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# International Journal of Humanity Studies

## IJHS

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## **CAPITALIZATION ERRORS FOUND IN THE TITLE OF ENGLISH ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN SELECTED JOURNALS**

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### **Abstract**

In English, a capital letter is used for the first word of a sentence and for all proper nouns (words that name a specific person, place, organization, or thing). This research finds the capitalization errors found in the English titles of journal articles. This research uses descriptive qualitative. The data are *Jurnal Akuntansi dan Pajak* (JAP) and *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam* (JIEI). The analysis shows that capitalization errors occurred in English titles, especially in writing prepositions such as “in, too, the, and, or, on, of, by, from, for, as, and with”. This can occur due to inaccuracy or misunderstanding about the use of prepositions. Writers are usually more concerned with the combination of words in each sentence and the continuity of the writing, the substance of the writing, rather than having to correct capital letters. In English, there is one type of word that basically cannot or should not be placed at the beginning of a sentence, namely determiner/article, prepositions, and conjunctions. Although the capitalization of words in titles might vary depending on the writer's/ author's, institution's, or publication's style, there are certain common capitalization principles to remember. 1) Any title's initial and last words should be capitalized. 2) Using capital letters for nouns and pronouns. Proper nouns are included in this category. 3) capitalizing helpful verbs and "to be" versions. 4) Capitalizing adjectives and adverbs, and 5) capitalizing articles in the title unless they are the first or last word. 6) In titles and short prepositions, do not capitalize short coordinating conjunctions like "and," "but," "or," "for," or "nor." In minimizing mistakes, it is important to know how to write capital letters in the correct title.

**Keywords:** capitalization, capitalization errors, journal, title article

### **Introduction**

One of the language skills is writing (Rulviana, 2020). Writing is the process of expressing thoughts, feelings, sensing, imagination, will, beliefs, and experiences arranged with graphic symbols in writing for communication both verbally and in writing (Haryanti, 2019). In the writing process, concentration and energy are needed, because in the process there are many times encounter



obstacles that occur. Writing is a very active thinking process because in the process a person's writing skills are required to be able to focus attention.

We may communicate and share our views with individuals all around the globe via writing. Content, structure, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics are all components of writing that must be addressed while creating a successful piece of writing. Combs (2014) and Slyke (2018) state that mechanic components include capitalization and punctuation. In writing, capitalization and punctuation are essential (Novianti, 2014). If capitalization and punctuation marks are not utilized correctly in writing, readers may have difficulty understanding it.

The most important element in an article is the title. Make the title as attractive as possible, because that's the first thing that makes the reader decide whether to read it or not. When writing a title, there are some provisions that we should know. Because not infrequently, there are still some people who are wrong in writing the title. The most common mistake is the use of capital letters. According to the Indonesian General Spelling Guidelines (PUEBI), the first letter of each word in the title must be written in capital letters. Indeed, some words are written in lowercase, but when the word is the beginning of a sentence in the title, it must still be written in capital letters.

Writing is thought to be more difficult than any other productive skill (Shweba & Mujiyanto, 2017). People may have difficulty and make errors in a variety of writing abilities, particularly in mechanics such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling (Fitria, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020c, 2020b). One of the most important writing conventions in English is capitalization. The proper use of capitalization not only indicates the start of a phrase or highlights specific sorts of words within a sentence, but also ensures that the meaning is clear and that the writing is successful (Pathan, 2021). According to (Shatz, 2019), Capitalization is an essential orthographic element that affects linguistic processing during reading and writing. Ninčević & Zanchi (2012) state that correct capitalization and punctuation are indispensable language tools in academic and scientific settings.

Several studies have been conducted on capitalization errors. First, Elkiliç et al. (2009) state that Turkish EFL students may have punctuation and capitalization errors while writing compositions due to their L1 habits. Both intermediate and upper-intermediate students made fewer interference mistakes (20, 3%, and 17%, respectively) than general errors, and the percentage of interference reduces as the level improves (20, 3 percent for intermediate-level students, whereas 17 percent for upper-intermediate students). Second, Siddiqui (2015) states that capitalization problems are a common type of error in Saudi students' writing. There are 983 errors in capitalization throughout the 10 categories in a 12,000-word paper by 20 students. So, Saudi Arabia's English language curriculum should incorporate innovative pedagogical strategies in capitalization education to help students acquire the basic capitalization principles and understand the orthographic, linguistic, and cultural conventions of the English language. Third, Zahida et al. (2016) state that capitalization, commas, semicolons, periods, quotes, hyphens, apostrophes, and question marks were found to be the most often produced errors. Unexpectedly, no significant variations in the frequency of punctuation and capitalization errors produced by students were found to be related to their academic level, major, or gender.



Fourth, Shatz (2019) states that speakers of all L1s produced a high number of capitalization mistakes, both in terms of errors per word and error percentage (out of total errors), particularly at lower L2 competence levels. Under-capitalization was more frequent than over-capitalization during the period, however, the difference lessened over time. Fifth, Challay & Jones (2019) state that most junior secondary school students in Bo District were unaware of the capital letter use rules. Proper nouns, the start of a sentence, a lack of prior knowledge of letterforms, overgeneralization, and not capitalizing the first word in a letter's close were among the places where mistakes were more common. Sixth, Kļavinska (2021) states that errors in the expression of grammatical meaning have been discovered in the written works of Latvian language learners, including missing capitalization at the start of a phrase and needless capitalization (in the middle of a sentence). Seventh, Pathan (2021) states that the majority of the 230 undergraduate students at Bangladesh Agricultural University were unaware of and uninterested in proper capital/small letter usage, resulting in numerous errors in their writing. The use of capital/small letters with words associated with the Internet such as Net, Web, Internet, and so on; with names of general academic subjects; with family relationship words; with exceptional proper nouns such as black & white (human race names), sun & moon (planet names); with the first word of an incomplete sentence after a colon; with the titles of people; and so on are some of the most common errors made by participants.

Based on the previous studies above, there are similarities and differences with this research. All previous studies and this research have the same focus on capitalization errors. In difference, all previous studies use an object of research by using students/learners' writing. However, this research will use an object of research by using an English title which was published in the journals in 2021. Therefore, the objective of this research is to find out the capitalization errors found in the English title of articles journal.

## **Method**

This research used descriptive qualitative research. This type of qualitative research is a research method that utilizes qualitative and descriptive data. Thus, displaying the data results as they are without any manipulation or other treatment. This research used documents to collect data. The documents were taken from selected journals published by ITB AAS Indonesia, for example, *Jurnal Akuntansi dan Pajak (JAP)* and *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam (JIEI)*. These journals accept journals both Indonesian and English articles. This research only focused on the English articles, especially in the titles.

This research used three steps of analysis proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, and data conclusion. The data reduction stage was used to determine whether the data were relevant to the research objective. The data were obtained after being reduced, and it then were structured and placed in a relational pattern to make it easier to grasp. The next step was to draw conclusions based on the results of the analysis.



## Findings and Discussion

### Findings

The objective of this research is to find out the capitalization errors found in the English title of articles journal. Below the findings of the study can be seen:

**Table 1. Capitalization Errors Found in English Titles' Article Journal**

No	Title of English Articles	Capitalization Errors	Type of Class Word
1.	Exploring Indonesian Millennials Muzakkis' Insight of Paying Zakat <b>In</b> Digital Era (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	in	Preposition
2.	Factors Affecting Disclosure of Islamic Social Reporting on Companies Listed <b>In</b> Jakarta Islamic Index 2017-2019 (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	In	Preposition
3.	Fund Assistance From Amal and Zakat Agencies: Will It Help Effectiveness and Improve MSME Performance in <b>The</b> Time of <b>The</b> Covid-19 Pandemic? (Case Study of Lazismu Indonesia's MSME Empowerment Program) (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	The	Article
4.	Influence of Corporate Governance <b>On</b> Profit of Islamic Banks in Indonesia Period 2016-2020 (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	On	Preposition
5.	Comparative Study of <b>The</b> Dynamics of Riba Discourses Between Sharia Banks and Conventional Banks (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	The	Article
6.	The Reformation of Waqf Institution to Improve <b>The</b> Potential of Waqf in Indonesia (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	The	Article
7.	Determinants of Micro and Small Business Financing <b>In</b> Sharia Commercial Banks <b>In</b> Indonesia (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	In	Preposition
8.	Analysis <b>Of</b> Zakat Empowerment <b>In</b> <b>The</b> Era <b>Of</b> Pandemy Covid-19 Towards Impossible Material and Spiritual Aspects Mustahik (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	Of, In, The	Preposition Article
9.	Islamic Perspectivte <b>On</b> Money Market and <b>The</b> Operation of Sharia Money Market (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 3, 2021)	On, The	Preposition Article
10.	The Role of Baitul Maal Wa Tamwil in <b>The</b> Economic Empowerment of Poor Women in Cianjur District (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 2, 2021)	The	Article
11.	Effect of Word of Mouth, Perception of Quality and Use of Technology <b>On</b> Decisions of Application-Based Transportation Users (Study on Muslimah Community in Purwokerto) (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 2, 2021)	On	Preposition
12.	Strategies to Improve Halal Tourism in Indonesia During <b>The</b> Pandemic Covid-19	The	Article

(JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 2, 2021)			
13.	Halal Transaction: Implication <b>For</b> Digital Retail <b>By</b> Using Financial Technology (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 1, 2021)	For, By	Preposition
14.	The Effect <b>Of</b> Employee Engagement and Emotional Intelligent on Organizational Commitment by Job Satisfaction as Mediate Variable Case in Employee <b>Of</b> Islamic Education Institution (JIEI: Vol. 7, No. 1, 2021)	Of	Preposition
15.	The Influence of Leadership Style and Organizational Culture by Mediating Job Satisfaction on Organizational Commitment Case Study in Employees <b>Of</b> Islamic Education Institution (JIEI: Vol. 6, No. 3, 2021)	Of	Preposition
16.	Effect <b>Of</b> Compensation On Employee Performance Through Spirit of Work <b>As</b> a Variabel <b>Of</b> Mediation (Case Study in Employees <b>Of</b> Islamic Education Institution) (JIEI: Vol. 6, No. 2, 2021)	Of, On, As	Preposition Conjunction
17.	Impact Of Corporate Social Responsibility <b>On</b> <b>The</b> Company's Reputation <b>In</b> Manufacturing Companies <b>In</b> <b>The</b> Basic Industry <b>And</b> Chemicals Sector, Cement Sub-Sector Listed <b>On</b> <b>The</b> IDX 2012-2017 (JAP: Vol. 22, No. 1, 2021)	On, The, In, And	Preposition Article Conjunction
18.	The Effect of Audit Quality, Managerial Ownership, <b>And</b> Audit Committee on <b>The</b> Integrity of Financial Statements (Empirical Study on Manufacturing Companies Listed on <b>The</b> IDX 2015-2019) (JAP: Vol. 22, No. 1, 2021)	And, The	Conjunction Article
19.	Biological Asset: What is <b>The</b> Impact on Agricultural Companies? (JAP: Vol. 22, No. 1, 2021)	The	Article
20.	Financial Market Integration Between Stock Market <b>From</b> North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Member (JAP: Vol. 22, No. 2, 2021)	From	Preposition
21.	Financial Knowledge <b>And</b> Financial Behavior Among Educational Staff (A Survey on Educational Staff in Universitas Kuningan) (JAP: Vol. 22, No. 2, 2021)	And	Preposition
22.	The Effectiveness <b>Of</b> <b>The</b> Credit Relaxation Policy <b>On</b> <b>The</b> Batik MSMEs Affected <b>By</b> Covid-19 <b>In</b> Solo City (JAP: Vol. 22, No. 2, 2021)	Of, The, On, By, In	Preposition Article
23.	Determinant Compliance <b>With</b> People's Tax Obligations (JAP: Vol. 21, No. 1, 2021)	With	Conjunction
24.	Intellectual Capital Utilization <b>And</b> Intellectual Capital Growth <b>In</b> Improving Current <b>And</b> Future Financial Performance <b>In</b> Asean <b>In</b> <b>The</b>	And, In, The, Of	Conjunction, Preposition, Article

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Era <b>Of</b> Asean Economic Community (JAP: Vol. 21, No. 1, 2021)		
25. Capital Structure Evaluation Based Company Sizes <b>And</b> Profitability (JAP: Vol. 21, No. 1, 2021)	And	Conjunction

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Based on table 1 above shows that there are capitalization errors in the article “the”, conjunction “in, to, of, by, from, for, as, with” and the preposition “and, as”. In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> titles, the capitalization errors are found in the preposition “in” which is located in the middle of a sentence. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> title, the capitalization errors are found in the preposition “it” which is located in the middle of a sentence, then the determiner/article “the” which is located in the middle of a sentence. In the 4<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors are found in the preposition “on” which is located in the middle of a sentence. In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> titles, the capitalization errors are found in the determiner/article “on” which is located in the middle of a sentence. In the 7<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors are found in the preposition “in” which is located in the middle of a sentence. In the 8<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “in”, “of, and the determiner/article “the” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 9<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “on”, and the determiner/article “the” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the determiner/article “the” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 11<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “on” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 13<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “for” and “by” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “of” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 16<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “of” and the preposition “as” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 17<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “on”, “in”, the conjunction “and” and the determiner/article “the” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 18<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the conjunction “and” and the determiner/article “the” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 19<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the determiner/article “the” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 20<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the preposition “from” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 21<sup>st</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the conjunction “and” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 22<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the determiner/article “the” and the preposition “of”, “on”, “by”, and “in” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 23<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in conjunction “with” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 24<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the determiner/article “the”, the preposition “of”, and “in”, and the conjunction “and” which is located in the middle of sentence. In the 25<sup>th</sup> title, the capitalization errors found in the conjunction “and” which is located in the middle of sentence.

## Discussion

Writing skill seems to be more difficult to acquire than other language skills as some aspects of language are involved or interrelated (Oktaviani et al., 2022).

Understanding the use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling plays an important part in sentence structure and building a paragraph (Elfa et al., 2022). The sentences that make up a paragraph are connected. Capitalization is used as the description of information that is frequently written at the beginning of a sentence or statement (Sholikhatun, 2022). They are grouped into entire text or paragraphs that are simple to comprehend. In each sentence, capitalization is used as the description of information.

Good paragraph writing should encompass certain elements. Writers are expected to deliver on five critical elements of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language usage, and grammar and mechanics (Maharani & Sholikhatun, 2022). It is the application of capitalization, punctuation, and orthography in mechanics. Inaccurate punctuation can lead to substandard writing and cause readers to become confused. The functions of capitalization and punctuation are distinct. Punctuation aids the comprehension of the meaning of a statement by the reader.

Letter capitalization (use of capital letters) is often necessary for scientific writing (Dewirsyah, 2021). Capitalization is the process of using uppercase and lowercase letters in writing. In English, uppercase letters are used to start words, while lowercase letters are used for words that are not keywords or important words. Capitalization is used to differentiate words, mark the beginning of sentences, indicate the importance of certain words, and maintain consistency in writing. Capitalization in writing is very important because it can help understand sentence structure, emphasize important words, and maintain consistency and neatness in writing.

There are some reasons why capitalization is important such as: 1) Helping understand sentence structure: using capital letters at the beginning of a sentence helps readers to identify the beginning of a sentence. This makes it easier for readers to differentiate between one sentence and another, thereby facilitating understanding. 2) Emphasizing important words: capitalization can be used to emphasize important words, such as names of people, places, titles, or special terms. 3) Helping in faster reading: capitalization helps in differentiating between words starting with uppercase and lowercase letters, making it easier for readers to navigate the text quickly. 4) Consistency and neatness: consistent use of capitalization maintains neatness in writing. Without consistent capitalization, writing can look disorganized and difficult to understand. 5) Cultural norms and social etiquette: capitalization is also part of the cultural norms and social etiquette in writing. When we follow correct capitalization rules, we show respect for the language and the reader. Therefore, capitalization is not only about grammatical rules but also about readability, consistency, consistency, and cultural norms in writing.

The initial word of a sentence and all proper nouns in English are written with a capital letter (words that name a specific person, place, organization, or thing). In the example above, it was found that there are capitalization errors occurred especially in writing prepositions such as “in, too, the, and, or, on, of, by, from, for, as, with”. The frequent writing of prepositions is a common error. This usually happens when we write scientific work/papers. This can occur due to inaccuracy or misunderstanding about the use of prepositions in English. It may sound trivial, specifying capital letters in a sentence, but who would have thought

that the accuracy of the use of words is often neglected? Usually, writers/authors pay more attention to writing letters, and words, and forget to pay attention to capital letters. Writers are usually more concerned with the combination of words in each sentence and the continuity of the writing, the substance of the writing, rather than having to correct capital letters.

In English, there is one type of word that basically cannot or should not be placed at the beginning of a sentence, namely determiner/article, prepositions, and conjunctions. This is because of following their respective functions. Prepositions have many functions, such as stating the place, direction, origin, purpose, comparison, cause and effect, and so on. While conjunctions are used to connect two clauses, two sentences, or two paragraphs. As prepositions and connecting words, these two types of words cannot then be used as opening words in sentences.

Writing in English is commonplace. Maybe almost everyone can do it well. The thing that needs to be considered when writing in English is usually only a matter of spelling and the correct number of letters. Not only is it a matter of spelling that must be precise, but writing titles must also pay attention to certain rules. In writing titles, both in Indonesian and English, all letters must begin with a capital letter. However, there are several different elements when it comes to writing titles in English. Based on the basic guidelines for writing titles, the following are aspects that must be started with a capital letter when writing titles: Nouns, Proper Nouns, Pronouns, Verbs, and Adjectives. Meanwhile, aspects that are NOT written in capital letters are Articles, Conjunctions, and Prepositions.

It will be easier to produce articles, papers, and other pieces of work if we get familiar with typical title capitalization norms. Although the capitalization of words in titles might vary depending on the writer's/ author's, institution's, or publication's style, there are certain common capitalization principles to remember. 1) Any title's initial and last words are capitalized. 2) Nouns and pronouns should be capitalized. Proper nouns are included in this category. 3) Helping verbs and variants of the verb "to be" are capitalized. 4) Adjectives and adverbs are capitalized; short prepositions are not capitalized; and articles in the title are not capitalized unless they are the first or final word in the title. 7) Short coordinating conjunctions are not capitalized such as like "and," "but," "our," "for," or "nor" is lowercase in titles. The capitalization standards for books, films, and other work titles differ slightly amongst style guides. The initial word, all nouns, all verbs (including short ones like is), all adjectives, and all proper nouns should all be capitalized. This means we should lowercase articles, conjunctions, and prepositions; nevertheless, some style guidelines recommend capitalizing conjunctions and prepositions with more than five letters.

The use of capital letters and punctuation when writing articles is intended to help the writer or writer clarify and emphasize the contents of the article being communicated to the reader (Mulyati, 2022). Inconsistent capitalization can blur the focus of a title and make it difficult to read. Make sure to consistently capitalize keywords and other important words in the title. Capitalization in writing the title of a scientific article is very important because the title is a very prominent and important part of a scientific publication. For example, if in the title of a scientific article, some keywords are capitalized but others are not, this can confuse readers and make the title look less professional.

There are several reasons why capitalization is important in writing scientific article titles such as: 1) Making headlines easier to read: consistent use of capitalization helps in making titles easier to read and understand. By following proper capitalization rules, readers can quickly identify keywords in the title. 2) Showing structure and hierarchy: the use of capitalization can be used to show the structure and hierarchy of information in a title. Keywords or important elements in the title are often emphasized using capital letters, which helps readers understand the main idea or focus of the article. 3) Providing professionalism: writing the title of a scientific article with correct capitalization shows the level of professionalism of the author and publication. This is important in the academic and scientific world, where rigor and consistency are highly valued. 4) Helping with indexation and searching: consistent capitalization is also important for indexation and searching in scientific databases. Using capital letters for keywords in the title can help the search system recognize and consider the title of the article when searched by readers or researchers. 5) Making citations easier: when quoting or rewriting information from the title of a scientific article, consistent capitalization makes it easier to copy and present the title correctly. This minimizes errors and ambiguity in citations, which is important for academic integrity. Thus, capitalization in writing the title of a scientific article is not just a matter of style or grammar, but also has significant implications in understanding, professionalism, indexation, and citation in a scientific context.

Writing article titles using appropriate capitalization is important to ensure clarity, consistency, and a professional appearance. There are several general guidelines for writing article titles with correct capital letters, including: 1) Capitalize keywords: typically, the first letter of each keyword in an article title should be capitalized. This includes nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. 2) Avoid lowercase letters between words: in English, prepositions, conjunctions, and other short words (such as "of", "and", "or", "in") are usually written with lowercase letters, unless they are part of keywords or are words that are important in the context of the title. 3) Capitalize important words: apart from the main keyword, capitalize other important words that require emphasis or identify important concepts in the title. 4) Pay attention to style and writing style rules: if you are writing for a particular scientific publication or journal, be sure to check their official writing guidelines. Some publications may have special preferences or rules regarding the use of capital letters in article titles. 5) Consistency is key: make sure to be consistent in your use of capital letters in article titles. Avoid inconsistent changes in capitalization style between title words. Consistency helps maintain professionalism and makes it easier for readers to understand the title. 6) Edit and double-check: after writing an article title, it is important to go through the editing and double-checking process to ensure that capitalization has been applied correctly. This helps prevent errors and ensures compliance with applicable writing norms.

There are several provisions for writing capital letters in English that we should avoid. 1. Articles (a, an, the). In English, articles cannot be written in capital letters, except at the beginning of a sentence or title. 2. Prepositions (at, on, in, for, etc). As a complement in a sentence, prepositions are not written using capital letters, even though they are in the title. 3. Conjunctions (and, or, but). Just

like prepositions, conjunctions also do not require capital letters because they only function as a complement to sentences, even though they are in the title.

According to the Indonesian General Spelling Guidelines (PUEBI), the first letter of each word in the title must be written in capital letters. Indeed, some words are written in lowercase, but when the word is the beginning of a sentence in the title, it must still be written in capital letters. When we write a title with a word that is included in the word particle, we must write it in lowercase. Here are some words that belong to the word particle: Prepositions or also called prepositions: in, to, of, on, in, that is, to, than, for, for, ala, tub, about, regarding, because, in terms of, towards, upon, by, against, will, with, and until. Conjunctions such as: and, as well as, or, but, but, however, but, whereas, whereas, that, in order, so that, let, even if, if, if, if, as long as, if, when, since, since, since, while, when, while, while, so, while, while, during, while, by, after, after, before, after, finished, after, until, until, if, because, because, and so. Interjection or also called exclamatory words: yeah, really, wow, etc.

### **Conclusion**

The frequent writing of prepositions is a common error. In English, there is one type of word that basically cannot or should not be placed at the beginning of a sentence, namely determiner/article, prepositions, and conjunctions. In the example above, it was found that there are capitalization errors occurred especially in writing prepositions such as “in, it, the, and, or, on, of, by, from, for, as, with”. This is following their respective functions. Prepositions have many functions, such as stating the place, direction, origin, purpose, comparison, cause and effect, and so on. While conjunctions are used to connect two clauses, two sentences, or two paragraphs. As prepositions and connecting words, these three types of words cannot then be used as opening words in sentences.

In the world of writing, there are still many errors in the use of words and their placement in sentences. This is the reason why we as writers and journal editors must learn about writing capital letters in sentences or journal article titles. So that in the future there will be no more mistakes in writing sentences. Grammarly software may be suggested to improve grammatical accuracy, including capitalization. To minimize mistakes, it is important to know how to write capital letters in the correct title.

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## **HYSTERICAL FEMININITY IN NICK JOAQUIN'S *THE WOMAN WHO HAD TWO NAVELS***

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### **Abstract**

This essay presents a reading of Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* through the lens of feminist scholarship on the history and social construction of female hysteria. It argues that a critical intertextual reading of this sort affirms the heteropatriarchal foundations of popular ideations of the Philippine nation. It uses Sara Mills' *Feminist Stylistics* to draw attention to Joaquin's discourse on women, specifically, hysterical women such as Connie Escobar. It argues that the discourse of the novel—its reliance on the stereotype of the hysterical feminine woman, its focalization through a male gaze, and its employment of the schemata of “women asking for it”—explains why readers find Connie Escobar's inconsistent behavior and characterization not only plausible but even subversive. However, reading the novel from the lens of feminist stylistics also reveals instances where the novel reinscribes patriarchal ideology. Any reading that views Connie as a metaphor for the Philippine nation must therefore confront the patriarchal ideology that informs this vision of the nation.

**Keywords:** feminist stylistics, hysteria studies, Philippine Anglophone literature.

### **Introduction**

Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961), a “masterpiece of modern Philippine literature” (Nadal, 2021, p. 568) is popularly conceived as a novel about personal and Philippine national identity, and a “national allegory of the Philippine condition” (San Juan, Jr., 2018, p. 174). In his introduction to the canonical novel, republished by Anvil Publishing, Inc. in 2018, Ruel De Vera provides a typical reading of the Philippine National Artist's celebrated work: “Deeply woven through *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* is, as always, the question of identity, both on a small and a big scale...[T]he characters ponder the nature of their being...[the] product of different cultures and settings” (2018, p. 10).

The central character of the novel, Connie Escobar, is a young Filipino woman who travels from Manila to Hong Kong to escape the betrayal of, and trauma inflicted on her by, her closest family members. She presents herself as a monstrous woman with two navels to the community of young individuals of Filipino descent residing in Hong Kong. Connie wreaks havoc on their lives until she undergoes a near-death experience that leads to a spiritual transformation.



For De Vera, Connie stands as a metaphor for “all Filipinos...who never stopped resisting the different kinds of invasion” (2018, p. 11). Connie’s navels “stand for the different things that keep her from finding her own identity in the world” (De Vera, 2018, p. 10) and are metaphors for the Spanish and American colonial origins of both the Filipino identity and the Philippine state (Liang, 2022, p. 548). Given that Joaquin’s capacious oeuvre is chiefly concerned with “the Philippines’ tortured history as a captive state, most clearly in recollections of the Spaniards’ 300-year rule or the American’s splashy time in the oriental sun” (De Vera, 2018, p. 9), such a reading is not unreasonable, and its popularity, not without justification.

The first six paragraphs of the novel foreground details that mark Connie Escobar as a woman with a “hysterical personality”—“highly impressionistic, suggestible, and narcissistic...[h]ighly labile, [whose] moods changed suddenly, dramatically, and for seemingly inconsequential reasons” (Smith-Rosenberg, 1972, p. 662). Not only does Connie ask the veterinarian, Pepe Monson, to operate on what she claims to be the monstrosity she possesses (two navels); she “cried that it was urgent: her whole life depended on it” (Joaquin, 2018, p. 13), displaying an extreme emotional reaction. In the sentences that follow, readers learn from the narrator that the seemingly desperate Connie turns “cagey” and “coy,” quickly able to slip out of her emotional performance to actively flirt with the veterinarian (Joaquin, 2018, p. 13).

Since the novel is popularly viewed as an allegory of the Philippine nation (De Vera, 2018; Lizada, 2018; Gonzalez, 2019; Blanco, 2022)—one might ask what Connie’s representation as a hysteric tells us about Joaquin’s vision of the Philippine nation.

### ***Reading Connie’s hysterical femininity***

Two fairly recent readings of the novel take Joaquin’s characterization of Connie as a hysterical woman into account when extending or challenging the popular reading of Connie as a metaphor for the Philippine nation in search of its identity.

Miguel Lizada (2018) examines the novel from a postcolonial Gothic perspective, surfacing the presence of empire in the text from the perspective of revolutionary Filipinos and their offspring, people twice colonized by the Spanish and American occupations. For Lizada, Connie’s hysterical claim that she has two navels amounts to a disavowal of her ownership over her monstrous postcolonial body, and the histories and heteropatriarchal cultural codes that have made it thus. Lizada extends the popular reading by claiming that this rejection is necessary to the spiritual transformation Connie undergoes—a transformation that he reads as a queer moment—at the novel’s conclusion. For Lizada, this queer moment is critical to what he and scholars like Mary Rose Arong (2018, 2019) and M.H. Abedi Valoojerdi (2021) read as the novel’s strategic resistance to American neocolonialism through the revival of what the latter has repressed.

Gabriel Gonzalez (2019), on the other hand, challenges the popular reading by proposing that Connie is a metaphor for the Philippine nation subjected to a patriarchal, neocolonial order (p. 153), and not simply one in search of its identity. Gonzalez draws from Juliana Chang’s (2003) assertion that “nation-states of Europe and the Americas operate ideologically within the metaphor of the

bourgeois family” (p. 638). Hence, hysteria, theorized within feminist psychoanalytic theory as a response to the European and American bourgeois family, can be read as a symptom of global capital and neocolonial relations.

Gonzalez likewise adopts Chang’s definition of “feminine hysteria” (“the performance of femininity that maintains characteristics which are acceptable to patriarchal norms but carries these modes of femininity to extreme or excess”) when he claims that Connie’s insistence that she has two navels—is an “act of resistance”—one which “acknowledges the hegemony of her mother and father over her as their daughter, but . . . is carried to an excess so as to draw attention and to divulge the contradictions that her mother’s masquerade has sought to conceal” (p. 161).

Lizada’s and Gonzalez’ readings both suggest that the hysterical woman is *necessary* for a critique of a heteronormative, patriarchal order. One might even be persuaded that the figure of a hysterical woman is necessarily a “powerful force that disrupts all signifiers” (Lizada, 2018, p. 444) or a “figure of resistance” (Gonzalez, 2019, p. 164). Lizada supports his claim that Connie is a “powerful force that disrupts all signifiers” with the argument that it is a series of encounters with Connie that transforms one of the male characters in the novel, Paco (p. 443). However, the text does not suggest that Connie intended her encounters to have such an effect. We receive information about the encounters and the transformation that follows solely from the viewpoint of the male character, Paco. Gonzalez, on the other hand, calls Connie’s declaration that she has two navels as “an act of resistance” and Connie herself a “figure of resistance.” In doing so, he ascribes to Connie, in her hysterical state, an agency that the literature on hysteria does not support. It should be noted that Chang, on whom Gonzalez relies for a definition of hysteria, *refuses* to classify hysteria as an act of resistance, pointing out that hysteria “simultaneously supports and challenges the status quo” and is, at best, an ambivalent concept; a *symptom* of the contradictions of the neo-colonial state, but not necessarily an act against it.<sup>1</sup>

In this essay, I argue that Joaquin’s critique of the patriarchal neocolonial Philippine nation is made legible through stylistic choices that reinscribe patriarchal ideology. I draw from Sara Mills’s argument in *Feminist Stylistics* (2005) that ideology determines the dominant reading of the text. Readers must draw upon the ideology from which the dominant reading ensues, for the text to make sense. For example, to understand *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, a woman would have to align herself with the dominant reading of the text, its presuppositions, and assumptions about women, even if these run contrary to her own lived experience and knowledge. If a reader chooses to reject the position foisted upon her by the dominant reading, she may find herself confronted with inconsistencies such as those that have been pointed out in the previous section on Lizada’s and Gonzalez’s readings of Connie’s hysterical femininity.

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<sup>1</sup> Other contemporary scholars likewise stop short of equating hysteria with resistance, noting that currently, “the term ‘hysteria’ tends to be tagged or deployed whenever issues that question or openly challenge established modes of cognition are at stake” (Zechner, 2020, p. 89). “To all the others, who [believe themselves to be] of sound of mind, such a reaction is alarmism...and the very existence of crisis conditions [may be] called into question” (Krasny, 2020, p. 128).

Using Mills's feminist stylistics, I revisit *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* and assert that Connie's portrayal as a female hysteric affirms the heteropatriarchal foundations of popular ideations of the Philippine nation. I argue that the discourse of the novel—its reliance on the stereotype of the hysterical feminine woman, its focalization through a male gaze, and its employment of the schemata of “women asking for it” —explains why many readers find Connie Escobar's inconsistent behavior and characterization not only plausible but even subversive. Without rejecting readings that take Connie Escobar's actions in the novel as a subversion of patriarchal norms, I show instances where the novel nevertheless reinscribes patriarchal ideology.

### ***Feminist scholarship on hysteria***

Feminist scholars argue that the history and social construction of female hysteria have been used throughout history as a tool to control and silence women's bodies and behaviors. Cecily Devereux (2014) observes that the term “hysteria” has, “for centuries [been used] as a dramatic medical metaphor for everything that men found mysterious or unmanageable in women” (p. 20).

As a medical condition, hysteria referred to “*involuntary, uncontrollable, somatic symptoms*” that were observed primarily in women, and which, from antiquity, were believed to be related to female reproductive capacity (Krasny, 2020, p. 125; King, 2022, p. 3; Bonomi, 2023, p. 55). Beginning in the nineteenth century, however, hysteria began to be theorized as a nervous disorder caused by psychological, rather than physical, factors. Jean-Martin Charcot observed that the evocation of an old physical trauma to a patient under hypnosis reproduced hysterical paralysis, leading him to conclude that it was a mental representation of a trauma experienced by the patient, and not the patient's gender, which was the source of hysterical symptoms (Bogousslavsky, 2020, p. 5). Nevertheless, hysteria remained coded as a female characteristic throughout the nineteenth century and beyond (Showalter, 2020, p. 29). Devereux (2014, p. 24) suggests this may have been due to the fact that Charcot's studies on the subject involved female, rather than male, patients.

Influenced by Charcot, Sigmund Freud developed the science of psychoanalysis by studying hysterical patients. He theorized that hysteria was caused by an “internal psychical scar produced through trauma or repression” (Devereux, 2014, p. 24), replacing the uterus with a pathological human imagination as hysteria's cause. This, however, did little to change the perception that women were at greater risk of suffering from hysteria, since “women's imagination was understood by the physicians of the time...as diseased” (Gilman, 2020, p. 42).

In women, hysteria was viewed as a “character disorder, the product of an unresolved Oedipal complex” (Smith-Rosenberg, 1972, p. 653). Whereas men were thought to achieve identity by recognizing their separation from the mother (“she is what he is not; he has what she does not”), the fact that women lacked a penis was thought to condemn them to “spend their lives desiring its replacement or substitution, first, and “normally,” through children” (Devereux, 2014, p. 25). This line of thinking has prompted feminist scholars to conclude that psychoanalysis is an apparatus of the patriarchy (Devereux, 2014, p. 27).

Mark S. Micale (1989) has pointed out that, before the twentieth century, what passed for the history of hysteria and its pathologization was the writing produced by male medical professionals, who based their work on their observation of patients, most of whom were female (p. 319). Male doctors who treated hysterical women in the nineteenth century determined that their patients displayed, not only a variety of physical symptoms (“nervousness, depression, the tendency to tears, and chronic fatigue, or of disabling pain” and a sudden seizure) but also a “hysterical personality”: “highly impressionistic, suggestible, and narcissistic. Highly labile...egocentric in the extreme...consistently superficial and tangential” (Smith Rosenberg, 1972, pp. 661-662). They described hysterical women as physically attractive and often sexually aroused; but also depressed, frigid, and uninterested in sex (Smith Rosenberg, 1972, p. 663). These descriptions presented hysterical women as being simultaneously sexual and asexual, the object of male desire, and yet without desires of her own. Doctors were often unsympathetic—even hostile—to their hysterical female patients., as they were deemed duplicitous (Gilman, 2022, p.352). Showalter (2020) observed that “nineteenth-century physicians generally believed that hysterical women were skillful performers, faking their symptoms in order to get attention and special treatment” (p. 29). Thinking these patients were incorrigible, doctors frequently recommended “suffocating hysterical women until their fits stopped, beating them across the face and body with wet towels, ridiculing and exposing them in front of family and friends, showering them with icy water” (Smith-Rosenberg, 1972, p. 675).

It was only towards the end of the twentieth century—during the rise of Second Wave feminism—that a significant body of feminist writing on hysteria appeared. Devereux (2014) notes that this corresponded with the term being dropped from the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (p. 19); a determination had been made that it was a non-specific and poorly defined diagnosis based on patriarchal ideas about women’s bodies and psychology. While feminists pointed out the sexism inherent in a diagnosis of hysteria, the psychiatric profession began to use more specific diagnoses to describe the symptoms and behaviors previously associated with the term.

In France, feminist writers attempted to reappropriate the term “hysteria” and use it in a feminist context. Helene Cixous proposed that women can escape from the phallogocentric symbolic order “by producing texts that challenge and move beyond the Law-of-the-Father” (Jones, 1985, p. 85). Cixous practiced “hysterical engagement”—mobilizing hysteria’s somatic symptomatology in her writing—as a means to escape the phallogocentric order that she believed permeated all language: “The societal Symbolic becomes represented within, or collapsed into, the subject’s Imaginary...pluck[ing] patriarchy from its perch in the social order and instead mak[ing] it play within the bounds of the subject’s consciousness” (Reinier, 2020, p. 7). In this way, the self makes space to imagine and critique what was previously repressed.

Elizabeth Grosz (1989) suggests that those who intentionally engage with hysteria in writing this way are “acting as the hysteric” (136). Devereux (2014) reads this strategy as an attempt to “establish the possibility of a female subjectivity [that is] *not* defined with reference to the Oedipalizing male” (p. 29). Understanding that hysteria is a symptom of the contradictions of the prevailing social order—



which allows women no position other than *Other*—Cixous, Irigaray, and other practitioners of *l'écriture féminine*<sup>2</sup> act as hysterics to call attention to these contradictions, resist the system that produces them, and explore the possibility of creating an originary, emancipatory space for women. It is their intentional replication of hysterical symptoms in their writing practice—the consequence of the writers' exercise of agency—that allows readers to understand their choice to act as hysterics as empowering. This qualification needs to be made to emphasize that representations of hysterical women are not innately empowering, emancipatory, or subversive. As Juliana Chang (2003) reminds us, the term “hysteria” is ambivalent, calling attention to the contradictions inherent in the status quo, yet supporting it.

It is with this understanding that I read Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* to answer the question: How does Joaquin's discourse on women—specifically, hysterical women such as Connie Escobar—operate to deliver his critique of the heteropatriarchal foundations of the Philippine nation?

## Method

Sara Mills (2005) calls “feminist stylistics” the use of linguistic or language analysis to reveal how systematic language choices in a text shape readers' ideas and impose structures on their perceptions of the world. It identifies itself as “feminist” because it aims to “draw attention [to] and change the way that gender is represented” (p. 1). Feminist stylistics “allows for an analysis of features of a text's language other than simply relying on content analysis to be able to extract ideologies present in a particular discourse...emphasizing the foregrounding of certain features in the text that...provide an opportunity for a more critical analysis of ideologies propagated by powerful entities in a society” (Topacio, 2020, p. 56). Mills' feminist stylistics has been used in conjunction with feminist critical discourse analysis to reveal how gendered relations of power and gender ideology have been constructed and deconstructed in literary works (See Ezenewa-Ohaeto & Ikemelu, 2021; Bukunmi et al., 2021; and Kayani & Anwar, 2022).

For Mills, a text can be analyzed at three levels: “of the word; of the phrase or sentence; and of *discourse*” (p. 15, emphasis supplied). At the level of discourse, one analyzes structures within the text that are larger than sentences, and which therefore determine smaller-scale elements such as words, phrases and sentences. Mills says that feminist stylistic analysis at the level of discourse does not focus on content “as if it were a self-evident given”; instead, the text is read “as something which is the negotiation of textual elements and codes and forces outside the text which influence both the way the text is constructed and the way that we decipher what is written” (p. 123).

Mills performs this type of analysis by examining: how characters are drawn in a text; how much the characterization or description of characters relies on stereotyped gender roles; whether characters and events are focalized from a male gaze and how this positions readers and affects their reception of the text; and how the operation of schemata, “larger discursive frameworks which seem to operate

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<sup>2</sup> Sheena J. Vachhani (2019) describes *écriture féminine*, as a means through which one might “channel the hysteria designated to the feminine precisely as a meaningful disruption of traditional epistemological methods of seeing/knowing” (p. 20).

over a wide range of texts... produces different visions of males and females” (pp. 148-156).

A schema is a “narrative pattern which, once embarked on, entails in its wake all manner of linguistic choices and decisions...a model or narrative format which individuals use to structure their thought and action sequences...[They are] ‘stereotypical models for the processing of thought’” (Mills, 2005, p. 152). The following are schema that Mills identifies in her discussion on schemata in *Feminist Stylistics*: women who are “asking for it”—that is, wanting things that are not in their interest (p. 150); women as people who are “there to be advised” (p. 153); women as “sites of transformation” (p. 154); and women as “victims of terrible accidents and difficult circumstances which they then go on to conquer, because of their own personal strength” (p. 155). The last schema, Mills notes, expects women to survive these difficulties individually without the expectation that fundamental social inequalities that cause these difficulties to arise in the first place be resolved.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Connie Escobar’s escape to Hong Kong is triggered by the discovery of love letters exchanged between her husband, Macho, and her mother, Concha. Upon arriving in Hong Kong, she causes much turmoil amongst the Monsons, Teixeiras, and their friends, who remark on Connie’s ability to make men do what they do not want to do. In this way, Connie is characterized as a fragile woman who exerts a mysterious power over the novel’s men—a power that seems to be rooted in her helplessness, weakness, and sinfulness. Connie is the stereotypical hysterical woman.

### ***Focalization***

One might argue that Connie’s characterization as a hysterical woman is necessary to the novel’s plot: without her outrageous claim that she had two navels, there would be no mystery to be unraveled, no story to tell. By necessity, therefore, Connie is presented as an object of mystery to be puzzled over by the other characters; it is not surprising, then, that although the author’s omniscient narrator uses multiple focalizations throughout the novel, it is focalized through the other characters of the novel—mainly through the male characters, whom Connie approaches in Manila and seeks out in Hong Kong.

The following passage describes Tacos and Connie’s first meeting in Manila:

While she talked Paco watched her face—they were standing very close in the dark room—and a smile appeared on the corners of his mouth. He was feeling more and more sure that it was this girl he had felt watching—not only just now but all the time before. He saw her coolly remarking his twitching mouth, his narrowed eyes. She asked if he were ill. Scooping the sweat off his brow, he swore at the heat. She offered to drive him out to the country where it might be cooler (Joaquin, 2018, p. 45).

In this passage, the omniscient third-person narrator focalizes the narrative mainly through Paco, who takes in Connie’s *face*, her physical presence so close to him. He is pleased by what he perceives to be the attention Connie pays to his

mouth and eyes. He smiles at the attention he is given—the implication being that he reads Connie’s attention as attraction— notwithstanding that Connie might have simply been worried that he was ill. This attention, together with Connie’s invitation to drive out to the country with Paco, apparently make Connie an object of desire for Paco, who attempts to make love to Connie when she stops her convertible by a river’s edge:

...[H]e shoved his arms around her and an unspeakable relief convulsed his taut frame. He saw her eyelids swooning, her mouth soundlessly sighing open, as his face swooped down, as their bodies collided, gravitated...But as, moaning, he moved his mouth over her chin, her ears, her tight throat, and felt the long-knotted ache in him sweetly uncoiling at last, she opened her eyes and, groaning, pushed him away...He grabbed her wrist so suddenly the compact shot out of her hands, whirling, she slapped him across the mouth...She said, spitting out the words: did he think she was as easy a job as her mother (Joaquin, 2018, p. 46)?

