successful implementation (Thị & Phụng, 2020).

To conduct this localized investigation, the study adopts a CAR framework. CAR is characterized by its iterative, reflective cycles of Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014). This methodology is particularly suitable as it empowers the practitioner-researcher to implement PBL interventions directly within their classroom, observe immediate effects on student learning and interaction, and make responsive, data-

informed refinements in subsequent cycles, ensuring the approach is contextually sensitive and pedagogically sustainable (Delisle, 2018).

The CAR process will unfold over multiple, systematic cycles. The planning phase for each cycle involves designing authentic, engaging problem scenarios aligned with the curriculum and student interests. During the action phase, students collaboratively engage in problem analysis, research, discussion, and solution presentation in English. Meticulous observation, using tools like observation checklists, field notes, and audio recordings, will focus on manifestations of critical thinking (e.g., posing probing questions, evaluating sources, constructing logical arguments) within students' spoken interactions. The subsequent reflective phase will critically analyze this data to inform the planning of the next, refined intervention cycle (Emaliana, 2017).

The findings of this CAR study are anticipated to yield dual contributions. Theoretically, it will enrich the nascent body of literature on innovative, student-centered learning models within the Indonesian secondary EFL context, providing a nuanced, empirical account of integrating PBL to bridge critical thinking and speaking skills (Siregar et al., 2025). Practically, it will offer EFL educators a reflective, tested model and actionable strategies for designing speaking activities that synergistically develop cognitive and communicative competencies, moving beyond traditional, form-focused drills.

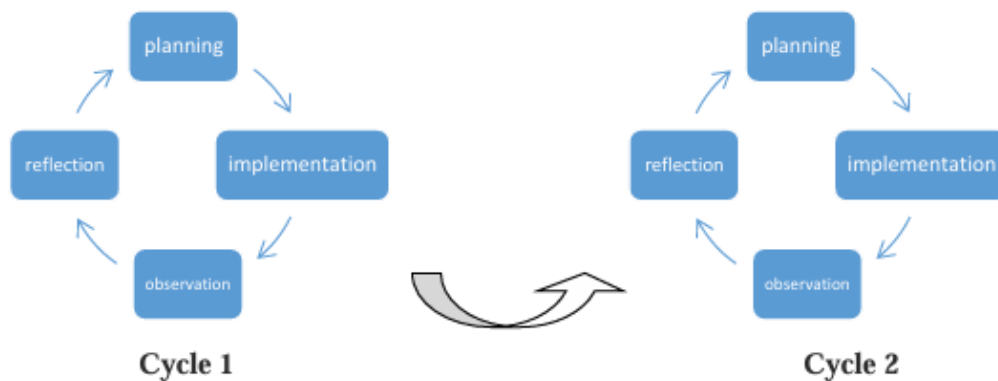
In conclusion, this CAR project aims to empirically investigate how a purposefully integrated PBL approach can enhance critical thinking manifested in speaking among students at Global Madani Senior High School. By embedding meaningful language use within the authentic cognitive and social process of collaborative problem-solving, the study seeks to transform EFL instruction into a more dynamic, reflective, and student-empowering experience. The ultimate goal is to foster learners who are not only more proficient English speakers but also agile, critical thinkers prepared for future academic and professional discourse.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted over two iterative cycles following the classical CAR model, which comprises planning, action, observation, and reflection (Magdalena et al., 2017). This methodology was selected for its alignment with the study's goal: not merely to measure an outcome, but to understand, adapt, and optimize the implementation of PBL to enhance students' critical thinking in speaking within a specific local setting.

The research was conducted at Global Madani Senior High School in Bandar Lampung during the 2024/2025 academic year. The population consisted of all eleventh-grade students, two classes: XI-1 (21 students) and XI-2 (18 students), totaling 39 students. Following the purposive sampling principle common in CAR, Class XI-1 was selected as the research sample. This decision was made collaboratively with the class's English teacher based on several criteria: (1) the class represented an average academic profile within the grade level, avoiding extreme high or low performers, which increases the practical relevance of the findings; (2) preliminary observations and teacher discussions identified a pronounced need for improvement in both English oral fluency and structured critical discourse; and (3) the class size and dynamics were deemed conducive to group-based PBL activities. This focused, in-depth engagement with a single class is a hallmark of CAR, prioritizing depth of understanding and contextual responsiveness over broad generalizability (Thị & Phụng, 2020).

FIGURE 1. Classroom Action Research cycles



The CAR was executed over two complete cycles, each comprising four interconnected stages as illustrated in Figure 1. Prior to Cycle 1, preliminary study was conducted, involving classroom observation and a diagnostic speaking assessment (pre-test) to establish a baseline of students' critical thinking abilities in spoken English.

CYCLE 1

Planning: Based on the preliminary data, the researcher designed a PBL module centered on a real-world, age-appropriate problem. Detailed lesson plans were created, incorporating group work stages (problem identification, research, solution formulation, presentation). Assessment tools, including an analytic rubric for critical thinking in speaking and observation sheets, were developed.

Action: The PBL module was implemented over two 90-minute sessions. The researcher, acting as the teacher-facilitator, introduced the problem, guided group discussions, and provided linguistic support while minimizing direct intervention in the problem-solving process.

Observation: Data were collected using the observation sheets (noting participation levels, interaction patterns, and use of critical thinking indicators).

Reflection: A critical analysis of the collected data revealed key successes and challenges. While some students engaged actively, major issues were identified: uneven group participation, reliance on superficial arguments, and difficulty in structuring logical spoken discourse. These insights directly informed the planning of Cycle 2.

CYCLE 2

Planning: To address the shortcomings from Cycle 1, the intervention was refined with enhanced scaffolding strategies. These included: (a) introducing explicit "thinking frameworks" (e.g., "What is your claim? What is your evidence? What is your reasoning?") as guided worksheets; (b) implementing structured peer feedback sessions using the assessment rubric; and (c) incorporating mini-lessons on logical connectors for argumentation.

Action: The revised PBL module (on a new but thematically linked problem) was implemented over another two sessions, with the teacher-facilitator more actively modeling questioning techniques and monitoring the use of scaffolding tools.

Observation & Reflection: Data collection methods remained consistent, with added focus on tracking the use of scaffolds and the quality of peer feedback. The reflection at the end of Cycle 2 focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the refinements and synthesizing overall learning from the two cycles. A post-test was administered to gauge development.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

A triangulation of data sources was employed to ensure validity and a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact.

1. Tests: A pre-test and post-test were administered. These tests required students to deliver a short, impromptu spoken argument in response to a prompt. Performances were scored using the validated analytic rubric focusing on critical thinking components.
2. Observation: Structured observation sheets were used by the researcher and a colleague to record quantitative data (e.g., frequency of student questions, use of evidence).
3. Recording: Audio-visual recordings of group work and presentations provided a rich, verbatim record for in-depth analysis of spoken discourse and interaction patterns.
4. Documentation: Student artifacts, including group notes, mind maps, and presentation slides, were collected. Additionally, student reflective journals provided insight into students' metacognitive awareness of their own thinking and speaking processes.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was conducted through a quantitative analysis. Scores from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed statistically using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. A paired-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean critical thinking scores before and after the two-cycle PBL intervention. This analysis provided objective evidence of the intervention's outcome on student performance. By integrating this robust, iterative CAR design with systematic data collection, the study not only assesses the effect of PBL on critical thinking in speaking but, more importantly, provides a detailed, contextualized account of the process the challenges, adaptations, and practical insights crucial for replicating and refining the approach in similar EFL environments.

Data from observations, journals, recordings, and researcher reflections were analyzed thematically. The process involved transcribing, coding, and categorizing data to identify emerging themes related to challenges, student responses, and the effectiveness of specific PBL and scaffolding strategies (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This analysis provided the narrative of the pedagogical journey.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted over two iterative cycles of CAR, following the plan-act-observe-reflect model with 21 eleventh-grade students, to investigate the integration of PBL with targeted scaffolds to enhance critical speaking.

CYCLE 1

1. Planning: The initial plan was designed to introduce a PBL framework. The objective was to create an authentic, collaborative need for communication, moving students beyond rote speaking into more meaningful discourse.
2. Action/Implementation: The PBL method was implemented. Students worked in small groups to tackle real-world issues, resulting in high engagement and energetic classroom discussions.
3. Observation: Data from speaking assessments, presentations, and student journals were collected. The observations revealed a key gap: while engagement was high, the students' speaking outputs were often unstructured. Their presentations resembled lists of ideas rather

than coherent arguments, and they struggled to build logical, evidence-based reasoning. The initial average speaking score was 50.71.

4. Reflection: Analysis of Cycle I data indicated that the PBL framework successfully created motivation and a need to communicate. However, it was insufficient on its own. Students lacked the explicit, structured support (“the how”) to translate collaborative brainstorming into cogent, critical individual speech. This reflection informed the revised plan for Cycle 2.

