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TECHNIQUES IN TRANSLATING TERMS RELATED TO ISLAM IN THE SUNDANESE FOLKLORES: A CASE OF MULTIPLE TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract

This article discusses the translation of Islam-related terms in Sundanese folklore as an example of multiple translations involving Sundanese, Indonesian, and English. Using qualitative research methods, it examines the translation techniques applied to Islam-related terms in folklore. While terms related to Islam may be non-equivalent in English, they are not in Indonesian. Therefore, it is the ideal tool for studying how terms related to Islam are translated into both target languages, rather than using strategies for non-equivalence. This research employs the translation techniques of Molina and Albir to understand how terms related to Islam are translated into the two target languages. The objectives are: (1) locating all terms related to Islam in the source text, (2) identifying the translation techniques used in both target texts, and (3) determining whether the equivalents in the target texts maintain the same meaning as in the source text. The results show that: (1) Thirty-four terms related to Islam were found in eleven out of thirty folklore texts. (2) The techniques identified in the English text are more varied than those in the Indonesian text. (3) The equivalents in the English text tend to be generalized, while those in the Indonesian text mostly are not. Related to Islam may be non-equivalent in English, but they are not in Indonesian. Therefore, it is the ideal tool for studying how terms related to Islam are translated into both target languages, rather than using strategies for non-equivalence. This research employs the translation techniques of Molina and Albir to understand how terms related to Islam are translated into the two target languages. The objectives are: (1) locating all terms related to Islam in the source text, (2) identifying the translation techniques used in both target texts, and (3) determining whether the equivalents in the target texts maintain the same meaning as in the source text. The results show that: (1) Thirty-four terms related to Islam were found in eleven out of thirty folklore texts. (2) The techniques identified in the English text are more varied than those in the Indonesian text. (3) The equivalents in the English text tend to be generalized, while those in the Indonesian text mostly are not.

Keywords: Islamic terms, multiple translation, Sundanese folklores, Sundanese language, techniques of translation

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INTRODUCTION

Anything related to any religion can be sensitive if not handled properly. Dealing with religious discourse, such as Islam, may need a certain strategy, like direct strategies to avoid misconceptions by non-Muslim target readers (Shehab et al., 2020). It is because religion deals with people's beliefs, guidance, and rules. It regulates the relationship among human beings and between human beings and their God. People of a certain religion, like Islam, have their ways to call their God 'Allah' known as 'Asma'ul Husna' (ninety-nine names of Allah) as written in the Holy Book, Al-Qur'an. Islam also has certain expressions specifying in their praying activities, like praying for 'solat'. The terms related to Islam in the names of Allah, the specific activities in praying, and the everyday rules are identified in the Sundanese folklore, which are then followed by their translations in two target languages altogether (Suganda et al., 2011).

The existence of two target languages with one source language is an example of multiple translations, also known as multilingual translation, as opposed to a translation from one source language to one target language. Regardless of how many languages are in the target language, translation functions the same way: it reproduces the closest natural equivalence of the source language's message in terms of both meaning and style (Nida & Taber, 1982). So far, no definition of multiple translations has been found using any search engine, nor has any research on multiple translations been found. If any such research exists, it is very rare; mostly, multiple translations are related to machine translation (Dong et al., 2015; Nishimura et al., 2019). In Indonesian-language proceedings, however, research on three-language translation, or penerjemahan multibahasa, can be found. Examples include the translation of the aphorism Al-Hikam from Arabic into English and Indonesian (Anis et al., 2021) and the translation dealing with politeness in the Indonesian novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, which involves Javanese, Indonesian, and English (Khristianto, 2016). In fact, research on translation remains limited, with recent studies focusing on literary translation (Jabu et al., 2021). Translating folklore is part of translating literary works.

Folklore of various kinds, relating to legend and tradition, is unique and may be untranslatable due to its cultural background (Savitri & Nugroho, 2019). To avoid misunderstandings, the translation process requires an in-depth focus (Fikri & Sutrisno, 2023). Translating folklore into other languages spreads the cultural values inherent in the folklore. Thus, translation preserves culture by involving the communities where the folklore is found (Mahmud et al., 2018). Although the translation of folklore is included in the translation of literary works, it is still limited. One reason for this is that the number of published folklores is also limited. Currently, published folklore still focuses on Central Java folklore (Yulianeta et al., 2022). There is an urgent need to publish Indonesian folklore from various regions and to accompany it with translations.