In the last excerpt, we find Connie “fragmented” into female body parts— eyelids, mouth, chin, ears, and throat that Paco both apprehends and moves his mouth over. Paco is the actor in this scene. The object of his actions is Connie’s body parts. Mills (2005) observes that the fragmentation of women in literary texts not only foregrounds male erotic arousal; it also co-occurs with male focalization (p. 135). Both appear to be the case in this scene. It is Paco’s “unspeakable relief” and “sweetly uncoiling long-knotted ache” that the narrator reports to be the result of the acts he performs on Connie’s body parts. When Connie, (no longer a collection of body parts) manages to push him away and slap him, he is “blurrily baffled” at the sudden change between what he had perceived to be her mutual desire for him and her cold demeanor towards him.

Because this portion of the novel is focalized through Paco, the reader is likewise puzzled by Connie’s seemingly inconsistent behavior. This befuddlement subsides when one considers the possibility that the narrator’s close focalization through Paco positions readers to process the event through Paco’s perspective— through the lens of Paco’s desire. Connie’s actual thoughts and intentions remain a mystery. As a result, when Connie acts against Paco’s desired perspective, the reader gets the impression that Connie is sick in the head. They fail to consider the possibility that Connie is a young woman who has been taken advantage of.

### ***Schemata***

The passage above conforms to what Mills (2005) calls the schema of women who want things that are not in their interest—women who are “asking for it” (p. 150). Having focalized the narrative through Paco, the author, through the third-person narrator, suggests two conflicting messages about Connie in the same text: (1) women like Connie are objects to be acted upon in sexual relations; and (2) women are strong and active, capable of inviting a man to a trip to the countryside, seducing him, and then preventing him from consummating his desire. These conflicting, though simultaneous, messages present women as natural objects of

men's sexual attention—even active solicitors of such attention—while denying men's responsibility for the violence they inflict on women.

The novel's reliance on this schema is evident when, at a subsequent encounter between Connie and Paco, Connie's decision to share the distressing information that she had two navels arouses Paco—a reaction that startles Connie:

When she told him she had two navels, he believed her at once, and felt—not repulsion—but the heat-lightnings of a desire, feverish and electric, that charged his hands with eyes and his eyes with mouths...Glancing up and catching the look on his face, she asked, alarmed, to be taken home. He smilingly informed her that she was coming back with him; *that she had played with him long enough*; that he was determined to find out that night what sort of monster she was. When she darted up in panic he started the car, and burst out laughing as she flopped down across the seat. He continued to roar with laughter all the way back to the hotel; Connie was quiet. When they arrived at the hotel ... she asked to be released: she would come quietly. *Her eyes had slitted with the sly look of her god* (Joaquin, 2018, p. 51, emphasis supplied).

The passage begins with the omniscient narrator reporting what Connie *said* and what Paco *felt*, suggesting that the narrator's focalization is closer to Paco than Connie. Although the narrator registers Connie's "alarm," upon recognizing Paco's intended lechery, one realizes that "alarm" can be recognized through the tone of a person's voice, the suddenness with which she asks to be taken home; it is not necessarily an unvoiced interior state, but one which Paco himself can perceive. The narrator then reports Paco as saying Connie "had played with him long enough," suggesting that Connie's "two-navel" confession, together with her visit to his workplace earlier that evening—were all games that Connie had instigated. At this point, we learn that Connie is panicked by Paco's intention to take her sexually against her will.

However, this detail is followed by the narrator's description of Connie acting in a manner that would seem inconsistent with the behavior of someone who is panicking. At the hotel, where Paco intended to rape her, Connie agrees to "come quietly"; the narrator tells us she eyes Paco "with the sly look of her god" (Joaquin, 2018, p. 51). These sentences suggest Connie's acquiescence to Paco's plan, and therefore her complicity in the violence attempted on her at the hotel. This has the effect of mitigating Paco's liability, if not exonerating him completely.

### ***Stereotyping***

What makes Connie's inconsistent behavior plausible to readers is the fact that she has consistently been characterized as a hysterical woman from the beginning of the novel. One should note, however, that the reliance on this stereotype normalizes, not only male violence but the dominance of the male point of view and its determination of what *is*. The stereotype makes it easier to accept the dominant reading of the text—one that adopts a male point of view and sees hysterical women as "naturally" inconsistent and therefore maddening and deserving of punishment.

Foreclosed by this stereotype are alternative readings that recognize how closely the novel is focalized through male characters. The last sentence of the passage discussed above, for instance, ends with the words, “with the sly look of her god.” The phrase presents Connie’s appearance—the look she gives Paco—from Paco’s worldview. What would appear to be Connie’s inconstancy, her panic at the thought of being raped and her “sly” desire to be taken by Paco, do not necessarily align with who women are and what they want. It may simply be the way men like Paco view women like Connie and the way the novel’s readers are encouraged to view women. Joaquin’s resort to free indirect discourse in this passage normalizes the male point of view, thus re-inscribing patterns of male dominance and female subordination.

### Conclusion

A feminist stylistic analysis of *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* at the level of discourse reveals authorial choices that reinscribe patriarchal ideology. Ironically, these choices also operate to make legible Joaquin’s critique of the heteropatriarchal foundations of the Philippine nation. Even though Joaquin arguably elevates the Filipino woman, whose subjectivity has historically been “effaced by Spanish colonial patriarchy [and] male and mestizo Ilustrados,” (Fermin, 2021, p. 182) by making Connie Escobar the main character and subject of the novel, Connie remains a cipher. Even as she is characterized as a “figure of resistance” (Gonzalez, 2019), a veritable site of transformation, a mysterious “powerful force” (Lizada, 2018) who, when encountered by Paco and the other male characters, manages to change and subvert their worldviews, if not their allegiance to the status quo, these men do not know who she is or what she thinks, even at the end of the novel—nor do all of them care. While the Monson brothers wonder about Connie’s eventual fate, Paco, the man she decides to run away with, does not even see her as an individual. In his view, Connie is not a person in her own right, but someone who is indistinguishable from the wife he leaves behind (Joaquin, 2018, p. 222). It is the men’s concerns—their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to Connie, the hysterical *Other*—that are central to the novel, which is focalized more closely and more frequently through its male characters rather than through Connie. The hysterical woman is *useful* to the narrative, and to our reading of it as a critique of the heteropatriarchal foundations of the Philippine nation; but even as she mobilizes the novel’s critique of heteropatriarchal codes and their implications, she simultaneously upholds male dominance and female subordination. Any reading that views Connie as a metaphor for the Philippine nation must therefore acknowledge, engage, and confront the patriarchal ideology that informs this vision of the nation.

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## **L2 SELF-CONFIDENCE: AN EXAMINATION OF INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN VARIOUS ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES CLASSES**

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### **Abstract**

The study aims to investigate second/foreign language (L2) confidence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners. It employed a survey method. This study involved 213 ESP learners from five different departments. Using descriptive statistics on SPSS, the study found a low-moderate level of L2 self-confidence among the participants. They reported interest in engaging in speaking activities in ESP classes. Nonetheless, they reported low L2 self-confidence regarding giving opinions and leading discussions in English and a low perception of their language competence in general. This low level of confidence could be attributed to the nature of ESP classes, which necessitate learners to study discipline-related vocabulary and language expressions, as well as several general aspects of L2 learning, such as pronunciation and grammar. Implications include encouraging ESP teachers to conduct more small-group-scale activities to boost learners' confidence, increase learner-talk, and provide a safe environment for less confident learners to engage in the activities. This study contributes to the understanding of Indonesian ESP learners' self-confidence, and this could inform future studies involving ESP learners in Indonesia. Future quantitative studies on L2 confidence could use more representative samples. It is also strategic to conduct a mixed-methods study involving ESP teachers to allow triangulation.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes (ESP), second/foreign language (L2), self-confidence, survey

### **Introduction**

Second/foreign language (L2) learning is closely intertwined with a crucial element known as affective factors. These factors encompass emotions significantly impacting language acquisition (Dornyei, 2005). These factors would determine the eventual L2 achievement, varying among learners. The variety in L2 achievements among learners is primarily because language learning is inherently personal, making emotional aspects integral to the process (Lee & Lee, 2020). One of these affective factors is learners' self-confidence. Norman and Hyland (2004) stated that learners with higher L2 self-confidence would feel well-to-do, impacting their



involvement in the classroom. Conversely, if students experience a lack of L2 self-confidence, they will tend to be silent and withdraw from activities in the classroom (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020).

L2 self-confidence is “the overall belief in being able to communicate in the L2 in an adaptive and efficient manner” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 551). As such, a confident learner is a learner who believes in their language abilities and is willing to speak without anxiety. In Iran, Ghonsooly et al. (2012) found that self-confidence contributed to willingness to communicate in language class. In line with that, a study involving Saudi Arabian undergraduate learners by Al-Hebaish (2012) reported that L2 self-confidence was positively and significantly associated with academic achievement in language classes. A relatively recent study in Afghanistan by Akbari and Sahibzada (2020) involved 1275 undergraduate learners. It was found that learners' L2 self-confidence influenced their learning in areas such as participation, level of interest in lessons, and seeking goals. These findings of the studies suggested that L2 self-confidence and L2 learning are intrinsically connected.

Furthermore, self-confidence is situational (Norman & Hyland, 2004). It means it is unstable and fluctuates, increasing and decreasing depending on the situation. A wide array of factors can influence L2 self-confidence either positively or negatively. A review study by Pasarlay (2018) found that across different studies, learners' anxiety and motivation and teachers' attitudes influenced learners' L2 self-confidence. The lower the learners' anxiety level, the higher their motivation to learn, and the more accommodating teachers were to individual learners, the higher learners' L2 self-confidence tended to be. A small-scale quantitative study involving English department students by Tridinanti (2018) also revealed that students with L2 self-confidence tended to have higher L2 achievement. Several studies also reported the connection between L2 self-confidence and enthusiasm (Nur, 2019; Yusriyah et al., 2021). Those who were confident likely exhibited enthusiasm to be engaged in L2 classes. In Bangladesh, a study by Alam et al. (2021) found that, besides learners' motivation as an internal factor, external factors such as social and environmental also played a part in influencing L2 self-confidence. Earlier, a study in Bangladesh by Jamila (2014) involving 83 L2 learners in Bangladesh suggested teachers' roles in improving learners' confidence through providing supportive environments to develop self-esteem and confidence where learners have opportunities to use L2 at ease.

Studies also identified several characteristics of learners possessing a high level of L2 self-confidence. A qualitative study in Indonesia by Nety et al. (2020) found that learners with L2 self-confidence were more courageous in engaging in risk-taking behaviours in a language class. Such learners were also reported to be more willing to speak in English class (Arung et al., 2019). They have a realistic picture of themselves and their talents, which motivates them to persevere in their endeavours (Suryadi, 2018). Learners with a high L2 confidence level believe in themselves and their language abilities and dare to take risks when using the language. That is why such learners tend to speak more and eventually attain more language classes (Listyani & Tananuraksakul, 2019).

Studies on L2 self-confidence seem to thrive in Indonesia, as seen from available studies in different segmentations of participants. Pebriyana (2017) conducted a small-scaled quantitative study involving 28 Indonesian junior high

school learners. The study reported that L2 self-confidence was negatively associated with anxiety and positively associated with speaking ability. In a senior high school context, Allo and Priawan (2019) involved 139 learners participants. In the study, the participants reported a moderate level of L2 self-confidence. In line with that, a study involving 69 junior high school learners by Febriyani et al. (2020) also reported moderate L2 self-confidence among learners. Furthermore, a large-scale quantitative study by Hamzah et al. (2020) involved 688 senior high school learners and found that their L2 self-confidence was generally moderate. The study further reported that personalised learning was attributed to higher L2 self-confidence. Involving vocational in-service teachers, an earlier study by Aritonang (2014) found that the teacher participants' confidence increased as they obtained positive responses from their students. As suggested by a study involving 156 learners from an English department by Fadilah (2018), the increase in L2 self-confidence would, in turn, lead to more willingness to communicate in L2, resulting in more active participation in L2 classes. These fairly extensive studies on L2 self-confidence may indicate many authors' acknowledgment of the role of L2 self-confidence in L2 learning.

### ***The present study***

The present study intends to answer this research question: "What is Indonesian students' level of L2 self-confidence in English for Specific Purposes classes?" This study was conducted based on several rationales. In the Indonesian context, home to one of the largest numbers of English learners in the world, studies specifically investigating L2 self-confidence have involved junior and senior high school students (Allo & Priawan, 2019; Febriyani et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2020; Muin & Aswati, 2019; Pebriyana, 2017), English department students (Fadilah, 2018; Tridinanti, 2018), and in-service teachers (Aritonang, 2014). For this reason, it is crucial to conduct a study investigating the L2 self-confidence of participants from a different background. In this case, involving English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students can be worthwhile, considering that ESP classes generally require learners not only to master the linguistic aspects but also the content-specific aspects in L2 based on the students' respective disciplines. In such a situation, ESP students' L2 self-confidence may play a critical factor in their L2 learning. For this reason, conducting a study on L2 self-confidence with ESP students as the participants is deemed strategic

## **Method**

### ***Research design***

The present study used a survey method to collect the data. For this purpose, the researcher distributed a paper-based questionnaire. Several rationales informed the selection of a quantitative method. First, the method matched the study's objective of portraying learners' L2 self-confidence. Second, the target participants, ESP learners, were relatively under-represented in the Indonesian context. Hence, it was deemed important to conduct a survey to find data that could map the phenomenon in general (Creswell, 2022). The findings could be a base on which further studies involving the under-research ESP learners on L2 confidence could be conducted.

### ***Instrument***

The instrument used in this study to collect the data from the participants was paper-based questionnaires in Indonesian. Each questionnaire set consisted of an informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, and Likert-scale questionnaire on L2 self-confidence. The questionnaire on L2 self-confidence consisted of 11 items. Items 1 to 7 were adapted from the work of Gabejan and Medalia (2021), whilst items 8 up to 11 were adapted from the work of Abdullah et al. (2021). In each of the statements, five possible responses were available: “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree”. The original questionnaires were translated into Indonesian to ensure that respondents understood the content and could answer the questionnaire according to their true circumstances without any possible language barrier. Before being distributed, the translated Indonesian version was back-translated into English to ensure no change in meaning during the translation process.

### ***Participants***

The present study's participants were 213 students taking English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes in their respective departments at a major private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. They were aged 18-26 with an intermediate level of English. These ESP students had passed three General English levels and were taking ESP classes in their respective departments. Of these participants, 116 (54.50%) were females, and 97 (45.50%) were males, suggesting a fairly balanced gender comparison. These participants were from five different ESP classes based on their departments. The details of the number of participants and departments are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Participants' Departments

No	Departments	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Architecture	44	21%
2.	Accounting	44	21%
3.	Theology	44	21%
4.	Management	67	31%
5.	Information System	14	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>213</b>	<b>100</b>

### ***Ethical considerations***

This study applied three ethical considerations: autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence. First, autonomy is a person's freedom to decide whether to participate (Gray, 2022). The implementation of autonomy in this study was through the researchers providing a consent form where the target participants could decide whether to participate after being informed of the purposes of this study (Geier et al., 2021). Second, non-maleficence is an attempt by researchers to avoid possible harm to participants (Israel & Hay, 2006). In this study, non-maleficence was conducted by maintaining the confidentiality of participants' identities. Also, the participants only needed around five minutes to complete the questionnaire. Finally, beneficence is the principle that the study should benefit its participants (Thomas, 2013). Small gifts were provided for all the participating

students. Before the study, gatekeeper consent (Ramathan et al., 2016) was obtained from the heads of the departments managing each of the ESP classes and the respective ESP class teachers, allowing the researchers to distribute the questionnaires during class hours.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

The data collection was conducted from 6 February 2023 to 23 February 2023 by distributing paper-based questionnaires directly to the participants during ESP class sessions with prior permission from the heads of the departments and respective ESP class teachers. The researchers distributed the questionnaire and orally introduced themselves, the purposes of the study, and the expectations towards the target participants. The obtained questionnaire data were recorded into SPSS 25. The responses to Likert scale questionnaire items on L2 self-confidence were recorded as follows: "strongly agree" as 5 points, "agree" as 4 points, "neither agree nor disagree" as 3 points, "disagree" as 2 points, and "strongly disagree" as one point.

Before the questionnaire data were analysed to answer the research question of this study, the data were tested for validity using Pearson's correlation and internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients. Using Pearson's correlation, the researchers correlated all eleven items of L2 self-confidence with the overall construct of L2 self-confidence. The data revealed that all of them positively and significantly correlated with the overall construct,  $p < .05$ . These items also produced values in the range of .52 up to .73, higher than the critical value at .13 ( $N = 213$ ,  $df = 211$ ), indicating validity. The Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients were .86 and .86, respectively, indicating reliability. After the validity and reliability tests were conducted, the data were analysed to answer the research question. Descriptive statistics were employed to find the participants' level of L2 self-confidence. Data are presented in percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The present study intends to find Indonesian ESP student participants' level of L2 confidence by employing a survey method using paper-based questionnaires. Using descriptive statistics, the researchers found the participants' overall level of L2 self-confidence. From 12 items, each of the scorings ranged from 1-5; the possible range of the participants' L2 self-confidence was between 11 and 55. In this study, the composite mean score of the participants' responses was 31.30 ( $SD = 7.39$ ), indicating an average mean score of 2.84 (from 1 to 5). It suggested that the participants' L2 self-confidence was low to moderate. This finding was slightly similar to the findings of at least two previous studies involving Indonesian junior high school students (Allo & Priawan, 2019; Febriyani et al., 2020). These studies also found a moderate level of L2 self-confidence among their participants, though, in the study by Febriyani et al. (2020), the confidence level was from moderate to high. In the present study, the ESP classes that the participants took may also play a part in influencing why their confidence level was rather low. In the ESP classes, the participants may not only need to learn the linguistics aspects such as grammar but they were also required to master vocabulary specific to their disciplines. For example, whilst these students may be able to explain discipline-related content in

their first language, doing so in L2, as often required in ESP classes, was probably at another level, thus their slightly lower level of L2 self-confidence. For more detailed responses on each questionnaire item, the data can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. The Participants' L2 Self-Confidence

No	Question	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I like to speak English in English classes.	3.09	1.13	13 (5.60%)	99 (46.50%)	1 (0.50%)	96 (45.10%)	4 (1.80%)
2	I can discuss using English with native English speakers.	2.67	1.04	4 (1.90%)	70 (32.90%)	0 (0%)	129 (60.60%)	10 (4.70%)
3	I can speak English easily.	2.47	0.96	1 (0.50%)	55 (25.80%)	0 (0%)	144 (67.60%)	13 (6.10%)
4	I look forward to the opportunity to speak in English.	3.45	1.13	25 (11.70%)	121 (56.80%)	2 (1.00%)	59 (27.70%)	6 (2.80%)
5	I feel relaxed when speaking English.	2.62	1.06	7 (3.30%)	61 (28.60%)	0 (0%)	133 (62.40%)	12 (5.60%)
6	I really like to give opinions using English.	2.54	1.06	6 (2.80%)	57 (26.80%)	3 (1.40%)	133 (62.40%)	14 (6.60%)
7	I feel my English will continue to get better.	3.97	0.82	44 (20.70%)	144 (67.60%)	0 (0%)	25 (11.70%)	0 (0%)
8	I feel confident speaking English in front of so many people.	2.40	1.01	3 (1.40%)	50 (23.50%)	0 (0%)	137 (64.30%)	23 (10.80%)
9	I feel confident speaking English even though my English may be bad.	3.39	1.13	28 (13.10%)	108 (50.70%)	1 (0.50%)	74 (34.70%)	2 (1.00%)



10	I have always felt capable of being someone who leads discussions in English.	2.19	0.92	4 (1.90%)	30 (14.10%)	0 (0%)	147 (69.00%)	32 (15.00%)
11	I feel confident when it comes to doing English presentations individually.	2.51	1.13	8 (3.80%)	57 (26.80%)	2 (1.00%)	119 (55.90%)	27 (12.60%)

\* Percentages may not add up to 100 because they are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Items 1, 4, and 6 concern the participants' interest and enthusiasm for learning English. Item 1 produced a mean score of 3.09. 112 participants (52.10%) reported that they liked to speak English in English classes. Item 4 obtained a mean score of 3.45. 146 participants (68.50%) agreed that they looked forward to the opportunity to speak in English. Then, item 6 produced a mean score of 2.54. 63 participants (29.60%) really liked to give opinions using English. As suggested in the results on items 1 and 4, the participants seemed to be highly interested in English-speaking activities. However, as suggested in the results on item 6, most of them did not like to give opinions using English. This apprehension in giving opinions in English may be attributed to the perceived difficulty in developing arguments in L2 compared to other speaking activities that do not necessitate learners to build arguments. Discipline-related content in ESP classes may also play a part. Other than having to possess sufficient mastery of grammar, the participants likely needed sufficient content-specific vocabulary to build arguments related to their disciplines in L2. However, as seen in the results on items 1 and 4, the participants reported their enthusiasm for speaking activities in general. Many factors may influence this enthusiasm, such as instructional materials, teachers' performance, peers' attitudes, and the classroom environment (Nur, 2019). Teachers could further leverage this enthusiasm to facilitate more discipline-related speaking activities, allowing learners to become familiar with vocabulary and language expressions commonly used in their respective disciplines.

Items 2 and 3 concern the participants' confidence in their communication competence. Item 2 produced a mean score of 2.67. 74 participants (34.80%) agreed they could do a discussion in English with native English speakers. Item 3 produced a mean score of 2.47. 56 participants (26.30%) reported that they could speak English easily. Based on the mean scores, it can be said that the participants had a rather low confidence in their communication competence. As mentioned by Nety et al. (2020), confident learners dare to act. In this case, conversation or discussion with native speakers can be seen as one of the manifestations of this courage. It may seem easier when learners learn English and practice it with their countrymates. However, when they have to talk directly to native English speakers, it may pose a challenge (Vyomakesisri, 2017). To talk with native speakers, learners likely need more courage and language mastery. In the case of the present study, the

participants were not confident in their communication competence. Their rather low confidence in their communication competence may be triggered by anxiety, fear of making mistakes, shyness, or lack of discipline-related vocabulary. In the Indonesian context, where the use of English is typically constrained within classroom contexts, learners may have little opportunity to practice the language extensively. They may be afraid of 'incorrect' pronunciation when speaking. The participants' worry may give some kind of support to the fact that the majority of the participants in this study did not seem to feel confident communicating with native speakers. In this case, teachers can emphasise intelligibility, allowing learners to bring their linguistic and cultural backgrounds into L2 learning and practice, rather than emphasising native-speaker standards in ESP classes, in line with the global reality of English mentioned by Rose et al. (2020) in *Global Englishes* views.

Items 5, 8, 10, and 11 concern the participants' feelings toward their English-speaking skills. Item 5 produced a mean score of 2.62. 68 participants (31.90%) agreed they felt relaxed when speaking English. 53 participants (24.90%) agreed with the statement in item 8, indicating their confidence in speaking English in front of so many people. The item produced a mean score of 2.40. Item 10 produced a mean score of 2.19. Only 34 participants (16.00%) agreed that they always felt capable of leading discussions in English. Item 11 produced a mean score of 2.51, with 65 participants (30.60%) agreeing that they felt confident doing English presentations individually. Overall, the range of the mean scores of these four items was 2.19 – 2.62, considered low level. It means that the participants' feelings toward their English-speaking skills were generally more negative than positive. In this case, the participants of the present study may feel unready to speak in front of many people, lead discussions, and do presentations individually. Observed more carefully, the percentage of those who reported their confidence in delivering individual presentations, as seen in item 11, was higher than those who reported their confidence in leading discussions, as seen in item 10. This could be attributed to the impromptu aspects of discussions requiring spontaneous language production. In comparison, presentations in L2 classes are typically delivered with slides as the guidelines, learners can memorise their presentation to a certain extent, and the communication is largely one-way. Related to this, a qualitative study involving 23 Indonesian senior high school learners by Elmiati et al. (2022) indicated that learners' negative emotions in English class negatively influenced their process of acquiring and processing information, which later negatively impacted their L2 confidence. In the case of the present study, most learner participants may feel shy and unready to do language production spontaneously without sufficient preparation. This was also in line with the findings of several previous studies on willingness to communicate and anxiety, suggesting sufficient preparation and less audience as contributing factors to lowering their anxiety (Mak, 2011) and promoting more willingness to speak in L2 (Fernando & Subekti, 2023; Subekti, 2019).

Items number 7 and 9 concern the participants' confidence despite their limitations in their English competence. Item 7, 'I feel my English will continue to get better,' produced the highest mean score of all, at 3.97. As many as 188 participants (88.30%) agreed with the statement. Item 9 produced a mean score of 3.39, the third highest. 136 participants (63.80%) agreed that they felt confident

speaking English even though their English may not be so good. The mean scores of these two items suggested a moderate-high confidence level despite possible language competence limitations. Regarding this, one of the findings of a study by Pasarlay (2018) in Afghanistan suggested that learners' mindsets contributed to their confidence. Positive attitudes towards learning positively impacted confidence. The findings on the two items also suggested learners' optimism toward their L2 learning prospects. The prospect of English usage in the participants' future may have affected the findings on the moderate-high level of confidence in these two items. For example, the participants likely need English mastery as one of the requirements for certain jobs and to pursue international careers. This optimism could be channeled by giving ESP learners as many opportunities as possible to use L2 in situations they will likely encounter in their professional lives.

The present study has several implications for L2 instructions, especially ESP instructions. Generally, the participants' L2 self-confidence was low-moderate. Teachers can make several efforts to address this issue. For example, ESP class activities can be done primarily in small groups instead of on a whole-class scale. Activities in a small group allow less confident learners to speak up more as they merely need to do so in front of a much smaller audience. Small group activities can also optimise learner-talk, meaning class activities should facilitate individual learners to simultaneously produce language. This way, within the class session, all learners have opportunities to practice their L2, allowing the process of trial and error for each learner. Furthermore, ESP class learners learn L2 in the framework of their disciplines, which could pose a challenge for some learners, for example, due to more complex vocabulary and language expressions. For this reason, ESP instruction should be designed to facilitate relevance and nurture learners' positive perceptions of their competence. Each time the materials progress, the right amount of challenge may be the key to maintaining learners' confidence and interest in the lesson and their L2 learning.

## **Conclusion**

In the conclusion, key findings need to be highlighted. Using a survey to collect data, the researchers found that the learner participants had a low-moderate level of L2 self-confidence, with an average mean score of 2.84 in the range of 1 to 5. Participants seemed to be interested in speaking activities in English classes but reported low confidence, particularly in giving opinions and leading discussions using English. Their feelings on their language competence were generally negative as well. Nonetheless, the participants reported a moderately high confidence level in progressing despite their language limitations.

The present study contributes to understanding ESP learners' L2 self-confidence in the Indonesian context. Considering the scarcity of such studies involving these participants, this study could be a stepping stone to conducting further studies with more diverse methods on L2 self-confidence involving ESP learners. Furthermore, certain speaking activities, such as giving opinions and leading discussions in English, were found to be activities the participants were not confident in doing. This finding could inform ESP teachers to expose learners to more such activities to familiarise them with the activities, sharpen their skills, and broaden the ESP-related vocabulary in the process.

This present study has several limitations. First, this study only used a survey, so the data solely depended on the participants' self-reports. Second, even though involving ESP learners from different departments, this study was conducted at a university only. Hence, it is unpersuasive to claim that the findings can be generalised to a wider ESP context at Indonesian universities.

Informed by the findings and the limitations, several recommendations for future studies on L2 self-confidence in ESP contexts can be outlined. Quantitative studies involving ESP learners in Indonesia should have a more representative sample, considering the vast area and cultural diversity across its regions. For example, such studies can aim to involve learners from all major islands in the country. That is to increase the likelihood of generalisation. Researchers may also conduct explanatory sequential mixed-methods studies employing a survey followed by interviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learners' L2 confidence. Such studies can delve into the possible explanations of the participants' responses to the survey. Furthermore, it is also strategic to involve ESP teachers in a study investigating the types of activities in ESP classes concerning boosting learners' L2 self-confidence.

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## OTHERNESS REPRESENTATION: A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF *TARZAN OF THE APES*

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the question of representation in Burrough's *Tarzan of the Apes*. It probes into the representation of otherness, with a focus on the signification of race, religion, and gender. Written against the backdrop of postcolonialism, the paper contends that the construction of the black other, religious discrimination, and female inferiority by Western imperialists and patriarchy prefigure persistent domination in the new world order. In this qualitative descriptive study that is based on textual analysis as a research method, the primary data were collected from the novel *Tarzan of the Apes*. Concerning secondary data, articles and books pertinent to postcolonial studies and popular literature were consulted. It was discovered that blacks are represented as the 'unorthodox' religious other embodying evil, darkness, ignorance, and primitive sensualism. Moreover, the black woman is pushed to the periphery and represented as a subject of barbarous polygamy, uncontrolled birth, and toys to satisfy men's desires. Furthermore, blacks are represented as hairless apes that are incapable of civilization. Finally, we discovered that the issue of the black other in particular was not a mistake by imperialists, but a well-planned scheme to concretize all the different forms of domination listed above, including the colonial agenda.

**Keywords:** otherness, postcolonialism, representation, *Tarzan*

### Introduction

*Tarzan of the Apes* is a popular novel that was written by Edgar Rice Burroughs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lupoff (2005), the novel was first published in the pulp magazine, *All-Story Magazine*, in October 1912 and released as the film *Tarzan of Apes* in 1918. Following *Tarzan*, Burroughs wrote many popular fiction and fantasy stories under the collection of *Pellucidar*. He wrote westerns and historical romances which were published in *All-Story* and *The Argosy* magazines. The term Tarzan is inseparable from the life of the author. The earnings from the commercialization of the novel through its various popular cultural texts enabled Burroughs to purchase "Tarzana", a large ranch, north of Los Angeles, between 1915 and 1919. As a result, he was able to form the Tarzana





Community in 1927. After his death, following a heart attack on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1950, he was buried in Tarzana California. *Tarzan of the Apes* is the first novel in the best-seller series, labeled “Tarzan”. In addition, as Wannamaker and Abate (2012) assert, it has been adapted into films, comics, radio programs, and Television cartoons and movies (p. 2). The reception of this novel in varied genres resulted from the issue of representation which he explores from different dimensions. It is within this prism that this paper revisits otherness in *Tarzan of the Apes*, this time, with a focus on otherness. The otherness, here, is viewed in terms of race, religion, and sex. It is on this note that Edward Saïd’s concept of orientalism and other critics’ views on cultural representations become relevant in this discussion. In what follows, the theoretical framework, literature review, aims, and methods are stated before the discussion of findings and conclusion of results.

### ***Orientalism and cultural representation***

Saïd (2006) defines orientalism as a style of thought that is based on a dichotomy between the Orient and the Occident (p. 25). As a theory, orientalism is an ideology of the West on the Orient, whereby the Orient has helped to define Europe or the West as its contrasting image, idea, personality, and experience (Storey, 2010, p. 171). Put differently, orientalism is a system of ideological fiction, a matter of power, and one of the mechanisms by which the West maintained its hegemony over the Orient. It is centered on the idea of the absolute difference between the West and the Orient, whereby the West is rational, developed, humane, and superior whereas the Orient is aberrant, undeveloped, and inferior. Saïd’s view becomes pertinent to the analysis of imperial fiction, which can be classified into two categories. First, stories in which the white colonizers succumb to the primeval power of the jungle. In *Heart of Darkness*, for example, Joseph Conrad (1990) portrays Kurtz as a pilgrim in the African wilderness who is innocent and a victim of a series of diseases including malaria, fever, and dysentery. The second category looks at stories of whites, who because of the supposed power of their racial heredity, impose themselves on the jungle and its inhabitants. However, this category of narratives should not be confused with stories by the colonized people wherein authors capture the dislocation of Africa’s sociocultural universe by the intrusion of the white people. In his novel *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe shows that when the Europeans arrived in Africa, they established a new system of government with courts and Christian missions to control the black people and to serve their own interests (Nnoromele, 2010, p. 47).

The *Tarzan* stories fall within the second domain of imperial fiction. In both categories, imperial narratives are more concerned with the anxieties and desires of the culture of imperialism than the people and places in the conquered territories. Postcolonial critics in this vein look at the function of the imperial plot structures, producers, and consumers of such fictions with keen interest. In other words, this paper, re-reads, within the framework of postcolonialism the shift in focus, from what the stories ordinarily tell about Africa or Africans to Western connotative representations. It is also a shift from how the stories are told to why and from whom the stories are about to those who tell them and consume them.

This popular culture novel is a representation of colonialism in Africa, especially in Congo. According to the *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture* (2011, p. 206), cultural representation of colonialism deals with narratives by Western



writers that dramatize the link between colonialism and commercial gain and offers insight into the colonial ideology. They represent the colonizer as a pattern of education, religion, and order seeking to suppress native religions, languages, and cultures and convert them to Christianity and Western sensibilities. The so-called conversion is an ultimate motive to enter the colony for capitalist reasons. In these narratives, the colonized is represented as the other: cruel lazy, sensual, animalistic, exotic, mystical, and seductive. The colonizer justifies his intervention by perceiving the colonized as naïve and childlike, whose economy and society need to be improved.

### ***Representing and signifying the other***

In his approach to cultural production, Hall introduces the theory of representation that lays the foundation for his later concept of the “other” signification. This approach is anchored on his theory of “the circuit of culture” (Hall, 2003). It is a new import in the study of culture in the modern or popular sense including “popular music, publishing, art, design, and literature or the activities of leisure time and entertainment” (p. 1). By representation, Hall means cultural representations and signifying practices. In his attempt to expand the representation process, he goes further to exploit the representation of power relations and ideologies in popular culture. This is captured in “The Spectacle of the Other”, where Hall studies the different signification in “contemporary popular cultural forms”, including “news photos, advertising film, and popular illustration” (p. 8). He is concerned with “how racial, ethnic, and sexual difference” has been signified in visual culture throughout history. Thus, he looks at how these sociocultural differentials are represented as “other”. Put differently, his point is to examine how the sociocultural difference is signified through stereotyping practice, for example, advertising that uses black models. His focus is ethnic and racial otherness in such popular cultural items as newspaper reports, crime fiction, films, and magazines. He considers the representation of the other on the basis of ethnicity and racism in a variety of images in popular culture and the mass media. He finds that racial stereotypes have been signified in American popular culture since the early years of slavery.

There have been various strategies for the representation of the other in terms of ethnic and racial differences. Both “negative images” and positive representational racial images have been used (p. 225). From the perspective of the cultural industry, Hall pinpoints that representing the other through visual culture is the best-selling in the market, for its complex business “engages feelings, attitudes, and emotions” by deeply mobilizing fears and anxieties among the viewers or audience. Analyzing sports magazine pictures, he highlights the issue of binary representation. The other is represented through such binary opposition as “good/ bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/ compelling-because-strange-and-exotic” (p. 226). Moreover, in the representation of the other, the variables of sexuality and gender are added to that of race. Thus, in the signification of black people as the other, positive images that combine race, gender, and sexuality are used. Black people are viewed as naturally endowed with “outstanding success” in sports. This is because their bodies are athletic with a physical perfection suitable for achievement in sport. These images are connected with gender and sexuality. A visual representation of African

Americans shows that images are signified to connote “superbly-honed athletic bodies, tensed in action, super-men and super-women” (p. 233). But here the meaning is differently inflected. This demonstrates to which extent otherness representation is made to reflect racial, sexual, gender, and class dimensions. It proves that the signification of the other in popular culture goes with other variables of sociocultural identity differentiation among others class, race, gender, and religion.

Despite the pertinence of the novel to popular signification of alterity, it has not attracted a lot of researchers. While many studies have been conducted on the representation of African otherness in popular fiction in general, few works have been done on the novel *Tarzan of the Apes*. Recent publications mostly include works in literary studies and cultural studies, inter alia, Ango’s “Representing Otherness: Contemporary Nigerian Literature and Emerging Cultural Identities” (2019), Vitackova’s “Representation of Racial and Sexual ‘Others’ in Afrikaans Popular Romantic Fiction by Sophia Kapp” (2018), Fafowora’s “Politics and International Studies. Imagining the Dark Continent: Disney’s Tarzan and Defining the African Postcolonial Subject” (2018), Roumar’s “From High Literature toward Popular Literature: From Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness to Edgar Burrough’s Tarzan of the Apes” (2018), Tapionkaski’s “Tarzan of the Apes, the Bearman Tarsa: Discourses of National Identity and Colonialism in Finnish Adaptation of an American Classic (2014), El Diwany’s “The journey from Slavery to Civilization: A Lacanian Reading of Burroughs’ Tarzan of the Apes”, and Parciack’s “Contending Simulacra: Tarzan in Postcolonial India” (2012). In these studies, various approaches and theories are used to treat African otherness from the perspectives of gender, religion, race, class, or folk group ways. Despite the deep concern of these writers on the issue of otherness representation, their exploration of the related issues raised has given little or no attention to confirm Burroughs as a racist and forerunner of the colonial agenda and other forms of oppression as a whole. It is on this note that Saïd’s notion of orientalism and Hall’s view on “otherness” become necessary, as theoretical paradigms, in re-reading and rewriting Burroughs’ *Tarzan of the Apes*.

## Method

This is a qualitative study on postcolonial popular cultural representation of the other. The method is relevant to the study of popular literature, for as Stokes mentions, qualitative research is “the name given to a range of research paradigms that are primarily concerned with meaning and interpretation” (2003, p. 3). That is why qualitative “methods are more typical of the humanities”. Studying the postcolonial representation of black otherness in popular fiction is an issue pertinent to the area of popular culture. Consequently, the analytical methods of popular cultural studies are relevant to this research.

Hall’s theory of “circuit of culture” delineates the methodological analytical framework for the study of popular culture (Hall, 2003). In the theory of circuit of culture, Hall is concerned with how meaning is produced and circulated by means of language. According to him, the representation of culture from the perspective of a cultural circuit comprises three paradigms, namely the production approach, the textual approach, and the consumption or audience approach. This conception is further described in Pickering’s *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* (2008)

where authors distinguish cultural products, producers, and consumption in the analysis of media and culture.

In “Investigating Cultural Producers”, Davis distinguishes three methodological approaches in cultural studies: political economy, textual analysis, and sociological or ethnographic work (Davis, 2008, p. 53). This research used the textual approach in order to explore how black people are signified in the novel *Tarzan of the Apes*. The textual analysis as a research method is advocated by Catherine Belsey (2013, p. 160). She contends that textual analysis is suitable for cultural criticism and indispensable to dealing with the inscription of culture in texts and artifacts. With regard to cultural production, Davis reiterates that textual analysis as a research approach in cultural studies investigates “cultural production through an analysis of cultural outputs” (2008, p. 56). In other words, cultural textual analysis deals with the text be it “printed, visual or audio texts”. He further explains that “in analyzing texts researchers seek to highlight the common codes, terms, ideologies, discourses and individuals that come to dominate cultural outputs”. Davis’s point is relevant to the exploration of the postcolonial popular representation of the other in the novel *Tarzan of the Apes*.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Race and otherness***

*Tarzan of the Apes* represents racial dichotomy where the white is signified as educated, ordered, and good in contrast to the uneducated, chaotic, irrational, and evil black. The narrative opens in an exotic setting to the white characters. An English, couple John Clayton and Alice Clayton, land on an African coast where Clayton is appointed to work in a new post in British West Africa. There is a negative image of Africa because these white main characters are represented as a noble family commissioned to serve the British colonial power in the dark continent. The blacks are represented as savages and fools who are easily manipulated by the white colonizer. It is mentioned that “The Englishmen in Africa went even saying that these poor blacks were held in virtual slavery, since after their terms of enlistment expired their ignorance was imposed upon by their white officers, and they were told that they had yet several years to serve” (Burroughs, 1999, p. 4). This quotation shows that races are defined by the binary opposition upon which the white is a master and blacks his slaves. Though the colonization is described as “friendly European power” and the colonized people as “black British subjects”, the relationship between whites and blacks is capitalist (p. 4). Actually, the white is capital whereas the black is labor. This capitalism and racial power imbalance are also demonstrated by the task assigned to the native army by the colonial power. The soldiers are “solely used for the forcible collection of rubber and ivory” (p. 4). This capitalism heightens the exploitation of the blacks by the whites which widens the gap between the West and Africa. While Europe is power, Africa is a reservoir of mines and natural resources for the profit of whites.

White personality qualities are represented through the personality of John Clayton. The writer presents, “Clayton was the type of Englishman that one likes best to associate with the noblest monuments of historical achievements upon a thousand victorious battlefields—a strong, virile man—mentally, morally, and physically” (Burroughs, 1999, p. 4). In portraying the white as physically, morally, and mentally strong, the writer ensures in this adventure fantasy the operation of

formula and cultural representation. In fact, Cawelti (1976, p.9) defines the first characteristic of formulaic art as the power of popular literature by the combination of well-established conventional structures that reflect the interests of the audiences, creators, and distributors. Thus, *Tarzan of the Apes* written for the American audience has to reflect first of all the cultural values and the interests of the West. The narrative also develops the nineteenth and twentieth-century American cultural conventions and dreams. As mentioned in the pamphlet of Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, America has always pointed to the ills of British imperialism that does not recognize natural human rights (Philp, 1995, p.1). While America started as a mature continent in human rights by reinforcing liberalism, republicanism, democracy, and independence, Great Britain was characterized by greed for wealth and was conquering other countries in order to exploit them. Thus, in signifying these British political and economic maneuvers in Africa, the writer ensures American cultural exceptionalism by permitting Americans to laugh at the cruel and merciless capitalism of Great Britain. In addition, he suggests to American cultural imperialists to settle in Africa in order to extend their concept of democracy and utilitarian capitalism. That is why later in chapter thirteen of the novel, American characters are represented as researchers and redeemers. However, Burroughs's splendid depiction of physical traits reinforces the colonialist's ideology that identifies the colonized as the other:

In stature he was above the average height; his eyes were grey, his features regular and strong; his carriage that of perfect, robust health influenced by his years of army training. [...]. The preferment seemed to him in the nature of a well-merited reward for painstaking and intelligent service [...]" (Burroughs, 1999, p. 4).

The emphasis of the white physiognomy is a display of the cultural stereotypes of the consumer society. On the contrary, it is America's shared belief with the Victorians that black inferiority is linked to facial characteristics. Actually, the Victorians' faith in physiognomy suggests that the nose, lips, forehead, and bone structure are all key to the character of an individual and by extension, a race. Based on the eugenic theories of Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau, the English people and other Western nations believed that short noses, large mouths, and small foreheads were marks of an inferior character found in criminals and African people (Southerton, 2011, p. 206). In the same spirit, Burroughs mentions, "The bestial faces, daubed with color-the huge mouths and flabby hanging lips-the yellow teeth, sharp filed-the rolling demon eyes-the shining naked bodies-the cruel spares" (Burroughs, 1999, p. 222).