CYCLE 2

1. Planning: Based on the reflection from Cycle 1, the plan was refined to integrate specific linguistic-cognitive scaffolds within the PBL structure. Key interventions included: (a) "Claim-Evidence-Reasoning" (CER) graphic organizers, (b) teacher "think-aloud" modeling of argument construction, and (c) structured peer feedback sessions guided by the speaking rubric.
2. Action/Implementation: The redesigned lessons were implemented. Students used the CER templates to prepare their arguments, observed teacher modeling, and participated in structured peer review.
3. Observation: In this cycle, observation noted a qualitative shift in classroom discourse. Students began using meta-cognitive language (e.g., “What is your claim?” “Can you provide evidence?”). Their final presentations demonstrated improved organization, clearer claims, and more deliberate use of evidence. Quantitatively, the post-test average speaking score rose significantly to 81.90.
4. Reflection: The triangulation of data—significant score gains, improved observational notes, and positive student feedback—confirmed that the integration of PBL with targeted scaffolds was effective. The combination provided the engaging context ("the why") and the necessary procedural support ("the how"). One student’s reflection, *"Before, I just talked. Now, I think about how to build my talk so people will really believe my idea,"* encapsulated this development of a more critical and structured voice.

TABLE 1. Independent sample T Test pretest

		Group Statistics					
	Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Pretest	1	21	50.7143	11.75646	2.56547		
	2	18	56.6667	10.28992	2.42536		

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.815	.373	-1.668	37	.104	-5.95238	3.56757	-13.18096	1.27619
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.686	36.977	.100	-5.95238	3.53044	-13.10588	1.20112

TABLE 2. Independent sample T Test posttest

		Group Statistics				
	Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Posttest	1	21	81.9048	26.00366	5.67446	
	2	18	71.7647	29.20516	7.08329	

		Independent Samples Test					t-test for Equality of Means				
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.045	.833	1.131	36	.265	10.14006	8.96310	-8.03795	28.31806	
	Equal variances not assumed			1.117	32.438	.272	10.14006	9.07593	-8.33722	28.61733	

TABLE 3. Paired sample T-Test control class

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	72.2222	18	28.39958	6.69384
	Pretest	56.6667	18	10.28992	2.42536

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Control Class Post - Control Class Pre	15.55556	27.05598	6.37716	2.10093	29.01018	2.439	17	.026

TABLE 4. Paired Sample T-Test Experimental Class

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	81.9048	21	26.00366	5.67446
	Pretest	50.7143	21	11.75646	2.56547

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Experimental Study Post - Experimental Study Pre	31.19048	25.83141	5.63688	19.43216	42.94879	5.533	20	.000

TABLE 5. Difference

		Group Statistics				
		Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Difference	1	18	15.5555	27.055	6.337	
	2	21	31.1904	25.831	5.636	

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Difference	Equal variances assumed	21.247	.000	-3.861	37	.000	-15.635	6.537	-38.483	-11.993
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.090	26.918	.000	-15.635	6.171	-37.902	-12.574

The discussion of these findings highlights how the iterative nature of CAR allowed for continuous refinement of teaching strategies, making PBL more accessible and effective for students. The increase in scores corresponds with observed growth in students' confidence, logical reasoning, and ability to articulate complex ideas in English. This suggests that PBL,

when implemented through a reflective and adaptive CAR framework, can effectively enhance both critical thinking and speaking competence in an EFL context.

CYCLE 1

PLANNING

In the initial planning phase for Cycle 1, the researchers, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, designed a PBL module aimed at enhancing critical thinking in speaking. This involved selecting authentic, real-world problems relevant to the students' curriculum, preparing discussion guides, and creating assessment rubrics focused on critical discourse indicators such as argument clarity, reasoning, relevance, and use of evidence. The goal was to structure a learning environment that moved beyond traditional recitation toward analytical dialogue.

IMPLEMENTATION

The PBL module was implemented over several class sessions. Students worked in small groups to analyze the given problems, discuss possible solutions, and prepare spoken presentations of their conclusions. The teacher acted primarily as a facilitator, guiding the discussion with open-ended questions and encouraging peer-to-peer interaction rather than delivering direct instruction.

OBSERVATION

During the implementation, observational data were collected through field notes and audio recordings of group discussions. It was noted that while students were engaged by the problem scenarios, many struggled to articulate logical arguments or use English persuasively. Participation was uneven, with more confident students dominating conversations. The pre-test administered prior to the cycle yielded an average score of 50.71, quantitatively supporting the observed need for intervention in structured critical speaking.

REFLECTION

Reflecting on Cycle 1, the researcher identified key areas for improvement. Students required more scaffolding to connect critical thinking with spoken expression—particularly in organizing ideas, building vocabulary for argumentation, and engaging in balanced group discourse. The reflection concluded that while PBL provided a promising framework, its effectiveness in this context depended on greater instructional support and structured practice in constructing and delivering arguments.

CYCLE 2

PLANNING

Informed by the reflections from Cycle 1, the planning for Cycle 2 incorporated targeted scaffolds to address observed difficulties. The revised plan included explicit modeling of argument structures, the introduction of sentence stems for academic discussion, structured peer feedback protocols, and mini-lessons on persuasive vocabulary. Problem scenarios were also refined to increase personal relevance and stimulate deeper emotional and cognitive engagement.

IMPLEMENTATION

Cycle 2 was executed with these enhanced supports in place. The teacher began sessions with short modeling demonstrations, after which students practiced constructing arguments using guided frameworks. Peer feedback sessions were formally integrated, allowing students to critique and refine each other's reasoning and delivery. The facilitator's role evolved to include more proactive prompting for evidence and reasoning during discussions.

OBSERVATION

Observations during Cycle 2 revealed marked improvements. Students demonstrated greater confidence and participation equity within groups. Their spoken arguments were more coherent, better supported with reasons, and used a wider range of linking and evaluative language. The post-test average of 81.90 provided strong quantitative evidence of growth, and observational notes corroborated this with accounts of more nuanced and critical classroom dialogue.

REFLECTION

The final reflection confirmed that the iterative, responsive nature of the action research process was crucial to achieving the outcomes. The adjustments made between cycles—particularly in scaffolding argumentation and formalizing peer feedback—directly addressed the initial barriers to critical speaking. The researcher concluded that PBL, when deliberately adapted through classroom-based reflection and refinement, can significantly enhance both the quality of critical thinking and the fluency of spoken expression in EFL learners.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This journey in the classroom began with a practical question from dedicated teachers: How do we help our students not just speak English, but think critically as they speak? The two cycles of action research with my 21 students provided a powerful answer. We discovered that the true magic doesn't lie solely in the engaging problems of PBL or in the careful reflection of CAR, but in their intentional union. PBL ignited my students' motivation, giving them a real 'why' to communicate. The CAR process, however, gave us, the teachers, the 'how' a reflective compass to listen, diagnose their specific struggles with structuring arguments, and responsively provide tools like reasoning templates and peer feedback. This synergy transformed our classroom. We moved from simply implementing a method to co-creating a learning environment where each cycle of teaching was informed by the evidence from the last. The significant leap in their speaking scores is a testament not just to a technique, but to this adaptive, student-centered process. For fellow educators, our experience offers a hopeful blueprint: sustainable improvement in complex skills like critical speaking is achievable through this integrated, reflective approach. It empowers teachers to be inquirers in their own classrooms, systematically tailoring instruction to student needs. Looking ahead, we are curious to see if the structured voice our students found persists over time and transfers to other subjects. We encourage other teacher-researchers to adapt this CAR-PBL model in different contexts, to continue exploring how we can best equip every student with the confidence and clarity to build their ideas into powerful speech.

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Survival Symbols of Disabilities in Global Era as Reflected in “The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell” by Robert Dugoni

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ABSTRACT

*This research discusses the survival symbols of disabilities in the global era as reflected in the novel *The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell* by Robert Dugoni. The main character, Samuel Hill, is portrayed as a disabled individual who has experienced various forms of social discrimination since childhood. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and Roland Barthes’s semiotic theory, this study reveals how the symbols in the novel represent the struggles of individuals with disabilities in facing stigma and social challenges. The analysis shows that disability is not only presented as a physical limitation but also as an identity that shapes resilience, courage, and determination to survive. Samuel’s life journey reflects the transformation from marginalization to self-acceptance and achievement, which gives new meaning to the condition of disability in the context of a global society. Moreover, this research highlights that literature is a powerful medium to articulate the voices of marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, whose narratives are often silenced in mainstream discourse. By interpreting symbols such as vision, faith, and perseverance, this study demonstrates that disability can be seen as a source of empowerment rather than limitation. The findings enrich readers’ understanding of the realities faced by individuals with disabilities while encouraging inclusive values that uphold dignity and diversity. Ultimately, the novel delivers a universal message that survival is deeply connected with empathy, acceptance, and recognition of every individual’s worth in a global society.*

Keywords: disabilities; global era; survival symbols; semiotic

INTRODUCTION

A symbol is something that has more meaning than just a literal word. A symbol can be an object, letter, color, or even a shape that represents an abstract concept (Seymour, 2023). Symbols or signs can be considered a way for humans to give special meaning to something, based on logical analysis or associations that arise in thoughts or facts (Hendro, 2020). Humans are *homo symbolicum* or human symbol users whose lives express their creativity through various forms of art, by utilizing symbols as a means of communication to convey ideas, values, and interpretations of the world around them (Siswadi, 2024). It can be said that humans consistently rely on symbols during interaction and communication, as they cannot comprehend one another without them. In daily life, symbols appear in multiple forms, including words, pictures, actions, colors, and even traditions and rituals that have been inherited over time. As a result, symbols are frequently derived from a situation, item, or person that signifies a specific meaning. An example is the Gawai Traditional Ceremony in the Dayak

community as a form of gratitude for the rice that has been harvested or a rice party (Astuti & Beding, 2021). As for the other examples, the white color in a wedding dress depicts happiness and purity, and reflects hope and sacredness (Aziz, 2021) Symbols can be interpreted by examining the significance embedded within them. The author's intent for incorporating symbols in their work is to convey an underlying message to the audience.