The sensitivity of Islamic discourse, the limited number of publications regarding research about multiple translations, and the limited number of publications on folklore and their translations form the main background of this research article. These lead to the objectives of this research: (1) to identify terms related to Islam in Sundanese folklore as written in the data source, (2) to study the translation techniques used in both target texts, and (3) to find out whether the meaning in the equivalents is still the same or shifted. It can be stated that the significance of this research is to add a publication of a research article dealing with multiple translations as well as the translation of literary works, especially in the translation of Sundanese folklore.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has examined the translation of terms related to Islam. The first study discussed strategies, procedures, and problems of translating Islamic-related texts and ideology (Khaleel, 2016). The next study focuses on the translation of surahs in the Quran, analyzing translation techniques in English versions of the Ar-Rahman surah (Kembaren, 2018). A third study examined the equivalences of Islamic terms in translating a novel from Indonesian to English (Zulkifli Mahmud, 2018). The fourth study examined strategies for translating Islamic terms in spoken English conversations among English lecturers (Noviyenty et al., 2020). Lastly, there is research on teaching Islamic values through traditional stories, specifically Minangkabau stories (Gayatri et al., 2023).

To study the translation of terms related to Islam in Sundanese folklore, the translation techniques of Molina and Albir (2002) are employed. These techniques were chosen because they can be widely applied, for example, to the translation of cultural categories in an English novel, *Origin*, into Indonesian (Noftariani, 2019); directive speech acts in *The Little Prince* into Indonesian (Sakulpimolrat, 2019); an Indonesian novel, *Entrok*, into English (Nashiroh, 2020); honorific markers in the English novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, into Sundanese (Sukaesih, 2020). - Subtitle in *The Angry Birds Movie* (Hadi & Waluyo, 2017), - Subtitle in the movie *When Love Calls* (Afandi & Authar, 2021), - Slang expression in a movie (Resta Permana, 2022), - Dialogues in the movie *Enola Holmes* (A. K. Nugrahani et al., 2021), - Poem "You Are My Everything" by Powell (Febriani et al., 2020), - Fables (Muttaqin et al., 2021). There is also the translation of mechanical engineering terms in accredited national journals (Febryanto et al., 2021), political texts in international political news (Suprpto et al., 2018), and speech texts in the *Pidato Tiga Bahasa* book (Soleh et al., 2016). Lastly, there is the teaching of Islamic values through traditional stories and Minangkabau stories (Gayatri et al., 2023). Of all the translation techniques used by Molina and Albir (2002), one appears in all the texts: literal translation.

Molina and Hurtado-Albir (2002) propose eighteen translation techniques, ranging from adaptation and amplification to borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalents, generalization, linguistic amplification and compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation. However, not all of these techniques were found in the translation of Sundanese folklore into Indonesian and English.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method in which words, rather than numbers or quantities, are the object of study. It involves qualitative phenomena (Kothari, 2004). These phenomena deal with terms related to Islam found in Sundanese folklore. No field research was conducted for this article. It is library research, dealing with the analysis of documents. The documents are Sundanese folklore that has been written down and translated into two target texts in a single book entitled *The Most Popular Sundanese Folklore: Myths, Legends, and Tales* (Suganda et al., 2011).

The data were collected through observation. Any words or terms related to Islam were gathered. Then, the data were classified into themes revealed by the terms. These themes included the names of Allah in Islam (*Asma'ul Husna*), activities of worship, names of prayer times, and more. Next, we moved on to the equivalents of the terms related to Islam. By doing so, we could study how the terms were translated. The data were analyzed using translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002). Finally, the results of the analysis were presented in an explanatory discussion.

There is also the translation of mechanical engineering terms in accredited national journals (Febryanto et al., 2021), political texts in international political news (Suprpto et al., 2018), and speech texts in the Pidato Tiga Bahasa book (Soleh et al., 2016). Lastly, there is the teaching of Islamic values through traditional stories and Minangkabau stories (Gayatri et al., 2023). Of all the translation techniques used by Molina and Albir (2002), one appears in all the texts: literal translation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into four subsections based on the identified theme categories. All data are presented in the following sections: section 1: Multiple translations of the names of Allah, section 2: Multiple translations of activities of worship, section 3: Times of praying, and section 4: Other activities and rules.