The construction of the colonized other is contrasted with a white character whose physical and moral fit into the beliefs of his white audience. It is a cultural representation of colonialism which is coupled with the advertisement of commodities. The publication of *Tarzan of the Apes* in the early 1920s operates as an advertisement to stimulate the United States as the first world economic power to go to the "dark continent" in order to grab local commodities (DeGraw, 2016, p.15). Thus, American economic investments and trade in colonized countries automatically become a merciful and civilizing mission. That is why images of ugliness, stupidity, and cannibalism are strongly emphasized. These images serve

as a vista of the evolution of culture and civilization for the audience. They revive the ancient and early medieval West before scientific discoveries and the propagation of Christianity in order to boost urgent civilization missions for the African continent.

Underlining cannibalism, the writer posits, “For many days they had gorged themselves on meat, but eventually, a stronger body of troops had come and fallen upon their village by night to revenge the death of their comrades” (p. 82). In this passage, Africans are cannibals because they can eat any human body, be it white or black. The captives of battlefields are pierced, cooked, and eaten. This comportment is vehemently rebuked by the whites who relate it to hell for even beasts do not manifest it. It is inscribed in the moral law to shun the flesh of human beings. The writer is insinuating that in the order of cultural evolution, blacks are at the bottom of the civilization ladder. He highlights that because of civilization, “white men do not kill wantonly” (Burroughs, 1999, p. 270) and “in cold blood” (p. 300). This imperial narrative enacts the myths of curse and blessing that have characterized American national mythology (Collins, 2007, p. 80). In fact, early Americans construed racial differences through master narratives where Blacks, Indians, and Whites were signified respectively as the cursed Ham, the cursed Canaan, and blessed Japhet.

The otherness representation is further captured in the description of the ignorance and lack of technology among Africans. Their ignorance is the cause of their cruel and brutal reactions. Depicting the eating habits of blacks, the narrator maintains that, “be that it may, Tarzan would not ruin good meat in any such foolish manner, so he gobbled down a great quantity of the raw flesh, burying the balance of the carcass beside the trail where he could find it upon his return” (Burroughs, 1999, p. 88). The “uncivilized manners” of blacks are contrasted to the judgment and experimentation of white people. Thus, of Tarzan, the writer says: “The key was in the lock, and a few moments of investigation and experimentation were rewarded with the successful opening of the receptacle” (Burroughs, 1999, p.100).

The novel as a cultural representation therefore portrays the white racial stereotypes that marginalize black Africans in the same way as the African-Americans. In addition to an ugly portrait, the African-American woman, “a huge Negress clothed like Solomon with great eyes [that] rolled in evident terror” (p. 129). The writer shows that the black woman acts hysterically “[...]to situations while the white girl, dry-eyed and outwardly calm, is torn by inward fears and forebodings” (p. 144). This corroborates Saïd’s theory of postcolonial universalism (2003, p. 47). The colonized other is not individualized. It is rather generalized. In the eyes of the American society, which is the main audience of *Tarzan of the Apes*, blacks in Africa are identical to the ones in America and are all indistinctively uncivilized, dirty, and ugly. Burroughs’ alarming voice to Americans to invest in Africa pinpoints also the black rudimental techniques among black Africans. Depicting a black warrior, he stresses, “At his back his bow, and in the quiver upon his shield many slim, straight arrows, well smeared with the thick, dark, tarry substance that rendered deadly their tiniest needle prick” (Burroughs, 1999, p. 83). These archaic implements are different from the guns and bullets used by Western people. Though they provide the Africans with security in the jungle of wild beasts, they cannot enable them to resist the gun shooting of the West. As a result, scientific and trade adventures in Africa are possible for Europeans and Americans.

While the African culture and society are characterized by ignorance, violence, and brutality, the Western culture is depicted on the basis of American cultural exceptionalism, characterized by hard work and opportunism. To be successful in their capitalist missions in Africa, they have to work hard. Clayton confirms, "There is one thing to do, Alice, and he spoke as quietly as though they were sitting in their snug living room at home, and that is work. Work must be our salvation. We must not give ourselves time to think, for in that direction lies madness" (Burroughs, 1999, p. 22). In addition, the conflicts between ship officers and White travelers are capitalist in nature. Consequently, for capitalist reasons, Lord and Lady Clayton are not taken to "civilized" places where they can enjoy the company of other whites living in Africa (Burroughs, 1999, p. 21). The fact is that there is an interest-based rivalry among the Western people who reside in Africa. The collection of rubber and ivory generates greed and mutual hatred. As a result, introducing the Claytons to other whites would be trying them because Lord Clayton was officially appointed to investigate the embezzlement and economic maneuvers perpetrated by the West in Africa. This would shed light on the *divide et impera* tactics used by whites to manipulate Africans and the genocides committed to innocent defensive Africans. Actually, Africans have been massacred by white and black mercenaries. For not facilitating the White man's accumulation of ivory and rubber, for instance, the tribe of Munango was exterminated to the extent that only children and some women survived (Burroughs, 1999, p. 126). The narrative does not only represent the stereotypes and beliefs of the American society, but it also, as Cawelti asserts in the second characteristic of a literary formula, provides the American and Western audience a moment of escapism and entertainment in the other (1976, p. 13). The African continent and its inhabitants including humans, the fauna, and the flora are exaggeratedly described as dark and primeval.

### ***Religion and the question of otherness***

The narrative represents a world that is dominated by Christian beliefs. The religious otherness is viewed through the discrimination of the African traditional religious beliefs and Islam religion. Tarzan, the superhero saves the white Christians but kills the superstitious Africans and considers Islam as an obstacle to science and development. The genius Tarzan finds out that blacks lack scientific curiosity and rational judgment because of their belief in traditional religion. They attribute causes to all phenomena of intrigues and puzzles to gods:

The finding of the still warm body of Kulonga [...] knifed and stripped at the door of his father's home, was in itself sufficiently mysterious, but these last awesome discoveries within the village, within the dead Kulonga's own hut, filled their hearts with dismay, and conjured in their poor brains only the most frightful of superstitious explanations. (Burroughs, 1999, p. 98)

The writer subjects African traditional religions to Christianity. In the novel, the first letter of the Christian God is written in uppercase, and he intervenes to save and help white people through Angels, and divine messengers (Burroughs, 1999, p. 165). The derogatory signification of the African religions is climaxed by the

silence of God. Tarzan takes pleasure in laughing at his black victims whose divine invocation and incantations do not produce any effect. The narrator recounts:

Later, when they discovered the overturned cauldron and that once more their arrows had been pilfered, it commenced to dawn upon them that they had offended some great god by placing their village in this part of the jungle without propitiating him. From then on an offering of food was daily placed below the great tree from whence the arrows disappeared in an effort to conciliate the mighty one (Burroughs, 1999, p. 2007).

The blacks appease the wrath of God by giving food and other material offerings. This is the way to reconcile with him. Tarzan considers this stupidity and *ipso facto* enjoys the sacrifices by eating and stealing them. The tabernacle or altar of the traditional god constitutes a reservoir whereby Tarzan collects food and weapons to supply his animal and human subjects. The narrator intimates:

As long as they supplied him with arrows and food he would not harm them unless they looked upon him, so it was ordered by Mboga that in addition to the food offering there should also be laid out an offering of arrows for this Munango-Keewati, and this was done from then on (Burroughs, 1999, p.126).

This narrative instance shows that Tarzan has become an invisible “god” for the black Africans. They venerate him by depositing his needs under a tree so that on his passage he takes all that pleases him. This abuse of blacks by Tarzan is not different from that of Indians by early English settlers in America. Like Captain Smith, Christopher Columbus, and his Spanish companions who profited from the innocence of Native Americans by robbing, enslaving, and raping them, Tarzan exploits African religious beliefs by plundering whatever he judges valuable for him. Contrary to the death of the traditional god of Africans who does not protect them, Burroughs constructs a Christian God that is the source of science and human civilization. He blesses, guides, and saves the white travelers. That is why voices of gratefulness are uttered. This can be illustrated by the following religious statement:

For God’s sake, what shall we do? (Burroughs, 1999, p. 145)  
Well, whatever he may be [...] we owe him our lives, and may God bless him and keep him in safety in his wild and savage jungle (p. 154).  
Amen, Saïd Clayton, fervently. [...] for the good Lord’s sake, ain’t I dead? (p. 154)

Like the construction of racial otherness, the writer represents a world that is not alien to Western consumers of his art. He combines conventions and inventions in order to provide the American target audience with a spectacle of American culture and dreams. The American Judeo-Christian community finds its place in the narrative while black Africans, Arabs, and all Muslims, in general, constitute the other dark and pagan sphere that was needed to be evangelized and civilized.

The scientific progress that started in Europe and spread under the auspice of religious institutions, is not possible unless the traditional African and Muslims embrace Christian values. The writer is categorical that “Moslemism was, is, and always will be, a blight on that scientific progress [...]” (Burroughs, 1999, p.156).

### ***Gender and otherness***

Rynjah (2022) intimates that,

Literary, the other is someone or something different from the self and the same yet it is very important for acknowledging the reality of oneself. Through different from the self, it may very well form part of it, that is, the otherness of the other which is a person`s non conformity to the norms or the given social identity may very well be the defining identity of that other and mainly constitutes the who and the what the other is. Thus, peculiarity and difference mark otherness and this places one not in the center but at the margins and boundaries (p. 172).

It is from this premise that Burroughs gives a new identity of a sub-human to the female gender. Through his representation of the female other, Burroughs stresses gender relations in a bid to highlight the barbarity of Africans in Congo. Both the communities of blacks and whites are characterized by gender binary work division. But there is an improvement for the West because a white woman has the freedom to make decisions. At the beginning of the novel, Clayton is influenced to go to Africa with his pregnant wife Alice: “For her sake, she would have refused the appointment, but she would not have it so. Instead, she insisted that he accept, and, indeed, take her with him” (Burroughs, 1999, p.5). But white masculine heteronormativity still defines the relationship between man and woman, for in Western society the woman is the heart whereas the man is the head (Gilbert, 2011, p. 227). Like the black characters, women are represented as inferior subjects. According to Wannamaker, *Tarzan of the Apes* reinforces the superiority of the white, upper-class, and Western male (2008, p. 44). In the struggle to survive in the jungle, Alice becomes a symbol of marriage and motherhood. She contends that if she were not pregnant, she would have helped her husband to set up their cabin and habitation. Nevertheless, she obeyed the nature that made her a woman to be the heart of the household. She confirmed, “Ah, John, I wish that I might be a man with a man`s philosophy, but I am a woman, seeing with my heart rather than my head, and all that I can see is too horrible, too unthinkable to put into words” (Burroughs, 1999, p. 22).

The writer opposes this collaboration of marital partners with spousal relations among Africans. Due to their wildlife, black Africans are divided into men or warriors and women and children who are household property. While black men move with spears, arrows, bows, and shields, black women and children bear upon their heads “their heads great burdens of cooking pots, household utensils and ivory” (Burroughs, 1999, p. 82). In addition, in the evening before each hut, a woman presides over a boiling stew, while little cakes of plantains and cassava puddings are to be seen on every hand (p. 101). The marriage institution that was characterized by the oppression of women in nineteenth-century American society (Fuller, 1989, p. 1518) is not improved yet in the narrative because Jane must marry



Mr. Canler because her father owes him a lot of money and is unable to reimburse. His daughter unconditionally accepts the hand of the usurious master to satisfy the father. In spite of this violation of women's rights, the marriage is licensed by court officials, witnessed by a lot of people, and ministered by a Christian church official (Burroughs, 1999, p. 281). This incident emphasizes the new position in which the woman finds herself. Besides, no special care is given to the woman. Like any other jungle Ape, marital cheating and infidelity by women are punished by the jungle law, which is based on the survival of the fittest principle. Rape and bigamy maintain black women under the yoke of their warrior husbands. Jane criticizes the condition of the African women and children as follows: "If he belonged to some savage tribe he had a savage wife-a dozen of them perhaps- and wild, half-caste children" (Burroughs, 1999, p. 257).

Jane's criticism shows that black women have to contend with polygamy and uncontrolled births. This indicates that black women do not exist outside the household. She is not allowed to partake in public life. She is valued for childbearing and domestic chores. On the contrary, the Western counterpart goes on adventures and enjoys love in public places. In the wilderness, Christened Africa, the woman relies on his hunter mate who has to supply her with meat and products of his forest. This is the periphery where the black woman finds herself according to Burroughs.

### **Conclusion**

Edgar Rice Burroughs's novel *Tarzan of the Apes* is a cultural representation of colonialism and other forms of domination, where peripheral cultures and idiosyncrasies are subverted in favor of Western norms. The novel embodies the construction of otherness in race, religion, and gender. In this representation, African religious beliefs are viewed as superstitious; consequently, that keeps them under ignorance and barbarity. Likewise, Islam, which is also practiced in the dark continent also maintains these black souls in darkness, void of any scientific progress. Otherness, as the analysis revealed is constructed through gender relations. The ugliness and dirtiness of Africa through Burroughs' lenses extend to the mistreatment of women, as they are subjected to barbarous polygamy and uncontrolled births. Consequently, they suffer, not only in the hands of the West but patriarchy as well. We also found out that, in the black otherness construction, blacks suffer the cruelty of the white superhero Tarzan who, systematically and miraculously protects his white counterparts.

Though the writer draws a scheme of civilization from the Apes-men through the black hairless Apes, he, on the contrary projects the impossibility for blacks to evolve, since according to him, civilization is hereditary. The analysis revealed that the author values Apes more than black Africans. We equally discovered that all these machinations of domination are geared towards the legitimation of the colonial and hegemonic powers, with the intention of establishing the nineteenth and twentieth century's colonial expansion and formation of Western nationalist identities based on racial and cultural differences. In sum, *Tarzan of the Apes* confirms Burroughs, not only as a racist, but an oppressor, with all its ramifications.

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## **ANALYZING COLLAGE AS A COMMUNICATION ACT IN THE DIGITAL AGE BASED ON THE DADAISM RENEWAL MOVEMENT'S SPIRIT**

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### **Abstract**

Collage combines the semiotic tradition of Roland Barthes, the phenomenological tradition of Edmund Husserl, the critical tradition of Karl Marx, and the point of view of Jurgen Habermas in visual communication. The collage technique creates trans-aesthetic elements and double codes, a Dadaist method of encoding signs. Building on previous research, this study explores collage art as a communication act and its process in the digital era. Digital photography technology and computer software facilitate quicker and easier creation of collage art, emphasizing the fundamental concept of "paste." This pasting-sticking process mirrors the communication process of art and design in the digital era, illustrating cyclical communication capable of transcending space and time. The research has several conclusions. (1) By enhancing visual communication strategies and efficiency based on the spirit of the Dadaism renewal movement, unique collages can be created as a personal sign of message(s). (2) Collages as communication act in the digital era represent dialogue in trans-aesthetics code. (3) On the other hand, with the spirit of Dadaism that contains a free mind, open creation, and emphasis on social-cultural issues, collages as a communication process are also possible to frame messages and create fallacy.

**Keywords:** collage, communication, Dadaism, digitalization

### **Introduction**

The history of collage began in prehistoric times when flower powder, shells, feathers, and butterfly wings were used as the basic material for making it. The discovery of paper in China around 200 BC started collage works using paper. Japan, following in the 13th and 14th centuries, artists in Eastern Europe produced many works of a religious nature that took materials from rocks, elastic fibers, relics, and precious metals which were combined in new media such as walls and sky Church ceilings, castle walls of kings and nobles. Dutch artists in the 17th century produced silhouettes from pieces of paper. In the 19th century, collage developed into a popular work, because at this time collage was only used as a hobby or pleasure for people but rather as a form of art. In the 20th century,



collage became a technique in creating modern works of art with the synthetic cubism of Pablo Picasso, and continues to develop over time, starting from the Dadaism movement in Zurich, Switzerland, which uses a lot of collage art as a protest of their ideology, until today Collage art has been widely used for commercial purposes (Gotz, 1993).

According to the Dictionary of Modern Art, A Collins—Larousse Concise Encyclopedia, collage is a branch of fine art that includes the activity of attaching pieces of paper or other materials to form a certain image or design. For example, assembling and gluing paper, wood, metal, used items, and even trash into wall decoration media. Likewise, all the painting media that were added were attached with accessories in various shapes according to the original. In fine arts, even though collage art is the opposite in nature of painting, sculpture or printing, and other craft arts, that is, the resulting work no longer shows the original form of the material used in painting, for example, from a white canvas to a colorful painting.

Collage has a long history as an ancient cultural form before finally appearing to re-emerge as a contemporary art form at the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, traces of this collage technique - before it was given the name "collage" - were already known in China around 200 BC when paper was first discovered, but its use was not widespread, until the 10th Century in Japan when calligraphy artists began to attach text with glue to write poetry. The new collage technique emerged in central Europe in the 13th century as a form of folk craft to decorate their homes. In past cultures in Europe, Asia, and America, all kinds of materials commonly found in everyday life were often combined and transformed into symbolic objects as keepsakes or even just used as decoration as purely aesthetic elements.

The collage technique began to be applied in Gothic Cathedral churches in the 15th and 16th centuries. In the 18th century, examples of collage can be found in the work of Mary Delany, and in the 19th century, this collage method was also used by people with pieces of memorabilia to decorate photo albums and children's story books Hans Christian Andersen and Carl Spitzweg (Leland & Williams, 1994). In the early 1900s, the avant-garde adopted collage techniques as a medium for their work, making it an integral part of the evolution of contemporary art, as well as the desire of most artists to create works that could be produced more easily or in other words using ready-made materials.

Collage is starting to be of interest to many fine arts practitioners, both professional and amateur artists. It is because collage succeeds in representing something more personal and spontaneous in exploring materials that are easily found every day. These materials are turned into compositions that are very different from each personality until finally arriving at a theory that the creative possibilities that can be created when working with collage are endless (Dewi, 2019).

Collage has become a popular medium among artists due to its unique appearance which demands high creativity. Artists Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Hannah Hoch, Kurt Schwitters, Marcel Duchamp, Raoul Hausmann, Max Ernst, and Henri Matisse are famous for their work using collage techniques of paper, fabric, and various other objects. The use of foreign media outside of conventional painting materials caused a lot of criticism and controversy in the eyes of people in the early days of its application (Gotz, 1993). This also influenced Dada artists

who used collage techniques as one of the weapons widely used in the Dada movement as well as an expression of anti-establishment art. Regarding the possibility of collage techniques representing popular culture with its parody nature, Piliang explains this in a discussion of the aesthetic language of postmodernism. One of these aesthetic languages, according to Piliang, is parody, which is a composition in a work of literature, or art in which the typical thought tendencies and expressions of an author, artist, architect, or certain style are imitated in such a way as to make it humoristic or absurd (Piliang, 1998). With the possibility of combining various materials through collage techniques, humorous or absurd effects usually result from distortions or puns on existing expressions (Yunus, 2020). Although parody is a form of imitation, it is imitation characterized by ironic tendencies. Parody is the reuse of signs from the past that are filled with critical space, which emphasizes criticism, satire, and condemnation, as an expression of dissatisfaction or simply to explore a sense of humor from serious reference works. Parody elements in a two-dimensional work of art, through collage techniques, are very likely composed of signs of 'established' subcultures that have found new meanings with presentations that seem ironic, contradictory, lose the core meaning, and prioritize surface meaning (Piliang, 2004).

The Dadaism movement was a rebel movement that rejected the way of thinking that "art is something high, expensive, serious, complicated and exclusive." They reject this frame of mind because this kind of art belongs to the upper middle class who have pseudo-aesthetics. In this phenomenal Dadaism movement, many works of fine art once again emerged with the dominance of clearer, bolder, and more demonstrative collage techniques, which then moved to encourage the birth of three-dimensional assembly techniques (assemblages) for the presence of found objects in works of fine art (Clement, 1958). This research aims to analyze, as a tangible object, and as an intangible idea how the communication process of art and design occurs in collage as an art movement that became the foundation of many Dadaist artists, so that it becomes an immanent space that breeds many transcendent signs, trans-aesthetic codes that often cause "noise" in the appreciator's "decoding" process; also, to find possibility analysis model that can figure special pattern that communicates this technique in the process of creating art, thus making it a technique that is significantly assumed to be able to "encode" a "message", a stimulus for the public (Stephen & Foss, 1996). This research can produce a logical explanation of the communication process of art and design in the digital era—based on collage as a case study focused on the spirit of the renewal movement in the Dadaism era.

## **Method**

This interdisciplinary research will rely on a Cultural Studies approach, using text analysis. The way Cultural Studies works is related to the concept of signs. Signs are often structured as codes that are determined by implicit and explicit rules by members of a culture (Barker, 2011). Code as a cultural text implies a variety of social attitudes contained in cultural artifacts so that it always becomes a forum where the code articulation process takes place. "The concept of articulation refers to the formation of a temporary unity between elements that do

not actually have to be combined" (Barker, 2011); so in articulation, there is a process of combining or unifying certain elements (Piliang, 1998).

The term "text" refers to more than just written words; it also encompasses a variety of meaning practices that are embodied in other elements, such as sounds, images, objects, and activities. The functioning mechanism is comparable to language because each of these components is also a marking system (Barnard, 2005). A deeper understanding of meaning is necessary to comprehend how the articulation process, which is characterized by the creation of a new code, can cause differences in understanding between creators and audiences. It is quite possible for there to be a double coding or an expansion of the sign's meaning during the articulation process (Eco, 1976 in Noth, 2006). Qualitative text and image data will be obtained using Documentation Analysis in the form of images taken from archives and other recorded images related to collage art.

This research was divided into two stages; the first stage was collecting visual data representing collages in the Dadaist era, and the second stage was conducting text analysis using related literature studies and qualitative data generated from related references, and drawing synthesis from the text analysis. In this case, as told in the previous before, the text can be in the form of writing, images, or even multimedia data. This research was conducted in several places; observations were made by visiting a gallery that has a strong relationship with samples of collage artwork. The research objects were limited to collage art in the Dadaist era, and Dadaist collage art in the area of fine arts and design today; and positioned as pre-research based on the data inventory stage—which means, that through triangulation of data sources (Dwiyanto, 2023)—there is still potential to produce and/or develop more specific research related to Dadaist-based collage as an act of communication in the digital era.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Collage art as a reform movement in the era of Dadaism***

The Dadaism movement was a rebellious wave that rejected the notion that "art is something elevated, expensive, serious, complicated, and exclusive." They opposed this conventional way of thinking, as such art was perceived to belong to the upper middle class and possessed a superficial aesthetic. Within this phenomenal Dadaism movement, numerous works of visual art emerged, prominently employing the collage technique with more distinct, assertive, and demonstrative characteristics (Mitchell, 1994). This movement also later led to the emergence of the three-dimensional assemblage technique, incorporating found objects into artworks.

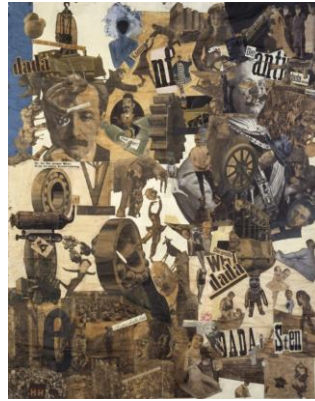


Figure 1. Hannah Höch, Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Beer-Belly of the Weimar Republic, 1919, collage of pasted papers, 90 x 144 cm  
(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah\\_H%C3%B6ch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah_H%C3%B6ch))

Collage was seen as a technique capable of representing Dadaist ideas that deviated from established artistic norms, simultaneously aligning with the message of the artwork meant to respond to and critique the socio-economic and political conditions of the time, amidst the turmoil of World War I. In its creation process, the art of combining images can be categorized into three techniques: assembling, montage, and collage. Assembling involves creating a tri-material work by arranging or assembling specific objects into an artwork, similar to what is seen in "nirmana tri-matra." Some significant artists of that era who worked with the collage technique and whose works form the foundation of analysis in this paper include Kurt Schwitters, Hannah Hoch (Berlin Dadaism), and Robert Rauschenberg (Neo-Dada) (Gotz, 1993). The term "montage" originates from the French language, meaning "assembly" or "putting together." "Montage was first used by Soviet filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein in the 1920s to describe the process of editing and assembling film images—however, it quickly found its place among Berlin Dadaists like Hannah Hoch for her 'photo montages'" (Gotz, 1993).

In contrast to montage, collage works are generally perceived through touch, while montage presents a smoother integration, akin to a single photo print. "Collage originates from the French word 'coller,' meaning to paste or stick, it is a technique of adhering elements such as newspaper clippings, ribbons, images, or other artistic creations onto a surface to create a unified work" This can be observed in the collage and assembling works of Kurt Schwitters.



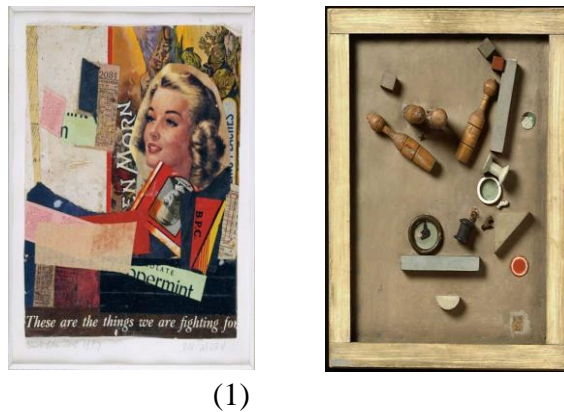


Figure 2. (1) Kurt Schwitters, *En Morn* (1947); (2) Kurt Schwitters, *Merz Picture 46 A. The Skittle Picture* (1921)

Source: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-galenson/kurt-schwitters-art-of-re\\_b\\_3102921.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-galenson/kurt-schwitters-art-of-re_b_3102921.html)

Collage, born alongside the Dada movement, gradually experienced a decline. After a period of dormancy lasting several years, collage resurfaced in the 1960s. Some artists associated with the pop art movement began using photographs and magazine clippings to create collage forms to convey their ideas. One notable figure in this resurgence was a neo-Dada exponent, Robert Rauschenberg, who employed popular objects and items as subject matter and engaged with the material imagery of everyday life within his artistic technique.

Several artists associated with the pop art movement began to use photographs and magazine writings to create a form of collage to convey their ideas, one of which was an oft-discussed exponent of neo-dada, namely Robert Rauschenberg, who used objects that are popular as subject matter and related to material images in the everyday environment in his work techniques.



Figure 3. Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon* (1959)

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Robert\\_Rauschenberg%27s\\_%27Canyon%27,\\_1959.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_Rauschenberg%27s_%27Canyon%27,_1959.jpg)

Robert Rauschenberg was more varied in his work and carried out transformations. After experiments with minimalism, Rauschenberg began to move towards painting or combination painting, a creative method in which the painted surface is combined with various objects added to the surface. Sometimes

the paintings appear three-dimensional. Rauschenberg is often referred to as a Schwitters who has gone through abstract expressionist experiences.

***The communication process of the collage art-based-renewal movement in Dadaism***

Collage as a technique for packaging the "message" of the artist, often raises themes that can be divided into at least 2 (two), namely themes that are social and political in nature, and themes that are personal in nature. In the Dada movement, although it was full of political enthusiasm, not all of its activists included political themes in their works. Unlike Hannah Hoch, whose collage works are very political, Kurt Schwitters and Robert Rauschenberg often raise themes that are very personal in nature, even seeming absurd (Clement, 1993).

Double codes and trans-aesthetic codes arise from the "obscurity" of the various signs that appear through collage techniques as a Dadaist way of "encoding" their signs. A signifier is not a sign if it does not have a signified; otherwise, it means nothing. However, a signifier is necessary for a sign to be conveyed or captured; the signified, on the other hand, is a sign in and of itself and is therefore a linguistic factor. Like the two sides of a piece of paper, the signifier and the signified are the same.

Semiotics comprises three areas of study: communication semiotics, which examines signs as a component of communication. Here a sign is only considered a sign as intended by the sender and as received by the recipient. The second one is connotation semiotics, which studies the connotative meaning of signs. In human relations, it often happens that the signs given by someone are understood differently by the recipient. The relationship between texts and the cultural and personal experiences of their users, as well as the relationship between textual conventions and the conventions that users experience and anticipate, is emphasized by Roland Barthes' Connotation Semiotics. The "order of signification" is the term used to describe Barthes' theory, which includes denotation—the dictionary's actual meaning—and connotation—a double meaning derived from cultural and personal experience (Kurniawan, 2001). In the communication process of collage art as a renewal movement in the era of Dadaism which gave rise to works with a tendency toward trans-aesthetic codes, communication semiotics can be used to analyze works related to the identification of material signs used as subject matter in the work. Meanwhile, connotation semiotics is used in the analysis related to the relationship between signifier and signified in the overall interpretation of the work (Dominic, et al., 1993).

On the other side, the phenomenological communication tradition which concentrates on personal experience includes the part of individuals who share their experiences. Phenomenology is a way that humans use to understand the world through direct experience (Stephen & Foss, 1996). The concept of a person's experience in interpreting a phenomenon makes it a guide for understanding the concept of other phenomena that occur in front of him. Communication is seen as a process of sharing experiences between individuals through dialogue. Therefore, the phenomenological tradition relies heavily on people's perceptions and interpretations of their subjective experiences. Expert in the phenomenological tradition, According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, all

knowledge—including scientific knowledge—comes from a variety of global experiences. Stanley Deetz identifies three fundamental tenets of phenomenology: knowledge is derived directly from conscious experience; the significance of an object is derived from its influence on an individual's life; and language serves as a medium for meaning. Each person defines and expresses the world through the language they use to experience it (Stephen & Foss, 1996).

### ***Discussion***

As a phenomenon of the renewal movement in the era of Dadaism, based on its historicity, collage art can be analyzed using the phenomenological approach of Edmund Husserl who uses the term phenomenology to show what appears in our consciousness by allowing it to manifest as it is without attaching the categories of our thoughts to it or according to expressions. Husserl: *zurück den sachen selbst* (return to reality itself). In contrast to Kant, Husserl stated that what is called a phenomenon is reality itself which appears after our consciousness has become fluid with reality. Husserl's phenomenology aims to find the essential or *eidōs* (essence) of what is called a phenomenon. The method used to search for the essential is to let the phenomenon speak for itself without being accompanied by prejudice (pre-suppositionlessness) (David, 2007). For this, Husserl uses the term "intentionality", namely the reality that appears in individual consciousness or intentional consciousness in capturing "phenomena as they are".

This approach is of course different from the neuroscience approach, which seeks to understand how human consciousness works in the brain and nerves, namely by using an observer's point of view. Neuroscience views the phenomenon of consciousness as a biological phenomenon. Meanwhile, phenomenological descriptions look more at human experiences as they experience them, namely from a first-person perspective. Even though it focuses on first-person subjective experiences, phenomenology does not stop at just describing sensory feelings (David, 2007). Sensory experience is only a starting point for arriving at conceptual meaning, which is deeper than sensory experience itself. Conceptual meaning can be in the form of imagination, thoughts, desires, or specific feelings when people experience their world personally and then communicate these experiences through collage art (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

Both the scope of interpersonal communication and media communication that is expected collage to act as a tool for societal transformation (Dewi, 2020), possible to explain through the critical tradition. This tradition views the communication process from a critical perspective. Communication is considered to have two opposing sides, where on the one hand it is characterized by the process of domination of strong groups over weak groups of society. On the other hand, communication activities should be a process of articulation of the interests of weak social groups. Critical theory also pays great attention to the means of communication in society. Communication, according to the Critical Tradition approach, is a result of the pressure between individual creativity in providing a message framework and social constraints on that creativity. In this tradition, the communication process of collage art can be analyzed through post-structuralist ideas in the critical tradition, which views reality as something complex and always in the process of becoming. Reality is not as seen by structuralists who see it as orderly, orderly, and structured. Reality is a process of formation that takes

place continuously involving many groups with their respective identities. What stands out is the process of articulation from each group (David, 2007).

In the digital era, a spirit of rebellion similar to the parody of Dada's movement against established structures is demonstrated through the incorporation of images from sources usually protected by intellectual property rights—with the possibility of combining various materials through collage techniques, humorous or absurd effects usually result from distortions or puns on existing expressions using digital application.

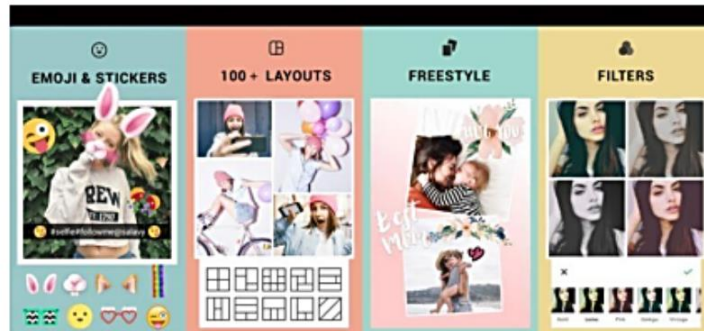


Figure 4. One of the digital applications that accommodates the practical creation of collage works

Although parody is a form of imitation, it is imitation characterized by ironic tendencies. Parody is the reuse of signs from the past that are filled with critical space, which emphasizes criticism, satire, and condemnation, as an expression of dissatisfaction or simply to explore a sense of humor from serious reference works. The element of parody in a work of collage art, is very likely composed of signs of an established subculture that has found new meaning with an exposure that seems ironic, contradictory, loses core meaning, and prioritizes surface meaning, the emergence of "novelty", "dual codes" which opposes the industrialization of the mind which is built through media penetration (Dewi, et al., 2020); to give rise to a uniform feedback tendency from the public using the Critical Tradition which can be analyzed through Karl Marx's approach regarding the commodification of art and Jurgen Habermas' approach in one of his works "Modernity: An "Incomplete Project" (1988), states that the principle of "something new" (...) is a principle that reflects modern humans' longing for beauty and authenticity (Piliang, 1998).

Then, referring to Harold Lasswell's Communication Model, in collage art as a renewal movement in the era of Dadaism, a cyclical process occurred which was in line with this model, namely "Who – Says What – In Which Channel – To Whom – With What Effect". In this cyclical process, it appears that there is a communicator and message domain that is dominated by the Intrapersonal Communication context; an "In Which Channel" domain that is dominated by the Interpersonal Context which overlaps with the Small Group Communication Context, and a To Whom - With What Effect domain that is dominated by the context. Mass Communication (Media Communication) intersects with the context of Intercultural Communication (David, 2007).

The creation of collage art involves an understanding of 'images,' 'imagery,' and 'thoughts,' encapsulating a broad spectrum of contemplative signs from the artist (Tabrani, 2005). At a particular stage, the process of crafting collage art within the framework of Intrapersonal Communication can be perceived as a means of self-control (imagining) by the artist over the impressions garnered from their environment (Rakhmat, 2002). Collage art often becomes an icon, an index, and occasionally even a symbol—a constellation of signs conveying connotative and/or denotative meanings that are subjectively constructed as avenues for exploration and a realm of contemplation. In this context, the collage artist as a communicator engages in an internal dialogic process to construct an array of imagery that is eventually released into a more expansive space for appreciation.

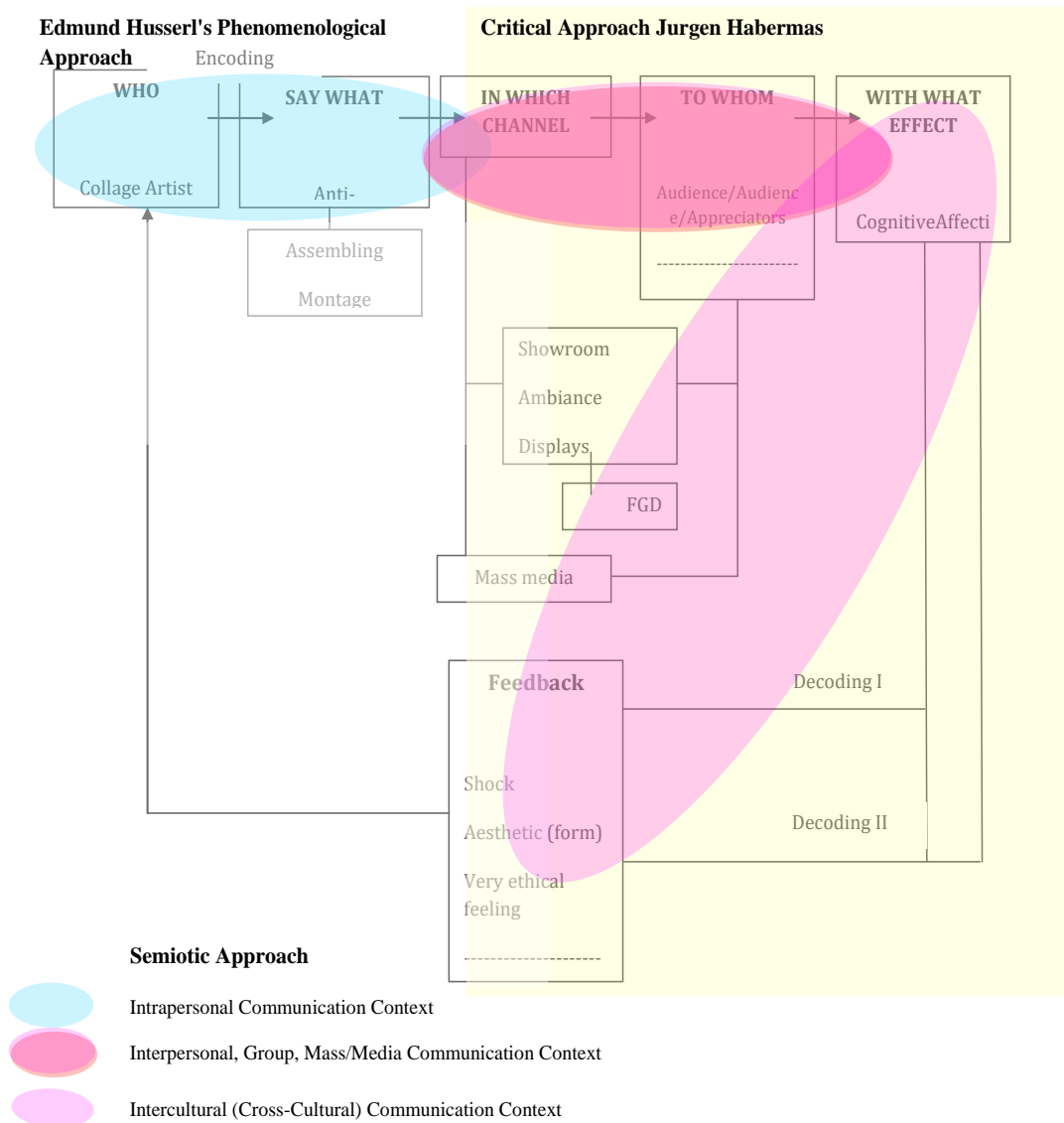


Figure 5. The model that represents analysis collage as a communication act based on spirit renewal Dadaism (Dewi, 2023)

Within the Interpersonal Context, during the process of communication through collage art in the Dadaism era, a parallel can be drawn to when an individual communicates their thoughts to others. For instance, Hannah Hoch communicated her ideas to the public regarding the application of collage art in her works through verbal expressions. Within this scenario, the collage artist is likely engaged in a process of artistic communication concerning their work, which intersects with the context of Small Group Communication and/or Mass Communication/Mediated Communication. In this setting, the encoding phase of collage art from the Dadaism era can be profoundly subjective, personal, and rife with signs referencing self-identity, bearing an immanent character (closer and confined to the artist's personal experience) (Reed, 2004).

These artworks can trigger various transcendent ideas; ideas that lie beyond the boundaries of normalcy, knowledge, and human capacity; extraordinary ideas that might be deemed unfitting, inappropriate, sparking controversy, evoking contradiction and polemics, and even capable of engendering unforeseen dialogues within the creative process (David, 2007). This encoding communication process undoubtedly gives rise to a series of effects that target various cognitive, affective, and/or psychomotor aspects of the audience as communicants as multimodalities (Dewi & Levita, 2004). The feedback that emerges could take the form of questioning, negation, or any form of reaction towards the "decoded" (or decoding) artwork—potentially discussing or classifying the collage art as entertainment or assessing its worth as an artistic creation for the public (Zaenal, 2015).

Regarding the content of the message, collage artists engage in an encoding process that significantly invites the public to explore the integrity and intensity of creation rooted in issues of vulnerability. Often, the artist's aesthetic concerns, drawn from various signs in social reality, emerge as a set of indices that frequently (although sometimes subjectively; "double-coded messages," "trans-aesthetic codes," "arbitrary codes") contribute symbols and/or disrupt symbols within the doctrine of cultural elements, integrating into the consciousness schema regarding their statement about the collage art itself. This statement, which may take the form of (self-distribution) integration of text, images, shapes, and found objects, could potentially give rise to feedback in the form of criticism among fellow collage artists. The process of collage art communication, in the end, becomes cyclical, and it could potentially birth a realm of immanence that fosters numerous transcendent ideas, which can subsequently be openly appreciated.

Striving for the search for both meaning and a new means of expression, the subsequent resurgence in the utilization of collage in Europe is closely linked to the anti-nuclear political movement of the 1980s. Numerous works were designed for use in banners or posters for the anti-nuclear movement demonstrations. Peter Kennard and Klaus Staeck are two names that can be mentioned in connection with the revival of collage art in the 1980s. Both have produced numerous politically charged collages. Klaus Staeck can even be considered as carrying on the tradition of Heartfield's collage from the Dada movement, as many of his collages take the form of single images with accompanying politically critical captions.

Based on the above discussion, to address the underlying questions that prompted the analysis of the collage art communication process as a renewal

movement in the Dadaism era in the Introduction, the author presents an analytical model developed from the Lasswell Communication Model concerning Communication Traditions and Contexts (Figure 5). Collage, as a technique to convey the "message" of the artist, often addresses themes that can be categorized into at least two distinct categories: social and political themes, and personal themes. Within the Dada movement, although imbued with political fervor, not all activists incorporated political themes into their works. Unlike Hannah Hoch, whose collages were strongly political, Kurt Schwitters and Robert Rauschenberg often leaned towards exploring highly personal themes, even bordering on the absurd.