Symbols in literature are often used to represent abstract concepts, including the theme of survival. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, survival refers to the ability of individuals to successfully maintain their lives or overcome various difficulties and threats that cannot be overcome by others. Every individual must strive to achieve their desired goals, but not all individuals can overcome the challenges they face. Individuals who are unable to deal with pressure tend to give up, while individuals who have resilience and mental strength will be able to survive and overcome various challenges (Hayati, 2021) In literary works, the process of survival is often depicted through the journey of characters who face social pressures, inner conflicts, and situational limitations that shape and create their characters. For example, the novel with the title *Zesyazeoviennazabrizkie "White Wedding"*, was published in 2015 and has 252 pages. This book narrates the experiences and challenges faced by a child born an albino named Elphira, who is completely white in appearance. She could not accept her physical condition and always hated the color white. However, Elphira did not give up easily even though she often received taunts from her friends. Elphira lived her life at home with knitting lessons and private lessons in biology, physics, and astronomy. This process is not just a physical struggle but also reflects the deep psychological and emotional dynamics of maintaining her existence and identity. The theme of survival ultimately symbolizes resistance to adversity and illustrates the human ability to rise, endure, and move on amidst the harshness of life.

Survival is an important aspect in understanding individuals with disabilities who are often faced with physical, social, and psychological challenges. Persons with disabilities who have limitations or inability in carrying out certain as commonly carried out by humans in general (Pramashela & Rachim, 2021) This limitation is caused by a temporary or permanent impairment or decline in physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory function. In the social context, people with disabilities are often positioned in a very weak and marginalized position (Allo, 2022) Therefore, people with disabilities often experience emotional instability caused by difficulties in social adaptation to their environment (Marpaung & Sahrani, 2025) In social life, people with disabilities often face various barriers to accessing basic rights such as education, employment, health services, and legal protection (Ningsih, 2022) People with disabilities are often treated differently and unequally by society. They often experience forms of discrimination, both directly and indirectly. One example is an athlete from North Sumatera, Evi Yunita Pohan, who revealed that disabled athletes often receive lower salaries than non-disabled athletes, even though they are in the same category (Wijaya, 2024) Therefore, serious and special attention is needed from the government and the entire community to create an inclusive, disability-friendly, equitable environment, as well as changes in the way people view disability (Sari, 2024)

The challenges faced by people with disabilities are increasingly complex often with the entry of society into the global era. The global era is a time when technological development, communication, and human mobility have caused geographical boundaries and cultural differences to become increasingly invisible or fused (Hermawanto & Anggriani, 2020). This condition creates a closer connection between countries and communities, so interactions occur more intensely and quickly. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), the global era can be defined as a process in which various activities, relationships, and interactions expand to cover the entire scope of the world as a whole. The global era has affected various aspects of human life, including the economic, political, social, cultural, scientific,

technological, legal, and other sectors (Fattahillah et al., 2023). The influence of this global era has brought significant changes that are felt throughout the world. Despite the global era's numerous significant advancements across various domains, individuals with disabilities continue to experience discrimination that obstructs equal involvement in society.

In various literary, whether in the form of novels, short stories, or films, the theme of the struggle and survival of people with disabilities to obtain equality in society is often raised. This phenomenon illustrates the fact that people with disabilities still often experience various forms of discrimination, both verbally through inappropriate words and physically through unfair and unequal treatment in various aspects of daily life. One example of a literary work with a disability theme is the famous novel *"Of Mice and Man"* by Steinbeck, which was published in 1937 and has 128 pages. The novel tells the story of two migrant workers, named George Milton and Lennie Small, who move around in search of work. Lennie is an intellectually disabled person who relies heavily on George. He often experienced discrimination and unfair treatment because of his mental limitations. He is regarded as foolish, odd, and even dangerous. However, Lennie never intends to harm anyone and has a compassionate heart. Another literary work that tells the story of people with disabilities is a novel entitled *"Golden Boy"* by Tara Sullivan which was published in 2014 and has 384 pages. The novel portrays the story of an albino boy named Habo who is discriminated against in Africa, and his father cannot accept his physical condition. But at the time, during that period in Mwanza, people hunted albinos as it was thought that their body parts would bring good fortune. From that point forward, Habo realized that he was valuable and he also found a way to love himself. I also found an update on the novel *"The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell"* by Robert Dugoni. According to Amazon, the novel was published in 2018 in the United States and is a Wall Street and New York Times bestseller. The novel is about the struggle and survival of an albino child to maintain an equal life in society, despite the many obstacles he has to face.

Research on the novel *"The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell"* has been conducted by several researchers. The first research was conducted by Ruslan (2024) entitled *"Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) of the Main Character in the Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell"* using a psychoanalytic approach. The research concentrated on the psychological trauma experienced by the main character as a consequence of discrimination and bullying he faced as a child because of his rare red eye condition, also known as ocular albinism. Using the DSM-5 theory from the American Psychiatric Association, this research identifies the causes of PTSD, the symptoms experienced by the main character, and her recovery strategies through social support, internal efforts, and therapy. PTSD is more common in those whose have experienced trauma, especially if the experience has resulted in a decreasing psychological state (Azizah et al., 2024). The second research was conducted by Aulia (2022) entitled *"Self-acceptance in The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell"* with a developmental psychological approach based on Elizabeth Hurlock's theory. The focus of this research is the process of self-acceptance experienced by the main character as a form of resistance to social pressure. This research shows how the main character can finally accept his physical condition, develop self-confidence, and form the meaning of life through painful life experiences. Previous studies have discussed the psychological aspects of Samuel Hill's character through psychoanalytical and developmental psychology approaches, especially related to trauma and the process of self-acceptance. However, no study that specifically examines the symbols of resilience in the novel *"The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell"* which illustrate the struggles of individuals with disabilities in facing challenges and stigma in a global society. Through this study, it is hoped that it can provide a new perspective for readers to understand the dynamics that exist in the story.

Previous studies have focused more on the psychological aspects of the character in the novel, such as the trauma experienced as a result of discrimination and the process of self-acceptance. However, studies that specifically examine symbols of resilience among people with disabilities in the context of the global era are still rare. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how the symbol in Robert Dugoni's novel "*The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell*" represent the struggles of individuals with disabilities in facing life's challenges. The analysis is conducted in these symbols. In line with this, the objectives of this study are to describe how the position of people with disabilities is projected in the global era through the characters in the novel, explain how the symbols that appear represent the theme of resilience, and elaborate on the relationship between the social position of people with disabilities and their ability to survive as reflected in the story. Through this approach, the study is expected to enrich understanding, while opening up new discussion about the importance of inclusive attitude and social awareness of human diversity.

The intention of this research is to examine how individuals with disabilities are represented in the global context, as shown in the novel entitled "*The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell*". Besides from that, the purpose of this research is to examine the role of symbols in presenting the concept of enduring life as shown in the novel. Furthermore, the research aims to reveal the relationship between the social position of disabled people and challenges of living as depicted in the novel, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between disability, symbolism, and the concept of survival in a novel. Through this analysis, the study contributes to literary and disability studies by offering critical insight into how narratives shape societal perceptions of disability and resilience.

METHODOLOGY

This research was applied using a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing and analyzing the survival symbols of individuals with disabilities in the novel "*The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell*". Qualitative research method is one of the approaches used to describe, explore, and understand the meaning constructed by individuals or groups in response to social or human personalities (Creswell, 2013) According to (Waruwu, 2024) the qualitative approach aims to describe phenomena, perceptions, and behavior by presenting factually based on field findings. This method enables researchers to investigate the symbolic significance in the text thoroughly and within context. The theory used as the basis of this research is the semiotic theory developed by Roland Barthes. This theory is used to analyze the meaning and symbols contained in the novel. The word semiotic comes from Greek which means sign. So, it can be concluded that semiotics is an approach used to study and understand the meaning of a sign (Fitriah et al., 2023) In semiotic studies, there are several important concepts, such as denotation which refers to the literal meaning of a sign, and connotation which refers to conceptual meaning or interpretation based on personal views (Antonia, 2023) While at the myth stage, a sign that initially carries connotative meaning is reinterpreted as a new sign, and over time, its connotation becomes accepted as denotation, thus creating a myth (Rais & Fadillah, 2025) This research aims to analyze the symbols of survival of disabilities in the novel "*The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell*" by Robert Dugoni.