Table 1. Section 1 (Multiple Translations of the Names of Allah)

No.	Source Language Text	Target Language Text (Indonesian)	Target Language Text (English)
1	<i>Nu Kawasa</i>	<i>Yang Mahakuasa</i>	God
2	<i>Hiji mangsa, manehna meunang pituduh ti nu Kawasa</i>	<i>Yang Mahakuasa</i>	The night, during his sleep, the poor man dreamed of meeting a magical catfish.
3	<i>Nu Kawasa</i>	<i>Yang Mahakuasa</i>	the Gods
4 & 5	<i>Nu Maha Kawasa</i>	<i>Yang Mahakuasa</i>	the God
6	<i>Nu Maha Agung</i>	<i>Yang Maha Agung</i>	The Almighty
7	<i>Di jero leuweung teras neneda Ka Nu Maha Suci</i>	<i>Di sana sang Prabu terus berdoa</i>	The King even went to the woods to meditate and pray to the Gods
8	<i>Nu Maha Suci</i>	<i>Yang Maha Suci</i>	the Holy One
9	<i>Nu Maha Asih</i>	<i>Yang Maha Pengasih</i>	At the mercy of God
10	<i>Gusti Nu Maha Welas tur Maha Asih</i>	<i>Yang Maha Pemurah dan Pengasih</i>	By the mercy of God

There are some names of Allah that are similar: *Nu Kawasa* appears in data no. 1, 2, and 3. The name is implicit, as the explicit name is *Nu Maha Kawasa*, meaning "The Most Dominant" and "The All Determiner." In the Indonesian target text, all three names are translated using the amplification technique by adding the word "*Maha*," a superlative adjective meaning "the most," to show that no character of Allah represented in His name is comparable. Molina and Albir (2002) categorize adding information from the target text that is not in the source text as an amplification technique. This technique is similar to Nida's addition, which is one of the adjustment techniques (Nida & Taber, 1982). However, this technique is not found in the English target text in section 1.

In the English target text, the name *Allah Nu Kawasa*, meaning "The Most Dominant, The All Determiner," is translated as "God," which does not indicate that God is "The Most Dominant" or "The All Determiner." According to Molina and Albir (2002), when a specific piece of information in the source text is translated into general or neutral information in the target text, it involves generalization. This technique can be used with other techniques, such as translating cultural words (Raheesa & Rosa, 2020). This technique is similar to Newmark's free modulation, "part for the whole" (Newmark, 1988b). This technique is also evident in data no. 4 and 5 of the English target text, where the term *Nu Maha Kawasa* (the explicit term of *Nu Kawasa*), which has a specific meaning mentioned in data no. 1, is translated as God, which has no specific characteristics. Another example of the generalization technique is seen in data no. 8 in the English target text, where the term *Nu Maha Suci*, meaning "the most holy," is translated as "the Holy One," which refers to the same general meaning, but lacks the specific information about the superlative characteristic. This translation technique is not present in the Indonesian target text of this section.

In data no. 2, the term *Nu Kawasa* is omitted from the English target text, so the information that God is the Most Dominant and All-Determiner who gave guidance is missing. Molina and Albir (2002) categorize the suppression of source text information items in the target text as "reduction." This technique, which eliminates some words in the source text, is also found in Newmark's translation procedure (Newmark, 1988a). Using this technique in certain contexts may distort the quality of the translation (Sakulpimolrat, 2019). Reduction is found in data no. 7 and 10 in the Indonesian target text. In data no. 7, the name Allah, *Nu Maha Suci*, which means "The Most Holy," is omitted. This omits the meaning of the name *Nu Maha Suci*. Similarly, in data no. 10, the two names of Allah, *Gusti Nu Maha Welas tur Maha Asih*, which mean "God the All Beneficent" and "The Compassionate, The All Pitying," are translated into "*Yang Maha Pemurah dan Maha Pengasih*," which has the same meaning as in the source text. However, this translation reduces the term "*Gusti*" to "God." In data no. 10 of the English target text, the two names of Allah, *Gusti Nu Maha Welas tur Maha Asih*, are translated as "the mercy of God," omitting the source text's "*Gusti Nu Maha Welas*." This reveals only one character of Allah: Nu Maha Asih, "The Compassionate, The All Pitying."