When looking back to the early days of collage's inception, distinct characteristics emerge in the spirit of the messages conveyed by collage works:

1. There is an urge to constantly bring about change by collecting images from different sources and attempting to unify them on a single surface. This imparts a strong sense of the process of creating something new from something old—an eagerness to dismantle old structures and rejuvenate them.
2. A spirit of rebellion against established structures is demonstrated through the incorporation of images from sources usually protected by intellectual property rights. In collage, these sources are playfully inverted by the collage creator, who takes them and combines them with other images that might also be protected by copyright laws. This spirit of rebellion also involves dismantling the barriers that separate artists from non-artists, erasing distinctions between those deserving the title of "artist" and those who are not. Through this breaking down of barriers, collage "seems" to exhibit an artistic communication pattern that suggests everyone is an artist, capable of easily producing their artwork without prior education in art school or formal art courses. In this context, G. Jula Dech once commented that collage holds political significance due to its emphasis on technical elements in an attack on bourgeois aesthetics, and it serves as a technique that can be learned, especially by the general mass of amateur artists.
3. There is a celebration of pluralism or the celebration of diversity to forge something new or better. In collage, various objects sourced from different origins are brought together to form a new meaning. Shapes with distinct original backgrounds are united or harmonized to achieve something both unique and beautiful. The diversity of the sources of image fragments that are then amalgamated strongly conveys the spirit of celebrating diversity toward achieving something beautiful (Sears, 1998). Dual codes, trans-aesthetic codes, are created by the "ambiguity" of the various signs created by the collage technique as a Dadaist method of "encoding" their signs.

Collage art, within the realm of art communication in the digital transformation era, becomes a process that gives birth to works of art with dual codes, some of which are highly likely to be arbitrary codes. According to this concept, meaning arises when there is an associative or in absentia relationship between the "signified" and the "signifier" (Kurniawan, 2001)—which gives rise to works with tendencies toward trans-aesthetic codes.

Meanwhile, phenomenology is a way humans understand the world through direct experience. The concept of one's experience in interpreting a



phenomenon serves as a guide to understanding other phenomena that occur before them. Communication is seen as the process of sharing experiences between individuals through dialogue. Therefore, the phenomenological tradition heavily relies on people's perceptions and interpretations of their subjective experiences. Although focusing on the first-person subjective experience, phenomenology does not stop at describing sensory feelings alone. Sensory experience is only a starting point to reach conceptual meaning, which goes beyond the sensory experience itself. This conceptual meaning can involve imagination, thoughts, desires, or specific feelings when individuals experience their world personally and then communicate that experience through collage art.

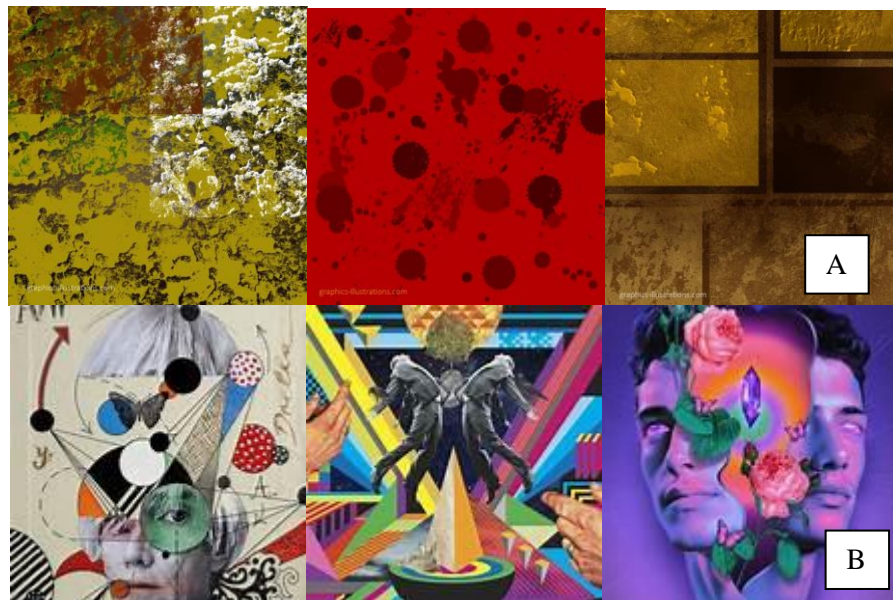


Figure 5. (A) The Collage Design Trend: A Nostalgic Twist in 2024's Art World (Graphics-Illustrations, 2024), retrieved from <https://graphics-illustrations.com/collage-design-trend-crafting-nostalgia-in-2024s-creative-landscape/>; (B) Collage Art: 50 New Artworks to Fuel Your Creativity (Indieground, 2024), retrieved from <https://indieground.net/blog/collage-art-50-new-artworks/>

Digital transformation opens up opportunities for colleges to become a broader communication act (Husain, 2022). In the sense that, using artificial intelligence, visual elements can be combined in a more expressive, emotive way, going beyond the limits of what could be done in the Dadaist era. However, with the openness of collage to become a communication act in the era of digital transformation, it should have the potential to strengthen the spirit of the Dadaist era--which optimizes collage as a form of art and design that functions as social criticism.

The no-boundaries space created by the digital era could make collages view the communication process critically. Communication is seen as having two opposing sides: on one hand, it's marked by the dominance of powerful groups over weaker societal groups, and on the other, communication activities should ideally serve as a process of articulation for the interests of weaker societal groups. This means the Dadaism Renewal spirit is in line with critical theory that also



pays significant attention to communication tools within society. Communication becomes results from the tension between individual creativity in framing messages and social constraints on that creativity. Reality is a continuous formation process involving many groups with their distinct identities. What stands out is the presence of articulation processes from each group.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the potential of multi-literacy in art and design using collage as a communication act during the era of the digital transformation, in its process, can give rise to designs with double meanings in their codes, which fundamentally aims to study how humanity interprets things. Interpreting (to signify) in this context cannot be confused with communicating (to communicate) (Dewi, 2019). Multimodalities acknowledge that communication extends beyond a singular mode, encompassing a combination of modes to enhance the richness, engagement, and effectiveness of conveying information and meaning (Dewi & Levita, 2024). This idea holds particular relevance in our contemporary digital and interconnected environment, where diverse forms of media and communication intersect and interact. Interpreting means that objects not only convey information but also constitute a structured system of signs. This means that one of the multi-literacy competencies in design that should be achieved in higher design education is the ability for conceptual understanding.

### **Conclusion**

As feedback emerges from the cyclical process of collage art communication, especially in the era of advanced technology today, particularly for parties operating in industries that cannot detach themselves from image-related issues, collage art has become almost mandatory. The development of computer technology, such as Photoshop software, has made collage art increasingly intricate and beautiful. From television commercials to music videos and even fashion, various forms of collage have been widely adopted. Collage art once considered an anti-art movement, deemed messy and laden with blasphemy against the divine, with its lengthy "communication" process built through dialog between collage artists and/or their works with the public, has eventually become inseparable from the societal fabric it inhabits.

However, subsequently, the impacts of societal development do not always provide an influence that "strengthens the character" of collage artworks. One of the feedbacks from modernity is revealed by Peter Kennard, a collage artist, who stated:

....."There's a problem with collages now, you can see them anywhere because of digital technology. Too many images are altered, [but] among those who receive the formed image, they don't question its meaning. I think my work lost its impact because of that."....

This statement seems to point towards a "noise" in the communication process of collage art in its role as an artwork and/or technique and/or concept.

It means that collage art communication can be analyzed both in its process related to artworks as tangible objects and/or the technique and/or concept, as well as its approach as both a "message" and a "creation" itself. It

can also examine its dissemination to a broader group of individuals through interpersonal and/or mediated means, including the feedback it generates. This model, then, is very possible to apply (in extended analysis) to the creation process collage as a communication act in the digital transformation era.

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## **IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES BASED ON CULPEPER'S MODEL: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *A MAN CALLED OTTO***

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### **Abstract**

This research delves into a comprehensive analysis of impoliteness strategies used by Otto, the main character in the movie *A Man Called Otto*, drawing upon Culpeper's model. The objectives encompass the identification of the most common type of impoliteness strategy and the examination of the function associated with each type. Moreover, the qualitative discourse analysis method was used to gain a deeper and more holistic comprehension of the research objectives that encompass a broader context beyond sentences. Within this method, a total of 155 instances of Otto's impolite speech were meticulously examined. The findings revealed two facets: first, there are three types of impoliteness strategies, namely positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and withhold politeness. Among these, positive impoliteness emerged as the most frequently used strategy, followed by negative impoliteness and withhold politeness. Second, two functions attributed to the three impoliteness strategies used by the main character are found, namely affective impoliteness and coercive impoliteness.

**Keywords:** functions of impoliteness strategies, impoliteness strategies, types of impoliteness strategies

### **Introduction**

Language functions as a set of rules that regulate the combination and use of symbols to create meaning. These rules include grammar, syntax, and semantics, orchestrating the creation of systematic and cohesive linguistic constructs. As a result, individuals are enabled to exchange information and ideas.

However, when using a language, individuals must be aware of its innate ability to reflect and maintain power imbalances and social hierarchies. Hence, appropriate language usage becomes essential in promoting social inclusion and equity, as underscored by Gary B. Palmer (Sharifian, 2015). Central to this ethos of linguistic responsibility is the cultivation of respectful discourse, wherein the tenets of politeness are instrumental.

Politeness, as an essential language construct, refers to a communication attitude that shows respect and consideration towards the interlocutor. This definition aligns seamlessly with the perspective explained by Janet Holmes, which

asserts that politeness serves as a channel for maintaining social harmony while avoiding potential disagreement (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). Furthermore, Lakoff defines politeness as a structured framework of interpersonal dynamics that has been deliberately designed to enhance the efficacy of interactions (Leech, 2014).

On the contrary, impoliteness is characterized by the use of inappropriate language. According to Jonathan Culpeper, impoliteness is conveyed through negative comments or attitudes toward specific behaviors in particular circumstances, which are based on social expectations, desires, and beliefs. For this reason, Culpeper asserts that impolite behavior occurs when individuals act in a way that contradicts others' expectations, desires, or beliefs concerning their behaviors (Culpeper et al., 2017).

Culpeper's research further suggests that impoliteness emerges when the interlocutor intentionally communicates face attack or when the recipient interprets the interlocutor's behavior as intentionally face-attacking. This aligns with the notion that impoliteness is developed through the interplay between the interlocutor and the recipient's expectations, beliefs, and perceptions.

Regarding the topic of impoliteness, it is noteworthy that the five super strategies of impoliteness—bald on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness—provide pertinent knowledge into the various ways in which impoliteness can occur in social interactions (Culpeper et al., 2017). Additionally, impoliteness strategies have three functions: affective, coercive, and entertaining (Culpeper, 2011).

Numerous studies have delved into the intricacies of impoliteness strategies in movies. For instance, the first study (Chintiabela, 2017) investigates impoliteness strategies used by the characters in the movie *Carrie* using Culpeper's model. Following that, the second study (Ratri & Ardi, 2019) concentrates on the impoliteness and power displayed by two particular characters in the movie *The Devil Wears Prada*, employing several theories of Culpeper, Bebé, and Bousfield. Lastly, a study by (Silviani, 2022) analyses the script of *12 Years Slave* movie identifying the types of impoliteness strategies and their functions using Culpeper's theory. All characters in the movie were examined.

Building upon previous research, this study is distinguished through its distinctive data source and research objectives. The movie chosen for analysis is *A Man Called Otto*, adapted from a Swedish book entitled *A Man Called Ove*, with particular emphasis on the impolite speech made by Otto during his interactions with other characters. Using Culpeper's model of impoliteness, this research seeks to achieve two following objectives: (1) to identify the most common type of impoliteness strategies used by the main character in *A Man Called Otto* and (2) to investigate the functions of the impoliteness strategies used by the main character in *A Man Called Otto*.

### ***The Definition of Face***

A North American sociologist Erving Goffman first introduced the concept of face in his original work *On-Face Work* in 1955. According to Goffman, face is a positive reputation that individuals attempt to form in social situations (Goffman, 2017). Twelve years later, Goffman sharpened the definition to make it more precise as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Culpeper & Haugh,

2014). Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson adopted Goffman's work to elucidate how politeness influenced human interactions. Face, as stated by Brown and Levinson, is a public persona that individuals wish to lay claim to (Culpeper et al., 2017). Inferentially, the two face-maintenance concepts differ from one another. Goffman's face refers to something individuals already own; thus, it is considered an afterthought. Conversely, Brown and Levinson view face as something individuals wish to possess, making it a before perspective that emphasizes establishing a desired image (Culpeper et al., 2017). Two additional explanations of face are offered straightforwardly. Craig, Tracy, and Spisak characterize face as a self-representation individuals display to others. Cupach and Metts, on the other hand, perceive it as the self-concepts of individuals manifested in specific interactions with others (Redmond, 2015).

### ***Positive and Negative Face***

Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize two types of face as follows:

#### 1) Positive Face

Similar to Goffman's definition of face, positive face is "the positive, consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants ... the want of every [person] that his wants be desirable to at least some other" (Culpeper et al., 2017). For instance, acknowledging individuals' presence, approving their opinions, and expressing admiration (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014).

#### 2) Negative Face

On the other hand, negative face pertains to "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction ... the want of every [person] that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Culpeper et al., 2017). For example, it involves individuals being able to do what they want and are allowed to do so by others (Redmond, 2015).

### ***The Definition of Impoliteness***

Based on Culpeper, based on Culpeper, the term impoliteness is defined as situations where a face attack is intentionally conducted by the interlocutor, where the recipient interprets the action as intentionally attacking, or where both of these conditions occur (Leech, 2014). Later, Culpeper redefines it as unpleasant manners toward certain behaviors happening in specific situations. These manners are reliant on expectations, desires, and beliefs about social organization, specifically how someone intervenes in another individual's face in communication. Consequently, the attitude is seen unfavorably and is considered a cause of offense resulting from the emotional consequences an individual experiences (Jamet & Jobert, 2013).

According to Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, also known as Bebé, impoliteness is a purposeful choice rather than a failure to be politely used to achieve certain goals throughout a conversation, exhibiting pragmatic competence. Although impoliteness is portrayed as obstructive, it may be considered rational in specific circumstances (Arendholz, 2013). On the contrary, Jonathan Bousfield and Maria Sifianou Terkourafi contend that impoliteness does not involve either intentions or recognition of intentions. If such intentions are present, the behavior is considered rude rather than impolite. Thus, impoliteness is not always a deliberate or intentional act (Huang, 2017). These contrasting perspectives

highlight impoliteness' complexity and varied interpretations in pragmatic studies. Moreover, Culpeper adds that impoliteness involves negative behavior expressed through various emotions and conventionalized formulae, such as insults, criticism, challenges, condescension, dismissals, threats, and non-supportive intrusions (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014).

### ***Types of Impoliteness Strategies***

Culpeper (1996) identifies five impoliteness super strategies, which are described below:

#### **1) Bald On-Record Impoliteness**

The act that threatens an individual's face is clearly expressed. Different from Brown and Levinson's—where the minimal face is at stake, and the interlocutor's purpose is not to attack the recipient's face—this bald on-record is used when there are many faces at risk intending to attack the recipient's face down with the use of impolite language (Arendholz, 2013).

#### **2) Positive Impoliteness**

This strategy is used to attack the recipient's positive face by not accepting his desire. Positive impoliteness is performed by insulting another individual, refusing common ground with the recipient, choosing unpleasant or unwanted topics to talk about, employing irrelevant code, being ignorant in a conversation with others, awaiting disagreements, employing ambiguous and confidential language, and employing taboo words (Capone & Mey, 2016).

#### **3) Negative Impoliteness**

In contrast to positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness is intended to attack the recipient's negative face desire. For example, intimidating the recipient for his action that is viewed as harmful by the interlocutor, speaking rudely, mocking, not treating another interactant earnestly, and invading the recipient's space (Culpeper et al., 2017).

#### **4) Sarcasm or Mock Politeness**

This strategy is deceitful in that it appears polite and respectful on the surface but is actually meant to convey the opposite sentiment. Sarcasm or mock politeness is performed by using Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies (Mohammed & Abbas, 2015).

#### **5) Withhold Politeness**

This strategy lacks of politeness that the recipient expects. For example, failing to thank others for something they give may be considered intentional impoliteness (Bączkowska, 2017).

### ***Impoliteness Functions***

According to Culpeper (2011), impoliteness events serve numerous functions. They are:

#### **1) Affective Impoliteness**

The first function of impoliteness involves aggression which is an angry response to frustration or provocation. In this event, the interlocutor directs their negative emotion toward the recipient to assign blame to the recipient. Consequently, the atmosphere between the interlocutor and the recipient becomes unpleasant or hostile (Bączkowska, 2017).

#### **2) Coercive Impoliteness**

The second function of impoliteness is to gain control and influence over the recipient by making oneself look superior. Coercive impoliteness arises when the interlocutor belongs to a higher and more influential social level than the recipient. Although it usually occurs in situations where there is a power imbalance, it can also occur when the interlocutor is equal to the recipient to gain social power (Mohammed & Abbas, 2015).

### 3) Entertaining Impoliteness

This impoliteness differs from the others in that it delivers enjoyment to the audience at the expense of harming individuals or groups (victims) throughout the course of the entertainment. However, the victim may or may not be aware of the harm done to them; hence, it often involves exploiting the victim merely for amusement (Fouad Kadhum & Fadhil Abbas, 2021).

## Method

This study employed a qualitative discourse analysis methodology. The purpose of this method is to investigate and comprehend the meaning attributed to social problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Patricia Leavy, qualitative research creates meaning by exploring and investigating social situations and aims to uncover the meanings individuals ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts to gain a deeper understanding of some features of social life (2017). Concurrently, the discourse analysis method used in this study involves a comprehensive examination of language as it is used in practice. It goes beyond analyzing individual sentences to examine larger contextual factors (Gee, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, discourse analysis emphasizes understanding the various roles of language in a variety of context (Parker, 2015, p. 46).

The data for this study is obtained from the movie's transcription that is accessible on the website <https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk> using a documentation method as a data collection technique. According to Avril Coxhead, documentation method allows for the examination of various linguistic dimensions such as lexical choices, discourse nuances, pragmatic methodologies, linguistic conventions, and gender-related influences (Rose et al., 2020, p. 202). Specifically, the data collection process involved two steps. Initially, the movie was watched, followed by a thorough reading of the transcript. Subsequently, the collected data was coded according to Culpeper's model of impoliteness.

## Findings and Discussion

Upon a comprehensive analysis of Otto's impolite speech, several types and functions of impoliteness strategies have been identified in accordance with Culpeper's model: (1) Otto uses three types of impoliteness strategies, namely positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and withhold politeness in which positive impoliteness is the most frequently used strategy, (2) the impoliteness strategies serve two functions within Otto's interactions which are affective impoliteness and coercive impoliteness.

### *Impoliteness Strategies Used by the Main Character in A Man Called Otto*

The number of impoliteness strategies used by Otto according to Culpeper's model is examined in this sub-section wherein revealed 155 occurrences of impoliteness strategies, with Otto using positive impoliteness, negative



impoliteness, and withheld politeness during his interactions with strangers, neighbors, or colleagues.

### *1. Positive Impoliteness*

Positive impoliteness is used to undermine the positive face desires of the recipient by disregarding their need for appreciation and approval. It involves behaviors such as insulting others, refusing common ground, discussing unpleasant or unwanted topics, using irrelevant code, displaying ignorance during conversations, provoking disagreements, using ambiguous and confidential language, and using taboo words.

Otto, the main character, consistently demonstrated a preference for this impoliteness strategy, which manifested itself in 84 occurrences. As part of this discussion, three specific examples of positive impoliteness are provided as follows:

#### Example 1

Hardware clerk: “Uh, yeah, we don’t charge by the foot. We charge by the yard.”

Otto: “99 cents a yard is 33 cents a foot—times five, that’s \$1.65. You charged me \$1.98.”

Description of the scene:

Otto argues the total price of the rope with the hardware clerk. Subsequently, Otto challenges the clerk’s pricing method, emphasizing a difference between the price per yard and the price per foot.

Analysis:

Otto attempts to invalidate the hardware clerk’s pricing method by demonstrating his mathematical skill. As a result, the clerk experiences discomfort and embarrassment due to the public nature of their disagreement, making it challenging for the clerk to save face. Therefore, Otto’s speech can be categorized as a positive impoliteness as it undermines the recipient’s positive face by provoking disagreement and causing discomfort.

#### Example 2:

Marisol: “Hm? Mm! I have a very good idea. You can be my driver’s instructor.”

Otto: “No. No, no, no. I don’t have time for that.”

Description of the scene:

Marisol suggests that Otto becomes her driving instructor. However, Otto promptly dismisses the idea, stating his lack of available time to fulfill such a commitment.

Analysis:

Otto strongly dismisses Marisol’s request to be her driving instructor and does not provide any alternative solutions showing his disinterest and disregard for her needs. Therefore, Otto’s speech can be categorized as a positive impoliteness as his response fails to fulfill Marisol’s positive face by dismissing her idea.

## 2. *Negative Impoliteness*

Negative impoliteness is used to undermine the negative face desires of the recipient by disregarding their privacy, autonomy, and independence. It involves behaviors such as intimidation, rudeness, mockery, lack of seriousness, and invasion of personal space.

Otto consistently demonstrated a preference for this impoliteness strategy, with a total of 59 occurrences identified. In this discussion, three examples of negative impoliteness are provided as follows:

Example 1:

Doctor: “Next. I suspect you have hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, which is a genetic enlargement of the—”

Otto: “I know. My father had it.”

Description of the scene:

The doctor diagnoses Otto with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a genetic condition characterized by heart enlargement. However, before the doctor can complete the diagnosis, Otto interrupts mentioning his father’s history with the same disease.

Analysis:

Otto’s interruption, preventing the doctor from completing the diagnosis, signifies a violation of the conversational structure. Therefore, Otto’s speech can be categorized as negative impoliteness as it disregards the doctor’s negative face desire to avoid being interrupted or hindered in conversation.

Example 2:

Otto: “I loaned you my garden hose last August. If you give it back to me, I’ll bleed your radiators for you.”

Anita: “Come in. So those new neighbors of yours, they seem quite lovely, don’t you think?”

Description of the scene:

Otto approaches Reuben and Anita’s house offering his assistance in bleeding the radiators. However, Otto conditions his offer on Anita returning the garden hose she borrowed from him last August.

Analysis:

Otto emphasizes his ownership and fosters indebtedness by reminding Anita of the borrowed garden hose. It implies that Anita’s refusal to return the hose leads to the loss of assistance. Therefore, Otto’s speech can be categorized as a negative impoliteness as he prioritizes his own rights over Anita’s autonomy and freedom regarding the hose.

## 3. *Withhold Politeness*

Withhold politeness is a strategy where the interlocutor refrains from using expected politeness expressions. It involves abstaining from common courtesy phrases, such as “thank you,” “please,” or “excuse me.”

Otto consistently demonstrated a preference for this impoliteness strategy, with a total of 12 occurrences identified. To further illustrate this point, the following are three examples of withhold politeness:

Example 1:

Hardware customer: "Here. I got some change. Let me cover that extra 33 cents for you."

Otto: "Sir, I don't want your 33 cents! And this isn't about 33 cents! This is about the fact that I got five feet of rope because I want five feet of rope. And I shouldn't have to pay for six feet of rope if I don't want six feet."

Description of the scene:

The hardware customer in the queue offers to cover the additional 33 cents for Otto. However, Otto declines emphasizing that the issue is not solely about the 33 cents but rather the correct pricing.

Analysis:

Otto declines the hardware customer's offer without expressing gratitude but instead highlights his frustration by asserting the issue he is facing. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as withholding politeness as he refrains from using expected politeness expressions.

Example 2:

Otto: "I need to see everything you ever got from Dye & Merika.

Notices, letters. Do you have a copy of the power of attorney?"

Anita: "How do you know about that?"

Description of the scene:

Otto approaches Reuben and Anita's house and makes a prompt request for Anita's cooperation. This unexpected request caught Anita off guard as she had not informed Otto about the issue beforehand.

Analysis:

Otto's direct request to Anita for documents received from Dye & Merika and the existence of a power attorney, without using the word "please" or engaging in small talk beforehand, suggests that he is withholding politeness. Therefore, Otto's speech can be categorized as a withheld politeness as he refrains from using pleasantries.

The amount and percentage of each impoliteness strategy used by Otto in his interactions are presented in Table III.1. It also highlights the strategy that Otto frequently uses.

Table 1. The Amount of Impoliteness Strategy Used by Otto

No	Type of Impoliteness Strategy	Amount	Percentage
1.	Positive Impoliteness	84	54.19%
2.	Negative Impoliteness	59	38.06%
3.	Withhold Politeness	12	7.74%
	<b>Total</b>	155	100%

To calculate the percentages, the following formula is used. This formula offers a systematic approach to determine the relative proportions based on the amount of impoliteness strategies data available.

$$\text{Percentage} = \left( \frac{\text{Count of Impoliteness Strategy}}{\text{Total Number of Impoliteness Strategies}} \right) \times 100$$

Taking the positive impoliteness strategy as an example, the count of positive impoliteness is 84. By substituting this value into the formula, the percentage can be computed as follows:

$$\text{Percentage of Positive Impoliteness} = \left( \frac{84}{155} \right) \times 100 = 54.19\%$$

Based on the calculation, it is evident that Otto mostly uses positive impoliteness in his interactions, with 84 occurrences (54.19%). The second most used strategy is negative impoliteness with 54 occurrences (38.06%). Lastly, withhold politeness is the least used strategy with 12 occurrences (7.74%).

### ***The Functions of the Impoliteness Strategies Used by the Main Character in A Man Called Otto***

This sub-chapter examines the functions of impoliteness strategies used by Otto during his interactions with strangers, neighbors, or colleagues. The examination applies Culpeper's model, which involves affective, coercive, and entertaining impoliteness. Through a comprehensive examination, two of the three functions were identified: affective and coercive impoliteness (see Appendix C). To facilitate the comprehension of the impoliteness strategies' functions, selected data, description of the scene, and analysis are provided.

#### ***1. Affective Impoliteness***

Affective impoliteness is an assertive response triggered by feelings of anger, frustration, or provocation. The interlocutor expresses their negative emotions toward the recipient aiming to assign blame for the perceived issue. As a result, the interaction between the interlocutor and the recipient becomes unpleasant or hostile.

Otto demonstrated a preference for this function of impoliteness strategies, as evidenced by 104 occurrences. To illustrate the manifestation of the affective impoliteness function, three examples are provided below:

##### **Example 1:**

Hardware clerk: "You're good at math. Um... No, I know, but I can't put it into the computer the way that you just said."

Otto: “What the hell kind of computer can’t do simple math? Can I speak to your manager?”

Description of the scene:

The hardware clerk acknowledges his inability to input the calculation into the computer as suggested by Otto. However, Otto finds it difficult to believe that a computer would be incapable of performing such a basic mathematical task.

Analysis:

Through impoliteness strategies involving strong language and a request to speak with the manager, Otto conveys his frustration and holds the hardware clerk accountable for the perceived incompetence. This aggressive communication style emphasizes his dissatisfaction and assigns blame to the clerk for his inability to solve the problem. Therefore, Otto’s impoliteness strategies illustrate the affective impoliteness function.

Example 2:

Boss: “Come on, Otto. You’re the one who decided to leave. And you did get a nice severance package.”

Otto: “You took me off Operations. You cut back on my hours. You made Terry, who I trained, my supervisor. Terry, who can barely figure out what year it is without his phone. So, yes, I took the severance package.”

Description of the scene:

Otto’s boss reminds him of his decision to leave the job and the favorable severance package he received. However, Otto responds by asserting that his boss’s actions directly contributed to his retirement.

Analysis:

Otto implies a connection between his boss’s actions during his employment, which impacted his job satisfaction, and his choice to retire. Through his criticism of his boss’s decision-making and emphasis on these actions, Otto expresses his negative emotions and attributes responsibility to his boss for the circumstances that led to his retirement. Therefore, Otto’s impoliteness strategies in this interaction demonstrate the affective impoliteness function.

## 2. *Coercive Impoliteness*

Coercive impoliteness displays authority and influence over the recipient, implying superiority. It typically occurs in situations where a power imbalance exists. However, it can also occur when the interlocutor and recipient are socially equal, as both individuals strive to gain social influence.

Otto demonstrated a preference for coercive impoliteness function, which is evident in 51 occurrences. To further illustrate this function, three examples are provided below:

Example 1:

Otto: “Don’t you dare let that little rat dog of yours piss on my walkway again! I know it was you!”

Barb: “He’s a nasty, bitter old man. And he has no idea who’s doing that.”

Description of the scene:

In a confrontation between Otto and Barb regarding her dog urinating on his walkway, Otto firmly warns Barb to prevent it from happening again and accuses her of being responsible. However, Barb dismisses Otto’s claim and implies that he is mistaken about the true culprit.

Analysis:

Otto’s impoliteness strategies, which involve threat and diminutive language directed at Barb and her dog, demonstrate his firm belief that she is accountable for the behavior. Through these strategies, Otto aims to intimidate Barb and establish his dominance, emphasizing his higher status and control over her. Therefore, Otto’s impoliteness strategies illustrate the coercive impoliteness function.

Example 2:

Tommy: “Oh, sorry.”

Otto: “All of you get outta here. Go, go. Take your ladder and go. Get outta here. All of you.”

Description of the scene:

Tommy apologizes to Otto for taking something belonging to Sonya from the garage without Otto’s permission. In response, Otto quickly and firmly instructs Tommy, along with the other neighbors present, Marisol and Anita, to leave.

Analysis:

Otto conveys his disapproval of Tommy’s action and asserts his ownership and control over Sonya’s belongings by instructing Tommy and the others to leave. Otto’s impoliteness strategies aim to establish dominance and convey his zero tolerance for unauthorized access to Sonya’s possession. Therefore, Otto’s impoliteness strategies in the interaction illustrate the coercive impoliteness function.

The amount and percentage of each impoliteness function used by Otto in his impoliteness strategies are presented in Table III.2. It also highlights the function that Otto frequently uses.

Table 2. The Amount of Impoliteness Functions Used by Otto

No	Impoliteness Function	Amount	Percentage
1.	Affective Impoliteness	104	67.1%
2.	Coercive Impoliteness	51	32.9%
	<b>Total</b>	155	100%

To calculate the percentages, the following formula is used. This formula offers a systematic approach to determine the relative proportions based on the amount of impoliteness functions data available.

$$Percentage = \left( \frac{Count\ of\ Impoliteness\ Function}{Total\ Number\ of\ Impoliteness\ Functions} \right) \times 100$$

Taking the affective impoliteness function as an example, the count of affective impoliteness is 104. By substituting this value into the formula, the percentage can be computed as follows:

$$\text{Percentage of Affective Impoliteness} = \left(\frac{104}{155}\right) \times 100 = 67.1\%$$

Based on the calculation, it is evident that Otto mostly uses affective impoliteness function to express his negative emotions and assign blame, accounting for 104 occurrences (67.1%). Additionally, Otto uses coercive impoliteness function in 51 occurrences (32.9%) to assert control and influence over others.

## Conclusion

After analyzing Otto's speech in *A Man Called Otto*, several findings are found. First, Otto uses three out of Culpeper's five impoliteness strategies for 155 occurrences consisting of positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, and withhold politeness. Among the strategies, positive impoliteness emerges as the most frequently used strategy by Otto, with 84 occurrences (54.19%). It is followed by negative impoliteness with 59 occurrences (38.06%) and withhold politeness with 12 occurrences (7.74%). Furthermore, Otto uses impoliteness strategies that express negative emotions (affective impoliteness) and assert control (coercive impoliteness). Specifically, affective impoliteness is mostly used in Otto's interactions, observed in 104 occurrences (67.1%), while coercive impoliteness is evident in 51 occurrences (32.9%).

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## **OPTIMIZING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF LEARNERS WITH AUTISM IN ESWATINI MAINSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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### **Abstract**

In 2010, the Kingdom of Eswatini granted learners with mild to moderate forms of autism the right to access education in neighborhood schools. However, the Eswatini Annual Education Census report of 2019 did not make specific mention of these learners' current state of affairs. This qualitative, phenomenological study explored strategies for optimizing parental involvement in the education of learners with autism in Eswatini mainstream primary schools. The data were extracted through interviews and document analysis from fifteen purposively sampled parents and teachers selected from four mainstream primary schools in Eswatini. The data were analyzed thematically. Ethical considerations upheld during this investigation were informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of information that participants divulged. One major finding of this study demonstrates that the deployment of highly autism-qualified teachers is crucial for laying a concrete foundation for parents to use in helping the learners in their studies. Thus, to accrue the involvement of parents in education, the Deputy Prime Minister's office should state guidelines and craft monitoring tools to ensure that schools embrace and support the involvement of parents.

**Keywords:** learner with autism, mainstream school, optimize, parental involvement

### **Introduction**

The endorsement of the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in Spain (UNESCO, 1994) which the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly called Swaziland) signed signaled the dawn of providing quality, non-discriminatory education to learners who require special education (Ainscow, 2020). Disappointingly, owing to that academic achievement is one of the elements which businesses examine when looking for employment (Briones et al., 2021), in Eswatini, the high grade repetition rate among learners with mild to moderate degrees of autism spectrum disorder (hereafter referred to as autism) in mainstream primary schools is a cause of concern, as it accelerates drop-out of these learners before they enroll for secondary education (Swaziland Ministry of Education and Training, 2018).



The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition defines autism as a neurodevelopmental, biologically determined disorder that is characterized by a triad of impairments that impacts social interactions, communication, and imagination (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The social communication and interaction deficits manifest across a variety of contexts, like limited participation in social activities (Ghanouni et al. 2019). Moreover, learners with autism also suffer from bullying (Bergara et al., 2019).

Despite the domestication of inclusive education in Eswatini, the education of learners with autism is still beclouded with several daunting prospects, which include teachers' dwindling capacities to deploy required pedagogies for effectively teaching the learners. Kasongole and Muzata (2020) opine that through homework, the home environment can play a pivotal role in improving the academic performance of all sorts of learners. Nevertheless, in spite of the drastic effort of mainstreaming the learners into regular classrooms in 2010, which necessitates informing all stakeholders of the education fraternity about the incidences of autism in their jurisdictions (Ozerk & Cardinal, 2020), the parents of learners with autism in Eswatini mainstream primary schools are still not adequately involved in matters of supporting the learners.

Eswatini's giant strides taken to remove handicapping features that impede learners with autism from attaining their fullest mental and physical potentials through interface with education include the development of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland of 2005 (Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 2005), the National Disability Policy of 2013 (Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013), the National Disability Act of 2018 (Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2018), Draft Inclusive Education Policy of 2008 (Swaziland Ministry of Education and Training, 2008), and the National Education and Training Sector Policy of 2018 (Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training, 2018).

Disappointingly, irrespective of the massive drive to bring issues of educating learners with special education needs to the forefront through ratification of such a vast majority of legal and policy framework, none of the above stipulated promulgations explicitly outlines strategies through which involvement of parents in the education of the learners with autism could be optimized. Sadly, the Eswatini Annual Education Census report of 2019 did not account for the existence of learners with autism (Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training, 2019). The undocumented existence of the learners in this vital education management information system seems to be the underlying reason that has prevented the parents from being considered subjects of investigation. The paucity of such crucial information has bottled our minds, thus, warranting us to embark on conducting this investigation.

### ***Research aims and questions***

The main aim of this study was to investigate and understand strategies that could be used to optimize parental involvement in the education of learners with autism in Eswatini mainstream primary schools. In light of the above, the primary research question of this study was, 'What strategies can be utilized to optimize parental involvement in educating learners with autism in Eswatini mainstream primary schools?' In a quest to answer this research question, we guided the study by utilizing the following sub-research questions:

- a) What strategies can be used to ensure that human and material resources in Eswatini optimize parental involvement in the education of learners with autism in mainstream primary schools?
- b) How can stakeholders in the education fraternity dispel negative societal perceptions that hinder effective parents' involvement in the education of learners with autism in Eswatini mainstream primary schools?

### ***Theoretical Framework***

As a point of departure, the theoretical underpinning of this study lies in the utilization of Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) and the Bio-ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the subsequent section, we briefly discuss these two theoretical lenses.

#### ***Parent Development Theory***

Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) is a six-dimensional theory that was developed by Barbara Mowder, and it views parenting as continuously altering perceptions of parenting expectations and attitudes in response to the needs of the developing child as they change from time to time (Bradley, 2020). This theory was most appropriate because it is rooted in the coalition of multiple experts, like therapists, psychologists, and special education teachers at the forefront to encourage parents' active participation in education, as such a coalition affords the learners the best educational services in an environment that provides best resources. Below we provide a brief explanation of each of the six dimensions of this theory.

*Bonding:* This term refers to the parents' love and affection for their child (Mowder, 2005). In this study, bonding looked at ways through which parents used home resources to strengthen their bonding with the learners.

*Discipline:* It refers to the standards that parents set for a child, as well as the means through which parents uphold the standards they have set. In this study, we focused on strategies that parents set for themselves and for the learners, to try and achieve optimized opportunities to be involved in the education of learners with autism.

*Education:* This term implies techniques that parents employ in order to teach, as well as guide children through maintaining communication and imparting them with information (Mowder, 2005). The focus of this dimension was on how teachers helped parents to utilize both in-school and out-of-school resources to guide the learners in doing homework.

*General welfare and protection:* Parents are obliged to provide basic needs to their children, and further keep the learners safe from all sorts of harm (Rekha & Satapathy, 2017). In this factor, we analyzed the role teachers and therapists played in enhancing parental involvement in in-school and out-of-school activities to protect the learners from being subjected to psychological, emotional, and physical harm.

*Responsivity:* Mowder (2005) posits that responsivity is the degree to which parents respond to the daily needs of their children. Hence, our focus was on the strategies that teachers set up to enable parents to be responsive to the academic needs of learners with autism and also to motivate the learners to thrive for academic excellence.

*Sensitivity:* This term refers to an accurate understanding of the meaning behind the behavior of the child and attending to the child's needs. Hence, we looked at strategies that parents, teachers, and out-of-school communities used to optimize parental involvement in addressing the learners' academic and social needs.

### *Bio-ecological Systems Theory*

The Bio-ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was propounded by Urie Bronfenbrenner, a Russian developmental psychologist. This theory views the environment as a multi-layer of five interrelated systems: the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-system. Underneath, we describe each of these five systems.

*The micro-system:* This is the child's closest area of direct participation (Soyege, 2020), comprised of structures that include family, school, neighborhood, and church (Guy-Evans, 2020). Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulates that in micro-system relationships are bi-directional, that is, they impact both away from the developing child and also towards the child. In this system, we focused on resources through which the family and school can optimize parental involvement in the endeavor to successfully educate learners with autism in mainstream primary schools.

*The meso-system:* This system elucidates the ultimate impact of the relationship between two or more micro-systems as the child develops (Guy-Evans, 2020). In the case of educating learners, Magano (2020) notes that parental involvement entails parents' visits to their child's teachers, whereby in the presence of the learner, the learners' work should be reviewed. Hence, in this context, we focused on how human resources, namely teachers and in-service education and training department lecturers can create the least restrictive environments that are conducive to intensifying opportunities for the involvement of the parents in educating learners with autism.

*The exo-system:* It encompasses links that exist between settings that although not involving the child directly (Brien, 2019), the child does nevertheless, significantly experience the negative or positive forces between the setting of their sphere of operation and the other settings. Thus, we focused on how communities, health services, and the entire education system designed tailor-made activities and services to optimize parental involvement in educating learners with autism.

*Macro-system:* This system encloses the micro-, meso- and exo-systems, and it constitutes the administrative or political hierarchy, traditions, and opinions within the culture and society in which the child develops (Soyege, 2020). In this system, we analyzed measures that head teachers, as administrators used to curb handicapping environments which constrain maximized parental involvement in the education of learners at home and school.

*The chrono-system:* It encapsulates the time of occurrence of environmental events as they unfold throughout the course and development of the child (Soyege, 2020). Hence, we focused on strategies through which resources in the community, health services, and the country's education systems could be effectively and efficiently used to optimize parental involvement in relation to the current trend of inclusion of learners with autism.

### ***A review of local and international literature***

Operationalized through the National Disability Plan of Action 2015-2020, the National Disability Policy of 2013 is authorized to inform and sensitize families about the unique needs and rights of persons with autism, and further ensure that they are successfully mainstreamed in all levels of society, beginning from the home, as the first and most fundamental setting of society (Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013). Chalwe et al. (2021) opine that to enable parents to efficiently navigate the complexities of obtaining resources, support, and maintaining motivation that emanates from parenting learners with autism, the parents require counseling.

Shattnawi et al. (2020) report that to cater to the exceptionality of learners with autism, some parents find themselves compelled to quit their full-time jobs. While struggling with the reduced family income, which comes with the loss of full-time jobs, the state of schools, on the other hand, often requires parents to boost the academic aspect of the learners with autism by hiring private special education teachers. Notably, in the United States of America, Helkkula et al. (2020) revealed that for tuition, parents of learners with autism are offered discounts.

Although inclusive education is embedded in a social justice paradigm, parents are engulfed with mainstream schools' neglect and isolation of learners with autism, and the absence of autism-appropriate curriculum and assessment tools (Yaacob et al., 2021). While adequately trained teachers are entrusted with producing positive scholastic results, Numisi et al. (2020) showed teachers' ill-preparedness and inadequacy of skills in teaching learners with autism. Moreover, in an effort to explore profiles of private and public autism-specific schools in the Gauteng province of South Africa, Erasmus et al. (2019) established that according to principals' perspective, autism-specific schools were the best educational placement for learners with autism.

Adigun, Mosia, and Mngomezulu (2023) believe that making fathers guest speakers on 'career days' can strengthen the bonding between fathers and their children, and could also serve as a prudent strategy for the maximization of the fathers' involvement in their children's education. In another study, Marais (2020) established that teachers held the view that talks, workshops, seminars, and support groups are significantly essential for equipping parents with crucial information that they need for optimization of their involvement in the teaching and learning of learners with autism. Moreover, utilization of these fora is also paramount for eliminating and reducing teacher-parent conflict by keeping teachers well acquainted with current information and trends in the education of learners with autism, for instance, additional sources available to provide extra help for the learners with autism (Omolayo et al., 2020), as it has been observed that conflicts arising from unrealistic expectations damage teacher-parent relationship (Numisi et al., 2020).

### **Method**

The subsequent section discusses the methodology which underpinned this study.

### ***Approach, design, and paradigm***

This study was guided by a qualitative research approach, and such an approach was prudent for describing experiences and situations from the participants' perspective (Davidson, 2019), and also enabling us to explore and understand strategies for optimizing parental involvement in educating learners with autism in mainstream primary schools from multiple perspectives (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020), hence, the use of interviews and document analysis. To seek the strategies, we utilized a phenomenological design, and the interpretivism paradigm (Alharahshen & Pius, 2020).

### ***Sampling***

The participants of this study were a composition of fifteen male and female parents and teachers, amongst whom were seven parents and eight teachers of learners with autism. Due to our anticipated desire to extract rich and relevant data, we purposively sampled from four public and private mainstream primary schools situated in the Manzini region of Eswatini.

### ***Data collection***

For collecting data, we employed individual semi-structured interviews, focus-group interviews, and document analysis. In readiness for conducting the study, we designed separate individual interview guides for the parents and teachers, a focus-group interview guide for teachers of learners with autism, and a document analysis form. Before taking each of these instruments to the field for data collection, we sent them to a specialist in the field of special education needs for expert validation. After a thorough review, we amended all items that appeared seemingly vague or less beneficial for extracting data relevant to answering the research question. For instance, in order to safeguard participants from experiencing fatigue, we reduced the number of interview questions.