The data source in this study is the novel "*The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell*", which is analyzed through dialogue and narrative excerpts relevant to the issue of disability, discrimination, and the main character's life struggle and survival. Data collection techniques are carried out through intensive reading of the text to identify the symbols that appear, followed by recording and classification based on the context behind it. Furthermore, the symbols were analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to reveal denotation,

connotation, and myth. the analysis is done by identifying signs that represent the struggle and survival of a person with a disability, then interpreting the meaning to reveal the ideology and values contained in the novel.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

POSITION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE GLOBAL ERA AS REFLECTED IN THE NOVEL

The findings of this study were obtained through an analysis of the dialog and narrative contained in the novel *“The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell”* by Robert Dugoni. Through the depiction of the main character, Samuel Hill, who was born with ocular albinism. This novel presents a variety of social responses to disability. The narrative and dialogue between characters reflect how disability in society in the global era.

Previous studies, such as Ruslan (2024), focused on the psychological trauma of Samuel Hill, particularly the symptoms of PTSD caused by discrimination and bullying, while Aulia (2022) examined the process of self-acceptance of the main character through a developmental psychology lens. Both studies emphasized the psychological impact and coping mechanism of the protagonist but did not address how symbolic representations in the novel construct meaning around disability. In contrast, this study highlights how social discrimination, stigma, and empowerment are reflected through symbolic elements that go beyond psychological interpretation. This study extends the analysis to how those struggles are externalized and symbolized in the narrative as part of broader social discourse.

First, the condition of disability in the novel depicts a social identity that is discriminated or marginalized. Samuel, who faces different treatment and stigma from his surroundings, reflects how society views and treats people with disabilities as a marginalized group

“I believe it will be difficult for your son to fit in, to make friends.” My mother started to speak, and Sister Beatrice added, “The children refer to him as ‘Sam Hell’.” (p.23)

The quote above describes how Sister Beatrice revealed to Samuel’s mother that it was difficult for Samuel to make a new friend because of his physical differences. Samuel’s red eyes made him the target of ridicule and stigma from his friends who called him *“Sam Hell”* while his real name was Samuel Hill. The word *“hell”* can be interpreted as a red color like his eyes. This statement proves that the social discrimination Samuel has experienced since childhood due to his physical condition causes fear of being alienated or marginalized. This attitude shows how physical differences are often used as an excuse to exclude and discriminate against people with disabilities.

Secondly, disability is portrayed through society’s view of Samuel’s condition as a curse. This is a negative reaction that Samuel has received since childhood, which illustrates how disability is still perceived as a burden or bad luck.

Bateman’s eyes widened, then the corners of his mouth slanted upward. “Well, well. What do we have here, Devil Boy?” He approached. “You taking a shit with your pants on?” (p.65)

The excerpt above is David Bateman’s dialogue where he says *“Devil Boy”* to Samuel as a form of mockery of Samuel’s red eye condition due to ocular albinism. This remark reflects the perception that disability is a curse or a bad luck charm. The nickname is not only personally demeaning but also shows how society associates physical differences with mystical or negative things. This view reinforces social stigma and creates distance between people with disabilities and their surroundings.

Third, disability is positioned as a hidden gift. Samuel's life experiences shaped his survival and strong self-confidence. His physical differences became a source of strength that shaped his character and direction in life.

"I introduced myself and said I was the ophthalmologist to whom she had referred Trina Crouch and that I had seen Daniela that afternoon."

The quote above occurs when Samuel introduces himself as an ophthalmologist to his patient's mother. This moment shows how Samuel's disability experience does not prevent him from playing an active role and contributing to his profession. Instead, his ocular albinism condition has shaped his deep sensitivity and perseverance in understanding patients and the world around him. Disability, which may initially be seen as a limitation, in Samuel's life journey has developed into a hidden gift that strengthens his character and makes him an inspiring and dedicated person.

Therefore, compared to previous studies that mainly emphasized trauma and self-acceptance, this study contributes by examining the symbolic dimension of survival and resilience in the novel. This approach reveals how disability is represented as both a marginalized identity and a source of empowerment, which provides new insight into the portrayal of individuals with disabilities in the global era.

ALBINO AS A SURVIVAL SYMBOL OF DISABILITIES IN THE NOVEL

Albino is portrayed as a survival symbol of disabilities in the novel. Through the figure of Samuel Hill, the novel shows determination and hope to achieve recognition and equality. The novel is analyzed using the semiotic theory developed by Roland Barthes. This theory includes three levels of meaning, such as denotation, connotation, and myth. This approach is used to reveal the hidden meanings behind the symbol in the novel.

RED EYES

"You denied Samuel admission because he was born with red eyes, a condition over which he has no control." (p.23)

At the denotation, the term "*red eyes*" in the phrase above refers towards the medical condition faced by individuals with ocular albinism. In connotation, "*red eyes*" represent physical distinctions that lead to social shame, rejection, and discrimination. While myths, "*red eyes*" build on the idea that disability is perceived as separate from social norms. This notion is supported by societal institutions like schools, which reject Samuel's presence because he is perceived as different.

BLACK CROW

"That night I dreamed of a black crow with a sharp beak pecking at my eyes." (p.34)

"Sister Beatrice peered down at me with the same black-eyes, menacing glare of the crow in my nightmare just before its sharp beak pecked at me." (p.43)

At the denotation, the first dialogue portrays Samuel's dream of a black crow pecking his eyes, while the following dialogue describes the figure of Sister Beatrice who seems at the crow in his dream. In connotation, the black crow and its sharp beak represent a threat, danger, or a bad omen. While Sister Beatrice is directly identified with the symbol due to her stare. This indicates that Sister Beatrice is the true representation of fear in dreams. In the myth, black crows are frequently associated with death, witchcraft, or dark powers in popular culture and

tradition. As a result, these associations build a subliminal narrative in which Sister Beatrice is not just an ordinary character, but a representation of dark power, oppression, or a psychological threat that intimidates Samuel.

CONTACT LENSES

"I'm the kid with the red eyes. I wear brown contact lenses." (p.106)

The denotation of contact lenses is an optical device worn on the eyes to improve vision or change eye color. In connotation, the use of contact lenses is Samuel's attempt to hide his inherent differences to gain social acceptance. Contact lenses are not simply a visual assistance, but an identity simulacrum camouflaged as an act of compromise against the expectations of societal normality. In myth, Samuel's act of using contact lenses reflects the modern myth of normality instilled by global society that differences must be disguised to be accepted.

BOOK "THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO"

"I picked up The Count of Monte Cristo from my nightstand. Reading it had been tough going, the words harder to pronounce than those in my schoolbooks, but I had gotten the hang of it about halfway through. I aside my ice cream, thinking about Edmond Dantes and the sufferings he'd endured," (p.92)

At the denotation, "*The Count of Monte Cristo*" is a classic novel about revenge and justice. However, the connotation of the book is more than just a story as it motivates Samuel to see himself as Edmond Dantes, a fellow victim of injustice. The book can also be interpreted as a symbol of the struggle and survival of someone who is learning and struggling to get through the challenges of his life. Meanwhile, the myth, "*The Count of Monte Cristo*" is proof that suffering is the path to redemption and justice.

PURPLE

"My favorite color is purple." (p.107)

The denotation of the color purple is nobility, strength, luxury, and uniqueness. In connotation, Samuel likes purple because he wants a life that reflects the color, which is strong and valuable. Meanwhile, the myth, purple is a symbol of struggle and identity resilience for marginalized groups, including people with disabilities. This color represents hope, courage, and endeavours to obtain respect and dignity in the face of social pressures that emphasize uniformity.

OPHTHALMOLOGIST

"I introduced myself and said I was the ophthalmologist to whom she had referred Trina Crouch and that I had seen Daniela that afternoon." (p.110)

At the denotation level, an eye doctor is a profession that treats and cures visual impairment. At the connotation level, the ophthalmologist depicts the struggle of Samuel, who has been discrimination against since childhood because of his red eyes which are considered different from the norms of society. Despite social rejection, he is determined to become an ophthalmologist and turn the stigma of being ostracized into a symbol of strength and hope that turns the stigma of disability into a story of success and self-acceptance so that this profession is not just a job but a representation of the struggle against discrimination and physical

limitations. Therefore, the myth of the ophthalmologist is a representation of transcending limitations and serves as a sign of hope for people who have been excluded.

HIS FATHER'S PHARMACY SHOP

"You did it, Hill. You saved your father's store." (p.279)

The denotation of a pharmacy shop is a place of business that sells medicines. In the connotation, the pharmacy shop symbolizes a very valuable family legacy as well as a big responsibility for Samuel. The shop also illustrates Samuel's personal struggle to maintain something important and meaningful in his life. While at the myth, the pharmacy shop symbolizes the struggle and success of a disabled character like Samuel who managed to face various obstacles and challenges while being able to maintain and continue his family legacy with full determination.