In Data No. 3, the term *Nu Kawasa*, meaning "the most dominant" and "the all determiner," is translated into the plural form of the word "gods," written in lowercase. However, this translation does not convey the same meaning as *Nu Kawasa*, The Most Dominant, The All Determiner, who is the creator, while the gods are included as creatures. According to Molina and Albir (2002), this translation involves an adaptation technique, replacing one element of the source text's culture with an element of the target text's culture. With this technique, the translator mediates between the source and target languages (Volf, 2020). Newmark (1988c) also uses the term "adaptation" to refer to the whole sentence, while in this research, it only refers to smaller linguistic units, such as phrases or words (Hartono, 2020). The same technique can be seen in data no. 7, where the term Nu Maha Suci, meaning "The Most Holy" and referring to a specific characteristic, "holy," which is considered an element of the source text's culture, is translated into "Gods" with the same meaning as in data no. 3. The same technique is used in data no. 8, where the term *Nu Maha Suci* is translated into the Indonesian target text *Yang Maha Suci*, which has the same meaning as in the source text. The next term, *Nu Maha Asih*, is also translated word for word in data no. 9, referring to the character of Allah as The Most Merciful and The Compassionate. It is translated into *Yang Maha Pengasih*, which has the same meaning, showing certain characteristic information from the source text. The term "The Compassionate" and "The All Pitying" are translated into a concrete meaning, showing what God does: giving His mercy.

The next translation technique identified in Section 1 is literal translation. It involves translating words one by one. Although literal translation is word-for-word, it still considers the grammatical rules of the target language (Hatim & Munday, 2004). This technique is one of the most common in translating the Holy Qur'an (Kembaren, 2018). In data numbers 4 and 5, the term *Nu Maha Kawasa* is translated into the Indonesian word *Yang Maha Kuasa*, which keeps the same structure and meaning as the source text. In data no. 6, the name of Allah, Nu Maha Agung, is translated word for word as *Yang Maha Agung*, which refers to Allah as "The Magnificent" and "The Infinite." This translation maintains the same syntactic structure and meaning as the source text. This technique is also used in data no. 8, where the term *Nu Maha Suci*, meaning "The Most Holy," is translated into the Indonesian target text as *Yang Maha Suci*, which has the same meaning as in the source text. The term *Nu Maha Asih*, referring to Allah as The Most Merciful and The Compassionate, is also translated word for word into the Indonesian target text as *Yang Maha Pengasih*, which has the same meaning.

The final technique in Section 1 is modulation. Molina and Albir (2002) define modulation as a change in viewpoint, focus, or cognitive category. Newmark (1988c) also uses the same term for one of his translation procedures, describing it in detail as having two major parts: obligatory modulation and free modulation. Modulation aims to maintain naturalness by changing the point of view and using various forms of the message (Putranti, 2018). This technique is seen in data no. 6, where the term Nu Maha Agung, which refers to Allah as The Magnificent and The Infinite, is translated as The Almighty, referring to other characteristics of Allah,

meaning the greatest. This technique is evident from a different point of view or focus in relation to the source text. The same technique is found in data no. 9, where the term *Nu Maha Asih*, meaning "The Compassionate, The All Pitying," is translated into the English target text as "at the mercy of God," changing the cognitive category from an abstract meaning.

Table 2. Section 2 (Multiple Translation of Activities of Worship)

No.	Source Language Text	Target Language Text (Indonesian)	Target Language Text (English)
1	<i>netepan</i>	<i>Solat</i>	To spend some time praying to God Almighty
2	<i>wiridan</i>	<i>Berdzikir</i>	Expressing his love of God, praising His greatness, and asking for His protection
3	<i>Solat</i>	<i>solat dan berdzikir</i>	praying
4	<i>Alhamdulillah</i>	<i>Alhamdulillah</i>	Alhamdulillah
5	<i>Hijrah ke Mekah pikeun munggah haji</i>	<i>Hijrah ke Mekkah untuk menunaikan ibadah haji</i>	Meanwhile, the real Dipati Ukur sailed to Mecca

Section 2 consists of multiple translations of activities of worship. In data no. 1, the activity of *netepan* is translated as *solat*, which refers to the same activity as in the source text. This translation uses an established equivalent. Molina and Albir (2002) define an established equivalent as a term or expression that is recognized as equivalent in the target language. The term "*solat*" is recognized in the target text. This technique is also known as equivalence.

Using the equivalence technique indicates that the translator tried to produce a natural translation (Muttaqin et al., 2021). The same technique is used in data no. 2 in the Indonesian target text when the term *wiridan*, meaning "praising Allah," "thanking Allah," and "praising Allah as the Almighty," is translated into *berdzikir*, which refers to the same activity performed after praying *solat*. This equivalent is recognized in the target text because it is provided in a bilingual dictionary of the Indonesian language.