As observed by Wishkoski (2020), semi-structured interviews enabled us to have more control over the subject of inquiry, as their flexibility accorded us an opportunity to ask follow-up questions by deviating from the pre-formulated key questions when needed to pursue a response in more detail arose (Cohen et al., 2018). We administered individual interviews, ranging from 30 to 60 minutes long in venues that were suggested by the participants, and the rapport we established earlier with the interviewees enabled them to provide rich, detailed accounts of the subject at the heart of the study (McGrath et al., 2020). From the teacher participants, we also collected data through a focus-group interview, thus, enabling the participants to interact spontaneously with each other (Gundumogula, 2020), and at this juncture, allowing the subject under investigation to be tackled without having to follow a formulated strict series of questions (Adler et al., 2019). The data collected through interviews were authenticated through an audio-recording system. Moreover, to supplement the responses from interviews, we engaged in document analysis (Bingham et al., 2019), whereby, we analyzed learners' exercise books, workbooks, and class attendance registers.

### ***Data analysis***

We analyzed the data using the six basic steps of thematic analysis as posited by Braun and Clarke (2006). Since the thematic approach of analysis is a method

for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Braun et al., 2019), we, thus, familiarized ourselves with the data, generated codes, searched for themes, reviewed the themes in relation to the codes extracted, defined and named the themes, and lastly we compiled a report.

### ***Ethical aspects considered in the study***

Ethical considerations which we adhered to were informed consent, whereby participants declared their consent to participate by endorsing signatures in consent form reply slips which we provided to them; self-determination, whereby participants' dignity and freedom of choice to partake, refuse or withdraw participating at any stage of this study was not coerced by any means of intimidation emanating from fear of incurring penalties (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); minimization of harm, by safeguarding participants against becoming stressed (Arifin 2018); anonymity, by ensuring high level of privacy of data sources through assigning pseudo-names to participant parents, teachers and schools; and securing confidentiality of information participants divulged. Prior to undertaking this study, we secured authorization from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee of the university (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), and also from the Director of Education in Eswatini.

### ***Measures of trustworthiness***

In this study, we anchored trustworthiness through the four pillars: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as outlined by Guba and Lincoln, (1981), cited in Huttunen and Kakkori (2020). We established credibility by presenting supporting evidence to prove that the findings accurately reflected the data that we collected (Johnson et al., 2020). To ensure transferability, we provided thick descriptions that were rich enough to make judgments about the findings' transferability to other contexts (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Furthermore, we safeguarded dependability by providing documentation of clear, logical notes of how each stage of the study was undertaken (Maree, 2020), so other researchers could follow the audit trail (Leavy, 2020). Moreover, we guaranteed confirmability through establishing transparency in all the steps we undertook throughout the entire research process, and thoroughly ensured that we never at any stage fabricated the data.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Below are the findings of this study, categorized into two themes: deployment of autism-specific trained teachers and raising awareness at all levels of society. Each theme is elucidated below.

#### ***Deployment of autism-specific trained teachers***

During training, autism-specific trained teachers are equipped with skills to make them competent in utilizing autism-specific curriculum and assessment tools (Yaacob et al., 2021). The findings of this study illustrate that due to doubting the teachers' qualifications, parent participants never believed that the currently deployed teachers could combat the academic performance discrepancies among learners with autism, hence, some even suggested the establishment of separate

educational settings. In a complaint, School A, Parent Participant 2, a teacher by profession purported that:

*The Ministry of Education and Training should embrace the learners with autism and should post a special education needs teacher to the school... The head teacher too should embrace the disability and educate herself. Such can make it easier for her to monitor and support the teachers, and then easier for them to give us tips on how to support the learners in studies.*

School A, Parent Participant 1 expressed the need for the government to take giant strides to revamp the education system by saying:

*I think the Ministry of Education and Training should train teachers for autism because most teachers are learning about our children. Hence, it's difficult for us to be involved in assisting the learners with their studies.*

After analyzing the classwork exercise book for the learner, School B, Parent Participant 2 shared the same sentiments by saying:

*The school should have relevant qualified teachers to teach our children... For now, I think there should be separate places where these children can be taught, either in this school or in a special school constructed specifically for them. These learners can get a proper education if they can compete among themselves because for now we get minimal support because the focus of the school is on the 'normal' learners.*

The findings show that parent participants feel teachers should be typically trained in various assessments and techniques that are commensurate to the complexities of leading the learners to achieve positive scholastic results in examinations, quizzes, and tests. The findings on parent participants' mistrust of teachers' competency seem to be in alignment with findings recorded by Numisi et al. (2020) where both parent and teacher participants felt teachers had not been adequately trained to handle the complexities of educating learners with autism. Contrarily, the findings contradict those of a study conducted by Helkkula et al. (2020) whereby parents demonstrated a high degree of satisfaction with teachers who were autism-skilled enough to demonstrate a good understanding of special education needs for learners with autism.

The findings also reveal that parents' minimal involvement emanates from an existing misalignment between policy and practice, a situation which makes parents anxious and unable to adhere to Mowder's (2005) dimension of education where parents should use teachers as resources to gain assistance on how to support the learners in doing homework. This finding concurs with one from Numisi et al. (2020) where in Limpopo, unrealistic expectations negatively impacted the teachers-parents relationship. In the context of Eswatini, unless they have upgraded their qualifications to keep themselves abreast with inclusive education,



most teachers who acquired pre-service training earlier than 2010 have with the introduction of inclusive education only received small doses of training through in-service training. Notably, behavioral problems exhibited by learners with autism require a strong intervention, especially one that comprises highly autism-skilled teachers. While Chitiyo and Dzenga (2021) aver that budgetary constraints inhibit the allocation of funds to education, it is, however, imperative to note that without adequate skills and instructional resources, teachers cannot be able to tailor instructional methods to accommodate the exceptional needs of the learners with autism. Consequently, with the minimal information imparted by incompetent teachers, the parents' effort in supporting the learners in studies may yield futile results, thus, a need for relevantly skilled teachers to lay a solid foundation during class time.

***Raising awareness in all levels of society***

The National Disability Plan of Action of 2015-2020 strives to uproot all misconceptions leveled towards all persons with autism (Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013). The majority of parent participants believed that sensitizing the entire society could serve as a brilliant strategy to optimize parental involvement in the education of learners with autism. School B, Parent Participant 1 mentioned that:

*There should be awareness and ongoing counseling at school level, whereby teachers or any relevant people should see to it that issues of bullying are curbed.*

School A, Parent Participant 2 alluded that:

*There should be some awareness of some sort, at all levels of society. For example, the first time I heard and learned about it was when I got this child. I got so confused.*

Through their responses, teacher participants also revealed that they, too, as curriculum implementers believed that sensitization could be a pivotal strategy towards optimization of the involvement of parents in the education of the learners. School D, Teacher Participant 1 purported that:

*Parents are fighting for their children to be accepted, so the school should sensitize the rest of the learner population.*

Similarly, School A, Teacher Participant 1 alluded that:

*The parents and the entire community have to be counseled. Actually, if they are counseled at the community level prior to enrolling their children here at school, they can be supportive... We too, if parents bring a child to school, we educators should show that the child is gradually growing to be something in the future, like this existence of autism is not the end of life.*

Furthermore, School A, Teacher Participant 2 believed that when the opportunity is availed, teachers too should not be spared from intensive counselling. She said:

*For teachers, I feel there should be workshops now and again where teachers can be sensitized... and the administration would sensitize parents, thus, they would help, like, where I need to improvise for teaching aids.*

Moreover, School C, Teacher Participant 1 believed that parents should be counseled to train the learners to be active in performing exercises, rather than spoiling the learners by pampering them. She said:

*Not to give cell phones to sit and play, but to make sure that learners are accorded and supported to do activities to allow practice on speech and gross-motor movement.*

The above findings and those from focus-group interviews demonstrate that while there may be a vast array of verbal communication channels that could be beneficial in optimizing parental involvement in an endeavor to assist the learners to succeed in school, like talking to teachers in person and/or phone calls, as well as written communication channels, like notebooks and learners' progress report cards, parent participants also had hope that workshops and teachers' meetings could be used to foster the two-way communication salient for disseminating information. This finding echoes that of a study conducted by Marais (2020) where workshops, seminars, and support groups emerged as useful systems for disseminating accurate information to various stakeholders. For instance, in the case of head teachers, after being well-informed they can in addition to procurement of accommodative teaching aids inspire parents to cooperate in all matters of educating the learners with autism.

Notable is that the learners' accumulative exposure to bullying may increase the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and interfere with the learners' willingness to attend school. While in this study, some parent participants were qualified teachers, the effects of exposure to bullying may compromise the effort of such parents to volunteer their minimal expertise in motivating learners to engage meaningfully in their education. Regardless of such, the Bio-ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is rooted in the belief that social contexts and the level of the healthiness of relationships a person shares with colleagues, neighbors, family members, and institutional frameworks within their environment all tend to have an influence on the child's overall state of wellbeing (Soyege, 2020). Unless and until curbed, the destructive impact of autism on the learners and their parents struggling within parameters of what is generally considered worth of inclusion in regular school and society will continue to prevail and compromise parental involvement. Thus, the need for vibrant sensitization of people at all levels of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological System can equip the entire citizenry with the necessary information to dispel all misconceptions centered around autism.

## **Conclusion**

The findings reveal that the current widespread dissatisfaction emanating from teachers' incompetence can be mitigated through the deployment of autism-specific trained teachers. Furthermore, the inhumane treatment of parents of learners with autism which manifests through minimal consideration of the academic needs of their children educated in mainstream primary school settings can be eliminated through conducting nationwide training to sensitize the entire citizenry on fostering concrete parental involvement in the education of learners with autism.

## **Suggestions**

The findings show that despite the numerous government policies in place, the supremacy of the drive towards equalization of educational opportunities for learners with autism has not yet received adequate attention, and that jeopardizes the extent to which the learners' parents are involved in mainstream primary schools. Thus, we suggest that to optimize parental involvement, teacher training institutions and the in-service education and training department should increase teachers' efficacy by expanding their scope of inclusive education programs to include vigorous training of all stakeholders on autism. Hence, to ensure that the education of learners with autism is not jeopardized, the Ministry of Education and Training can dispatch a vibrant inspectorate to monitor the implementation and evaluation of educating the learners with autism in mainstream primary schools as well as enhance its potential to yield tangible outcomes for optimal involvement of parents.

Moreover, to accrue the involvement of parents, the Ministry of Education and Training in collaboration with the Deputy Prime Minister's office, as a focal point for disseminating accurate information about disabilities should stipulate guidelines for parental involvement, conduct robust nationwide awareness campaigns to empower the entire broader citizenry, and as well craft monitoring tools for ensuring that schools and the entire Eswatini society embrace and support the involvement of parents in all areas of decision making in the inception, implementation and evaluation of all educational programs pertaining the learners with autism.

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## **LEARNING ACADEMIC WRITING IN THE AGE OF AI THROUGH PATTERNING CHATGPT PROMPTED TEXTS: THE HARE VS. THE TORTOISE**

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### **Abstract**

The quill is dead; long live AI. Generative AI writing tools or what is commonly known as GAI or GenAI are becoming the students' best friends. Today, they are largely used -and abused- by students and surprisingly even researchers looking for the "perfect" text. Patterning GenAI content like ChatGPT is still an unexplored avenue. From this perspective, this paper tries to provide structured guidance for struggling post-millennial learners. After asking ChatGPT to generate academic texts, a content analysis was conducted to unlock ChatGPT's seemingly "perfect" writing style. The results of the research uncovered a series of decoded patterns that offer a treasure map and an academic journey to GenAI minds. Furthermore, this showed that (over) relying on GenAI machines or competing with them is simply counter-productive. Therefore, learning WITH them is technically possible. Imagine for a second the great potential of such cooperation human - machine. Speed is allied with imagination. Why not? Moving from a prohibitive approach to an inclusive one through learning with AI chatbots might be a solution.

**Keywords:** academic writing, generative AI writing tools, pattern-based learning (PBL), pl(AI)giamism, post-millennials.

### **Introduction**

The quill is dead long live the pen. The pen is dead long live the typing machine. The typing machine is dead long live Microsoft Word. Microsoft Word is dead long live Google. Google is dead long live AI. And what is next? It remains to be seen. Our minds can outsmart GenAI tools provided we find the right way to utilize them. Our students are unlearning written expression lessons through over-relying on GenAI tools killing in the same occasion their minds with their own minds and thinking that GenAI machines are more intelligent than them. The present paper hypothesizes that learning with GenAI machines might be more beneficial than simply over-relying on them through prompting then copying and pasting content mindlessly. Prompting ChatGPT to generate content about this same topic and then patterning its structural, lexical, syntactic, and grammatical style is the approach we explored. Throughout this research we revisited the following sub-topics: learning academic writing in the age of AI, Understanding the basics of academic writing, developing a writing style, academic writing in





brick-and-mortar schools vs. AI, the dangers of over-relying on GenAI tools, patterning GenAI texts or “the tortoise approach”, and finally understanding patterning in GenAI texts (Whiteside & Wharton, 2019).

The quill, as the first writing technology, survived from the 6th to the 19th century. With technological advancements, Gutenberg's printing machine was a real writing revolution (Man, 2010). Welcome to mass production. With a real cultural and social impact, books and documents were no longer precious rare intellectual products.

Developed in the 19th century, the typewriter mechanized the writing process. Everyone could buy his/her own machine democratizing fast writing at home and working places. It allowed typists and secretaries -women in general- to gain social power till the 70s (Lyons, 2021). That century knew a real intellectual revolution. In Algeria, that machine survived till the late 90s when computers were not democratized enough.

The 20th century witnessed the digitalization of the writing activity. Now Bill Gates' Microsoft Word is everywhere, even on the computer am using to write these lines. Not only MS Word writes faster than any formal tool, but it can correct our typing and even linguistic mistakes. Images, hyperlinks, and other multimedia elements can be integrated into text. Then, Larry Page and Sergey Brin created Google (Flammang, 2007). Google was a game changer in terms of online advertising, search engine technology, cloud computing, computer software, quantum computing, e-commerce, consumer electronics, and now artificial intelligence. However, it could not dominate the market of AI as OpenAI did (Berkeley, 2023).

AI technology opened doors to incredible possibilities taking a lead in different domains like education, medicine, agriculture, military defense, and even entertainment (Maglogiannis, 2011). The use of NLP permitted AI-powered tools like Grammarly, GPT 4, and Gemini to invade almost every personal computer in the world. GenAI tools are now offering opportunities and challenges at the same time. This dual and often complex nature made schools around the globe legitimately suspicious creating a wait-and-see reluctant attitude. AI or not AI, that is the biggest question.

Defining the concept of patterns is necessary to understand their types and the fields they could be applied. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2024), “pattern is any regularly repeated arrangement”. The term is defined in Dictionary.com (2024) as “a combination of qualities, acts, tendencies, etc., forming a consistent or characteristic arrangement”. Pattern recognition in language learning and foreign languages is of paramount importance. It permits us to understand the foundations of language structures syntactically, lexically, and stylistically. Roots, prefixes, affixes, and even infixes (rare occurrences), if they are analyzed and understood, can solve many linguistic issues in terms of text comprehension (Summers, 1979). The same could be said for collocational patterns in foreign languages, allowing to unlock almost any Romanic/Latin language like French and Spanish, including English which uses plenty of Latin borrowings. Patterning a language can be defined as the identifiable repeated elements in a text. These include patterns of repetition or similarity.

### ***Theoretical framework***

#### *Learning academic writing in the age of AI*

Students and teachers are making great but often inefficient efforts to learn/teach productive skills mainly academic writing. Ultimately, our students are taught to generate academic content called a thesis or dissertation. The examiner's concern is more focused on how well that thesis/dissertation is written with little consideration on the oral viva defense. Learning academic writing involves mastering a set of principles that include clarity, cohesion, coherence, conciseness, preciseness, and scholarly rigor. In the end, students often opt for copying and pasting content neglecting at the same time their supposed intellectual presence and critical skill.

Therefore, the one-million-dollar question is: can we really “teach” writing in the age of AI? One may say that it would be nonsense to over-focus on traditional explicit grammar rules and mechanics since every student possesses MS Word. Furthermore, using GenAI today is within a few mouse clicks. A simple and “free” subscription can open endless possibilities when asked to generate academic content like an essay or a thesis/dissertation. One more thing, let's ask an innocent question: why are GenAI tools free? The democratization of AI tools is not without challenges. Furthermore, why is it banned or restricted to use in prestigious universities like Sciences Po in France? (Dawson, 2023). Still, students around the globe have the possibility to use GenAI at home without any restriction to complete their academic “tasks”. Is it really a good idea to ban it at universities only? Rethinking the way we learn/teach writing is NOW more crucial than ever before (Laist, 2024). In the age of AI something has gone very wrong with writing instruction remarked Warner (2025).

#### *Understanding the basics*

The other one-million-dollar question that every student around the globe wants us (teachers) to answer is the following: Why do we have to learn academic writing when we have GenAI literally in our pockets? Using GenAI can be extremely helpful to work faster and probably more efficiently. Sometimes writing a thesis might be overwhelming leading to “mental health issues” (Ayres, 2022). GenAI can for instance gather data, provide a consistent list of references, and correct the whole within hours or less. However, academic writing requires students to analyze information, interpret, and synthesize knowledge with a personal touch. That personal touch implies imperfect content. So, that imperfection is perfect when using pre-GenAI age. Therefore, developing critical thinking skills is essential for problem-solving and decision-making. On the other hand, retention cannot be reinforced with GenAI. Students are required to defend their theses and explain concepts in their own words when in viva voces; GenAI cannot. More importantly, and in terms of integrity, GenAI cannot guarantee a (pl)AIgiarism-free content as references are often missing and “hallucinations” are frequent. Humans might be assisted by powerful GenAI, but their creative insights are irreplaceable (Bornet, 2024). GenAI content is too perfect to be human, and that is the problem with NLP machines. Finally, one can never repeat that enough, over-relying on GenAI is raising ethical concerns. Achievements are better valued when accomplished under

time and space constraints, which make them, again, human. Understanding the basics can save our students' academic careers.

### *Developing a writing style*

Developing a personal writing style is not something that happens out of the blue. It is the result of persistent reading. This process requires reading diverse texts on a daily basis. Obtaining new vocabulary from different writing styles deepens the understanding of various themes. This consistent exposure to literature whether academic, non-academic, or even “trash”, as recommended by a certain William Faulkner, sharpens critical thinking and forms unique and original texts. “Read, read, read. Read everything -- trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write. If it's good, you'll find out. If it's not, throw it out of the window.” (Faulkner, as cited in Ephron, 2010)

Those texts, even if they are imperfect, are perfect for perfectness is a myth. In the same vein, GenAI pseudo linguistic perfectness is imperfect. Browsing diverse genres and authors can inspire writers who can themselves inspire future generations and Charles Dickens, the bestselling author in the world after the bible, is only the tip of the iceberg. Like any other craft, writing can be improved with practice, a persistent practice (Rosenfeld, 2015). Journaling, writing short texts, messaging, chatting, and even SMS are frequently used by students. Unfortunately, they are performed in their respective native languages very often in dialect. Furthermore, listening and listening a lot can also enrich a language/foreign language. Radio-based learning (RBL), including its modern version of podcasts. Participating in writing workshops is another option. Moreover, national and international conferences offer real opportunities for undergraduates to challenge other peers with varied cultural and thus linguistic perspectives. Postgraduates can do the same through international academic events or reading papers in one's field of study. Those approaches provide the writer with a broad spectrum of styles and expose them to native speakers at the same time. Peer reviews and proofreading from colleagues are valuable feedback. Finally, and this is our topic, learning from GenAI machines is now technically possible. One may generate his own content using the above recommendations and then ask a GenAI machine for assistance. That assistance can take many forms. One may ask a GenAI to check mistakes, coherence, cohesion, clarity, accuracy, etc. One can even ask a GenAI to provide (more) references or convert a text written in APA into an MLA format without altering the content and without trying to impose that typically AI “perfect” style on writers. Otherwise, ethical issues may arise.

### *Academic writing in brick-and-mortar schools vs. AI*

Teaching methods have significantly developed over time. Traditionally, academic writing has been taught for centuries in brick-and-mortar schools. Human communication, feedback, and team working were key assets. However, with the impressive possibilities GenAI can offer, tech-savvy students -and even some researchers- think they have finally found that ultimate tool capable of generating everything, everywhen, for everyone, about anything.

In brick-and-mortar schools, academic writing is typically taught through direct instruction from teachers who explain writing principles to the whole class.

Students rarely receive personalized feedback on their work. Therefore, their improvements are followed only on very rare occasions like exams which is nonsense. However, face-to-face interaction is the key asset brick-and-mortar schools possess (Milakovich & Wise, 2019). Oftentimes, students can ask questions and receive immediate clarification. Still, when it comes to applying those rules in real-world situations like writing abstracts for a conference application, it is another story. Traditional schools emphasize peer collaboration and teamwork, where they correct each other mistakes. This “collaborative learning approach” (Rutherford, 2014) might help some students but cannot always develop all aspects of writing like critical thinking and analytical skills for it is said to be time-consuming.

Theoretically, brick-and-mortar schools offer access to resources, such as traditional libraries that almost nobody uses unless forced to do so. These resources do not really provide students with effective and efficient support to enhance their writing skills. Students need writing centers staffed with experts in university research methodology, research techniques, academic writing techniques, etc. Libraries are hiding a wealth of references that students do not unfortunately use because simply they cannot. Their smartphones and homes seem more welcoming than those empty, unmonitored, deserted places called libraries. Furthermore, students, and mainly Master students, do not have institutional emails to get access to digital research platforms like ResearchGate. They have to wait for an eternity to get that access. Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok are much more appreciated for their prompt accessibility. Some universities in developing countries need to address that nonsense. It is urgent.

With a set curriculum and deadlines, traditional schools are surviving. This structured learning guarantees students discipline essential for academic success. Regular assignments and assessments are maybe the last “bullets” of brick-and-mortar schools GenAI lacks. The key asset of AI-based learning and GenAI is their possibility to offer personalized and tailored experiences that meet students’ individual needs anytime, anywhere, and everywhere (Davidson, 2024). AI tools force the use of algorithms to analyze a student's writing, identify patterns, and provide customized feedback. This allows students to work at their own pace. This level of customization is nearly impossible in public schools where class sizes often exceed 40 students. Furthermore, instant feedback is a significant advantage GenAI possesses. Students are now challenged by time constraints including deadlines. GenAI offers a miracle solution when it comes to saving and managing time (Marr, 2024).

The digital age has provided an intimidating number of resources available to students 24/7. AI extensive databases include academic papers, style guides like the APA, and writing tutorials. These resources allow students to learn flexibly outside of traditional classroom hours. Furthermore, GenAI machines do not have the words tiredness, fatigue, or burnout syndrome in their dictionaries (Bowen, & Watson, 2024).

Despite the many advantages, our students are facing a multitude of challenges related to academic writing in the age of AI. One concern is the potential over-reliance on AI tools, which may lead to a serious deficiency in self-editing skills. Additionally, AI tools may not fully capture the nuances that only human teachers can offer. The other challenge is the absence of “group dynamics” (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Working the whole day with a cold machine -

computers equipped with AI- is not fun. No genuine interaction can be felt to make a working day a memorable moment where smiling, laughing, communicating emotions, and nonverbal interactions are present. So, both brick-and-mortar schools and GenAI-based learning have their unique benefits and challenges. The ideal approach may lie in integrating both methods. This hybrid approach is the future of academic writing. Resisting the winds of change is simply futile.

#### *The dangers of over-relying on GenAI tools*

The unconscious use of AI tools can inadvertently lead to the intellectual theft of ideas or an improper citation. This will cause a real issue of originality and integrity when preparing academic work. Claiming credit for work that we do not produce violates the academic regulation. Moreover, a dependence on GenAI to generate content can erode students' ability to rely on their minds and produce consistent personal works based on critical thinking, and analytical skills. Education is about acquiring skills, solving problems, and making decisions after rigorous analysis. It is about learning how to learn and not mere content production. Content is everywhere, in our computers, in libraries, and even in our smartphones in the form of an unlimited flood of information. Schools or officials allowing the overuse of AI are putting their reputations in jeopardy. Furthermore, GenAI systems are trained in vast amounts of data processing. When processing huge amounts of information, biases and inaccuracies might occur. Mistakes and errors might be perpetuated and even amplified if not checked and double checked by professionals. Over-relying on GenAI may lead to an (un)intentional propagation of biased or incorrect information. A heavy dependence on technology and GenAI may also lead to technologism, i.e., "an ideology to think that all human problems can be solved with technology" (Wiktionary, 2024). What if a technical failure shuts off all our devices and forces us to come back to our good old pen and paper? The above threats are a real message to humanity to strike a certain balance between minds and machines to guarantee probable resilience.

#### *Patterning GenAI texts or the tortoise approach*

ChatGPT is a slave who will soon become the students' master if they switch off their minds thinking that AI is THE ultimate solution. This is not an apocalyptic premonition but a fact. Students are excessively relying on technology. Now GenAI is everywhere. This leaves us with two options. Either switching off our minds and letting GenAI do our job -which is the slave approach- or trying to cooperate and learn with AI tools, or this is the master approach.

In this paper, we will try to explore the second option: cooperating and learning WITH GenAI tools by leveraging patterning techniques (Lingard, 2023). Patterning GenAI texts offers the possibility to the students (and our) minds to keep them switched on mode. If we choose the first option, we will activate Aesop's fast but stupid arrogant Hare mode. However, if we opt for the second, we will embody the slow but wise and persistent Tortoise. Yes, Aesop foresaw that as well. Just revisit the Hare and the Tortoise Aesop's fable and try to comprehend it from different perspectives including AI context.

### ***Understanding patterning in GAI texts***

Patterning refers to “the practice of identifying and replicating the structure, style, and content patterns in texts” (Hoey, 2005). It involves analyzing how AI constructs sentences and paragraphs, including all the (highly) frequent linguistic and stylistic elements. By studying these patterns, students can learn to mimic any GenAI they are using. This keeps their minds switched on following an ongoing learning approach or the Tortoise approach according to Aesop the father of all fables. Students can find plenty of examples to emulate by integrating interesting elements in their beginner style like nuances of academic writing, clarity, coherence, cohesion, appropriateness of lexical choice, conciseness, and even connectors and mechanics. Patterning allows students to be exposed to very high-quality writing based on high-quality sources. Furthermore, the possibility of GenAI to generate large volumes of text within seconds is a real game changer. Just ask. Do you want accelerated learning for free? Patterning ChatGPT content is the answer.

However, challenges with this approach exist. True, ChatGPT texts are too perfect to be within human reach. ChatGPT texts often lack creativity (McGeorge, 2023). Relying solely on patterning GAI texts may delimit students’ critical thinking. Therefore, it would be wise to pattern HUMAN authors who are masters in their craft like the bestselling author in the world after the Bible: Mr Charles Dickens. Dickens was capable of structuring a sentence within a word. Fictional works may complete that creativity gap that nonfiction lacks. Still, if utilized, students must be cautious and critically evaluate the content generated by AI which often suffers from inaccuracy and even hallucination (Ji et al, 2023).

### **Methodology**

This study employed a content analysis method to explore how ChatGPT-generated texts can enhance academic writing skills. Analyzing the structural, syntactic, and lexical patterns in ChatGPT's essay aimed to identify the potential opportunities and challenges of using GenAI tools in educational settings and homes. Through an experiment, this method involved dissecting the texts generated by ChatGPT to understand how the model adheres to rigorous academic writing (Liu et al, 2023). Through this analysis, students could leverage these patterns to improve their writing skills. Three steps were used to conduct the experiment:

1. Asking ChatGPT to write an essay about: “Learning Academic Writing with ChatGPT in the Age of AI through Patterning Its Prompted Texts” i.e. the article I wrote.
2. Patterning and templating ChatGPT generated essay using CA
3. Displaying the results.

Step 1: Asking ChatGPT to write an essay about: “Learning Academic Writing with ChatGPT in the Age of AI through Patterning Its Prompted Texts” i.e. the article I wrote. ChatGPT (OpenAI) wrote this as shown in italics about the topic: “Learning Academic Writing with ChatGPT in the Age of AI through Patterning Its Prompted Texts”:

### *Introduction*

*In the age of artificial intelligence, the landscape of education, particularly in the realm of academic writing, is undergoing significant transformation. ChatGPT, a state-of-the-art language model developed by OpenAI, stands at the forefront of this revolution. One innovative approach to learning academic writing with ChatGPT involves patterning its prompted texts. This essay explores how students can leverage ChatGPT to enhance their academic writing skills through this method, highlighting its benefits and potential challenges.*

### *Understanding Patterning with ChatGPT*

*Patterning, in the context of learning writing, refers to the practice of analyzing and replicating the structural and stylistic elements of high-quality texts. When applied to ChatGPT-generated content, this approach involves dissecting the model's output to understand how it constructs coherent and sophisticated academic writing. Students can use these insights to emulate effective writing techniques, thereby improving their own skills.*

*ChatGPT generates text based on extensive training on diverse datasets, which include a vast array of academic sources. This enables the model to produce well-structured and articulate writing that adheres to academic conventions. By prompting ChatGPT with specific topics or questions, students can obtain exemplar texts that demonstrate how to organize ideas, develop arguments, and use academic language effectively.*

### *Benefits of Patterning ChatGPT Texts*

*One of the primary benefits of this approach is exposure to high-quality writing. ChatGPT can provide numerous examples of well-crafted academic texts, offering students a rich resource for learning. By analyzing these texts, students can internalize key elements of academic writing, such as thesis development, evidence integration, and the use of transitional phrases.*

*Another advantage is the enhancement of writing skills. Through patterning ChatGPT-generated texts, students can improve their ability to structure essays, construct logical arguments, and employ precise language. This process helps students develop a deeper understanding of the mechanics of writing and boosts their confidence in producing their own work.*

*Furthermore, patterning ChatGPT texts can significantly accelerate the learning process. The model can generate a variety of examples in a short time, providing students with ample material to study and emulate. This efficiency allows learners to practice and refine their writing skills more rapidly than traditional methods.*

### *Challenges and Considerations*

*Despite the benefits, there are challenges associated with this approach. One potential issue is the risk of overreliance on AI-*

*generated content. Students might become too dependent on ChatGPT for generating ideas and structuring their writing, which can hinder the development of their independent critical thinking and originality.*

*Additionally, while ChatGPT produces coherent and contextually appropriate texts, it may not always capture the nuanced understanding required for complex academic topics. Students need to critically evaluate and adapt the AI-generated content to ensure it meets their specific academic needs and standards.*

*Ethical considerations also play a crucial role. Students must be aware of the importance of academic integrity and the ethical use of AI tools. Properly attributing sources and avoiding plagiarism are essential practices that should be emphasized alongside the use of ChatGPT.*

### *Conclusion*

*Learning academic writing with ChatGPT through patterning its prompted texts offers a promising and innovative approach to education in the digital age. By analyzing and emulating high-quality AI-generated content, students can enhance their writing skills, gain exposure to effective academic conventions, and expedite their learning process. However, it is essential to balance the use of AI with the cultivation of independent thinking, critical analysis, and ethical practices. Integrating ChatGPT as a complementary tool in academic writing education can help students develop a well-rounded and proficient approach to their writing endeavors.*

### Step 2: Patterning and templating ChatGPT-generated essay

This step consists of patterning the essay shown above. The step aims at analyzing the different linguistic patterns used to generate an academic text. The different linguistic patterns known in the literature are the following:

1. Discourse patterns/structural (organization of larger units of text, such as paragraphs and essays)
2. Syntactic patterns (sentences/phrases)
3. Lexical patterns (Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)

Discourse is “a generalization of the notion of a conversation to any form of communication” (Wikipedia contributors, 2024). Discourse analysis is the structural organization of larger units of texts, such as paragraphs and essays. This analysis gave the reader an idea of how ChatGPT formats essays or larger content. The syntactic patterns were considered to analyze smaller units like the sentence/phrase. When dealing with syntax we must consider the sentences -simple, complex, compound, or compound-complex- to calculate their presence and prevalence. Mechanics, or what is commonly known in schools as punctuation, refers to the conventions of written language, including punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and formatting. These elements are essential for clarity and readability in writing, ensuring that the text is understood as intended by the reader. As for the lexical analysis, it considered the lexical choice in terms of the usage of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. One can notice that we moved from macro elements (essay/paragraph) to micro ones, such as the syntactic level or the grammatical level that includes mechanics.



## Results

### *Discourse /Structural pattern*

ChatGPT uses the following 10-move patterns as an outline. However, the essay is too dry and robotic as it avoids any linguistic element helping to make the readers engaged and interested. Among the missing elements are the hook and the clincher. Without the hook, as a key element, readers can never be attracted to content. Furthermore, without the clincher, the readers may not be left with a good impression. Here is the outline proposed by ChatGPT in italics:

*Introduction:* Introduce the topic, provide background information, and state the thesis or main argument.

*Body:*

*Exploration:* Explore the topic in depth, presenting various aspects or perspectives.

*Understanding:* Explain key concepts or theories related to the topic to help the reader understand the context.

*Benefits:* Discuss the benefits or positive aspects of the topic.

*Advantage:* Highlight specific advantages or strengths.

*Efficiency:* Address how the topic can lead to more efficient outcomes or processes.

*Challenges:* Acknowledge potential challenges, obstacles, or drawbacks.

*Considerations:* Offer considerations or factors to keep in mind when approaching the topic.

*Ethical Considerations:* Discuss ethical implications or concerns related to the topic.

*Conclusion:* Summarize the main points, restate the thesis in light of the discussion, and provide closing thoughts or recommendations.

When asked: “Do you always follow this pattern when writing essays?” ChatGPT responded: “When writing essays, I often use a structure similar to the pattern you've described. This pattern provides a comprehensive and balanced approach to essay writing, ensuring that all important aspects of the topic are covered. However, the specific structure can be adjusted based on the requirements of the essay (1) or the preferences of the writer (2)”. This answer shows the ability of GenAI tools to adapt to different requirements or writers'/students' preferences. This adaptation is driven by a linguistic flexibility that demands high commands of linguistic patterns learned through the data of AI developers.

### *Syntactic patterns*

Table 1. Syntactic patterns

Sentence type	Number	%	Phrase type	Number	%
Declarative	31	100%	Noun Phrase	30	38.5%
Interrogative	00	0%	Verb Phrase	22	28.2%
Imperative	00	0%	Adjective Phrase	10	12.8%
Exclamatory	00	0%	Adverb Phrase	8	10.3%

Simple	12	38.7%	Prepositional phrase	8	10.3%
Complex	14	45.2%	Appositive Phrases	3	3.8%
Compound	5	16.1%	Gerund Phrases	2	2.6%

The text predominantly uses declarative sentences (100%) and a variety of phrases, with noun phrases (38.5%) being the most frequent. ChatGPT focuses on providing information and detailing concepts. This is a typical characteristic of rigorous academic writing that does not allow rhetorical style that might lead to confusion or misunderstanding. The diverse use of phrases is used to provide a comprehensive list of arguments. Complex sentences are often used in academic writing because they allow for more nuanced expression and detailed explanations. They help in conveying intricate ideas and relationships between concepts clearly. This is why complex sentences are prevalent in the provided texts.

Technically, any academic and thus structured text, can be templated. The following syntactic GenAI style-based template (GSBT) might address the student’s need for readily available texts. However, for many teachers, it raises the issue of integrity especially if used by many students for the same task. In terms of syntactic structures, some sentences might be too similar to the original text if simply copied and pasted unconsciously. The following templated text is a fast way to learn impressive useful academic expressions like: “... particularly in the realm of.....”, which is a low-frequency phrase used only by prominent writers or a GenAI tool like ChatGPT.

***The templated ChatGPT text***

**Introduction**

In the age of ....., the landscape of ....., particularly in the realm of ....., is undergoing significant transformation. ...., a state-of-the-art ..... developed by ....., stands at the forefront of this ..... . One innovative approach to ..... with ..... involves ..... . This essay explores how ..... can leverage ..... to enhance their ..... through this method, highlighting its ..... and potential challenges.

**Body**

....., in the context of ....., refers to ..... . When applied to ....., this approach involves dissecting the .....to understand how it ..... . Students can use these insights to....., thereby improving their own ..... .

By (verb)ing ..... with ..... or ....., students can obtain .....that demonstrate how to ....., ....., and use ..... effectively.

One of the primary benefits of this approach is ..... . ..... can provide numerous examples of ....., offering students a ..... for learning. By analyzing these ....., students can ..... of ....., such as ....., ....., and the use of ..... .

Another advantage is the enhancement of ..... . Through ....., students can improve their ability to ....., ....., and ..... . This process helps students develop a deeper understanding of the mechanics of ..... and boosts their confidence in ..... . Furthermore, ..... can significantly accelerate the ..... process. The model can ..... a variety of ..... in a short time, providing students with ample ..... to ..... and ..... . This efficiency allows learners to ..... their ..... more rapidly than ..... . Despite the benefits, there are challenges associated with ..... . One potential issue is the risk of (verb) ing..... . Students might too dependent on ..... for (verb) ing ..... and (verb) ing their ....., which can hinder the development of their .....and ..... . Additionally, while ..... produces (adjective) and (adverb) adjective ....., it may not always ..... required for ..... . Students need to (adverb) ..... and ..... the ..... to ensure it meets their specific ..... needs and standards. Ethical considerations also play a crucial role. Students must be aware of the importance of ..... and the ethical use of ..... . Properly (verb) ing ..... and (verb) ing are essential practices that should be emphasized alongside the use of ..... .

### **Conclusion**

Learning ..... with ..... through (verb) ing..... its ..... offers a promising and innovative approach to ..... in the digital age. By (verb) ing and (verb) ing..... , students can enhance their ....., gain....., and ..... their ..... process. However, it is essential to balance the use of ..... with the ..... of ..... , ..... , and (adjective) ..... Integrating ..... as a complementary tool in ..... can help students develop a well-rounded and proficient approach to their ..... .

By using these patterns, students can structure various academic texts in a similar style ensuring clarity and coherence while avoiding verbiage, redundancy, and ungrammatical sentences. Creating a “dictionary of patterns” (GenAI-Style-based Template) to be reused to write academic content when needed is possible now. Students can learn new low-frequency academic phrases never used by students so far such as “particularly in the realm of ...”. You can notice the importance of mechanics in understanding the logical sequencing of the lexis used in terms of choice, semantics, and pragmatics. Remove a comma, and everything crumbles down. A GenAI-style-based template (GSBT) refers to a structured framework derived from the stylistic and structural patterns identified in texts generated by GenAI models, such as ChatGPT. This template is used to help students and raise their awareness about the possibility of mimicking elements characterizing AI tools. It involves analyzing the syntactic, lexical, grammatical, and stylistic features. The purpose of a GenAI Style Based Template is to provide writers, particularly students, with a reliable blueprint that can improve their academic writing skills.

***Lexical patterns***

Academic writing requires adherence to some basic rules such as linguistic simplicity, accuracy, conciseness, and objectivity. However, according to ChatGPT, the readers' engagement is not really necessary when following these rules as it can divert the readers from the primary objective: clarity and informativeness. This explains the broad use of high-frequency lexis seen below. The human mind retains the vocabulary that is frequent, especially those regularly used at school. Therefore, the presence of low-frequency lexis in student's written or oral productions is minimal.

In academic writing, the use of low-frequency lexis can enhance the accuracy of the text. Low-frequency lexis is employed when it helps convey specific concepts or nuances that we cannot find in common vocabulary. Generally, it's important to ensure that the text remains comprehensible.

Counting the frequency of words in a text can be a useful idea for several reasons, depending on the context and the objectives. Readers can be informed about the presence of these two types of vocabulary that perform two different functions: clarity and accuracy. Frequent words can indicate the main themes and topics of a text. This can be very helpful in terms of literary content analysis. Moreover, the frequency of different types of words (e.g., high-frequency vs. low-frequency) can help assess the readability of a text. For students, analyzing word frequency can help identify overused words. In literature, for instance, students should be made aware of the uniqueness of author's styles, stylistically speaking. With this statistical approach, students can gain more insight into the world of words.

*Nouns*

Table 2. Syntactic patterns (nouns)

High-frequency nouns	%	Low-frequency nouns	%
Ability, age, analysis, approach, arguments, ChatGPT, challenges, confidence, considerations, content, conventions, context, development, digital, education, efficiency, elements, enhancement, essay, ethics, examples, exposure, ideas, implementation, insights, integrity, integration, intelligence, language, landscape, learners, learning, methods, mechanics, model, needs, notions, originality, output, participation, phrases, potential, practice, process, questions, reflection, reinforcement, resource, risk, role, skills, sources, standards, story, strategies, students, techniques, texts, time, topics, transformation, understanding, use, writing.	87.7%	Array, cultivation, dataset, endeavors, forefront, OpenAI, patterning, proficiency, realm.	12.3%

*Verbs*

Table 3. Syntactic patterns (verbs)

High-frequency verbs	%	Low-frequency verbs	%
Applied, analyzing, applied, become, breathe, balance, boost, create, can, construct, compare, evaluate, deliver, dissect, develop, demonstrate, design, employ, emphasize, Engaging, employed, exposing, employ, enhance, explore, ensure, evaluate, gain, generate, help, highlight, involve, incorporate, integrates, learns, offers, obtain, organize, play, practice, provide, produce, read, requires, rely, stand, study, supporting, structure, understand, using, use.	79.1%	Adhere, capture, delve, dissect, emulates, expound, expedite, hindering, harmonize, internalize, prompt, replicate, refine, underscore.	20.9%

*Adjectives*

Table 4. Syntactic patterns (adjectives)

High-frequency adjectives	%	Low-frequency adjectives	%
Academic, coherent, complex, critical, cultural, diverse, effective, educational, engaging, ethical, high-quality, imaginative, independent, innovative, numerous, own, popular, practical, rich, specific, structural, traditional, well-structured,	51.5%	Articulate, captivating, dynamic, state-of-the-art, nuanced, proficient, seamless, sophisticated, well-crafted, well-rounded,	48.5%

*Adverbs*

Table 5. Syntactic patterns (adverbs)

High-frequency adverbs	%	Low-frequency adverbs	%
Actively, always, effectively, extensively, naturally, rapidly.	62.5%	Potentially, seamlessly.	37.5%

*Implications*

GenAI or not GenAI in schools, that's the question. Some educational officials are looking at AI tools as an opportunity with challenges that probably bear the seeds of the students' minds destruction. However, we cannot resist the winds of change. Through the lens of Aesop's fable, "The Hare and the Tortoise," the opportunities are great but the challenges are great too. Should we work fast or slow and steady? There is no harm in being fast in today's fast-paced world.