The analysis reveals that several key symbols such as red eyes, the black crow, contact lenses, *The Count of Monte Cristo* book, purple color, the profession of ophthalmologist illustrate how disability, often perceived negatively by society, is transformed into sources of strength, identity, and survivals. While previous studies analyzed the novel from a psychoanalytic perspective and focused on the psychological trauma of the main character, emphasizing how discrimination and bullying caused symptoms of PTSD and how recovery occurred through social support and therapy Ruslan (2024). Meanwhile, Aulia (2022) highlighted the process of self-acceptance using developmental psychology, explaining how Samuel eventually accepted his condition and gained confidence. Both studies emphasized the psychological dimension of Samuel' life journey.

Thus, the novelty of this research lies in its symbolic analysis that complements and extends previous psychological interpretations. By revealing the semiotic layers of resilience in the novel, this study not only enriches literary understanding but also emphasize how literature can reframe disability from marginalization into empowerment, especially in the context of a global society that often imposes uniformity.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE POSITION OF DISABILITY AND THEIR SURVIVAL AS DEPICTED IN THE NOVEL

In the novel, the position of disability, especially ocular albinism experienced by the main character Samuel Hill, is described as the center of social and spiritual conflicts that shape his entire life journey. Disability not only appears as a physical condition but also as a survival symbol of struggle amidst social pressure and environmental rejection.

"They call him 'the devil boy.'" (p.23)

"We are sorry to advise that your application for enrolment in the first grade at Our Lady of Mercy has been denied." Unfortunately, Our Lady of Mercy did not have enough spots for every applicant." (p.19)

Since childhood, Samuel was discriminated against because of his red eyes. He became a victim of bullying by being nicknamed "*Devil Boy*" and was denied admission to a Catholic school this shows that disability in this novel is placed in a marginal position, as an identity that is different and considered abnormal by society. However, this marginal position becomes the starting point of Samuel's struggle to find his self-esteem, identity, and meaning in life.

"After I opened Burlingame Ophthalmology and Vision Center, Broadway Pharmacy's prescriptions doubled in a month, and it sold more reading glasses and eye-care product than any

drugstore in the area, once again proving that old real estate adage—location, location, location.”
(p.58)

However, through his life journey, the disability did not only become a burden but also a starting point for the struggle to survive and build an identity. Samuel slowly turned the stigma attached to him into a source of strength. He decides to become an ophthalmologist, a profession that symbolically reclaims control over something that was once his weakness. Thus, the position of disability in this novel does not only indicate suffering, but also reflects the power to survive, make peace with oneself, and transcend the limits set by society. Disability becomes a symbol of survival, struggle, and courage in facing life's challenges in a world that often judges people only by their outward appearance.

Compared with previous studies, such as Ruslan (2024) who emphasized Samuel's psychological trauma using a psychoanalytic perspective, and Aulia (2022) who highlighted the process of self-acceptance with a developmental psychology approach, this study offers a different lens. Instead of focusing only on the psychological aspects of the character, this research examines the symbolic dimension of disability and survival by employing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. This perspective shows that disability in the novel functions not only as an individual's personal struggle but also as a cultural symbol that challenges dominant narratives of abnormality in a global society. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in revealing how survival symbols embedded in the narrative provide broader insight into resilience, inclusivity, and the redefinition of disability in literature.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the analysis of the novel *“The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell”* by Robert Dugoni, it can be concluded that disability, especially the condition of ocular albinism experienced by Samuel Hill as the main character, is described as an identity that experiences various forms of social discrimination. Since childhood, Samuel experienced rejection from the school environment, verbal abuse, and exclusion from his peers. Society's view that associates physical differences with negative things causes Samuel to grow up in a hostile environment, which shows that people with disabilities are still often positioned unfairly. However, the novel also presents Samuel's life journey as a strong form of self-transformation. He is able to face various forms of rejection and social pressure with determination. His difficult life experiences have shaped him into an empathetic, resilient, and dedicated person. Samuel's decision to become an ophthalmologist reflects an achievement that is not only professional but also emotional and symbolic because he chose to master a field that is directly related to the conditions that have made him considered different.

In addition, the novel presents several symbols that reinforce Samuel's struggle for survival, such as the red eyes, the black crow, and the book *“The Count of Monte Cristo”*. These symbols represent Samuel's life journey in facing stigma and fighting for self-recognition. Through the various challenges he faces, Samuel manages to prove that his disability is not an absolute obstacle, but rather part of the process of building a stronger character and self-identity. Overall, the novel conveys the message that people with disability deserve an equal place in society. Disability in the story is not only portrayed as suffering but also as a strength that can change the way people view differences.

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The Formation of Indonesian VTuber Digital Identity: A Study of Expressive Speech Act

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how expressive speech acts in Indonesian contribute to digital identity formation by an Indonesian Virtual YouTuber (VTuber). The research focuses on Mikazuki Arion, a VTuber on the YouTube platform, and aims to analyze how expressive speech acts such as praise, gratitude, greetings, complaints, and humor function in constructing a distinctive digital persona. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a sociopragmatic approach, data were obtained through observation and note-taking from Mikazuki Arion's live broadcasts. The analysis examined the forms, functions, and pragmatic features of expressive speech acts that support self-representation in virtual communication. The findings show that expressive speech acts serve three key functions in constructing VTuber identity: (1) establishing emotional intimacy and social bonds through repetition and affective language, (2) demonstrating authenticity and self-reflection via humor, irony, and stance softening, and (3) enhancing audience engagement through inclusive and performative interaction. These strategies enable Mikazuki Arion to present an appreciative, humorous, and relatable digital persona, reinforcing parasocial relationships and community belonging. The study concludes that expressive speech acts are not merely emotional expressions but pragmatic tools for identity negotiation and relationship-building in digital interaction. Language thus becomes a central medium for performing self-representation and maintaining authenticity in Indonesian Vtuber culture, contributing to broader discussions of sociopragmatics and digital identity.

Keywords: expressive speech acts; identity formation; digital interaction; sociopragmatics; VTuber

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Virtual YouTubers (VTubers) represents a form of digital cultural development that combines technology, entertainment, and social communication within online networks. VTubers are virtual figures controlled by humans behind the screen using motion capture and digital animation technology, to allow the avatar to mimic facial expressions, voices, and body movements in real-time. The presence of VTubers shows a new form of identity performativity in the virtual world, with the boundaries between reality and representation becoming increasingly blurred (Ahn et al., 2025; Fauziah et al., 2025).

In this context, language plays a central role as the primary means of forming social relationships and self-representation. Through the utterances produced during live streaming, a VTuber conveys information, expresses emotions, builds intimacy, and displays a distinctive persona. One of the most dominant forms of language in this context is expressive speech acts,

which are utterances that reflect the speaker's attitude or feelings towards the addressee. According to Searle (1969), expressive speech acts serve to reveal the speaker's psychological state, such as gratitude, humor, sympathy, or apology. In interactive and spontaneous live streaming, expressive speech acts play a crucial role in fostering social closeness and strengthening emotional bonds between VTubers and their viewers.

Mikazuki Arion is an Indonesian male VTuber who made his debut in 2022, with a current YouTube subscriber count of 600,000 (VTuberpost.com, 2025). He is known for his expressive and humorous communication style. Arion's statements during live streams serve not only as entertainment but also as a performative expression of his digital identity. His use of language through laughter, light teasing, familiar greetings, or expressions of gratitude embodies a charismatic digital persona that is close to the audience and reflective of the norms of casual online interaction. Thus, expressive speech acts in VTuber broadcasts can be understood as pragmatic actions that simultaneously construct identity.

Regarding pragmatic actions, classical speech act theory by Searle (1969) and Leech (1983) provides a basis for understanding the expressive illocutionary function and the principle of politeness in communication. However, to understand the dimension of identity in linguistic practice, this study uses the *Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction* (RPIC) framework (refer to Agus & Iswandi, 2025). The RPIC framework is not a separate theory, but rather a synthesis of a number of classical sociopragmatic theories, such as the concept of facework by Goffman (1967), politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987), relational work by Locher and Watts (2005), and face constituting theory by Arundale (2021). By integrating these various perspectives, RPIC positions language not merely as a tool of communication, but as the primary means of forming relational identities that are situational and dynamic. Through strategies such as stance-taking, humor, mitigation, and the use of epistemic markers, speakers form and negotiate their social positions contextually. From this perspective, the digital identity of VTubers is formed through linguistic practices that are relational, performative, and situational, depending on how speakers adapt to their audience and the context of online communication.

Various studies on pragmatics have highlighted expressive speech acts in various communication contexts. Ngasini et al. (2021) analyzed expressive speech acts in *The Ellen Show* interview with Billie Eilish and found that acts such as *thanking, praising, and apologizing* were dominant, serving to build interpersonal rapport and a positive public image. Assidik et al. (2023) also examined expressive speech acts in thread writing, showing how emotional expression and social evaluation are utilized in online discourse to build the writer's ideological position. Meanwhile, research on expressive speech acts by Afitnasari et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of expressive function in maintaining social relationships and solidarity among teenagers. Similar studies also appear in entertainment media, such as the film *Penyalin Cahaya* (Cahyarani & Kusuma, 2024), *Imperfect* (Nur Fariza, 2022), and *Stand-Up Comedy Indonesia* (Jaya & Ramdhani, 2023), which show the emotional, moral, and social functions of expressive speech acts as a form of character representation and contextual meaning.