However, working smart would be better. Fast and smart? Much better. GenAI tools are now replacing our old good pens but they cannot replace our minds. From this perspective, co-working with AI should be considered an interesting option. Quoting OpenAI is possible now. It is legitimate, legal, ethical, and smart. Humans use tools to gain time and cut corners. Teaching GenAI patterns in grammar/linguistics lessons is more relevant than ever before. Traditional -human-based- noncooperative content generating is dead; long live human-AI cooperation. GenAI tools are emulating human styles. Humans can emulate its style too through patterning. Integrating speed in our slow but steady learning process offers students a third option that goes beyond the simplistic “ban or allow” traditional approaches. So, the most effective strategy for learning academic writing in the age of AI may lie in balancing the hare's rapid advancement with the tortoise's steady progress.

### ***Discussion***

Too many issues remain to be discussed before taking any decision that might compromise the future of our students, themselves our future teachers. As tech savvies, students were the first to adopt AI tools in all domains. Western countries are still debating the thorny issue of “ban or allow” vs. allow without compromising the human critical mind and his analytical skills. How about the rest of the world, waiting for Godot? AI is learning faster than us, but still, a great deal of work remains to be done. One of the challenges waiting to be dealt with is teachers’ reluctance to adopt AI tools to use them as a part of the curriculum and even assessment methods. We have already allowed open books /devices exams around the 2000s. Are we heading towards “open GenAI” exams? Why not? However, that small overdose of AI might put students’ minds in jeopardy. We need to adapt the right dose according to different contexts and disciplines. As for academic writing, there is no harm in “asking” GenAI tools to correct our mistakes the same way we did with MS Word or Google. There is a real fear that an over-reliance on AI might stifle the students’ creativity. Some scientists argued that GenAI actually fosters critical creativity if used properly. There is another more serious fear. What if AI learns extensively for us humans allowing it to avoid biases, mistakes, and hallucinations? Would we be granted opportunities or would that “AI superpower” challenge us? Nobody knows. Our ancestral wisdom has always insisted on striking balance, ensuring a careful approach. So, wait and see?

### ***Conclusion***

The thorny issue of academic writing is a great challenge. Too many students are struggling to read. Reading can significantly enhance academic and even non-academic writing. AI offers a potential solution: its patterned texts that can be easily templated. AI, a virtual teacher for our future schools? Maybe. However, this AI "teacher" is not without flaws-it can introduce biases, make mistakes, produce robotic and unengaging content, and even suffer from hallucinations. Despite these imperfections, AI is learning at an unprecedented rate. There is a possibility that AI could approach human “(im)perfection”. The extraordinary fact in human style is its creative “imperfection”. Schools around the globe are considering the tryptic scenarios: “ban” (1), “allow” (2), “allow with restrictions” (3). The ban approach is nonsense. As if we are asking students to come back to pens and paper technology. The “allow approach”, on the other hand, risks overreliance on AI and could stifle

students' critical thinking and creativity. The “allow with restrictions” seems to be a wise approach. Cooperating with GenAI and robots is possible now. Quoting GenAI passages is technically allowed even if raising a certain debate about its ethicality. One can easily understand those championing banning AI from schools. They are afraid that someday there will be a “rise of machines” that replace all humans and even worse enslave us. The use of GenAI offers opportunities and challenges as well. Seizing that opportunity while accepting the challenges is possible. Teaching academic writing becomes a real challenge for teachers. Relying partially on GenAI through patterning its style might be a solution to engage post-millennials of whom the majority are tech-savvy. The problem now is the reluctance of their teachers to follow the trend. Moreover, It is crucial to raise awareness about the necessity of learning with AI while keeping our minds alert. Following the dynamics of change is unquestionable. It is a guarantee that humanity is progressing towards an exciting world. Unproductive written expression is dead, long live AI-based written expression?

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## **SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN MORTAL ENGINES (2018) FILM: A STUDY OF POSTCOLONIAL ECOCRITICISM**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to uncover the social and environmental issues depicted in *Mortal Engines* (2018) and explore the possible implications the film promotes from the disparity's depiction concerning social and environmental justice. The study utilizes Huggan and Tiffin's Postcolonial ecocriticism and mise-en-scene theory, employing a descriptive-qualitative research method. The data is collected from the characters' dialogue and visual representations highlighting social and environmental injustice. The findings show that: 1) There are significant correlations and interconnectedness between different issues, resulting in social and environmental injustice within the film; 2) This injustice originates from ecological imperialism and is perpetuated by dualistic and binary thinking. These thinking patterns lead to bio-colonization, violence, abuse of power, marginalization, othering, and exploitation, contributing to power imbalances, social injustice, environmental racism, and degradation; 3) The depiction employs mise-en-scene, dialogue, symbols, allegory, visual language, and literary devices, the film effectively engages the audience and promotes social and environmental justice values; 4) The research also uncovers the film's role as an interventionist and counter-hegemony, advocating for social and environmental justice, decolonization, resistance, sustainability, humanity, and historicism.

**Keywords:** bio-colonization, dualistic thinking, environmental racism, postcolonial ecocriticism, social and environmental justice

### **Introduction**

In the field of social and environmental discourse, the pressing issues of justice for nature and justice for all people are two important dialogues taking place concurrently but frequently happening in different rooms. The interdependence between human existence and the Earth's conditions is often disregarded, mainly due to the influence of the "Western" development paradigm. This paradigm perceives environmental works and socio-human writing as having divergent focuses and interests (Nixon, 2005, p. 235). The integration of these two perspectives presents significant challenges due to the existing disparity between them. However, DeLoughrey, Huggan, and Tiffin challenge the presumption of incompatibility among "Western" scholars by highlighting human and nature's



shared interests and interconnected features. This issue is urgent because this prevailing paradigm often raises further social and environmental problems (DeLoughrey et al., 2011, p. 21). Fortunately, the emergence of the modern social and environmental criticism movement in the early twentieth century has led to a realization that these issues must be addressed together (Buell, 2011). This dual emphasis on human and nature's relationship is summed up in the phrase coined by Huggan and Tiffin (2007, p. 10): "no social justice without environmental justice; and without social justice – for all ecological beings – no justice at all." It was impossible to investigate contemporary colonialism and imperialism without dealing with the extensive ecological destruction that they entail (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 39). Thus, this research focuses on both social and environmental justice.

The increasing awareness of social and environmental injustice has ignited a greater demand for equitable and sustainable solutions. People have started actively challenging the prevailing "Western" development idea and advocating for social and environmental justice through various media, including film. As powerful artistic creations, films utilize cinematic elements to promote or mediate messages, and effectively explore issues and themes with the audiences. In today's society, movies play a significant role in our daily lives and are widely acknowledged for their capacity to inspire, evoke empathy, elicit sadness, or provoke fear (Bordwell et al., 2017). Films can communicate ideas, disseminate information, and shape social norms (Cloete, 2017). In this case, films possess subtle ideological and propagandistic elements capable of shaping societal perceptions and shaping notions of reality and truth (McQuail, 2010, p. 99). Moreover, mass media, including films, hold significant influence in framing and disseminating information about social and environmental issues (Vivanco, 2002, p. 3). However, ideas and beliefs in films come to life through how characters are shown and their underlying viewpoints. In film studies, these beliefs are also closely tied to the visual components of the film, including how it's shot and how everything appears in a scene called *mise-en-scene* which encompasses (Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2008, p. 317). How the camera is placed, the lighting is done, and the choices of costumes and props all work together to subtly share, advocate, or propagate the director's beliefs, message, ideology, or value with the viewers.

*Mortal Engines* is a thought-provoking film that delves into the issues of social and environmental disparity. The genre of this film is science fiction. The film is set in a post-apocalyptic and dystopian world. It takes place thousands of years after the devastating nuclear war between the American Empire and Greater China in 2116 years that obliterated the surface of the earth. The film depicts a society struggling to survive on a harsh, desolate earth. This film portrays the issues arising from environmental conditions and the efforts of the anti-traction league, led by Shan Guo, to preserve the environment and its resources. They face the Tractionists, represented by the city of London, who seek to exploit their land and community to fulfill the needs of the Traction city.

Traction City is a society that lives nomadically and relies on mobile cityscapes for survival, adding giant tank wheels under the settlement to roam the globe to fulfil the necessities by exploiting natural resources and hunting smaller towns. The central characters are Magnus Crome and Thaddeus Valentine. Magnus Crome is the Lord Mayor of London, responsible for addressing the city's crises, including energy and food needs. On the other hand, Thaddeus Valentine is

London's head historian and the film's main antagonist. He harbors the ambitious goal of resurrecting MEDUSA, an ancient weapon, to make London become the dominant world power. Due to his huge ambition, Valentine finally betrays and murders Magnus Crome to take control of London. This coup was caused by a different approach to solving London's problems. As a result, under Valentine's leadership, London became more invasive by declaring war on the anti-traction league to seize their territory and natural resources. London's plan is to demolish the anti-traction league's shield wall with MEDUSA to enter Shan Guo, take over, and exploit all the cities inside.

On the other side, Shan Guo, the leading nation-state of the anti-traction league, is a group of people who decide to a sedentary or settled living as opposed to the traction. They live harmoniously with nature without decreasing one another. This way of life is their struggle to save the world, stopping environmental destruction and overexploitation of natural resources. One of the important cities in Shan Guo territory is Batmunkh Gompa, a military base of the anti-traction league strategically positioned behind the Shield Wall. The Shield Wall is a robust steel and stone barrier spanning between two mountains, guarding the sole entry point into Shan Guo. The central characters in the anti-traction league are Ermene Khan, Anna Fang, and Tom Natsworthy. Ermene Khan, the Governor of Batmunkh Gompa, is responsible for keeping Shan Guo safe from outside threats. In addition, Anna Fang is a leading aviator and spy of the anti-traction league who struggles to defend Shan Guo from the London attack. In addition, Tom Natsworthy is the main protagonist of the film. He is also a London historian who is betrayed by Valentine. After being rescued by Anna Fang from being sold as a slave, Tom discovers Shan Guo and becomes an anti-Tractionist. He joins their forces to stop Valentine's evil plan and save the people of Shan Guo and London from the consequences of war and exploitation.

In addition, the clash between the Tractionists and the anti-traction league brings to light social and environmental issues. On the social aspect, the film exposes power dynamics, social injustice, political tyranny, abuse of power, othering, marginalization, and slavery. Simultaneously, the film shows environmental exploitation, revealing the depletion of natural resources, overexploitation, unsustainable lifestyles, polluted and damaged environments, and non-eco-friendly technology. What makes *Mortal Engines* compelling is its indirect depiction of how these issues are interconnected, giving rise to both social and environmental disparity.

The theory of postcolonial ecocriticism offers a valuable lens for analyzing *Mortal Engines* because the theory resonates with the core themes and concerns, presenting a compelling academic framework for understanding its intricate problems. Postcolonial ecocriticism's major idea is to study the connection between humans and nature, acknowledging the importance of both without diminishing either (DeLoughrey et al., 2011, p. 4). This theory specifically looks at how ecocriticism and postcolonialism intersect with and shape how human and nature is represented in literature. Postcolonial ecocriticism is driven by the principles of postcolonial, ecocritics, and postmodern theories, which aim to raise awareness and critique the practices of colonialism, specifically a new form of colonization emerged, known as imperialism, which prioritized the interests of capitalist politics and economics. This approach resulted in environmental degradation, serving as a

manifestation of its colonial agenda. This theory is characterized by its eclectic and interdisciplinary nature, as it draws upon a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, cultural studies, politics, literary language, social sciences, sociology, feminism, and more (Anggraini, 2019, p. 58). Furthermore, the themes studied are extensive and varied, covering almost every aspect of culture. These include politics, ideology, religion, education, history, anthropology, ethnic, arts, language and literature, as well as practical manifestations such as slavery, occupation, population displacement, language imposition, and various forms of cultural invasion (Bertens, 2017, p. 102).

It also analyzes how literature may be used to oppose or criticize colonial ideology and practices, especially those concerning social and environmental injustice. In addition, literature possesses the potential to wield political influence and force (Glissant, 1997, p. 151). Through artistic expressions like films, novels, and poetry, it utilizes persuasive methods and mediation to promote the cause of social and environmental justice. However, postcolonial ecocriticism, as an interdisciplinary framework, aligns with this perspective. Huggan and Tiffin, pioneers of this theory, present it as an interventionist discourse that challenges the dominant "Western" development narrative (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 27; Wenzel, 2011, p. 51).

This theory contests several notions. Firstly, it questions the dualistic thinking that simplifies issues into two opposing sides, such as right versus wrong and strong versus weak, which leads to marginalization and discrimination (Ashcroft et al., 2013, pp. 18–21). Secondly, it critiques the Western practice of bio-colonization, where the development narrative is used to exploit, civilize, and colonize entities for one-sided gains. Lastly, the theory addresses environmental racism, a sociological phenomenon that reflects an ecologically discriminatory attitude toward socially marginalized individuals. (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 4). Moreover, at its core, this theoretical approach is deeply concerned with the intricate interplay between humans and nature as they coalesce to forge a just society and sustainable environment (Miller, 2012, p. 476). As a result, this framework often involves the analysis of literature across diverse cultural and historical contexts while considering the perspectives of marginalized or colonized communities. This entails exploring how nature is portrayed in literature and how colonial power dynamics influence human interactions with the environment.

The research problem addressed in this study revolves around the intricate portrayal of social and environmental injustice within *Mortal Engines* film. This research used qualitative-descriptive methods, employing postcolonial ecocriticism and mise-en-scene analysis to explore the possible meanings and implications of the film's injustice depiction. As postcolonial ecocriticism is an evolving field of study, the writer focused on applying the relevant theories developed by scholars such as Huggan and Tiffin and necessary mise-en-scene concepts in order to address the research question.

## **Method**

The study utilized Huggan and Tiffin's Postcolonial ecocriticism and mise-en-scene theory. This Research decided to use a qualitative descriptive method as the main research methodology. The qualitative descriptive method is a research method that positions the writer as the main instrument while the data collection

process is done by merging and analyzing deductive data (Sugiyono, 2005). In the qualitative descriptive method, the data collected are in the form of words or pictures, not numbers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997, p. 5). Nevertheless, qualitative methods can be used when researching a person's life, life experiences, behaviors, emotions, feelings, functioning of organizations, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interrelationships among countries (Corbin & Strauss, 2014, p. 11).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Depiction of Social and Environmental Disparities in Mortal Engines***

The conflict between the Tractionists and the Anti-Traction League stems from differing perspectives, with the Tractionists holding a dualistic and anthropocentric view. This perspective places humans as superior beings at the center, considering the surrounding environment inferior and meant to be exploited for human interests. As stated by the narrator at the beginning of the film:

“60 minutes is all it took for the Ancients to bring humanity to the brink of extinction. Those who survived mobilized their settlements to begin life anew upon a poisoned Earth. In the hunt for food and fuel, the weak perished, and the strong grew ever more powerful. Until a new age arose, the Age of the Great Predator Cities of the West.” (Rivers, 2018, 00:00:35)

The opening narration sets the stage for the film's storyline and introduces the traction era. This new era emerged after the devastating Sixty-Minute War. The Sixty Minute War itself is a nuclear warfare event between the American Empire and Greater China that occurred in the year 2116 within the timeline of *Mortal Engines*. The two sides engaged in a full-scale nuclear war, resulting in widespread devastation and severe environmental damage. This catastrophic event also led to the demolition of vast amounts of humans, animals, plants, technology, and knowledge. Additionally, the narrator also talks about how society survived the harsh post-war environment and prevented humanity from extinction; People had to adapt by adopting a nomadic lifestyle and mobilizing their settlements. The narrator's statement signified the binary thinking that occurs in the film, highlighting the presence of the stronger/weaker binarism. However, binary thinking is connected to environmental and social injustice, as it creates a violent hierarchy where one side of the binary always dominates the other (Ashcroft et al., 2013, pp. 18–21). Any activity or state not fitting into this binary will be the subject of repression, exploitation, othering, and marginalization.



Figure 1. London City chasing Salzhaken City to exploit them

The figure above depicts a scene where London is chasing Salzhaken City, a small traction city focusing on harvesting salt to trade in the traction market. This chasing symbolizes predator/prey and strong/weak dualistic binarism. In this case, London is the Predator and Salzhaken City is the prey. Firstly, the scene takes place in the Hunting Ground, a desolate setting devoid of greenery, highlighting the scarcity of natural resources. Secondly, the scene's composition follows the rule of thirds technique, dividing it into two contrasting parts. Using a frog-eye low-angle technique further emphasizes the binary nature of the situation: strong/weak, predator/prey, colonizer/colonized. The foreground shows Salzhaken City as the weak prey, while London stands in the background as the powerful predator. Magnus' question reinforces this contrast, "What have we got?" (Rivers, 2018, 00:04:48), resembling a predator searching for prey. Magnus Crome as the Lord Mayor of London thinks power is everything, and the more powerful one has the right to oppress the weak. Valentine then answers "Small Bavarian mining town, powered by C-20 land engines. Usual store of brick, coal and iron and 75 tons of salt" (Rivers, 2018, 00:04:50). Valentine and Crome statements signify that both of them see Salzhaken City merely as a commodity or prey for London. In addition, postcolonial ecocriticism, rooted in the spirit of postmodernism, the discourse of colonialism in this theory goes beyond the explicit focus on the colonization of specific nations or peoples. Instead, it recognizes colonization as a broader phenomenon inherent to modernism, characterized by the imposition of a singular truth, uniformity, and universality across various domains, including knowledge, culture, and identity (Anggraini, 2019, p. 57). In this context, the findings above represent the universalistic efforts to legitimize and establish the hegemony of colonial practices by more powerful entities over weaker ones.



Figure 2. Damaged landscape caused by Traction City

The scene above portrays the damaged landscape caused by the traction city running over it with its gigantic tank wheels. The scene depicts the destruction of trees, plants, and land, pollution of soil and water, death of flora and fauna, and the formation of unhealthy pools in the *Mortal Engines* world. To highlight the extent of the environmental damage, the director utilizes an extreme long shot and a bird's eye angle, providing a clear view of the devastated natural surroundings. The rule of thirds framing technique is also employed, emphasizing the long stretch of land ravaged by the traction city symbolizing how big the impact is to the environmental degradation. The long stretch symbolizes a deep wound, aiming to evoke in the audience a sense of reflection and awareness that every human action is interconnected with the state of the environment. Figure 2 stands as a testament to the urge humans to no longer be indifferent to their surroundings and that there is a direct link between colonialist actions toward nature and humanity. The devastation



inflicted upon colonized territories parallels the destruction of societies and has blurred the line between the destruction of physical and human environments (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. viii). The term "post" in postcolonial is often understood to refer to the "time after" colonialism. However, postcolonialism is not limited to the study of literature in the postcolonial era or the era of independence. Its scope is much broader, encompassing all aspects related to colonialism. Rather than simply denoting a chronological sequence, the term "post" should be interpreted as "transcending" or "going beyond." Therefore, postcolonial (including its development theory) is a multidimensional field of study that extends beyond colonialism itself. It examines various issues that are connected to or influenced by colonialism, even if they may initially appear separate from it (Nurhadi, 2007, p. 2).

However, the people of Salzhaken were unaware that they would be trapped in a form of control and exploitation. The city of London uses the sign that says "London welcomes you" to manipulate and dominate them. This manipulation is a subtle process where the powerful party gains the trust of the weaker one and convinces them to submit and follow the dominant narrative (Piliang & Jaelani, 2018a, p. 99), in this case, to "turn in their old tech." It is done so subtly that the weaker party does not even realize it. This manipulation often starts by giving the weaker party what they want (Thwaites et al., 2018, p. 246). In the case of the Salzhaken refugees captured by London, they wanted to be welcomed by London. The sign's intention is to create a favorable first impression for visitors and convince them that London is a safe and pleasant place to call home. However, the writer has discovered relevant data that supports that statement which showed in Thaddeus Valentine's utterance:

"Oi! What's going on? Take this gentleman to the medics. I want that man on a charge. That should never have happened; you all deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. You will be given food, shelter, and employment. A chance to build a future, make a new life." (Rivers, 2018, 00:18:39)

The context of this statement is when a fight broke out between guards and a citizen from Salzhaken who was caught with a weapon. The guards resorted to violent repression, beating the resident. In response to the conflict, Mr. Valentine swiftly intervened, separating the two parties and restoring calm among the crowd. However, there were intriguing remarks made by Valentine during the incident that shed light on the hegemony of London. This can be observed in the figure presented below:



Figure 3. Thaddeus Valentine in the middle of the crowd

Thaddeus Valentine's speech may seem ordinary, but it is actually a clever manipulation. Since hegemony means gaining domination by consent (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 106), in the scene above, he speaks in a way that resonates with the people of Salzhaken. He is offering what they wanted first, promising them that they will be given food, a place to stay, a job, and a chance for them to have a better future and start a new life. All while assuring them that they will be treated with dignity and respect. Valentine's acting and performance show that he understands that getting people's consent cannot be achieved through force or violence. That is why he quickly stopped the violent acts of the guards. Additionally, hegemony is when a group of people naturally accepts the control of the dominant party without realizing it. Until unconsciously, they were under the control of the dominant party. Then, they see it as a normal part of their lives and follow it willingly, including their actions, thoughts, and beliefs (Piliang & Jaelani, 2018b, p. 100). This will be further clarified in the following discussion.

Hegemony is fundamentally the power of the ruling class to persuade other social classes that their interests are the interests of all (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 106). In Figure 3 above, the *mise-en-scène* is used by positioning Mr Valentine in the center of the frame, at the foreground side or closer to the camera. At the same time, other supporting characters, the Salzhaken citizens, are placed in the background. This arrangement directs our focus to the main character. Moreover, figure expression and movement are also crucial aspects of *mise-en-scène*, along with setting and costume. They contribute to the narrative and thematic unity of a film. Figure expression involves facial expressions and posture, while figure movement encompasses actions and gestures performed by actors (Lathrop & Sutton, 2014, p. 3). Together, these elements bring characters to life and enhance the overall coherence of the film. Therefore, by observing the characters' actions or figure behavior, it is evident that there is a change of mood and facial expression of Salzhaken residents that can be seen in the scene above. In the scene showing the condition before Valentine gives his speech, the tone and the mood are intense; the residents look afraid, worried, intimidated, and panicked. However, as seen in the background, the residents' expressions changed after he delivered his speech. They look delighted, smiling, calm, clapping, and cheering with happy faces in response to Valentine's speech. This response shows and signifies that Valentine has successfully gained the approval and support of the people subjected to colonialism, as they willingly embrace the dominant narrative. However, as the movie progresses, it becomes evident that the consent obtained through this hegemonic process becomes a source of exploitation and contributes to social and environmental injustice for the people of Salzhaken.



Figure 4. London tier identity card



Like gender and race, the concept of class intersects and interacts with the cultural and environmental consequences of colonial domination (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 33). This interaction can give rise to environmental racism, where certain social classes are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and pollution. This issue can be seen in Figure 4 which displays the character Katherine Valentine holding an identity card. The scene takes place in the Tottenham Court Station where access is only allowed for class 2 citizens and above. In the scene mentioned earlier, the use of mise-en-scene is worth noting as it enhances the film's narrative. The cinematographer employs close-up shots and applies the rule of thirds framing technique. By positioning the camera close to the object, in this case, Katherine's identity card, the audience's attention is directed toward it. The identity card holds more significance than meets the eye. Through this visual technique, the cinematographer intends to convey crucial information about the models of class-divided groups in *Mortal Engines* setting. Specifically, the London City social class system is divided into tiers, creating a class system where the wealthy and privileged patricians live at the top of the city with its luxurious infrastructures. In contrast, the lower castes are relegated to the lower levels, surrounded by the pollution and noise of the city's massive engines.

For instance, the "Tier One" label on Katherine's identity card indicates her high social status as the daughter of Mr. Valentine. This carefully filmed scene helps viewers understand the distinction between different social classes in the city. This creates a clear divide between the haves and the have-nots, with low-class citizens like Tom Natsworthy as third-tier citizens being treated discriminately. This social stratification within London also highlights the issue of environmental racism, as those in lower classes are not only denied access to certain facilities but are also subjected to harsher living conditions and limited access to resources. Because class played a crucial role in colonialism, it influenced how the colonizers viewed and treated different groups of people, often referred to as "natives" (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 33). This class distinction also started to affect the colonized individuals themselves, as they began adopting the language and ideas of the colonizers to describe the changes happening in their societies.



Figure 5. Slavery auction in the Hunting Ground society

The composition of the scene in Figure 5 is carefully crafted to convey the message effectively. The cinematographer uses a mise-en-scene technique by employing a wide-angle camera and a wide depth of field, allowing the audience to see the entire scene clearly. Additionally, the composition is structured in three layers: foreground, middle-ground, and background. In the foreground, the focus is on the bidders and buyers. Their appearance and costume, with decent clothing and healthy bodies, signify their privileged status and diverse origins. The blocking of

the scene directs the audience's attention toward the character in the center of the frame. In contrast, the background portrays the enslaved individuals in shabby clothes, with skinny and unhealthy appearances. They are shown tied and caged, emphasizing their dehumanization. This portrayal signifies the notion that enslaved people are treated as uncultured “others”, similar to animals, and subjected to unfair treatment that can be sold as commodities. Despite this, the blocking and use of props still draw attention to the central subject. The middle ground is the focal point of the scene, where two characters stand amidst the crowd. On the left is the skinny enslaved individual being auctioned, while on the right is the fat auctioneer. The auctioneer's actions, pointing out a high bidder for the enslaved person, symbolize crookedness and “the bad guys.” This scene serves as a powerful reminder of the harsh realities addressed by postcolonial ecocriticism. It highlights the interconnectedness between the exploitation of natural resources and the oppression of marginalized communities. The exploitation and discrimination faced by marginalized communities due to the monopolization and conquest of natural resources by the larger society are evident in this scene. It exemplifies how environmental exploitation can lead to the exploitation of human beings as well. Therefore, to achieve social and environmental justice, it is crucial to ban the institution of slavery and its trade, which has now been replaced by a form of employment known as indentured labor (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 196).

### **Conclusion**

Based on the comprehensive findings and analysis of the data presented above, it is evident that there exists a complex interplay of attachment, causality, and interdependence between social and environmental issues. These issues are deeply rooted in subjective dualistic, binary, and universalistic thinking, shaping attitudes and behaviors. As a result, phenomena such as colonialism, environmental racism, power abuse, slavery, exploitation, marginalization, and repression emerge, perpetuating a cycle of injustice and further exacerbating the destruction of nature and the environment. However, these forms of social and environmental disparities or injustice are depicted through various means: 1) Narrative elements such as character, dialogue, and action; 2) Mise-en-scene techniques such as settings, the camera works, camera angle, costume, makeup, and property; 2) Symbol and allegory. In addition, this interconnectedness forms a feedback loop whereby the deteriorating state of the environment reinforces the prevalence of dualistic thinking in society and vice versa. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that these issues are intricately intertwined and cannot be addressed in isolation. A holistic perspective is necessary to comprehend and address the underlying causes and effects of social and environmental injustice, paving the way for comprehensive solutions and systemic change to make social and environmental justice come true.

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## FEAR OF INCESTUOUS OIDA-POUS: UNEQUAL DISCOURSES AND TRAGEDY IN OEDIPUS THE KING

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### Abstract

This research aims to explain the enigmatic fact in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, where the discovery of regicide and origin coincides with the tragedy of patricide and incest in Oedipus. To achieve this, the research explores the unequal discourses of language and knowledge that result from the new awareness of the contingency of language. This research concludes with three discoveries through a forensic study of the discrepancies between the syntax in the text and the *épistémè* of the dramatic character. First, the tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles) is the symptomatic appearance of the unequal discourses between language as correspondence and language as a tool. Second, Oedipus' tragedy of patricide and incest was a semantic reality rather than a real-life event representing a divine register. Third, as seen in the interplay between the oracle, fate, and the tragic self-knowledge in *Oedipus the King*, this drama explicates the incestuous origin of knowledge and its tragic impact on the body. This study contributes to the many-have-done discussions and critics of *Oedipus the King*. This research demonstrates that a lack of awareness regarding unequal discourses can lead to tragic consequences.

**Keywords:** contingency, forensic analysis, oracle, semantic truth, tragedy

### Introduction

As a literary piece produced in the era of epistemological change around the discourse of language and knowledge in early Greek philosophy, *Oedipus the King*<sup>1</sup> embodies the metaphoric struggle in epistemology presented in the tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles).

*Oedipus the King* is one of the literary works produced in the atmosphere when Platonic idealism had been put into question. Segal (1982) stated that the epistemological struggle occurring around *Oedipus the King* was similar to

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<sup>1</sup> The version of *Oedipus the King* (OTK) explored in this research is that translated by Robert Fagles. The text appears in S. Lawall (General Editor) & M. Mack (General Editor Emeritus), *The Norton anthology of world literature*, Volume A – Beginnings to A.D. 100, Second Edition (pp. 617-658). New York, NY; London, England: W.W. Norton and Company.



Parmenides' account and his contemporary philosophers who wanted to reach the truth in a world of appearances. The question about platonic doctrine in early Greek philosophy was already evident in the sophist theories of language, which pointed to the question of the relation between words and reality. Seen in such a perspective, *Oedipus the King* is a case where words have the power to deceive, win unfair cases, and confuse moral issues (Segal, 1982, p. 10).

Greek tragedy, primarily written in the artifacts of the 5th century BC, has had a profound influence on European attitudes towards life and death, human responsibility and limitations, human relationships on the horizontal axis, and the vertical axis concerning the sacred, God, destiny, and transcendence. Since its performance at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza in 1585, *Oedipus Rex* has captured the attention of many observers due to its exploration of the high stakes involved in its story (Decreus, 2004). However, not all performances and interpretations of the play focus on the issue of tragedy. During the Baroque and Romantic eras, Oedipus was portrayed as a sinner, a political leader, or a *pharmakos*, a person who was sacrificed for the salvation of others. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the time of Immanuel Kant, Schelling, and Schopenhauer, that the study of tragic experiences became a serious pursuit. In his work *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1967 [1872]), Nietzsche saw Oedipus in the context of a revaluation of reality and Dionysian energy trapped in the "*principium individuationis*," which asserts that the human condition is determined by individuation (Smith & Riley, 2009, p. 21). Since the publication of Nietzsche's writings, Dionysus has been presented as a radical figure, a foreigner who dares to question human nature radically and terrifyingly.

Nietzsche's interpretation of tragedy in Greek culture helps to reveal the unpredictable and undefined side of reality. This is confirmed in Nietzsche's view of the relation between language and reality, namely that language does not reflect objects. Because its concepts are too general, language removes each object's differences (uniqueness) from other objects. Consequently, the truth expressed in language can never be treated as more than a metaphor, metonymy, and anthropomorphism (Smith & Riley, 2009, p. 21). The pre-rational element outside language is a vast field to investigate and discuss.

Nietzsche's thoughts about the contingent nature of language have sparked the birth of major schools such as existentialism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism, which -in Nietzsche's terms- is the language found by the Dionysian power to speak. One of the prominent postmodernists is Richard Rorty, whose pragmatic thoughts on the contingency of language are metaphorized as the Ironist (Rorty, 1989, p. xv). In Rorty's picture, Ironist doubts the last vocabulary he has, questions his moral identity, and doesn't even believe in the sanity of his mind and thoughts. He must always converse with other people and meet another final vocabulary to produce new descriptions of reality (Rorty, 1980). The goal of human life is ironic not in terms of its transformation that makes him transcendent and achieve "the Truth," "The Real," and "the Goodness," but in the openness to perform human social functions (Rorty, 1980, p. 377).

Drawing attention to the importance of the sanity of mind and thought in creating the openness that helps humans perform their social functions as Rorty said, Oedipus in *Oedipus the King* can be seen as an Ironist who embodies the tense connection between himself as a character of drama whose fate has been



determined by the author of the text and himself as the character who questions and challenges the text, language, and beliefs (See also Nikolarea, 2021). This research on Oedipus and his tragedy is an effort to make an opener to see the tragic epistemological experiences a person should bear if he is keen to function socially. Included within the discussion would be the function of evidence, the enigmatic correlation between meaning, author, text, and reality, and the awareness of the existence of the unequal discourses of language and knowledge in the tension one may encounter. For such concern, this research addresses two questions. What does it imply for the study of knowledge and language that Oedipus' terrifying tragedy of regicide, patricide, and incest occurred once the truth he sought was revealed? How can the relationship between the search for truth and the birth of tragedy in *Oedipus the King* be explained?

### ***Literature review***

This study adds to the ongoing discussions and criticisms of *Oedipus the King* but with a focus on the epistemological question of the contingency of language. It aims to expand upon Nietzsche's perspective on the contingent nature of language, by incorporating Rorty's ideas on contingency from his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Rorty, 1989). To achieve this goal, the study begins by examining previous works on text investigation. The insights gained from the text investigation provide a foundation for fresh interpretations of *Oedipus the King*.

Writing by Koper (2006) provides an insight that locates the critical analysis and examination of evidence in *Oedipus the King* as innovations in Sophocles' plays. However, Sophocles' method still reeks of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Greek mythical tradition. Koper sees the investigative element in this drama as a reflection of the progress of Athenian society, moving from a model of the family feud to the Areopagus court system as in Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*, or from oppression to the investigation as in *Oedipus the King* (Koper, 2006). As stated in Ong's sociological research, the change in the way of thinking of Athenian society was motivated by Athens's maturity in written narrative skills (Ong, 1982). Athens moved from a narrative culture that produced myths to an investigative community. Oedipus (Οιδίπους) is the product of the first generation that used the investigative method before Socrates. Ong explains that the alphabet, turning words into written abstractions, develops previously latent human abilities. Abstract thinking was not possible before literacy. Ong quoted from Luria, a Russian linguist, that Russians who are entirely illiterate are not able to make simple analyses. What changed the situation was the introduction of the alphabet (Ong, 1982).

Koper's opinion on Ancient Greek literacy helps elucidate the study of grammatical puzzles in *Oedipus the King*, such as plural and singular, three and five, including the *paronomasia* (pun) of the name Oedipus. Segal (1982) said that the language play in *Oedipus the King* is an epistemological symptom that begins to question the correspondence of words with reality. Fosso (2012) even suspected that Oedipus' name was not only a nickname for "Swollen Feet" but also a pun for "knowing-where" (*oidi-pou*) as when a messenger from Corinth asked where Oedipus' house was, or "knowing-all" (*oidi-pâs*) as used by Tiresias to mock Oedipus who thinks he knows everything, or "two-legged" (*oi-dipous*) as used in

the riddle of the Sphinx, or "knowing-foot" (*oidi-pous*) which associates searching (knowing) the origin (legs/base) of Oedipus (Fosso, 2012, p. 41). Fosso thinks that *oidi-pous* (knowing-foot) is Sophocles' signal that the primary concern of *Oedipus the King* is not about the origin of Oedipus' *oedi-pus*-"swollen feet" but about the *oidi-pous*-"the origin of knowledge."

The insights from Fosso, Segal, and Koper that place Oedipus' search for truth in the context of the 5th century BC sophist philosophers' struggles in the fields of semantics, rhetoric, ontology, and epistemology spark efforts to understand *Oedipus the King* as a metaphor for the manipulative nature of truth. The truth-seeking that Oedipus refers to in *Oedipus the King* is understood in several nuances: that a message corresponds to an event, that an event is the image of a divine plan, that the divine plan is accurately reflected in words, and that a representation is the same as it is represented (Pieri, 2019). The term "true" here expresses two things: the accurate nature of the correspondence between foundation and representation and the existence of a foundation. In Rorty's, truth is a semantic truth. Contingency concerning truth refers to the absence of a foundation for reality, incommensurability, and the instrumental nature of language. Conversing with those writings, this paper aims to explicate how unequal discourses contribute to the tragedy of the human person.

## Method

By way of explaining the enigmatic fact in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, namely the simultaneity of the discovery of the truth about regicide and origin and the birth of the tragedy of patricide and incest in Oedipus, this research explored the unequal discourses between the authorship and the text that holds language as a tool and knowledge as agreement, and the *épistémè* that has language as correspondence to reality and knowledge as the representation of the truth.

Table 1. The unequal discourses

	No. of Data	Truth as objective reality	No. of Data	Truth as semantic reality
Language	T1/1	Language is a correspondence to reality (the Truth).	T1/3	Language is a semantic tool to describe reality.
Knowledge	T1/2	Knowledge is the mirror (representation) of reality (the Truth).	T1/4	Knowledge is an agreement about fact.

For this reason, in the first part of the research, a summary of the plot of the investigation that Oedipus carried out as told in the drama was presented. This research section describes how Oedipus conducted the courtly investigation and made judgments. Particular attention was given to the way Oedipus juxtaposed his investigation side by side with his construction of understanding that the Delphi narrative has decided his life events. The next section of the research was a forensic study of the text that concerns Oedipus' investigation.<sup>2</sup> Here, Oedipus'

<sup>2</sup> Forensic text study is a text interpretation method by observing the interaction between phenomenological reality and hermeneutic analysis of evidence. In textual forensics, physical

process of investigation, both its semantics in the text and its mental system in Oedipus, was compared with the semantic facts of the text, assuming it as the thoughts of the playwright, Sophocles. The semantic relation of the text with Oedipus' *épistémè* during his investigation showed the interlays of discourses in Oedipus' paradigm and Sophocles' paradigm. In this interconnection, there were compatibility and discrepancy. These points were raised as epistemological issues and reflected in the last part of the paper. Insights from Fosso, Segal, and Koper lay a framework to read the data of studies from the perspective of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. sophist theory of language. We also referred to Rorty's views on the contingency of language to facilitate the reflection.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The examination of Oedipus's investigation and the forensic study of the discrepancies between the syntax in the text of Oedipus the King and the *épistémè* in Oedipus as the dramatic character leads this research to conclude with three surprising discoveries.

First, the tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles) is the symptomatic appearance of the unequal discourses between language as correspondence and language as a tool. Oedipus' search for truth in the drama resembles the linguistic turn discussed later in the twentieth century's study of language and epistemology, in which truth is semantic correctness rather than a transcendental reality founded in the Real, the Goodness, or the Truth. Second, Oedipus' tragedy of patricide and incest was a semantic reality rather than a real-life event representing a divine register. Third, as seen in the interplay between the oracle, fate, and the tragic self-knowledge in *Oedipus the King*, this drama explicates the incestuous origin of knowledge and its tragic impact on the body.

### ***Oedipus' investigation: knowledge as a representation of the truth and language as correspondence***

Sophocles does not provide any indication about the origins of the myth of Oedipus, leaving readers with many unanswered questions. What was the original story like, and how did the oracle's prophecies and curses play out? However, in Greek mythology, the story of Laius provides some context for the tragic events in *Oedipus the King*. According to the myth, Laius kidnapped and raped Chrysippus, the son of King Pelops, while living in Pelops' palace. Chrysippus later committed suicide, and as punishment for his crime, Laius was cursed that his own biological son would eventually kill him. This background information sheds light on the events leading up to the investigation of Laius' murder in *Oedipus the King*, but many questions about the origin of the myth remain unanswered.

By eliminating the historical fragment about Laius' curse, Sophocles presents *Oedipus the King* as a story about the successor of Thebes king named Oedipus, who investigates the cause of the plague in Thebes. This investigation of Oedipus ends in the tragedy of self-discovery: Oedipus has inadvertently committed patricide and incest. As the storyline changes from investigating the

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facts, rhetorical formulations, networks, and interconnections are the various objects of the study (Greetham, 1999, p. 1).



cause of the plague to investigating who killed Laius and finally examining the origin of Oedipus, the object of investigation changes throughout the story.

The first object of Oedipus' investigation was the cause of the plague.<sup>3</sup> To investigate, Oedipus sends Creon to Delphi to ask Apollo's oracle what Oedipus must do or say to save the country (OTK, lines 81-84). The answer that Oedipus received from Creon was twofold: the plague occurred because of a crime in Thebes, namely the murder of the king (T2/1b) (OTK, lines 109-111; 113-4), and the killer of the king must be avenged (T2/2b) (OTK, lines 114, 122). Creon said that his answer came from Apollo, and Apollo was a god. Later in his meeting with Tiresias, Oedipus reformulated Apollo's answer: "The cessation of the plague can only occur in one way. Find the killers of Laius (T2/3b), execute them, or throw them into exile (T2/4b)." (OTK, lines 349-351)

The second object of investigation is the killer of Laius. This time, Oedipus took several steps. He first asked the location of the killer's whereabouts, and Creon answered, according to Apollo's words, that the killer was in the city of Thebes (T2/5b) (OTK, lines 123-125). Second, Oedipus sought testimony. The first testimony came from Creon, who heard from a servant who was Laius' traveling companion who was able to escape when the murder occurred. Creon said that this servant has only one piece of information: "the robbers, a bunch, not just one robber," killed Laius (OTK, lines 138-139). Oedipus asked -but in singular form- how "a" robber was so brave to kill a king.

After these talks, the plot was switched. The Choir Leader advised Oedipus to summon Tiresias, the blind priest at Thebes, whom they believed to have had Apollo's vision. From Tiresias, information was obtained that Oedipus was the curse and evil in Thebes (OTK, line 401) and that Oedipus was the killer being sought. Oedipus took this notice as a curse and accused Tiresias of fabricating the story. When Oedipus entered the palace, Tiresias said that the mystery had been revealed, namely that Oedipus is both a brother and a father to his children, a husband, and a son to his mother and that he "seeds the same flesh where his father sowed the seed"<sup>4</sup> and sheds his own father's blood (OTK, lines 520-523).

From Jocasta, Oedipus heard about a prophecy by the priest of Apollo that Laius would be killed by "a son, their son, a child of his flesh and blood (T2/8b)."<sup>5</sup> Jocasta also told a story he heard from a "servant" about the murder of Laius. Sensing similarities with his events, Oedipus examined more detailed information from Jocasta regarding the place and time of Laius' murder and the description of Laius' stature. Laius was killed by robbers (in plural form) in a place called Phocis, at the crossroads of Daulia and Delphi (T2/9b). Jocasta said that the incident was not long before Oedipus appeared in Thebes and was proclaimed king. At that time, the hair on Laius' forehead had started to turn white, his skin was dark, and he was about the size of Oedipus.

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<sup>3</sup> Outbreaks take the form of fever, causing crops, pastures, and livestock to get sick and die. Likewise, women and children die in childbirth (OTK, lines 30-37).

<sup>4</sup> This phrase cannot simply be translated as "marrying his mother" or "having sex with his father's wife" because the issue of whether or not Oedipus's incest is true is still a matter of investigation.

<sup>5</sup> Jocasta: "An oracle came to Laius one fine day (I won't say from Apollo himself but his underlings, his priests), and it said that doom would strike him down at the hands of **a son, our son, to be born of our own flesh and blood...**" (OTK, lines 784-8)

At that point, Oedipus feared that what Tiresias said about him (T2/7b) was true (OTK, lines 823-4). The final question asked of Jocasta was whether Laius was accompanied by several armed men when the incident occurred. According to Jocasta, five people, including one courtier, attended a chariot carrying Laius.

Jocasta added that the witness for the account she told was a servant, whom she later called a "slave," the only survivor of the group (T2/10b). Unnoticing that Oedipus was becoming suspicious that the story of the death of the king was closely similar to the murder he committed, Jocasta naively told that once the man seeing Oedipus ascended the throne asked Jocasta to send him to a pasture far beyond Thebes. Oedipus asked this person, whom he called the "shepherd," to be presented. He wanted to check the similarity of information, namely whether those who killed Laius were "robbers" (thieves) or "robber," many people or just one person. Oedipus was sure that if it was one person, he was the killer of Laius.

The third object of investigation is the origin of Oedipus. The emergence of this problem was triggered by the presence of a person from Corinth -who was in character named "Messenger", but by the people of Thebes called "Stranger"- who informed Oedipus that King Polybus had died and "the people (in Corinth) wanted to make Oedipus king of Corinth." Oedipus said he would never return to Corinth to be near his "parents" because he feared that Apollo's prophecy at Delphi, namely that he was destined to have sex with his mother and kill his father, would come true. The stranger told Oedipus that Polybus and Merope, who had been the father and mother of Oedipus, were not Oedipus's biological parents (T2/15b). It happened because the stranger took Oedipus on Mount Cithaeron from a servant of Laius. The evidence of the account was that Oedipus' ankle was always swollen. Oedipus asked the "servant of Laius" to be presented. Jocasta strongly rejected the idea, saying "if you love your own life," "for yourself," "for what is best for you."<sup>6</sup> Since this time, Jocasta did not appear again until the end of the play. Oedipus insisted on completing the investigation to "solve, know, see, hear"<sup>7</sup> the mystery of his birth. The last thing he did was to hear the testimony of the "Shepherd" whom the stranger from Corinth told. The shepherd claimed to be "a slave" whose job was to "herd cattle". He said that he received from Jocasta, a baby from Laius' house (T2/11b), which people said was Laius' son (T2/13b), which then he gave to "a person". The Shepherd did not say that the stranger from Corinth was the "person" who received the baby from him. The Shepherd answered "yes" when asked, "did you give him the child" (T2/14b); that happened only when he was in pain because his hand was twisted behind his back (T2/16b).

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<sup>6</sup> Jocasta: "That man...why ask? Old shepherd, talk, empty nonsense, don't give it another thought, don't even think..." (OTK, lines 1157-9) "Stop...in the name of god, **if you love your own life**, call off this search! My suffering is enough." (OTK, lines 1163-4) "No, please...**for your sake...I want the best for you!**" (OTK, lines 170-2)

<sup>7</sup> Oedipus: "What...give up now, with a clue like this? Fail **to solve the mystery** of my birth? Not for all the world!" (OTK, line 1160-3) "...I must **know** it all, must **see** the truth at last." (OTK, line 1168-9) "I must **know** my birth, no matter how common it may be...I must **see** my origins face to face..." (OTK, 1183-5) "And I'm at the edge of hearing horrors, yes, but I must **hear!**" (OTK, lines 1283-5)

Table 2. Oedipus' investigation

Object	No. of Data	Method	No. of Data	Answer
Cause of the plague	T2/1a	Asking the Oracle	T2/1b	The existing crime of the murder of the king
	T2/2a	Asking the Oracle	T2/2b	An avenge should be made
	T2/3a	Asking a seer: Tiresias	T2/3b	To find the killer
	T2/4a	Asking a seer: Tiresias	T2/4b	To execute or exile the killer
The killer of Laius	T2/5a	Asking about the location of the killing	T2/5b	In Thebes
	T2/6a	Hearing the testimonies	T2/6b	By robbers
	T2/7a	Asking the Seer: Tiresias	T2/7b	By Oedipus
	T2/8a	Listening to Jocasta	T2/8b	In line with the curse against Laius
	T2/9a	Investigating Jocasta	T2/9b	Robbers in Phocis – the crossroad
	T2/10a	Listening to Jocasta	T2/10b	One of the servants in the palace witnessed it
Origin of Oedipus	T2/11a	Investigating the Shepherd	T2/11b	Receiving a baby from Laius' house
	T2/12a	Listening to the Shepherd	T2/12b	Jocasta gave the baby to him
	T2/13a	Listening to the Shepherd	T2/13b	He conveyed what people said regarding the child as Laius's son.
	T2/14a	Investigating the shepherd with pain enforcement	T2/14b	Saying yes when he was asked if he gave the baby to the Shepherd
	T2/15a	Listening to Messenger	T2/15b	Polybus and Merope were not the biological parents of Oedipus.
	T2/16a	Investigating the Messenger	T2/16b	Confessing that he got the baby from the Shepherd

After hearing information from the Shepherd, Oedipus said, "Everything happened, everything became clear... I finally saw... cursed for being born, cursed for marriage, cursed for the lives of those who were slain by these hands." (OTK, lines 1307-1311) Oedipus' own words emphasize at the end of the play that what is meant by "all happening" is the decision in Oedipus' mind that he had killed his father (patricide) and committed intercourse with his mother (incest).

Oedipus concluded about his incest and patricide based on the story of his origin he heard from the Messenger and the Shepherd. However, throughout the investigation, Oedipus constructed an account related to the curse he wanted to

avoid. This construction of thought impliedly becomes the rationality of Oedipus' judgment. First, he thought, "The Delphi oracle said I had been destined to kill my father and marry my mother." When he heard the account by Jocasta about the killing of Laius, Oedipus thought, "I have actually killed my father if the witness (the servant, or the shepherd; I call Witness A) says that Laius' killer was one person." Oedipus did not proceed with the investigation on the number of the killer. Instead, he was interested in investigating his origin and finally concluded, "It is confirmed that I have committed incest with my mother. The baby Jocasta gave to the Shepherd (Witness A) was the baby that the Messenger (I call Witness B) gave to Polybus and Merope, my parents." Based on the discovery of his incest, he also concluded his patricide, "Because it has been proven that I committed incest with my mother, it is also concluded that I killed my father." The progress of the discovery throughout the investigation led Oedipus to the same point as what he knew about the curse he should fulfill, thinking "I know that from the beginning I was destined to prosecute the two prophecies: to kill my father and to marry my mother."

Two essential notes need to be added here regarding the investigation by Oedipus, namely, what did not happen until the end of the investigation.

- a) As Jocasta no longer appeared until the end of the play, the question of whether the "Shepherd" present in front of Oedipus was the same person who witnessed the murder of Laius, is never confirmed by Jocasta.
- b) Oedipus did not ask the "Shepherd" whether the killer of Laius was one person or many.

### ***Textual forensic study on Oedipus' investigation: Sophocles' truth***

Readers of *Oedipus the King* who wish to investigate Oedipus' investigation and its verdict need to be aware that for Oedipus, the crimes of patricide and incest he unknowingly committed were real-life events. Sophocles wrote Oedipus' self-disposition in *Oedipus at Colonus*. In the text of this drama, Oedipus explains 1) that he defended himself when the murder incident occurred (*Oedipus at Colonus*, 1954, lines 270-291), 2) that he did not know whom he was killing or marrying (*Oedipus at Colonus* lines 537- 548), and 3) that his actions were predetermined before his birth (*Oedipus at Colonus* lines 960-999). These three explanations need to be considered in assessing the status of Oedipus' *épistémè*<sup>8</sup> during his conducting an investigation. We want to reexamine the process of Oedipus knowing his patricide and incest.

A distinction must be made between the views of Oedipus and Sophocles. According to Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1990), the three confessions of Oedipus do not necessarily convey Sophocles' opinions, even though they could be the product of the writing and the tendencies of Sophocles' thoughts. In other words, Oedipus sees that patricide and incest are his facts. In contrast, Sophocles sees that what Oedipus says is a one-sided fact because other parties, such as readers of the text, see textual evidence that does not support Oedipus' conclusion. Oedipus' thoughts and tendencies are detected in the words and actions of the characters in the text. In contrast, the views and tendencies of Sophocles can be seen, among

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<sup>8</sup> *Épistémè*, as in Michel Foucault's, refers to conditions that generate knowledge and to Thomas Kuhn's: paradigm.

others, in the thoughts and preferences of the characters, plus the intrinsic elements in the characterizations, storyline, setting of place and time, themes, and their apparent interconnections. Text forensics was carried out on the evidence used in Oedipus' investigation due to the possible discrepancies that appear in the contrasts.

Forensic analysis of the text is focused on three things: the status and function of the evidence in the text, the relationship between the evidence and the reality (probability), and the demands of cultural expression surrounding the text's formation. These three things are the main themes that contemporary epistemology deals with in examining the process of how humans know something (Greetham, 1990, p. 7). If in the investigation by Oedipus it is the "Shepherd," in the forensic analysis, the document text is the witness, in this case, the semantics of the text of *Oedipus the King*. Witnesses and testimonies are weighed, not counting how many or less, whether they are aggravating or mitigating. The conclusions to be reached in text forensics depend on the paradigm, but in this paper, the findings to be achieved are whether the conclusion is appropriate or inappropriate and reasonable or unreasonable.

Three texts will be reviewed forensically in this discussion: 1) the number of people killed by Oedipus in the incident at the intersection, 2) the number of people who killed Laius, and 3) Oedipus' origin. In Oedipus' memory, there were three people killed in the incident, namely the guide (a herald, *kerux*), the person on the train (an older man), and the coachman (T3/1b). Oedipus killed them all. In Jocasta's description, five people (T3/2b) were accompanying Laius. The text shows no data on who the other two are and why they were not visible to Oedipus. The text of the drama shows that information from Jocasta and information from Oedipus differ (T3/3b). This difference increases the possibility that Jocasta and Oedipus are referring to two separate incidents of murder, even though the circumstances of the two alleged murders are very similar.

The reason for creating this possibility is reinforced by doubts about the authenticity of Oedipus' memories of the place where he committed the murder. Oedipus calls the three-way intersection. The words were spoken in the context of repeating information from Jocasta that Laius was killed "where three roads meet" (T2/9b). The term "just now" in Oedipus' expression "Walk towards the intersection earlier..." suggests that Oedipus is equating the events in his memory with Jocasta's story. Thus, it is possible that Jocasta's account distorted the retelling of Oedipus' memories.

The second thing to review is the number of murderers people have told compared to the number in Oedipus' memory. In his investigation, Oedipus said that if there were one killer (T3/4b), it would be Oedipus. In the text of Creon's report on the words from the Delphi oracle, the term "killer" is written in the plural (T3/5b): "...and Apollo commands us now – he could not be more clear, 'Pay the **killers** back - whoever is responsible.'" (OTK, lines 120-2; My bold font style). The text in Creon's report matches the semantics of the news he heard from eyewitnesses (T3/5b), namely the servant (*oikeus*, housemaid) who survived the incident: "He said **thieves** attacked them – a whole band, not single-handed, cut King Laius down." (OTK, lines 138-9) Oedipus repeated the words but with a semantic change, namely in the singular (T3/4b): "**A thief**, so daring, so wild, he'd kill a king? Impossible, unless conspirators paid him off in Thebes." (OTK, lines

140-3) Oedipus consistently mentions Laius' killer in the singular form the next time: "What stopped you from tracking down **the killer** then and there?" (OTK, lines 146-7) In Jocasta's hearing, the servant's report was the same as what Creon heard: "...But Laius, so the report goes at least, was killed by **strangers, thieves....**" (T3/6b) (OTK, lines 788-90) Likewise, the Choir Leader recalled the story -which he called a rumor- that "Laius was killed, they say, by certain **travelers.**" (T3/7b) (OTK, line 331)

Oedipus was aware of the difference in the number of Laius' killers. The other characters were not aware of the importance of the difference. However, the reader is aware of the difference because the reader sees the semantic facts of the text (T3/8b). Oedipus wanted to ask eyewitnesses about the number of Laius' killers, one person or many people. Yet to the end of the play, Oedipus never asked about it; the witness never gave direct information about it to Oedipus. The text provides no other evidence. This critical piece of evidence has never been confirmed.

Table 3. Forensic investigation

Object	No. of Data	Method	No. of Data	Answer
The number of people killed in the incident	T3/1a	Referring to Oedipus' memory	T3/1b	three
	T3/2a	Referring to Jocasta	T3/2b	five
	T3/3a	<i>Conclusion</i>	T3/3b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The numbers uttered are different.</li> <li>• There is a probability that Oedipus and Jocasta refer to different events.</li> </ul>
The number of people who killed Laius	T3/4a	Referring to Oedipus' memory	T3/4b	one
	T3/5a	Referring to Creon's report	T3/5b	Plural: thieves
	T3/6a	Referring to Jocasta's hearing from a witness	T3/6b	Plural: strangers, thieves
	T3/7a	Referring to Choir Leader	T3/7b	Plural: some travelers
	T3/8a	<i>Conclusion</i>	T3/8b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number uttered and the semantic counting identifier is different.</li> <li>• There is no conclusion regarding the number of people who killed Laius.</li> </ul>

Witnesses	T3/9a	Referring to the Shepherd	T3/9b	The baby is from Laius' house
	T3/10a		T3/10b	The baby was given to him by Jocasta.
	T3/11a		T3/11b	He was conveying what people said regarding the child as Laius's son.
	T3/12a	<i>Conclusion</i>	T3/12b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jocasta never confirmed whether the baby was her son or other people's son.</li> <li>• It was not clarified in the text which the people who said the baby was Laius' son.</li> <li>• Jocasta never confirmed that this shepherd was the man she gave the baby to.</li> </ul>
	T3/13a	Referring to the Messenger from Corinth	T3/13b	Confessing that he got the baby from the Shepherd
	T3/14a	<i>Conclusion</i>	T3/14b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is suspicion about the probability of his opportunistic motive as no one sent him to convey the news.</li> <li>• Only under pain the Shepherd said yes concerning the fact that he gave the baby to this particular Messenger.</li> </ul>

The semantic formulation of the number of killers of Laius, which differs from Oedipus' knowledge that he was alone when he committed a murder, raises several conjectures. The first assumption is that the servant (Witness A) who reported Laius' murder was never present during the incident. In other words, the report was false. This is consistent with Oedipus' confession, namely that there were only three people he met, all of whom he killed. The second assumption is that from the beginning, Oedipus was so afraid of oracle prophecy that he practiced or experienced verisimilitude, which is the feeling that prophecy is happening when similar events or stories exist (Peradotto, 2002, p. 12). As a result, discrete events were accepted as events referred to in the prophecy. Thus, Oedipus' statement that there was only one killer contains two possibilities. First, he accurately refers to his knowledge, namely that he knows precisely that the killer is one person. Second, he is experiencing verisimilitude, so the murder incident he is listening to he considers his own. That's why he said there was only one killer, even though the narrator (Choir Leader) said there were many.

The third assumption, the consistency of the witnesses and even the oracle in mentioning the plural number of Laius' killers, raises the suspicion that the killing committed by Oedipus differed from those described by Jocasta, the servant, Creon, the Choir Leader, and the oracle.

It is surprising that although Oedipus paid close attention to Jocasta's words that Laius' killers were "thieves" and he was fully aware that "One cannot equal many,"<sup>9</sup> this discrepancy in numbers was never considered by Oedipus again that at the end he concluded that he had seen the truth: he had killed his father and has married his mother (OTK, lines 1493-4). He also did not ask the witness again about the figure. This textual fact of Oedipus' decision process echoes Jocasta's words to Oedipus, "Woe to you - you will never know yourself!"<sup>10</sup> This means that Jocasta kept information that she never said, which, if Oedipus knew, Oedipus' knowledge would be different.

The reader needs to be acutely aware that there is never any definitive momentum in the text to indicate when Oedipus explicitly concludes that he killed Laius (regicide) or his father (patricide). As has already been said, Oedipus seems to have relied on conclusive evidence: if the servant who survived the murder said the number of Laius' murderers was the same as Jocasta's, Oedipus was not the killer.<sup>11</sup> This evidence was never obtained by Oedipus or provided in the text by Sophocles. Then, the most probable suspicion is that Oedipus judged the regicide of Laius based on verisimilitude.

However, considering the structure of the storyline of *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus' decision regarding the regicide, which later became, at the same time, a patricide, follows the verdict that he had committed incest: Jocasta, his current wife, was his mother. Oedipus' decision-making structure can be summarized in Figure 1.

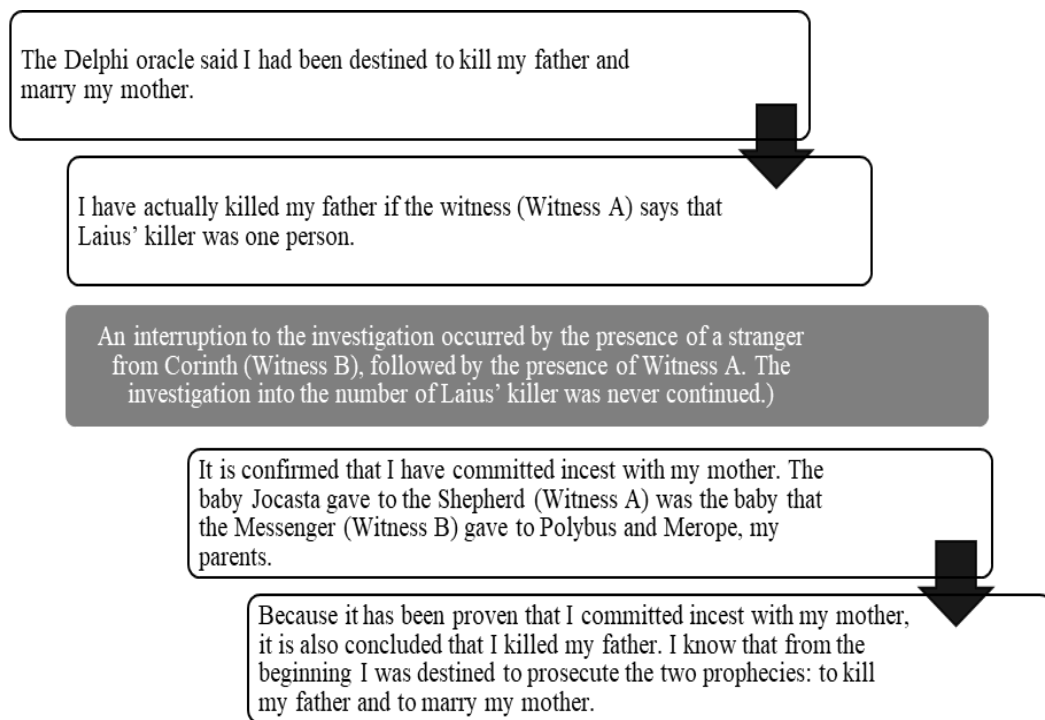


Figure 1. Oedipus' structure of his verdict

<sup>9</sup> Oedipus: "...One can't equal many." (OTK, line 934).

<sup>10</sup> Jocasta: "You're doomed – may you never fathom who you are!" (OTK, lines 1172-3).

<sup>11</sup> Oedipus: "You said thieves – he told you a whole band of them murdered Laius. So, if he still holds to the same number, I cannot be the killer..." (OTK, lines 932-4).



Crucial to Oedipus' reasoning is the proof that Jocasta was Oedipus' mother. Oedipus as the prosecutor of evidence made his decision based on the statements of Witness A (the Shepherd) and Witness B (the Messenger from Corinth). Witness A testified under threat of torture: that the baby he gave to Witness B came from Laius' house. The baby was given to him by Jocasta himself. Witness A added that "they said" the baby boy was Laius' child.<sup>12</sup> There is no explanation in the text as to who the "they" referred to by Witness A is.

Regarding Witness A, the Choir Leader said only Jocasta could confirm that he was the same person who witnessed Laius' murder and received Jocasta's baby. In the text of the drama, Jocasta never affirms Witness A because Jocasta immediately leaves the scene and does not appear again except for the news of her death. Witness A himself never said that he witnessed Laius being killed. Although from the beginning to the end of the drama, it was noted that Witness A was the same person in the two incidents being investigated, the two people who could give affirmative statements did not do so, namely Jocasta and Witness A himself (T3/12b).

Regarding Witness B, there are doubts about the veracity of his statement because the text shows his intention to come to Thebes was opportunistic (T3/14b). Witness B did not come to Thebes because he was officially sent but conveyed a rumor that Oedipus was about to be king of Corinth in place of Polybus. Oedipus believed what this man said: that he took Oedipus from a shepherd in Cithaeron (T3/13b) and handed him over to Polybus.

Doubts about the two witnesses are discussed because they form an essential part of the third doubt regarding Oedipus' investigation. This third point has to do with Oedipus' paternity and maternity. It is known from Witness A's confession that the baby brought by Witness A is from Laius' house (T3/9b), but it cannot be confirmed that he was born to Jocasta or was born to a slave.<sup>13</sup> Witness A asked Oedipus to ask Jocasta who the child's father was (OTK, lines 1286-8). Without questioning Jocasta -because Jocasta was no longer there-, Oedipus immediately concluded that the child was Jocasta's. If the child was not born by Jocasta, the marriage relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta is not incest. There is no textual indication in *Oedipus the King* that confirms that Oedipus was the son of Jocasta.

So far, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the forensic facts of the text do not support Oedipus' conclusion that he committed regicide (killed King Laius). Second, the intrinsic facts of the drama, namely the storyline, show that the claims of Oedipus' involvement in the regicide and patricide are concluded from the discovery of the identity of his paternity and maternity. Third, the textual facts do not show that Witness B's words can be trusted. The text also indicates the possibility of another child's mother mentioned by Witness A. The paternity of Oedipus of Laius can be ascertained if the words of Witness B can be trusted. The maternity of Oedipus of Jocasta can be confirmed if there is an acknowledgment from Jocasta herself.

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<sup>12</sup> Shepherd: "All right! His son, they said it was – his son! But the one inside, your wife, she'd tell it best." (OTK, lines 1286-8).

<sup>13</sup> Oedipus asks Witness A about this matter, "A slave? Or born of his own blood?" The witness answers, "Laius' son."

It can be further concluded that based on the findings of the forensic text examination of *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus' decision that he committed patricide and incest is flawed. In line with Oedipus's confession in *Oedipus of Colonus*, Oedipus' conclusion about patricide and incest is more verisimilitude to the narrative of Delphi. Allegedly, the text of *Oedipus the King* was written by Sophocles with a different or more purpose than just dramatizing the tragedy of Oedipus.

### ***The unequal discourses of language and knowledge and the subject***

The discrepancies of data found in the examination of Oedipus' investigation and the textual forensic study led this research to an attempt to understand *Oedipus the King* in the context of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. sophist philosophers' struggles in the fields of semantics, rhetoric, ontology, and epistemology. We learn from the writings by Fosso, Segal, and Koper that the question of platonic doctrine was already evident in the sophist theories of language, which pointed to the question of the relation between words and reality. This insight contributes to the study of *Oedipus the King* by explicating that words have the power to deceive, win unfair cases, and confuse moral issues. Seen in such a perspective, *Oedipus the King*, as a text and as a tragic drama, is a metaphor for the manipulative interplay of words and truth in the human person. Embracing the prophecy presented in Delphi's narrative, Oedipus shaped his beliefs, decisions, and actions, assuming that his life event should be in correspondence with this narrative (Pieri, 2019).

The tension between the fate of the dramatic character (Oedipus) and the domination of the author of the text (Sophocles) as seen in the examination of Oedipus' investigation through the textual forensic study is the symptomatic appearance of the unequal discourses between language as correspondence and language as a tool. Oedipus holds that reality is the mirror of the Truth (T1/2) and language is its correspondence (T1/1). In contrast, Sophocles has the truth as a semantic reality (T1/4) for which a language is merely a tool (T1/3).

Being held as the Truth for life events, Delphi's narrative of patricide and incest shows its strong influence on Oedipus in the form of fear, in Oedipus's tendency to compare other people's stories to his own (verisimilitude), and in the gaps in reasoning when Oedipus makes his decisions. At first glance, this reminds Barthes' view in *Mythologies* (1972) about myth. Myth takes from humans all the necessary historical realities, then returns them to humans but in a form that, for humans, is very natural. In this perspective, history is a coincidence that looks natural in human eyes as it is wrapped in myth.<sup>14</sup> For Oedipus, Delphi's narrative of patricide and incest is not seen as a myth or a mere product of language but as an innate nature that must happen to him. The semiotic reading of *Oedipus the King* makes explicit -in Peradotto's terms (1994) – Oedipus's ideological tendencies,<sup>15</sup> namely the standardization of what was initially random into natural,

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<sup>14</sup> In a system of signs, words and objects always appear natural to the utterer, as if what they say is eternal, true, and a must, whereas both are random, artificial, and contingent (Barthes, 1972, p. 142-3).

<sup>15</sup> "For in our time, it is largely semiotics and discourse analysis that have reversed this history of rhetoric by exposing our unreflective tendency (on which Aristotelian rhetoric heavily relies) to confuse linguistic or narrative reality with so-called "natural" reality, or better, to confuse what is

which originally happened incidentally to be a necessity (1994, p. 94). So, it is also imperative that the study of the text of *Oedipus the King* includes a review of the Delphi narrative as the most standard ideological and epistemological device in Oedipus' reasoning.

As seen in the investigation, the Delphi narrative is a model of rationality for Oedipus. The Delphi narrative becomes a reference, measurement tool, theory, and ideal in Oedipus' paradigm (Scodel, 2008). As a theory, the Delphi narrative is where Oedipus finds his explanation of the events of his life. For reference, the Delphi narrative is the cause; as a measuring tool, the Delphi narrative becomes the standard of objectivity or the level of reasonableness and irrationality of consideration. The Delphi narrative becomes a framework for induction and deduction as a theory. As an ideal, the Delphi narrative is the destiny and destiny that Oedipus must accept. The text of *Oedipus the King* shows repeated contact between Oedipus and the oracle and god of Apollo at Delphi. For example, he consulted Delphi when he heard rumors that he was an illegitimate son. He again asked Delphi when looking for a solution to the plague that hit Thebes. He invites Tiresias to "see" who killed Laius.

Uttered in Rorty's terms, Oedipus gets the "final vocabulary"<sup>16</sup> in the Delphi narrative. The final vocabulary, which can be in the form of theory, paradigm, language, or philosophy, contains the rationality of a person, group of people, or era. According to Rorty, from the time of Plato to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century period, the system of knowledge was built on the belief that there is a foundation for reality, there is a unique reality that must be represented, there is an essence in the cosmos, and there are truths and objective concepts as said by Plato (Rorty, 1979), so that explanations and theories are needed, or science is mandatory. The struggle of the philosophy of science revolves around the formulation of correspondence, reference, commensurability, objectivity, truth, and accurate representation. Rorty does not deny the immense value of concepts such as truth or objectivity. However, he emphasizes that these concepts bring different content and forms according to their place. He termed it the ethnocentric nature of what is called "true" or "objective". Rorty proposed that the ethnocentric nature of truth and objectivity helps concepts get out of their pure and abstract hypostasis so that they can help humans take action (Rorty, 1979, p. 179). For Rorty, the final narrative or vocabulary -as it is contingent- is not to claim to have absolute truth but apodictic truth. Such absolute claims and assumptions show the nature of tyranny rather than revealing the truth.

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being *referred to* with what really *is*, to confuse the mutant and heterogeneous forms of culture and history (verisimilitude) with enduring universals of nature, particularly human nature. By exposing the mechanics at the secret core of narrative discourse, semiotics makes ideology explicit; it unmask the process to which language is ever open, of making what is merely arbitrary seem *natural*, of turning the merely *accidental* into the *necessary*." (Peradotto, 1994, p. 94)

<sup>16</sup> Rorty describes "final vocabulary" as a set of words to justify one's reason for their actions, beliefs, and lives. The words are tools to express appreciation, displeasure, long-term plans, deepest doubts, or greatest hopes. The more specific the terms, the more they work. Final vocabulary shows the basic structure of a person's decisions. Some words contain the core of the moral, logical, or scientific theory, with evaluative, analytical, and epistemic functions. (Rorty, 1980, p. 73)

For Rorty, a narrative or final vocabulary can be a model of rationality and is called rational if it opens up a democratic space for exchanging ideas (Rorty, 1979). In Oedipus, there is no democratic space. The narratives Oedipus learned from the Delphi oracle, which he confirmed to be true through his investigations, are narratives with a tyrannical dominating nature. The more Oedipus investigates the prophecies of the oracle, the more he believes in the truth of the narrative. The root of Oedipus' difficulty is the paradigm that there is such a thing called the essence of reality, objectivity, and truth. Oedipus thought that his way of life was an exact reflection of an objective truth stated in the oracle of Delphi. In the case of Oedipus, prophecy, even though it is in the form of a narrative sentence, is seen as having an accurate correspondence with life events.

### ***The tragedy: A semantic reality***

As a second finding, the study shows that Oedipus' tragedy of patricide and incest was a semantic reality rather than a real-life event. Oedipus' search for truth in the drama resembles the linguistic turn discussed later in the twentieth century's study of language and epistemology, in which truth is semantic correctness rather than a transcendental reality founded in the Real, the Goodness, or the Truth.

Rorty explains that despite its usefulness, the term "objective truth" does not contain the name of an action or event directly connected to it. An event can be defined according to its causal description but cannot be linked to a causal "objective truth." This is because truth has no substantive content. According to Rorty, the truth lies in the sentence, that is, if all the semantic demands are met. A sentence is called true not because it relates to a value or reality, for example, because the Delphi oracle spoke it or because it is contained in a Scripture, or because it has other tools, for instance, a mantra. The truth of a sentence is semantic truth. There is no connection between semantic truth and the reality it is describing (Rorty, 1979, p. 308). Thus, pursuing the truth, as Oedipus did, will not lead to an "objective" line where actions and events have been prescribed. At best, what will be found is that all conditions are met or can be justified and agreed upon (Rorty, 1979, p. 337).

Investigations into *Oedipus the King* forensically reveal Oedipus' flaws in making decisions about the truth he seeks. Fosso says Oedipus' flaw lies in his haste. He suspected Oedipus' haste was in line with his impulsive nature (Fosso, 2012, p. 42). Oedipus' impulsive nature is seen several times, for example, his rush to seek advice from the oracle, his haste to flee from Corinth to avoid prophecy, his rush to accuse Tiresias of conspiring with Creon to usurp Laius' throne, including his rush to call witnesses and believe witnesses. Finally, Oedipus hastily judged that Delphi's predictions about patricide and incest had come true. Culler (1981) considers that the haste could be because he is the main character of the drama who must direct the course of the storyline: he must indeed submit to the "law of fate" being narrated, must do so, and make judgments. This is the weakness of discourse in drama (Culler, 1981, p. 174).

In *Oedipus the King*, the text leads Oedipus as a drama character to judge himself and make decisions in a way that is not by evidence. The semantic facts of the text are partially not in the *épistémè* of Oedipus as a dramatic character. The text reader can obtain semantic facts forensically regarding the evidence to be

weighed. While Oedipus, it is impossible to reach the forensic facts of the text because he is a dramatic character, whose actions, words, feelings, thoughts, and decisions can only be subject to what is written in the text. As Culler puts it, drama characters are subject to drama texts, including when they tragically make decisions in cases such as patricide and incest. Thus, the tragedy of Oedipus was not due to Apollo's divine predestination but to the text.

### ***The fear of incestuous oida-pous***

Finally, seen in the interplay between the oracle, fate, and the tragic self-knowledge in the drama, and reflecting the data of studies from the perspective of the unequal discourses of language and knowledge, *Oedipus the King* explicates the incestuous origin of knowledge and its tragic impact on the body.

Here it appears that Sophocles raised a significant theme that was only discussed in depth twenty centuries later, starting with Nietzsche, namely the question of the relation of language to reality. In *Oedipus the King*, it is shown that the tragedy of Oedipus has nothing to do with people's belief that fate is predetermined. It is also demonstrated that truth exists only in semantic reality and not in methods of investigation, opinions, thoughts, or ideas. *Oedipus the King* indicates that Oedipus' blindness, the tragedy of patricide and incest if they exist, are due to the semantic reality, i.e., to the text of the drama, and not to transcendent realities such as "the Real," intellectual realities such as "the Truth," or moral reality like "the Goodness."

As Miller (1990) puts it, *Oedipus the King's* success over the hundreds of years lies in its prowess in showing the problematic "story" rather than in the greatness of human tragedy and its nature." (Miller, 1990, p. 74) In *Oedipus the King*, the narrative gives birth to text, but after its birth, text determines the fate of narrative forever, and it is narrative that reaches humans in the form of messages of knowledge. Thus, knowledge is always ironic about its origins because the narration -that is its origin- is born from texts that are also born of narratives. There is the horror of the incest of knowledge. That's where the tragedy of *oida-pous* occurs, namely in the conversation between knowledge (*oida*) and its origin (*pous, leg*).

### **Conclusion**

This research presents a new perspective on the tragedy of *Oedipus the King*. Despite the belief that the curse from the oracle was the cause of the tragedy, this study argues that ignorance about the unequal discourses of language, authorship, and knowledge actually led to the tragedy. The study emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the existence of unequal discourses in order to create a more equitable space for social interaction. Many aspects of unequal discourses, including those depicted in *Oedipus the King*, have been revealed. The message is conveyed through conversation and interpretation rather than strict representation and correspondence. The study draws attention to the incestuous and unequal nature of knowledge, interpretation, and agreement, as demonstrated in the case of *oida-pous*. It warns against allowing one party to dominate the discourse, which could result in tragedy.

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## CULTURE-SPECIFIC ITEMS AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN TIM O'BRIEN'S *THE THINGS THEY CARRIED* AND ITS INDONESIAN TRANSLATION

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### Abstract

As one of the most complicated concepts to translate, a number of translators and researchers have presented various strategies to transfer the meaning of culture-specific items (CSIs) from one language to another. Through eight translation strategies used by professional translators based on Baker, this paper aimed to find the most applicable strategy to find a way around culture-specific items. In addition, this paper also attempted to categorize CSIs found in Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* according to Newmark's five taxonomies of foreign cultural words. The comparative model in translation studies and comparative research were applied as methods to obtain and analyze data from both the source text and target text. The results showed that out of five taxonomies, social culture has the highest percentage overall with 45%. Furthermore, translation by paraphrase using unrelated words also has the highest percentage among the eight translation strategies with 31%. Therefore, it can be concluded that translation by paraphrase using unrelated words is the most applicable strategy to translate CSIs found in *The Things They Carried*.

**Keywords:** culture-specific items, *The Things They Carried*, translation strategy

### Introduction

Translation has enabled people to expand their social lives across language and culture. However, on top of that, translation is a complex procedure of rewriting and transferring meaning between two languages and inevitably two different cultures. Catford (1978, p.20) defines translation as the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). In addition, Newmark (1988, p.5) describes translation as rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text. He further elaborated that the translation cannot simply reproduce, or be the original. Therefore, any product of translation would inescapably amalgamate two or more cultures by the end of its procedure, which in itself has become a different text compared to the source text (ST). Particularly, in the case of literary translation in the modern day where translators possess the capacity to decide which concept they would elaborate on or which concept they

would omit entirely from the target text (TT), which might instigate a power imbalance between the two cultures. Therefore, to solve translation issues that may appear in the translation process, it is suggested that translators must be able to consider and apply translation strategies accordingly. One of the objectives of this research is to find the most applicable strategy to translate culture-specific items (CSIs).

CSIs is a concept born from an intricate affiliation between language and culture throughout history. Chen et al. (2023) said that based on varying standards, different studies have defined CSIs in different ways. Kramersch (1998) divulges the relationship of language and culture. She concluded three aspects: language expresses cultural reality, language embodies cultural reality, and language symbolizes cultural reality. Furthermore, she elaborates on the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis which claims that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences one's manner of thinking and behavior. Thereafter, this behavior would compose a collective way of life peculiar to a community, which describes the definition of culture according to Newmark (1988). Newmark defines culture as the way of life and its manifestations are peculiar to a community that speaks a particular language as a means of expression. According to Baker (1992), "a word from the source language may express an idea that is completely unknown in the target culture" (p. 21). The idea at hand could be concrete or abstract, and it could have to do with specific foods, social more, or religious convictions. It is common to refer to these ideas as "culture-specific".

In addition, Aixelá (1996) also states the issue regarding the definition of CSIs, "the main difficulty with the definition lies, of course, in the fact that in a language everything is culturally produced, beginning with language itself." In this manner, language and culture exert influence on each other in a continuous cycle through time. As a result of the previously mentioned intricate and interwoven relationship, culture-specific items are very diverse and more often than not, specific to a particular culture. According to Aixelá (1996), CSIs are elements of the text connected to certain concepts in the foreign culture that might be unknown to the readers of the target text. Furthermore, Aixelá intends to improve the definition of CSIs to be more versatile. The definition of CSIs became

"Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text." (1996, p.58).

With a more flexible definition, any textual items that pose a translation problem due to a 'cultural gap' or nonexistent item in the target language would be considered as CSI.

Many translators and researchers deem CSIs as one of the most complex translation issues among many others. In her coursebook on translation titled *In Other Words*, Baker (2011) includes culture-specific concepts as one out of eleven common problems of non-equivalence at word level. Newmark (1998, p.94) also mentions that cultural words will be a translation problem due to the cultural 'gap'



or ‘distance’ between the source and target languages. When a certain concept in the source language is nonexistent in the target language, it unveils a ‘cultural gap’ that translators must be able to bridge by implementing a suitable translation strategy.

According to Chen et al. (2023), cultural words incorporate particular cultural traits, and cultural word translations seek to address the linguistic and cultural gaps brought about by differences in source and target languages. In line with Putri (2023), selecting diverse translation methods means that cultural components cannot be translated completely, and the methods selected for translation can change based on the context and target audience. Zuo, Abdullah, and Toh (2023) state the application of translation procedures shouldn't be predicated on speculative thinking or hasty assumptions of the expectations of the target audience. It requires to be determined by the unique circumstances surrounding certain cultural objects. Ergil (2020) in his statements states that translation plays an essential part in the circulation of world literature, in the creation and transformation of literary images, and in the maintenance of the dynamic nature of literary/cultural interactions. Due to this reason, translators are often referred to as mediators and bridges between two countries (Blažytė & Liubinienė 2016; Busana & Subiyanto 2020).

There has been a recent cultural turn in translation (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990; Bassnett, 2007), which requires that cultural distinctions between the communities the languages serve be taken into consideration in addition to the source and target languages (Venuti, 1994). Permatahati (2022) states that it is crucial for translators to consider not only the language but as well as the culture. Additionally, the translators need to have a deep understanding of both cultures from a wider angle. Mizin, Slavova, and Khmara, (2021) and Mizin et al., (2023) state that fields such as ethnolinguistics, linguculture, translation studies, and others provide solutions for problems pertaining to languages and cultures, interlingual barriers and deviations, etc. It is by means that the translator tends to utilize the techniques that are target-text-oriented such as localization, globalization, omission, transformation, and creation.

*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien (2009) is a collection of linked short stories and the Indonesian translation is titled *The Things They Carried: Kenangan Sang Prajurit* (2006) translated by Hendraytna. The major theme of the book mostly depicts the stories of post-war Vietnam war veterans with a few stories also portraying the life of soldiers in the middle of the war. *The Things They Carried* and its Indonesian translation have been chosen as objects of this research because of the historical significance that it contains. In one of his interviews, O'Brien stated that he had been drafted and served as a soldier in the Vietnam War, and it is precisely why he wrote war stories after he became a veteran. Although this book is mostly categorized as fiction or historical fiction, the fact that the author was a soldier in the Vietnam War implies that the contents of the book are not entirely fictional. In one of the short stories titled “Spin,” O'Brien stated the term “truth-goose.” A similar term to a verse in Marianne Moore's (1920) poem, “imaginary gardens with real toads in them.” Both of these idioms refer to fictional stories that have genuine truth mixed in them. Due to his experience as a soldier in the Vietnam War, O'Brien incorporated various categories of culture-specific items including American, Vietnamese, and military

terms CSIs. Hence, *The Things They Carried* should be able to provide invaluable data for this research.

### ***Five Taxonomies of Foreign Cultural Words***

As mentioned earlier, Newmark defines culture as the way of life peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression. In addition, he acknowledges that cultural words would pose translation problems because of the cultural ‘gap’ between SL and TL. Particularly, the more a language is ingrained in cultural features, the more specific it becomes. On top of that, many cultural words and customs are described in typical language, which would distort the meaning if it is translated using literal translation. These are examples of issues that would emerge when translating CSIs or foreign cultural words as Newmark refers to it. Therefore, by adapting Nida, Newmark categorizes foreign cultural words into five categories:

1. Ecology  
Includes flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills, and any other natural phenomena.
2. Material culture  
Includes artifacts such as food, clothes, houses, towns, and transportation.
3. Social culture  
Includes work, leisure, and expressions that not only have denotation but also connotation in a particular culture.
4. Organization, customs, and ideas  
Includes politics, administrative, religious, historical, and artistic terms.
5. Gestures and habits  
Commonly cultural customs or habits are described using ordinary words that may or may not exist in other cultures.

### ***Translation Strategies***

It has been established that Baker includes culture-specific concepts as one of eleven common problems of non-equivalence at word level. In addition, she presented eight translation strategies to overcome said eleven problems, including culture specific concepts. Baker refers to these strategies as strategies used by professional translators. First, translation by a more general word (superordinate) employs a hierarchical structure in the semantic fields that are not specific to a certain language, especially in the area of propositional meaning. Second, translation by a more neutral/less expressive word is often applied to an action or a verb that frequently has a considerably positive or negative connotation in the ST. Considering the translation may not have the same connotation in the TL, the result would be more neutral or less expressive than the ST. Third, translation by cultural substitution which replaces a CSI with a completely different item in the TL that is more familiar to the TT reader. However, it has to give a similar impact or evoke a similar emotion or context to the TT reader. Fourth, translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation which is usually written in *italics* or ‘inverted commas’ followed by an explanation inside a bracket if there is any. Fifth, translation by paraphrase using related words as the name suggests, paraphrase certain CSIs to become a different form. However, said CSIs might not be completely non-existent in the TL, hence a related word can still be used. On the contrary, sixth, translation by paraphrase using unrelated words is suitable for

CSIs that are non-existent or unknown in the TL. This strategy usually paraphrases by describing or altering a superordinate of the CSI. Seventh, translation by omission might sound extreme, but if the CSI or expression is not particularly necessary to the development of the text, and if translating it would result in a lengthy explanation, the CSI can be omitted from the TT. Lastly, translation by illustration can be an option if the CSI lacks an equivalent in the TT which refers to a physical object that can be illustrated (Baker, 1992).

## **Method**

Williams and Chesterman (2002) present three theoretical models of translation, namely the comparative model, process model, and causal model. A model that is being referred to is similar to the likeness of a miniature scale model of, for instance, a house that represents the full size of the house. They define a model as a construction that represents aspects of reality to some degree. In the example of a house, it is quite straightforward that the miniature scale model does not represent the size of the real house as the name “miniature scale” suggests. However, theoretical models represent more abstract objects in a more abstract way. These models are considered conceptual tools to arrange an initial framework within which we can start our train of thought. Therefore, the aims are to construct images and to better visualize, understand, and analyze the object of research.