While numerous studies have examined expressive speech acts in traditional and media-based interactions, meanwhile, research on digital identity and virtual performance has developed in a related but distinct direction. Scholars such as Widodo & Jacky (2025), Wan & Lu (2024) and Chincilla & Kim (2024) have explored how VTubers and digital streamers perform identity through multimodal interaction, embodiment, and social presence. Likewise, Hermawan et al., (2024) and Hariadi and Budiwaspada (2023) emphasized the cultural and affective dimensions of VTuber-audience relationship, showing how digital personas are maintained through emotional engagement and performativity.

Although these studies do not explicitly analyze expressive speech acts, they collectively demonstrate that language use and interactional style play crucial roles in constructing digital identity. This highlights a research gap in understanding how specific linguistic forms, such as expressive speech acts, function within VTuber communication as mechanisms of identity formation.

To address this gap, the present study adopts the Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) framework (refer Agus & Iswandi, 2025) to conceptually bridge pragmatic theory and digital identity studies. RPIC integrates classical pragmatic theories to explain how relational identities are continuously negotiated through language use. Within this framework, language functions not merely as a communicative tool but as a relational act through which speakers and audiences co-construct meaning and identity in digital contexts.

To date, studies on expressive speech acts or VTuber communication have rarely employed the RPIC framework. Therefore, this research extends the theoretical application of RPIC to the domain of digital pragmatics, particularly in analyzing how expressive speech acts operate as relational and performative strategies in online self-presentation. This theoretical positioning strengthens the study's novelty and establishes its contribution to the intersection between pragmatic theory and digital discourse analysis.

By combining RPIC with expressive speech act theory, this study bridges classical pragmatics and digital discourse analysis, emphasizing that digital identity is dynamically performed and contextually negotiated through pragmatic strategies such as humor, stance-taking, and mitigation. Consequently, expressive speech acts are positioned as performative resources for digital self-presentation and relationship-building within Indonesian VTuber culture.

Building upon these theoretical perspectives, the present study empirically explores how expressive speech acts contribute to the formation of digital identity by an Indonesian VTuber, Mikazuki Arion. Specifically, the research examines the forms, functions, and pragmatic features of expressive utterances observed in live broadcasts and analyzes how these linguistic practices contribute to digital persona construction in online interaction. This focus provides the conceptual bridge between the theoretical framework discussed above and the methodological approach presented in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach combined with sociopragmatic analysis to examine the forms, functions, and strategies of expressive speech acts in digital interaction. The qualitative method was selected because the research aims to explore meaning-making processes, contextual language use, and the relational dimensions of communication rather than to measure frequency or numerical correlation. As expressive speech acts are inherently subjective and context-dependent, a qualitative design allows for an in-depth and interpretive understanding of linguistic data within natural digital settings.

Furthermore, the sociopragmatic approach aligns with the study's theoretical framework, the Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC), which emphasized how speakers negotiate social identity through pragmatic interaction. This approach enables the researcher to analyze not only the structural forms of expressive utterances but also their interpersonal and relational functions within VTuber audience communication. In this way, the chosen method is most appropriate for capturing the performative and identity building aspects of expressive speech acts as they occur spontaneously in online contexts.

The focus of this study is on how Mikazuki Arion builds his digital identity through expressive speech acts in live broadcasts on YouTube. The data in the form of Mikazuki

Arion’s speech was taken from his YouTube live broadcast videos. Data selection was carried out using purposive sampling, considering two main criteria: (1) the broadcast featured active verbal interaction between Arion and the audience, and (2) the context of the conversation was spontaneous without a narrative script. In this study, the data source was taken from Mikazuki Arion’s live stream video titled “[Grow A Garden] Day 1 Planting in Roblox” and accessed on November 20, 2025. The video was transcribed manually after being copied using *Kome.ai*, then verified to ensure accuracy of meaning, intonation, and context.

Data was collected through the listen and note method, which involved listening to all the utterances in the video and taking down the parts that contained expressive speech. This process was followed by data classification based on the type of expression (compliment, joke, sarcasm, or thanks) and the surrounding social context. Each utterance was then coded to facilitate the analysis of pragmatic strategies and identity formation patterns that emerged.

The analysis was conducted in two main stages. The first stage used socio-pragmatic analysis, which examined the form and function of expressive speech acts by considering the social context and interactions between Mikazuki Arion and his audience. This analysis is based on the theories of Searle (1969) and Leech (1983) to identify illocutionary and politeness aspects and is reinforced by the concepts of Yule (1996), Cutting (2002), and Holmes (2013) regarding the social function of expressive speech. The second stage uses Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) analysis (refer to Agus & Iswandi, 2025)) to interpret key pragmatic features found, such as the use of humor, positive politeness, mitigation, and stance-taking, which play a role in the formation of Mikazuki Arion’s digital identity. This analysis connects sociopragmatic results with the relational identity dimensions that emerge in interactions, in line with the RPIC view that identity is the result of pragmatic negotiation between the speakers, audience, and digital context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Based on observations of Mikazuki Arion’s live broadcast content, 51 utterances were classified as expressive speech acts. All of this data was analyzed to identify the forms, functions, and pragmatic characteristics that appeared in the context of digital communication. From the entire data set, ten utterances were selected that were considered the most representative and had similar patterns to the other data. The selection of this data was based on considerations of the uniformity of pragmatic function and the frequency of occurrence of certain forms of expression so that the ten data points could represent the main variations of the overall expressive utterances analyzed.

TABLE 1. Forms, Function, and Key Pragmatic Features

No	Speech Data	Expressive Acts	Speech Function	Expressive Acts	Speech Function	Key Features	Pragmatic
1.	“Wow, amazing, beautiful. Ini yang papa cari selama ini!” (‘Wow, amazing, beautiful. This is what Papa has been looking for all this time!’)	Compliment		Expressing admiration		Affective interjection, intensification of lexical	
2.	“Asik, asik, asik!” (‘Cool, cool, cool!’)	Expression of joy		Expressing enthusiasm		Repetition, intensification	
3.	“Selamat wisuda!” (‘Congratulations on your graduation!’)	Congratulatory remarks		Providing support	social	Expressive formulaic	
4.	“Maafkan aku. Aku tidak sengaja.” (‘I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to’)	Apology		Showing regret		Stance softening, mitigation	

5.	<i>“Wah, terima kasih, terima kasih ya...”</i> (‘Wow, thank you, thank you so much...’)	Expression of thanks	Expressing appreciation	Repetition, affective affiliation
6.	<i>“Kenapa duit kita dikit kali, guys?”</i> (‘Why do we have so little money, guys?’)	Complaints	Expressing dissatisfaction	Negative evaluation, rhetorical question
7.	“Thank you for the suppa ”	Expression of thanks	Expressing appreciation and recognition for the audience’s support	Expressive formulaic, affective affiliation
8.	<i>“Hai, halo, selamat malam, selamat datang di stream!”</i> (‘Hi, hello, good evening, welcome to the stream!’)	Greetings	Opening interaction and familiarity	Expressive formulaic, inclusive
9.	<i>“Damn! I can do that. What is wrong with me?”</i>	Expression of surprise	of Reflective self-evaluation	Self-deprecation, negative self-evaluation, interjection.
10.	<i>“Punya 34 juta doang ini, kata dia guys!”</i> (‘He only has 34 million, guys!’)	Evaluative complaints	Ironically diminishing	Irony, hyperbole, negative self-evaluation

Based on the analysis of the expressive speech acts data, various forms of expressive speech acts were found that demonstrate the diversity of functions and pragmatic features in building social relationships between VTubers and their viewers. The forms of expressive speech acts that emerged of gratitude, complaints, greetings, and expressions of surprise. This variety of forms shows how Arion builds his digital identity as an expressive, friendly, and communicative figure through emotional and performative linguistic strategies.

PRAISE AND EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

Expressions of praise and thanks can be seen in data (1), (5), and (7), which are the most prominent and frequently seen expressive forms in Mikazuki Arion’s speech data. For instance, the utterance *“Wow, amazing, beautiful. Ini yang papa cari selama ini!”* (‘Wow, amazing, beautiful. This is what Papa has been looking for all this time!’) contains affective interjections and lexical intensification that emphasize admiration and enthusiasm. This finding is in line with Sudaryanto and Akbariski (2022), who argue that affective interjections function to express the speaker’s emotions, such as admiration, surprise, and excitement, while lexical intensification serves to strengthen emotional expression so that the message becomes more vivid and engaging.

Similar patterns are also found in other utterances that employ repetition and intensification as markers of praise, such as *“Anjas, rapi banget, rapi banget, rapi banget”* (‘Dang, super neat, super neat, super neat’) and *“Oh, amazing, mantap mantap mantap guys”* (‘Oh, amazing, awesome awesome awesome guys’). These utterances mainly occur when Mikazuki Arion respond to visual appearances, gameplay outcomes, or in-game elements that he considers satisfying or impressive. In this context, praise functions not only to express admiration but also to share positive emotions with the audience. Therefore, the use of repetition and positive evaluation is not incidental, but appears repeatedly within the context of gameplay experiences.