This particular research was based on the comparative model which looks as follows: source text (ST)  $\approx$  target text (TT). Instead of the equal sign (=), the sign ‘approximately equal’ ( $\approx$ ) brings back the argument that Catford has, which he stated that “the translation cannot simply reproduce, or be the original” (Catford, 1978, p.20). The translators’ duty is to choose elements of the target language that align most closely with the elements in the source language. In addition, the comparative model was product-oriented considering this paper was researching a translation product that has been published. The comparative model was mainly exercised to obtain CSIs in the ST and find the approximately equal translation in the TT. Therefore, any CSIs and their translation in the form of either words or phrases were considered the data of this research.

Following the comparative model, comparative research was also applied to analyze CSIs found in the ST and TT. The aim of this method was to evaluate the differences, similarities, and associations between objects of research. The evaluation often refers to the application of a general theory or process through different contexts or categories (Mills, 2008). The evaluation that was applied to the data included categorizing CSIs into five taxonomies of foreign cultural words based on Newmark. In addition, the translation strategy was analyzed using eight translation strategies used by professional translators according to Baker (2011). Comparative research assisted the research process in terms of analyzing the meaning of CSIs including the denotation and connotation that cultures are attached to certain CSIs.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Five Taxonomies of Foreign Cultural Words*

After CSIs and their equivalence were found in the ST and TT, they were classified into five taxonomies of foreign cultural words based on Newmark. According to the findings, all five taxonomies were able to be identified in the objects of research. The table below contains the number of data and their overall percentages that have been sorted from the highest to the lowest number.

Table 1. Five Taxonomies of Foreign Cultural Words

Taxonomies	Data	Percentage
Social culture	343	45%
Material culture	182	24%
Organization, customs, and ideas	105	14%
Gesture and habits	72	10%
Ecology	53	7%
Total data	: 755	

Out of five taxonomies, social culture had the highest percentage of 45%, nearly half of the overall percentage. The reason was various cultural expressions that can be seen in the book from either American or a few Vietnamese expressions. These expressions contain connotations from their respective cultures, which in the next section would most likely be paraphrased to elaborate the CSI or replaced by a more familiar item in the TL. Followed by material culture with 24% and organization with 14% due to the settings of war and military in the book. The last two were gestures and habits with 10%, followed by ecology with 7%. To elaborate on the reason ecology had the least number of data was because of the translation of proper names. According to Newmark (1988, p.214-216), we must respect a country's desire to decide the name of its geographical features, hence it is encouraged for translators to keep the proper names of not only geographical terms but also names of objects with trademarks and people's name. Therefore, every geographical feature name that was kept as the original in the TT to respect the cultural value of its name was not included in this research.

### *Translation Strategies*

Commencing from being classified into five taxonomies, the pair of CSIs and their translations were analyzed by applying comparative research to determine which translation strategies were exercised in the translation process. Based on the findings in Table 2 below, only seven out of eight translation strategies were exercised. The exception is the translation by illustration which can be used to illustrate physical objects. However, there were no hints of any illustration in the TT, hence translation by illustration is stated as 0%.

Table 2. Eight Translation Strategies

Strategies	Data	Percentage
Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words	234	31%

Translation by paraphrase using related words	195	26%
Translation by a more general word (superordinate)	130	17%
Translation by cultural substitution	66	9%
Translation by using a loan word or loan word plus explanation	62	8%
Translation by omission	37	5%
Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word	31	4%
Translation by illustration	0	0%
Total data	: 755	

The highest percentage out of the seven strategies that were able to be identified in the TT was the translation by paraphrase using unrelated words at 31%, followed by its counterpart, translation by paraphrase using related words at 26%. Subsequently, translation by a more general word (superordinate) with 17%, the last of the double-digit percentage in the list. The rest of the strategies were fairly close to each other, translation by using a loan word or loan word plus explanation with 8%, translation by omission with 5%, and with a mere one percent difference, translation by a more neutral/less expressive word with 4%.

Table 3. Example of translation by paraphrase using unrelated words

ST	TT	Taxonomy	Strategy
Dog tags	<i>Kalung tanda pengenal militer</i>	Material culture	Paraphrase using unrelated words

To this day, there are many rumors surrounding how dog tags are called as such. Dog tags are small metal disks on a chain that army members wear to identify themselves in battle (Lange, 2020). The Army Historical Foundation suggested that the term was coined by Willian Randolph Hearst in 1936. Other rumors include how the tags looked similar to the tag on a dog's collar and that the draftees of World War II claimed that they were treated like dogs. However, the most certain aspect is its function as an identifying tag. This description is being transferred in the Indonesian language, albeit the translator added more items, providing more context to the readers to avoid ambiguity. *Kalung tanda pengenal militer* essentially means "military identifying tags" without any relation to the word "dog." But, as Indonesian does not have a specific word equivalence for "tag," it is replaced by the closest word *kalung* or "necklace." Hence, the translation for this CSI is considered a translation by paraphrase using unrelated words.

Table 4. Example of translation by paraphrase using related words

ST	TT	Taxonomy	Strategy
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	<i>Polisi Berkuda Kanada</i>	Organizations, customs, & ideas	Paraphrase using related words

According to the official website (The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2021), The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has been serving Canada for

almost 150 years since 1873. Furthermore, The Canadian Encyclopedia (2016) mentions that as Canada's national police force, the RCMP provides various services from municipal policing to national intelligence gathering. However, the word "Royal" was added in 1904, and before that, the force was only known as North-West Mounted Police. Similar to the TT, it does not include "Royal" and only the "Canadian Mounted Police" with a few adjustments according to the Indonesian phrase structure. Therefore, the translation is considered a product of paraphrase using related words.

Table 5. Example of translation by using more general words

ST	TT	Taxonomy	Strategy
Ben Franklin store	<i>Toko serba ada</i>	Social culture	More general words

Baker (2011) states that abstract or concrete could have to do with a religious conviction, a specific type of food, or even a social more. Due to this reason, translators are often referred to as mediators and bridges between two countries (Blažytė & Liubiniene, 2016; Busana & Subiyanto, 2020). Ben Franklin store is an independent retail franchise in the United States. This establishment is well-known to be a one-stop shop for home décor, giftware, and crafts (Ben Franklin Online, 2023). However, the target readers are most likely not familiar with this particular franchise as it does not exist in Indonesia. The translation itself is also interesting, *toko serba ada* is much more general than the range of items that Ben Franklin provides. In addition, *toko serba ada* is also easier to accept in TL for its more familiar term affected by the local culture inherent in their social system. The meaning of *toko serba ada* is closer to a "department store" where they sell everyday necessities. It is conceptually more general and acceptable to the target reader.

Table 6. Example of translation by cultural substitution

ST	TT	Taxonomy	Strategy
Shredded wheat	<i>Telur dadar</i>	Material culture	Cultural substitution

Farkhan, Naimah, and Suriadi, (2020) in his findings state when translating terms linked to food, translators should take into consideration the cultural connotations associated with these terms, their purpose and meaning in the original language, and the translatability to which the phrases may be translated into the target language. The cultural or linguistic connotations of the original word in the source language are not taken into account by this method. The context behind "shredded wheat" is that in the story titled "The Man I Killed," Tim the soldier had killed a man with a grenade. He was shocked, stunned, and kept looking at the corpse. Meanwhile, one of his comrades, Azar, who's a brash young man was talking about how Tim shredded that man like shredded wheat. Wheat is not a common staple food in Indonesia and many target readers might not be familiar with any products related to wheat. Hence, "shredded wheat" was translated into a more familiar food to the target readers, *telur dadar* or "scrambled egg." Keeping in mind how "shredded" was used to describe a disarranged corpse, "scrambled" also expresses similar messiness. In fact, Azar

also used “scrambled” along the lines of “you scrambled his sorry self,” before he said “shredded wheat.” Therefore, “scrambled egg” is a suitable cultural substitution for “shredded wheat.”

Table 7. Examples of translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation

ST	TT	Taxonomy	Strategy
Birch	Birch	Ecology	Loan words
Trip flare	Trip flare ( <i>suar yang menyala bila pemicunya tersangkut</i> )	Material culture	Loan words plus explanation

Loan words are often signified by inverted commas or the *italic font*. This method ensures that the intended readers avoid getting lost in translation and can comprehend the specifics given in the text, such as how Birch, a species of tree is written in the TT. However, at other times, loan words are also followed by an explanation to provide more context for the target readers. For instance, the TT explained in parenthesis that a trip flare is a flare that will be activated if the trigger gets stuck. To put into more context, trip flares are commonly used in a defensive operation so that if someone unsuspectingly triggered it, it would burn and give a signal to nearby soldiers.

Table 8. Example of translation by omission

ST	TT	Taxonomy	Strategy
Riding shotgun	-	Gesture and habits	Omission

For some taboos and strange language collocations that cannot be accepted in another country’s culture, omission can be used to symbolize the language habits of the readers of the target language. Norman Bowker, a Vietnam war veteran, was riding his father’s Chevy around a lake. He imagined talking about the Song Tra Bong River to Sally Kramer, his high school crush while driving past her house. He also imagined talking to his father who was riding shotgun, telling a story about how he almost won the Silver Star, a medal for valor. According to the context of the story and the Oxford Dictionary, “riding shotgun” means to travel in a vehicle, especially as a passenger. However, this phrase is completely omitted in the TT. Instead, the TT described how Norman Bowker imagined his father was there and talking to him.

Table 9. Examples of translation using a more neutral/less expressive words

ST	TT	Taxonomy	Strategy
Gape	<i>Kekaguman</i>	Gesture and habits	Neutral/less expressive words

This strategy transforms the cultural expressions in the source language into more accessible and culturally equivalent expressions in the target language. Most dictionaries define “gape” as an act of staring at someone or something with your

mouth open because you are shocked or surprised. Therefore, it is related to the emotion of amazement or surprise similar to the TT *kekaguman*. However, it also signifies a specific action of being very surprised that you opened your mouth, which is non-existent in the translation. Hence, the translation is less expressive than the ST.

### Conclusion

There are a few conclusions that were achieved in this research. First, the most commonly found taxonomy in the research objects is social culture with 45% and more than three hundred data. On the contrary, ecology has the least amount of data with a little more than fifty and 7%. Second, the most applicable translation strategy for CSIs found in this research is translation by paraphrase using unrelated words with 31% and more than two hundred data followed by translation by paraphrase using related words with 26%. Lastly, only seven out of eight translation strategies were found in the objects of research. Translation by illustration has not been found in the TT in any shape or form.

From the conclusions above, it can be indicated that in general, paraphrasing is the most suitable strategy to translate CSIs. Regardless of whether the translator uses related or unrelated words, paraphrasing would provide more context to the target readers and avoid ambiguity. However, one shortcoming of this strategy is the difference in the length of the ST and TT. In the case of this research, the TT has 105 more pages compared to the ST.

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## **VIRTUAL FLIPPED CLASSROOM FOR DEVELOPING EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

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### **Abstract**

In Indonesia, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students often struggle with developing speaking skills due to limited classroom time and cultural tendencies towards passive learning. This study investigated the effectiveness of a virtual flipped classroom in addressing these challenges and enhancing EFL students' speaking abilities. The research involved 40 Indonesian university students, divided equally into experimental and control groups. The experimental group participated in a virtual flipped classroom, completing pre-class online activities and engaging in in-class speaking exercises, while the control group received traditional instruction. Pre- and post-tests assessed speaking skills, supplemented by student surveys. Results revealed significantly higher post-test scores in the experimental group compared to the control group. Furthermore, survey data indicated that students perceived the virtual flipped classroom as effective in promoting active learning and enhancing their speaking skills. This approach shows promise in overcoming cultural barriers to active participation and maximizing limited class time for speaking practice in Indonesian EFL contexts. However, further research is needed to explore long-term effects and optimal implementation strategies across diverse EFL settings.

**Keywords:** EFL, flipped classroom, speaking skills, virtual class

### **Introduction**

The flipped classroom has emerged as a promising approach to language learning, particularly for developing English as a foreign language (EFL) students' speaking skills (Abdullah, Hussin, & Ismail, 2019; Kawinkoonlasate, 2019). In a flipped classroom, students engage with the course material outside of class through online activities and exercises, allowing for more in-depth discussions and activities in the physical classroom (Baskara 2023a, 2023b). This approach is practical for promoting active learning and improving student engagement (Subramaniam & Muniandy, 2019).

Speaking effectively is a crucial skill for success in both academic and professional settings (Rao, 2019). Developing speaking skills for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) can be challenging but essential. In traditional EFL classrooms, speaking activities often take a backseat to more traditional language learning methods, such as grammar drills and vocabulary

memorisation. However, research has shown that speaking skills are best developed through authentic, real-life language and interaction with others (Chen & Kent, 2020; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; Toro et al., 2019).

In the context of higher education, particularly in EFL settings, the development of speaking skills presents unique challenges and opportunities. Recent research has highlighted the critical role of speaking skills in academic success and future career prospects for EFL learners (Maican & Cocoradă, 2021). For instance, a study by Asakereh and Dehghannezhad (2015) found that strong speaking skills were positively correlated with overall academic performance among EFL university students, while Ting et al. (2017) demonstrated that proficient oral communication in English significantly enhanced job market competitiveness for graduates in non-English speaking countries.

Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners to master, particularly in contexts where exposure to authentic English communication is limited. Mulyono et al. (2019) identified several factors contributing to this difficulty, including limited opportunities for practice, anxiety about making errors, and cultural norms that may discourage active participation in class. In the Indonesian context, Zulfikar (2013) noted that large class sizes and a traditionally teacher-centered approach to education further compound these challenges, often resulting in passive learning behaviors that hinder the development of speaking skills.

To address these issues, innovative approaches to language teaching that maximize opportunities for active learning and speaking practice are needed. The flipped classroom model, particularly when implemented in a virtual environment, offers a promising solution. By moving content delivery outside of class time through online materials, this approach frees up valuable in-class time for interactive speaking activities and personalized feedback (Sargent & Cassey, 2020). Moreover, the integration of technology in a virtual flipped classroom can provide learners with access to a wider range of authentic language input and opportunities for self-paced practice (Han, 2015).

Several studies have investigated the factors that affect the development of speaking skills in EFL learners (Amiryousefi, 2019; Namaziandost, Shatalebi, & Nasri, 2019; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019). One crucial factor is the amount and quality of exposure to the target language. Several studies have found that the more learners are exposed to the target language, their speaking skills improve (Al Zoubi, 2018; Angelini & García-Carbonell, 2019; Manel, Hassan, & Buriro, 2019). In addition, the quality of exposure is also essential, as learners exposed to authentic and varied language input tend to develop better speaking skills than those exposed to artificial and limited input (e.g., Willis and Willis, 2007; Nation, 2022).

Another critical factor is the instruction and activities used to promote speaking skills. Many studies have found that explicit instruction, focused feedback, and scaffolded practice effectively promote speaking skills among EFL learners (e.g., Ellis, 1995; Fang et al., 2018; Khoram, Bazvand, & Sarhad, 2020). Activities that encourage learners to use the target language in communicative and real-life situations, such as role-plays, debates, and discussions, be effective in promoting speaking skills (Karpushyna et al., 2019; Sayera, 2019).

The literature suggests that speaking skills are essential to language learning and use. Exposure to the target language, quality of exposure, and instructional activities play essential roles in developing speaking skills among EFL learners (Al Zoubi, 2018; Richter, 2019). The present study contributes to this body of research by investigating the use of a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL classroom and its impact on students' speaking skills. By implementing a virtual flipped classroom that provides exposure to authentic and varied language input and engages students in communicative and real-life activities, we aimed to promote the development of speaking skills among our EFL learners. Our study provides evidence for the effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting EFL speaking skills and offers insights for language educators on how to use the virtual flipped classroom to enhance language learning effectively.

There has been a growing interest in using the flipped classroom model in language education (Jiang et al., 2022; Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). The flipped classroom is a teaching approach that reverses the traditional classroom model by delivering instruction outside of class, typically through online activities and exercises, and using class time for more active learning and collaboration. This approach allows students to engage with course content and develop their language skills in a more personalized and self-paced manner while providing opportunities for in-class discussions and activities that promote language use and development.

Previous studies have investigated the use of the flipped classroom model in language education with mixed results. Some studies have found that the flipped classroom effectively promotes language learning and engagement, while others have found no significant differences between the flipped classroom and traditional classroom approaches (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021; Cheng et al., 2019; Santikarn & Wichadee, 2018; Zheng, 2020).

One study that has explored the use of the flipped classroom in EFL education is the study by Lee and Kim (2017), who implemented a flipped classroom in a Korean university and found that students in the flipped classroom demonstrated higher levels of achievement and engagement compared to the control group. Another study by Lin and Hwang (2018) also found that the flipped classroom effectively promoted EFL speaking skills among Chinese university students.

On the other hand, other studies have found no significant differences between the flipped classroom and traditional classroom approaches. For example, a study by Blair, Maharaj, and Primus (2016) found that the flipped classroom did not significantly improve EFL speaking skills among Jamaican university students. Another study by Öztürk and Çakıroğlu (2021) found no significant differences between the flipped and traditional classrooms regarding student achievement and engagement in a Turkish university.

In addition to the studies mentioned above, other studies have investigated the use of the flipped classroom in language education. For example, a study by Chang and Lan (2021) found that the flipped classroom effectively promoted EFL vocabulary learning among Taiwanese university students. Another study by Lin and Mubarak (2021) also found that the flipped classroom effectively improved learning performance and interactive behavior among Taiwanese university students.

Furthermore, studies have also explored the use of technology in the flipped classroom to enhance language learning. For example, a study by Khalil (2018) found that online collaboration tools in the flipped classroom effectively promoted EFL speaking and listening skills among Palestinian university students. Another study by Khodabandeh (2022) also found that using augmented reality simulations in the flipped classroom effectively promoted EFL speaking skills among Iranian university students.

The existing literature suggests that the flipped classroom can be a practical approach to promoting language learning. However, more research is needed to understand the factors contributing to its success and identify best practices for implementing it in language education. This paper presents the results of a study that investigated the use of a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL classroom and its impact on students' speaking skills. The study provides evidence for the effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting EFL speaking skills and suggests that it can be a valuable tool for language education.

In this paper, we present the results of a study in which we implemented a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL classroom and evaluated its impact on students' speaking skills. The virtual flipped classroom consisted of online activities and exercises that the students completed before class, including videos, readings, and quizzes. Students participated in group discussions and activities to promote speaking and collaboration during class. Our results show that the virtual flipped classroom is a practical approach for developing EFL speaking skills and can lead to more engaging and effective language learning. In the following sections, we will describe our methodology, present our findings, and discuss the implications of our study for using the virtual flipped classroom in EFL education.

## **Method**

The present study employed a mixed methods design, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Almalki, 2016; Creswell, 1999). Using a mixed methods design allowed us to triangulate the results and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the virtual flipped classroom on EFL speaking skills.

To evaluate the impact of the virtual flipped classroom on speaking skills, we employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. We administered a pre-test and a post-test to both the experimental and control groups. The tests consisted of speaking tasks, including describing a picture, role-playing a conversation, and giving a short presentation. These tasks were designed to assess various aspects of speaking skills, such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy.

The tests were scored by three trained evaluators using a standardized rubric. The evaluators were experienced EFL instructors who underwent a rigorous training process to ensure inter-rater reliability. This training included:

1. Familiarization with the rubric and assessment criteria.
2. Practice scoring of sample speaking performances.
3. Discussion and calibration sessions to align scoring practices.
4. A pilot scoring phase where inter-rater reliability was assessed (achieving an intraclass correlation coefficient  $> 0.80$ ).

To analyze the quantitative data, we employed several statistical techniques:

1. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to summarize the pre-test and post-test scores.
2. Paired t-tests to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group.
3. Independent samples t-test to compare the gains between the experimental and control groups.
4. Cohen's d to calculate the effect size of the intervention.

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26, with a significance level set at  $p < 0.05$ .

To gather qualitative data on students' perceptions of the virtual flipped classroom, we administered a mixed survey at the end of the study. The survey consisted of two parts:

1. Likert-scale items: These questions assessed students' overall satisfaction with the virtual flipped classroom, the perceived usefulness of online activities and exercises, and the effectiveness of in-class activities and discussions in promoting speaking skills. Responses were on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).
2. Open-ended questions: To gain deeper insights into students' experiences and perceptions, we included several open-ended questions, such as:
  - "What aspects of the virtual flipped classroom did you find most helpful for improving your speaking skills?"
  - "What challenges did you face in the virtual flipped classroom, and how did you overcome them?"
  - "How do you think the virtual flipped classroom compares to traditional classroom instruction for developing speaking skills?"

The Likert-scale items were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions) to summarize the students' responses. For the open-ended questions, we employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Two researchers independently coded the responses and then compared their analyses to ensure reliability. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved to reach a consensus on the final themes.

The use of a mixed methods design allowed us to combine the results of the pre-test and post-test, which provided quantitative data on the impact of the virtual flipped classroom on speaking skills, with the results of the survey, which provided qualitative data on the student's perceptions of the virtual flipped classroom. This allowed us to triangulate the results and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting EFL speaking skills.

To analyze the data, we used statistical tests to compare the scores on the pre-test and post-test between the experimental and control groups. We also conducted a thematic analysis of the observation and survey data to identify trends

and patterns in students' participation and engagement in virtual and traditional flipped classrooms.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of our study, we followed several best practices in research design and data collection (Abowitz & Toole, 2010). First, we used a randomized controlled trial design (Wozny et al., 2018). The experimental and control groups were randomly assigned to ensure that any differences were not due to pre-existing differences. This design allowed us to isolate the effects of the virtual flipped classroom on students' speaking skills and control for potential confounding variables.

Second, to evaluate students' speaking skills on the pre-test and post-test, we used a standardized test and rubric adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors. This allowed us to ensure consistency and fairness in assessment across all students and enhance the reliability and accuracy of the scoring.

The speaking test consisted of three tasks:

1. Describing a picture (2 minutes)
2. Role-playing a conversation on a given topic (3-4 minutes)
3. Giving a short presentation on a familiar topic (3-4 minutes)

The standardized rubric used to evaluate these tasks covered five key components of speaking proficiency:

1. Fluency and Coherence (25%)
  - Ability to speak at length without noticeable effort
  - Use of cohesive devices and discourse markers
  - Logical sequencing of ideas
2. Lexical Resource (20%)
  - Range and accuracy of vocabulary use
  - Ability to paraphrase effectively
3. Grammatical Range and Accuracy (20%)
  - Use of varied grammatical structures
  - Accuracy in simple and complex sentences
4. Pronunciation (20%)
  - Clarity of individual sounds
  - Appropriate use of stress, rhythm, and intonation
5. Interactive Communication (15%)
  - Ability to respond appropriately and develop ideas
  - Turn-taking skills in conversation

Each component was scored on a scale of 1-5, with detailed descriptors for each level. The overall speaking score was calculated as a weighted average of these five components, resulting in a final score between 1 and 5.

To ensure inter-rater reliability, we conducted training sessions for the evaluators, which included:

- Familiarization with the rubric and its components
- Practice scoring using sample speaking performances
- Calibration discussions to align scoring practices
- A pilot scoring phase where inter-rater reliability was assessed (achieving an intraclass correlation coefficient > 0.85)

This comprehensive rubric and thorough evaluator training process helped to ensure that the assessment of students' speaking skills was consistent, fair, and



accurate across both the pre-test and post-test, as well as between the experimental and control groups.

Third, we used trained evaluators to score the tests and trained observers to record students' participation and engagement in class. This ensured that the data were collected consistently and objectively and minimised any biases or subjectivity.

Our study involved 80 EFL students enrolled in a beginner-level English course at a public university in Indonesia. The participants were undergraduate students aged 18-22, with a balanced gender distribution (42 females, 38 males). To ensure ethical conduct throughout the research process, we implemented the following measures:

1. **Informed Consent:** All potential participants were provided with a comprehensive information sheet explaining the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants. Written informed consent was obtained from each student before their inclusion in the study. The consent form was provided in both English and Bahasa Indonesia to ensure full understanding.
2. **Voluntary Participation:** Students were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences to their academic standing or course grades.
3. **Confidentiality and Data Protection:** Participants were assured that their personal information and individual responses would be kept confidential. All data was anonymized using participant codes, and only aggregated results would be reported. Data was stored securely on password-protected devices and will be destroyed five years after the study's completion.
4. **Minimal Risk and Equal Educational Opportunity:** The study was designed to pose minimal risk to participants. To ensure that no student was disadvantaged, the control group was offered access to the virtual flipped classroom materials after the completion of the study.
5. **Random Assignment:** To avoid bias, participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (n=40), which received instruction in a virtual flipped classroom, or the control group (n=40), which received instruction in a traditional classroom. Both groups received the same course content and completed the same assignments and assessments.
6. **Debriefing:** At the conclusion of the study, all participants were debriefed about the research findings and given an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns.
7. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Given the Indonesian context, we ensured that all aspects of the study, including materials and communication, were culturally appropriate and respectful of local norms and values.

By implementing these ethical measures, we aimed to protect the rights and well-being of our participants while maintaining the integrity of our research. The study design and ethical procedures were in compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association.

The virtual flipped classroom consisted of online activities and exercises that the students completed before class, including videos, readings, and quizzes. These activities were designed to introduce and reinforce key language concepts

and vocabulary and provide listening and reading comprehension practice. Students were also allowed to complete self-assessment quizzes and submit written responses to discussion prompts.

In conclusion, our methodology was designed to ensure a rigorous and valid study of the impact of the virtual flipped classroom on EFL speaking skills. We achieved this through:

1. A robust experimental design with randomly assigned experimental and control groups
2. The use of standardized assessment tools, including a comprehensive rubric for evaluating speaking skills
3. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from pre- and post-tests with qualitative data from surveys
4. Rigorous data analysis procedures, including appropriate statistical tests and thematic analysis of qualitative data
5. Measures to ensure reliability, such as evaluator training and inter-rater reliability checks
6. Comprehensive ethical measures, including IRB approval, informed consent, confidentiality protections, and cultural sensitivity

By adhering to best practices in research design, data collection, and ethical conduct, we collected reliable, accurate, and ethically obtained data. This approach allowed us to draw meaningful and responsible conclusions about the effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in EFL education while prioritizing the rights and well-being of our participants.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The theoretical framework of the present study is based on the principles of communicative language teaching and the flipped classroom model. Communicative language teaching is an approach to language education that emphasizes using authentic and meaningful communication for language learning (Dörnyei, 2009; Jacobs & Farrell, 2003; Richards, 2005). This approach is based on the idea that a language is a tool for communication and that learners need to use it in real-life situations to develop their proficiency. Communicative language teaching focuses on providing learners with opportunities to use the language for purposes such as negotiating to mean, expressing opinions, and engaging in social interactions (Alamri, 2018; Ng, 2020).

The flipped classroom model is an instructional approach that involves flipping the traditional roles of in-class and out-of-class learning (Bonaim, 2022; Jiang et al., 2022). In the flipped classroom, learners are expected to engage with course content and complete assignments and exercises outside class, using online resources and materials. Learners participate in activities and discussions during class designed to promote active learning and collaboration (Jung et al., 2022). The flipped classroom model is based on the idea that learners can benefit from more personalized and interactive instruction during class, which can lead to more engaging and effective learning.

The theoretical framework of the present study combines the principles of communicative language teaching and the flipped classroom model to investigate the use of a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL context and its impact on speaking skills. Online activities and exercises, as well as in-class activities and

discussions, are intended to provide learners with exposure to authentic and varied language input and opportunities to use the language in communicative and real-life situations (AlSmari, 2020; Yesilçinar, 2019). These components of the virtual flipped classroom are expected to promote language learning and engagement among EFL learners and lead to more effective language instruction.

### ***Flipped Classroom Design***

The virtual flipped classroom in our study consisted of online activities and exercises that the students completed before class and in-class activities and discussions designed to promote speaking and collaboration.

The online activities and exercises included videos, readings, and quizzes designed to introduce and reinforce key language concepts and vocabulary and provide listening and reading comprehension practice (Korkmaz & Mirici, 2021). The videos were authentic recordings of native speakers using the language in different contexts, such as interviews, news reports, and social interactions. The readings included a variety of texts, such as articles, blogs, and short stories, that provided learners with exposure to different genres and styles of writing. The quizzes were self-assessment tools that allowed learners to check their understanding of the language concepts and vocabulary presented in the videos and readings.

The in-class activities and discussions included a variety of speaking tasks, such as role-plays, debates, and discussions of real-life scenarios. These activities were designed to provide learners with opportunities to use the language in communicative and real-life situations and to receive feedback and support from their peers and the teacher. The in-class activities and discussions were also intended to promote collaboration and interaction among learners, allowing them to practice their speaking skills in a supportive and engaging environment.

Our virtual flipped classroom's in-class activities and discussions included various speaking tasks designed to promote collaboration and interaction among learners. These activities were facilitated using technology, such as apps and online platforms, that allowed learners to engage in synchronous and asynchronous communication.

For example, one of the speaking activities in our virtual flipped classroom was a role-play activity in which learners were asked to act out a conversation in a real-life situation, such as ordering food at a restaurant. The learners were divided into pairs and assigned different roles, such as the customer and the waiter. Each pair used a mobile app, such as Zoom or Google Meet, to record their conversation and share it with the rest of the class. The class then listened to and discussed the different recordings, providing feedback and support to the learners.

Another speaking activity in our virtual flipped classroom was a debate activity in which learners were asked to discuss a controversial topic, such as the use of technology in education. The learners were divided into groups and assigned different positions on the topic, such as for or against using technology in education. Each group used an online platform, such as Google Docs or Slack, to brainstorm their arguments and evidence and share their ideas with the other groups. The class then participated in a live debate, using the online platform to present and defend their arguments and listen and respond to the other groups.

In our virtual flipped classroom, we used a learning management system (LMS) to deliver course content, manage assignments and assessments, and facilitate communication and collaboration among learners (Onodipe, Keengwe, & Cottrell-Yongye, 2020). The LMS provided learners access to online activities and exercises, as well as in-class activities and discussions, that were designed to promote speaking and collaboration.

The LMS also allowed learners to track their progress, submit their work, and access feedback and support from the teacher and their peers (El Mortaji, 2022). The LMS provided learners with a personalized learning experience, allowing them to engage with course content and practice their language skills at their own pace and in their own time. This was particularly beneficial for learners with different learning styles, backgrounds, and schedules.

The LMS also provides the teacher with tools and resources to manage and assess the learners' work and provide feedback and support (Teng & Wang, 2021). The teacher monitored the learners' progress, provided individualized feedback on their assignments and assessments, and facilitated discussions and interactions among learners. The LMS allowed the teacher to design and deliver instruction tailored to the learners' needs and interests and to create an engaging and effective learning environment.

Overall, our study's design of the virtual flipped classroom was based on the principles of communicative language teaching and the flipped classroom model. The use of technology in our virtual flipped classroom allowed learners to engage in speaking activities that were collaborative, interactive, and authentic. The use of mobile apps and online platforms facilitated communication and collaboration among learners, providing them with opportunities to use the language in real-life situations and to receive feedback and support from their peers and the teacher. This combination of online and in-class activities was intended to promote language learning and engagement among EFL learners and lead to more effective language instruction.

### Findings and Discussions

To evaluate the impact of the virtual flipped classroom on students' speaking skills, we administered a pre-test and a post-test to both groups. The tests consisted of speaking tasks, such as describing a picture, role-playing a conversation, and giving a short presentation. The tests were scored by trained evaluators using a standardized rubric.

The results of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using a paired t-test to compare the scores of the experimental and control groups. The results showed that the experimental group, which received instruction in the virtual flipped classroom, had significantly higher post-test scores than the control group, which received instruction in a traditional classroom.

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental and control groups.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental and control groups

Group	Pre-test mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test mean	Post-test SD
Experimental	22.5	3.2	28.0	2.3

Control	21.0	2.9	22.5	1.8
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The paired t-test showed that the difference in the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant, with a t-value of 4.52 and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates that the use of the virtual flipped classroom had a positive effect on EFL speaking skills.

Overall, the statistical analysis provides evidence for the effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting EFL speaking skills. The significant difference in the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups suggests that using the virtual flipped classroom positively affected our EFL learners' speaking skills. These findings support the conclusions of our study and provide evidence for the usefulness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting EFL speaking skills.

Future research with larger sample sizes and follow-up data on the long-term effects of the virtual flipped classroom would be necessary to confirm and expand on the findings of our study. Additionally, further research could investigate the components of the virtual flipped classroom, such as the type and quality of online activities and exercises and the type and frequency of in-class activities and discussions, that are most effective in promoting EFL speaking skills. This information would be valuable for language educators designing and implementing the virtual flipped classroom in their teaching.

In addition to the statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores, we collected data on the student's perceptions of the virtual flipped classroom through a survey administered at the end of the study. The survey included questions on the student's overall satisfaction with the virtual flipped classroom, the usefulness of the online activities and exercises, and the effectiveness of the in-class activities and discussions in promoting speaking skills.

The survey results provided valuable insights into students' perceptions of the virtual flipped classroom. We analyzed both Likert-scale responses and open-ended questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences. Table 2 summarizes the students' responses to key Likert-scale items:

Table 2: Summary of Students' Perceptions of the Virtual Flipped Classroom (n=40)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The virtual flipped classroom was a practical approach for developing EFL speaking skills	45%	40%	10%	5%	0%
The online activities and exercises were helpful for my language learning	50%	40%	7.5%	2.5%	0%
The in-class activities and discussions helped improve my speaking skills	35%	40%	15%	7.5%	2.5%
The in-class activities and discussions were engaging	42.5%	42.5%	10%	5%	0%

and enjoyable

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These results indicate a generally positive perception of the virtual flipped classroom approach, with a large majority of students finding it practical and helpful for developing their EFL speaking skills.

Thematic analysis of the open-ended responses revealed several key themes, which we present below with representative quotes from students:

1. **Increased Confidence in Speaking** Many students reported feeling more confident in their speaking abilities after participating in the virtual flipped classroom. For example: "Before this class, I was always nervous to speak English. But now, I feel more confident because I can practice a lot before the actual class discussion." (Student 17)
2. **Flexibility and Self-paced Learning** Students appreciated the flexibility offered by the online components of the course: "I loved that I could watch the videos and do the exercises at my own pace. It helped me understand better because I could replay parts I didn't get at first." (Student 8)
3. **Enhanced In-class Interactions** The flipped model seemed to facilitate more meaningful in-class interactions: "The class discussions were much more interesting because everyone came prepared. We could have deeper conversations in English instead of just basic practice." (Student 23)
4. **Technology-related Challenges** Some students faced technical difficulties, particularly at the beginning of the course: "At first, I had trouble with the online platform, but after a week or so, it became easier to use. Maybe more tech support at the start would be helpful." (Student 31)
5. **Preference for Blended Approach** Many students expressed a preference for the combination of online and in-person elements: "I think the mix of online preparation and in-class speaking practice is perfect. It gives us the best of both worlds." (Student 12)

These qualitative insights complement the quantitative data, providing a richer understanding of how students experienced and perceived the virtual flipped classroom approach. The combination of positive Likert-scale responses and supportive open-ended comments suggests that students found the virtual flipped classroom to be an effective and engaging method for developing their EFL speaking skills.

These results provide further evidence for the effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting EFL speaking skills and support the conclusions of our study. The students' positive perceptions of the virtual flipped classroom suggest that it was engaging and effective for their language learning and that the online activities and exercises, as well as the in-class activities and discussions, were valuable components of the virtual flipped classroom.

These results suggest that online activities and exercises, as well as in-class activities and discussions, are essential components of the virtual flipped classroom that contribute to its effectiveness in promoting EFL speaking skills. The online activities and exercises expose learners to authentic and varied language input and reinforce key concepts and vocabulary. The in-class activities and discussions provide learners with opportunities to use the language in communicative and real-life situations and to receive feedback and support from their peers and the teacher.

The positive perceptions of the students also suggest that the virtual flipped classroom can be a flexible and adaptable approach to language education. The use of technology and virtual environments allows educators to design and deliver instruction that is tailored to the needs and interests of their learners. The virtual flipped classroom can also allow learners to engage with course content and practice their language skills at their own pace and in their own time. This can make language learning more accessible and inclusive for learners with different learning styles, backgrounds, and schedules.

Our study's observation and survey data revealed several themes related to using a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL context and its impact on speaking skills.

One of the themes that emerged from the observation data was the potential of the virtual flipped classroom to provide learners with exposure to authentic and varied language input. The observations showed that the online activities and exercises, such as videos, readings, and quizzes, provided learners with access to authentic language in different contexts and genres. This exposure to authentic language benefited learners, as it allowed them to develop their listening and reading comprehension skills and vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

Another theme that emerged from the observation data was the potential of the virtual flipped classroom to promote collaboration and interaction among learners. The observations showed that the in-class activities and discussions, such as role-plays, debates, and discussions of real-life scenarios, facilitated communication and collaboration among learners. This benefited learners by allowing them to practice their speaking skills in a supportive and engaging environment. The use of technology in the virtual flipped classroom also facilitated communication and collaboration, allowing learners to engage in online discussions and activities and receive feedback and support from their peers and the teacher.

The survey data also revealed several themes related to using a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL context and its impact on speaking skills. One of the themes that emerged from the survey data was the perceived effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting speaking skills among EFL learners. Most of the learners reported that online activities and exercises, as well as in-class activities and discussions, helped them develop their speaking skills and confidence. The learners also reported that using technology and online resources and interacting with their peers and teachers enhanced their language learning experience.

Another theme from the survey data was the perceived benefits of the virtual flipped classroom for language education. Most of the learners reported that using a virtual flipped classroom allowed them to engage with course content and practice their language skills at their own pace and in their own time. This was particularly beneficial for learners with different learning styles, backgrounds, and schedules. The learners also reported that using a virtual flipped classroom facilitated collaboration and interaction among learners, allowing them to engage in online discussions and activities and receive feedback and support from their peers and the teacher.

Overall, our study's observation and survey data revealed several themes related to using a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL context and its impact on

speaking skills. The themes from the data suggested that the virtual flipped classroom provided learners exposure to authentic and varied language input and opportunities to use the language in communicative and real-life situations. The use of technology and online resources, as well as in-class activities and discussions, facilitated communication and collaboration among learners and enhanced their language learning experience.

The statistical and survey data also provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the virtual flipped classroom in promoting EFL speaking skills. The significant difference in the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups and the students' positive perceptions suggest that the virtual flipped classroom is a practical and effective approach to language education.

The use of a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL context is based on the belief that technology can enhance language education and provide learners with access to authentic and varied language input. Online resources and materials, such as videos, readings, and quizzes, can provide learners exposure to authentic language in different contexts and genres. This can help learners to develop their listening and reading comprehension skills, as well as their vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

Our results showed that virtual flipped classrooms significantly improved students' speaking skills. Students in the experimental group showed significantly higher scores on the post-test than on the pre-test, indicating a marked improvement in their speaking abilities. In contrast, the control group did not significantly change their scores.

Furthermore, our results indicate that using the virtual flipped classroom led to more engaging and effective language learning. Students in the experimental group reported higher satisfaction levels with the course and felt more confident and fluent in English. They also reported enjoying the online activities and found them to help reinforce language concepts and vocabulary.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our study showed that using a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL context is a practical approach to developing speaking skills and can lead to more engaging and effective language learning. Our findings indicated that the online activities and exercises, as well as the in-class activities and discussions, provided learners with exposure to authentic and varied language input and opportunities to use the language in communicative and real-life situations. The use of technology and online resources facilitated communication and collaboration among learners, enhancing their language learning experience.

Based on our findings, we recommend using a virtual flipped classroom in EFL education to promote speaking skills and enhance language instruction. Online activities and exercises, as well as in-class activities and discussions, can provide learners with exposure to authentic and varied language input and opportunities to use the language in communicative and real-life situations. The use of technology and online resources can facilitate communication and collaboration among learners, enhancing their language learning experience.

While our study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of virtual flipped classrooms for developing EFL speaking skills, it also has limitations that should be addressed in future research:



1. Long-term Effects: Our study was conducted over a single semester. We recommend longitudinal studies to investigate the long-term effects of virtual flipped classrooms on EFL speaking skills development. Such research could track students' progress over multiple semesters or even years to determine if the benefits are sustained over time.
2. Sample Size and Diversity: Our study was limited to 80 students from a single university in Indonesia. Future research should include larger sample sizes from diverse educational contexts, including different universities, regions, and countries. This would enhance the generalizability of findings and help identify how cultural and institutional factors might influence the effectiveness of virtual flipped classrooms.
3. Proficiency Levels: We focused on beginner-level EFL students. Further research is needed to explore the impact of virtual flipped classrooms on intermediate and advanced learners. This could help determine if the approach is equally effective across all proficiency levels or if it needs to be adapted for different stages of language learning.
4. Technology Integration: While our study used a specific set of online tools and resources, future research should investigate the effectiveness of different technological platforms and digital resources in virtual flipped classrooms. This could include comparing various learning management systems, video conferencing tools, or interactive language learning applications.
5. Speaking Sub-skills: Our assessment focused on overall speaking proficiency. Future studies could delve deeper into specific sub-skills of speaking, such as pronunciation, fluency, or conversational strategies, to provide a more nuanced understanding of how virtual flipped classrooms impact different aspects of speaking ability.
6. Learner Autonomy and Self-regulation: Given the self-paced nature of the online component, future research should explore how virtual flipped classrooms affect learner autonomy and self-regulation skills. This could include investigating strategies to support students who struggle with self-directed learning in this environment.
7. Teacher Training and Perceptions: Our study focused on student outcomes and perceptions. Future research should also examine teachers' experiences, including the challenges they face in implementing virtual flipped classrooms and the training needed to effectively use this approach.
8. Comparative Studies: While our study compared virtual flipped classrooms to traditional classrooms, future research could compare different models of flipped and blended learning to identify the most effective approaches for developing EFL speaking skills.

By addressing these limitations and expanding upon our findings, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how virtual flipped classrooms can be optimally implemented to enhance EFL speaking skills development. This will provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to improve EFL instruction in an increasingly digital educational landscape.

In addition, future research could also investigate the use of a virtual flipped classroom in different EFL contexts and settings, such as in primary and

secondary schools, as well as in higher education institutions and language schools. This could provide valuable insights into the potential and limitations of the virtual flipped classroom in different EFL contexts and its impact on speaking skills and language learning among learners with different backgrounds and learning styles.

Overall, our study suggests that using a virtual flipped classroom in an EFL context is a practical approach to developing speaking skills and enhancing language instruction. Online activities and exercises, as well as in-class activities and discussions, can provide learners with exposure to authentic and varied language input and opportunities to use the language in communicative and real-life situations. The use of technology and online resources can facilitate communication and collaboration among learners, enhancing their language learning experience. Further research on using a virtual flipped classroom in EFL education could provide valuable insights into its potential, limitations, and impact on speaking skills and language learning.

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