Likewise, the utterances “*Wow, terima kasih, terima kasih ya...*” (‘Wow, thank you, thank you so much...’) and “*Thank you for the suppa*” display patterns of repetition of formulaic expressions that are characteristic of VTuber interactions with viewers. In the data, such expressions consistently appear when Mikazuki Arion receives financial support from viewers, either through YouTube’s *super chat* feature or donation platforms such as *Trakteer*, marking a context of appreciation toward audience contributions. In addition, short expression such “*Terima kasih sayang*” (‘Thank you, dear’) are also used as affective and personal forms of appreciation. This finding supports Yin et al., (2025), who state that the use of repeated utterances and formulaic expressions in online interaction functions to enhance emotional engagement while maintaining the rhythm of interaction in virtual space. These forms serve not only to express sincere feelings but also to reinforce the emotional closeness between Arion and his audience, particularly on response to viewer support and participation.

Through the repeated use of intensification and affective affiliation in contexts of praising gameplay experiences and appreciating audience support, expressions of praise and gratitude contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion’s identity as an appreciative streamer.

GREETINGS

Expressions of congratulations and greetings seen in data (3) and data (8) demonstrate the strong social function of language in initiating interaction and maintaining closeness with the audience. Expressions such as “*Selamat wisuda*” (‘Congratulations on your graduation!’) and “*Hai, halo, selamat malam, selamat datang di stream*” (‘Hi, hello, good evening, welcome to the stream!’) serve to build intimacy and familiarity. These greeting and congratulatory expressions do not appear in isolation, but recur across different live-stream session of Mikazuki Arion.

In addition to these examples, congratulatory expressions are also realized in utterances such as “*Happy birthday Gipi, wish you all the best*” which are used to viewers’ personal achievements or special occasions. In the data, expressions like “*Selamat wisuda*” (‘Congratulations on your graduation’) and “*Happi birthday*” commonly appear when Mikazuki Arion receives donations through platforms such as *Trakteer* that include messages about viewers’ achievements or celebrations. In this context, congratulatory expressions function as forms of social recognition and appreciation, reinforcing emotional bonds between the VTuber and his audience.

Meanwhile, greeting expressions such as “*Hai, halo, selamat malam, selamat datang di stream*” (‘Hi, hello, good evening, welcome to the stream!’) and “*Hai, hai hai, halo semuanya*” (‘Hi hi hi, hello everyone’) consistently appear at the beginning of the stream as part of the opening interaction and collective greeting to viewers. This pattern remains relatively stable across different broadcasts and thus becomes a characteristic feature of Mikazuki Arion’s communication style. On the other hand, personalized greetings such as “*Selamat datang Akemi, selamat datang, selamat datang*” (‘Welcome Akemi, welcome, welcome’) emerge when another VTuber enters the stream and leaves a comment in the YouTube *live chat*. Such greetings may occur at the beginning, middle, or even toward the end of the stream, depending on the timing of the other VTuber’s presence.

This type of expressive formulaic forms is inclusive in nature and affirm Arion’s position as a friendly and open figure. In the context of live broadcasting, this strategy is important because it helps maintain audience engagement and strengthens Arion’s image as a figure who is “close” to his fans, even though it takes place in a digital space. This is in line with Page’s (2012) opinion that in the digital context, the use of expressive formulas can be a

marker of social identity and as a strategy for building parasocial closeness in online environments.

Through the recurrent use of greetings and congratulatory expressions in stream openings, donation responses, and the welcoming of other participants, these linguistic practices contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion's identity as a friendly and affiliative streamer.

APOLOGY

Expression of apology found in data (4), such as "*Maafkan aku, aku tidak sengaja*" ('I'm sorry. I didn't mean to'), shows Arion's pragmatic awareness of politeness and face management. Through the use of mitigation strategies and stance softening, Arion displays humility and responsibility, which contribute to the formation of an empathetic and non-authoritative self-image. Holmes (1984) emphasizes that mitigation reflects social awareness and pragmatic responsibility in interaction. Similarly, Hyland (2005) argues that stance softening functions as a way to reduce the force of a speaker's position so that it does not appear authoritative or imposing. From this perspective, these strategies can be understood as linguistic maneuvers oriented toward maintaining politeness and interpersonal balance in discourse.

Beyond this initial example, patterns of apology were also identified in several other utterances that serve a mitigative function in situations involving potential disagreement with the audience. For instance, the utterance "*Maaf ya aku beli semua ya teman-teman ya, karena aku anak baru jadi harus beli semuanya*" ('Sorry, I'm going to buy everything, friends, because I'm new here so I have to buy them all') was produced when Arion made an in-game decision that could invite disagreement from audience. Similar patterns appear in utterances such as "*Maaf ya, tapi lelaki yang harus dipegang adalah omongannya*" ('Sorry but a man should stand by his words') dan "*Sorry ya teman-teman, tapi jangan kirimkan permintaan pertemanan terlebih dahulu ya*" ('Sorry friends, but please don't send friend requests yet'), which were delivered when Arion chose to maintain a particular stance or rule while simultaneously providing reasons that could be accepted by the audience.

In these contexts, apologies do not function merely as admissions of wrongdoing, but as pragmatic strategies to soften potential tension and preserve interactional harmony when the speaker needs to assert a decision or personal position. By using apologies as a prefatory move, Arion mitigates the force of his stance so that is less likely to be perceived as dominant or authoritative by audiences.

Through the recurrent use of mitigation and stance softening in situation involving decision-making and the management of differing opinions, these apology practices contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion's identity as an empathetic, responsible, a friendly and affiliative streamer, particularly in contexts where negotiation and relationship maintenance with the audience are required.

COMPLAINTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF SURPRISE

The utterances in the form of complaints and expressions of surprise seen in data (6), (9), and (10) show the reflective and humorous dimensions of expressive speech acts in Mikazuki Arion's live streams. Utterances such as "*Kenapa duit kita dikit kali guys?*" ('Why do we have so little money, guys?') or "*Punya 34 juta doang ini, kata dia guys*" ('He only has 34 million, guys!') use irony, hyperbole, and negative self-evaluation to create humor and emotional closeness with the audience. Through such expressions, Arion constructs a digital persona that is not merely ideal or perfection-oriented, but also human and relatable.

Expressions of surprise also recur across various utterances produced when Arion encounters situations that fall outside his expectations during gameplay. Utterances such as “*Gila, gede banget*” (‘That’s crazy, it’s so big’), “*Damn, I can do that? What is wrong with me?*”, “*Anjay, amazing, damn, damn*” and “*Oh my God, the name is so hard to spell, to read*” are used to convey amazement, shock, or confusion toward game elements that are perceived as impressive, valuable, or unexpected. In these contexts, expressions of surprise function as a means of sharing spontaneous reactions with viewers, making the gameplay experience more vivid, expressive, and interactive

In addition to surprise, complaints are consistently observed in the data, particularly when Arion faces difficulties or limitations during gameplay. Utterances such as “*Ah, gila banget, susah banget guys, susah banget*” (‘Ah, this is insane, it’s so hard, guys, so hard’), “*Aduh, tidak simetris anjay*” (‘Ugh, it’s not symmetrical’), “*Th mahalnya, ih najisnya mahal banget guys*” (‘it’s so expensive, ridiculously expensive, guys’), and “*Guys, kenapa jadi ajang donasi gini? Udah kayak traktiran kan..*” (‘Guys, why does this turn into a donation event? It’s like a treat already’), reflect complaints delivered through hyperbole and light negative evaluation. In most cases, these complaints relate to limited in-game currency or Arion’s inability to perform certain actions as intended. Rather than creating distance or tension, such complaints tend to elicit laughter and empathy from viewers, as they are framed humorously and are not directed in an aggressive manner.

In expressing complaints and surprise, Arion frequently employs self-deprecation as a strategy for interpersonal closeness. This strategy allows viewers to perceive the on-screen character as authentic, emotionally expressive, and spontaneous. As explained by Dynel (2009), humor that involves negative self-evaluation and exaggerated emotional reactions can strengthen social solidarity and convey emotional authenticity in interaction.

Through the recurrent use of complaints and expressions of surprise marked by hyperbole, negative self-evaluation, humorous framing, and emotional interjections, these linguistic practices contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion’s identity as a playful and chaotic streamer, emphasizing spontaneity, expressiveness, and emotional engagement in digital interactions.

EXPRESSIONS OF JOY

Expressions of joy, such as in data (2), namely “*Asik, asik, asik!*”, demonstrate the use of repetition and intensification as linguistic strategies to convey enthusiasm. Repetition in this utterance functions to emphasize positive emotion while simultaneously strengthening emotional engagement with the audience. This finding aligns with Tannen (2007), who argues that repetition not only serves as a form of repetition but also as a means of emphasizing emotions and building engagement between the speaker and the listener.

Lexical intensification is also evident in other expressions of joy, such as “*Kita mendapatkan emas, anjay keren banget keren banget*” (‘We got gold, anjay, that’s really cool, really cool’) and “*Anjay terong only adik-adik, gila banget, pecah banget pecah*” (‘Anjay, terong only, guys, that’s crazy, totally awesome’). The use of hyperbolic evaluative expressions and lexical repetition in these utterances reflects the support Goddard (2014) view that lexical intensification, through markers of high emotional intensity, represents the speaker’s enthusiasm and emotional involvement in verbal interaction.

In the data, such expressions of joy reappear when Mikazuki Arion obtains something valuable, successfully performs an action, or encounters in-game elements that strongly capture his interest and preference. In these contexts, expressions of joy function as spontaneous emotional responses that are openly shared with viewers, transforming the gameplay experience from an individual activity into a more collective and participatory interaction.

From an illocutionary perspective, utterances such as “*Asik, asik, asik!*” (‘Cool, cool, cool!’) and similar joyful expressions are not produced to achieve a specific communicative goal, but rather to express the speaker’s psychological state. Accordingly, these utterances are categorized as expressive speech acts, in line with Searle’s (1969) opinion that expressive speech acts are speech acts that function to express the psychological state of the speaker towards a situation or event.

Through the recurrent use of repetition and intensification in expression of joy, these linguistic practices contribute to the reinforcement of Mikazuki Arion’s identity as an enthusiastic, emotionally engaged, and friendly as well as affiliative streamer in digital interactions.

Overall, the analysis shows that Mikazuki Arion strategically uses expressive speech acts to build social closeness with the audience. These expressive forms not only reveal personal emotions but also function as performative tools in shaping an appreciative, humorous, and authentic digital persona in the online space.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of expressive speech acts in Mikazuki Arion’s live broadcasts, it was found that the use of various forms of expressive speech acts contributed significantly to the formation of Mikazuki Arion’s digital identity as an Indonesian VTuber. The analysis of the form, function, and key pragmatic features of expressive speech acts shows that every linguistic expression used by Mikazuki Arion not only serves as a tool for emotional communication but also contains an identity dimension that represents their digital persona. This is in line with the opinion of Agus and Iswandi (2025) that key pragmatic features in speech function as markers of relational identity that emerge through certain linguistic strategies towards speech partners. Therefore, to understand more deeply the relationship between expressive strategies and identity construction, the researcher presents the following table that maps the dominant speech acts, the accompanying pragmatic features, and the digital identity that is constructed through these language practices.

TABLE 2. Digital identity construction

The Most Frequently Occurring Expression Speech Acts	Key Pragmatic Features	Digital Identity
Praise and gratitude	Intensification, affective affiliation	Appreciative streamer
Hyperbolic complaints	Negative evaluation, humor, interjections	Playful/chaotic streamer
Greetings and apologies	Expressive formulaic, stance softening	Friendly/affiliative
Self-irony	Self-deprecation, irony, hyperbole	Self-mocking

Based on the mapping in the table, the form, function, and pragmatic characteristics of expressive speech acts in Mikazuki Arion’s live broadcasts show that language plays a role not only as a medium of communication but also as a means of self-representation in the digital space. The context of VTubers is relevant for expanding the scope of speech act theory because this phenomenon presents a complex and multimodal form of linguistic interaction in the digital space. The context of VTubers is relevant for expanding the scope of speech act theory because this phenomenon presents a complex and multimodal form of linguistic interaction in the digital space. In live broadcasts, a VTuber’s speech not only serves to convey linguistic messages but also displays emotional expressions and digital persona performances constructed through virtual avatars. The interaction between the speaker and the audience takes place synchronously, with the support of technology that enables the negotiation of meaning and expression in real time. Within this framework, expressive speech acts are no longer understood

merely as a reflection of the speaker's psychological state, but also as performative actions that negotiate identity and social closeness in the online space.

The relationship between the form, function, and pragmatic features of expressive speech acts and the type of digital identity formed shows a systematic integration between language choices and the representation of the persona displayed by the speaker. Forms of praise and expressions of gratitude accompanied by lexical intensification reinforce the identity of an appreciative streamer who is communicative and empathetic towards the audience. Conversely, hyperbolic complaints and ironic humor reflect a playful or chaotic persona that displays spontaneity and social closeness. Politeness strategies through stance softening in greetings and apologies reinforce a friendly and inclusive identity, while the use of self-deprecating humor indicates an authentic and human self-mocking persona. This connection shows that the form and function of expressive speech acts not only serve an emotional purpose but also become a linguistic mechanism in constructing and affirming digital identity in a relational, performative, and contextual manner. It can be observed that each form of expressive speech act used by Mikazuki Arion has a different contribution in constructing and affirming his digital identity.

APPRECIATIVE

The identity of an appreciative streamer is formed through the use of speech acts in the form of praise and expressions of gratitude. Such utterances in Mikazuki Arion's expressive speech analysis data are characterized by key pragmatic features such as lexical intensification and affective affiliation, for example, in the expressions "*Wah, terima kasih banyak, kalian luar biasa,*" ('Wow, thank you so much, you guys are amazing,') or "*Wow, amazing, beautiful*". The use of intensification and positive interjections portrays Arion as a figure who is full of appreciation and emotional openness towards the support of his audience. Pragmatically, this form presents Arion as a performer who not only entertains but also appreciates audience participation, thereby strengthening social relationships and virtual intimacy. This appreciative identity is at the core of Arion's communicative, positive, and highly empathetic digital persona toward his audience community.

PLAYFUL/CHAOTIC

The playful/chaotic streamer identity emerges through the use of hyperbolic complaints accompanied by pragmatic features such as negative evaluations, humor, and interjections. Examples that represent this category are statements such as "*Kenapa duit kita dikit kali guys?*" or "*Punya 34 juta doang ini, kata dia guys?*" ('Why do we have so little money, guys?'). Although semantically negative, these expressions actually have a humorous effect because they are delivered hyperbolically and accompanied by a light intonation. This strategy serves to build social closeness and display a spontaneous, relaxed persona with an entertaining sense of humor. This is in line with the opinions of Attardo (2001) and Dynel (2009) that irony and hyperbole serve to mark humorous intent that strengthens social closeness. This chaotic identity shows that Mikazuki Arion uses language as entertainment, with complaints not being expressions of true frustration, but rather a means of building a funny, ironic communication style that invites emotional responses from the audience.

FRIENDLY/AFFILIATIVE

A friendly/affiliative identity emerges through the use of greetings and apologies that have key pragmatic features in the form of expressive formulas and softening stances. Utterances such as "*Hai, halo, selamat malam semuanya!*" ('Hi, hello, good evening everyone') or "*Maaf ya,*

aku nggak sengaja,” (‘Sorry, I didn't mean to’) show Mikazuki Arion’s pragmatic awareness of the importance of maintaining a polite and empathetic image in the digital space. These expressive forms show Arion’s efforts to present himself as a humble, friendly, and approachable figure. From the perspective of digital identity theory, this friendly streamer persona strengthens interpersonal relationships with viewers and creates an inclusive online community. Thus, the strategy of greetings and apologies becomes a key element in building familiarity and viewer loyalty toward his virtual character (Yin et al., 2025)

SELF-MOCKING

Self-mocking identity or reflective-ironic persona is demonstrated through expressive speech acts that contain ironic self-evaluation, with pragmatic features such as self-deprecation, irony, and hyperbole. Examples of speech acts such as “*Damn, I can do that? What is wrong with me?*” display a form of negative self-evaluation packaged humorously. This strategy shows Mikazuki Arion’s ability to laugh at himself, which socially increases emotional closeness with the audience. This identity reflects a form of authentic vulnerability, which is an open attitude towards one’s imperfections that makes digital personas appear more human and relatable. In the context of digital culture, this self-deprecating humor strategy is an effective way to balance the position between “virtual public figure” and “online peer” (Cao et al., 2025).

Thus, the results of this analysis show that speech act theory can be expanded to explain linguistic practices in a digital context that is oriented towards performativity and social relations. Through a study of VTuber live broadcasts, it can be seen that linguistic expression is not only an instrument of communication but also a medium for representing identities that are dynamic, interactive, and rooted in Indonesian digital culture.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the expressive speech acts, a case study by Mikazuki Arion, in live broadcasts on YouTube serve not only as a means of expressing emotions or psychological attitudes, but also as a pragmatic strategy in shaping his digital identity as an Indonesian VTuber. Through expressive forms such as praise, greetings, complaints, and reflective humor, Arion presents a digital persona that is appreciative, friendly, and authentic. Linguistic strategies such as intensification, stance softening, and the use of humor serve acts in this context that do not merely convey emotional meaning but become a sociopragmatic practice that negotiates relationships and identities in an interactive digital communication space.

These findings directly address the research aims of this study by demonstrating how expressive speech acts function not only in terms of their forms and communicative purposes, but also through their pragmatic features in the construction of digital identity. The analysis reveals that expressive speech acts such as praise, gratitude, greetings, apologies, complaints, expression of surprise, and joy operate as relational and performative resources that shape an appreciative, friendly/affiliative, and playful digital persona in VTuber live-stream interactions. In line with previous studies on pragmatics and digital discourse, expressive language in online environments plays a crucial role in negotiating applying the Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) framework, this study extends earlier pragmatic research that primarily focused on speech acts as expressions of psychological states or politeness strategies (Searle, 1969; Holmes, 1984), by situating expressive speech acts within the broader process of digital identity formation and online performativity.

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