Meanwhile, in the English target text, the term "*netepan*" in data no. 1 is translated as "to spend some time praying to God Almighty," which has the same meaning as in the source text, but is translated as a description. Molina & Albir (2002) define this technique as an equivalent that refers to a term or expression in the form of a description. Newmark uses the more specific term "descriptive equivalent," which refers to the same function as the description. This technique is most frequently used in translating Mohammad Al-Ghazali's Islamic Guidance (Abdulaziz Al Saleh, 2019). This technique is also found in data no. 2, where the term *wiridan* is translated as expressing love for God, praising His greatness, and asking for His protection. In data no. 3, the term *solat*, a synonym of *netepan* in the Indonesian text, is translated as *solat dan berdzikir*, using two translation techniques: (i) the established equivalent for *solat*, and (ii) the amplification technique, which adds information. *Berdzikir* is not explicitly stated in the source text, but it implicitly refers to the activity of praying "*solat*," which is usually completed by "*wiridan*" "*berdzikir*." In the English target text, *solat* is translated as "praying" to refer to its general meaning, using the generalization technique.

The next term in data no. 4 is "*Alhamdulillah*," which refers to the expression of thanks to Allah. It is translated as "*Alhamdulillah*," which has the same spelling and meaning as in the source text. This technique is called borrowing, which Molina and Albir (2002) define as taking a word directly from the source text. This type of borrowing is considered pure borrowing, as defined by Delisle (Molina & Albir, 2002), and is referred to as transference by Newmark (1988b). This technique is the most dominant one used in translating the novel *Origin* (Noftariani, 2019). This is evident in both target texts.

In the last data of Table 2 (data no. 5), the expression *hijrah ke Mekah pikeun munggah haji*, which translates to "going to Mecca to perform Hajj," is translated into "*hijrah ke Mekah untuk menunaikan ibadah haji*" in the Indonesian target text. This translation uses the amplification technique, in which the translator adds the word "*ibadah*" before "*haji*." This technique is used to present details not found in the source text (K. A. Nugrahani et al., 2021). In the English target text, it is translated as "sailed to Mecca" using two translation techniques altogether: (i) particularization, as going to Mecca is made specific by sailing, and (ii) reduction, as the purpose of going to Mecca is hidden by omitting the word "*haji*." Using two techniques altogether is called a "double technique," meaning the practical application of two different translation techniques in one text (Soleh et al., 2016). Particularization, the opposite of generalization, uses a more specific term to translate dialogue in movies (K. A. Nugrahani et al., 2021).

Table 3. Section 3 (Times of Praying)

No.	Source Language Text	Target Language Text (Indonesian)	Target Language Text (English)
1	<i>Hayam kongkorongok Subuh</i>	<i>Ayam jago bersuara kongkorongok setiap Subuh</i>	Why rooster crow
2	<i>Subuh</i>	<i>subuh</i>	ere dawn
3	<i>Subuh</i>	<i>subuh</i>	morning breaks
4	<i>Subuh</i>	<i>setiap subuh</i>	right before morning breaks
5	<i>wanci isa</i>	<i>waktu Isya</i>	At night

The term *subuh*, which refers to the time of early morning prayer in Islam, is used four times in Section 3. Most of these instances are translated into equivalent terms in the Indonesian target text, yet the English target text uses different equivalents. In data no. 1 of the Indonesian target text, the term *subuh* is translated as "*subuh*" again, as recognized in the dictionary. Here, however, it is added with the frequentative time "*setiap*" (every). Therefore, two translation techniques are used: (i) the established equivalent for "*subuh*" and (ii) the amplification for "*setiap*." In the English target text, the term "*subuh*" is omitted; the reduction technique is used.

In data no. 2, 3, and 4 of the Indonesian text, *subuh* is translated as *subuh* using an established equivalent. It is not difficult to find an equivalent in Indonesian because most Indonesians are Muslim and familiar with the term. Unlike in the English target text, in data no. 1 and 2, the term "*subuh*" is omitted, so the translation technique used is reduction. In data no. 3, however, the term *subuh* is translated into "morning breaks" by generalizing its meaning as the time of prayer in the morning. The translation technique used is generalization.

In data no. 4, the term is translated as "right before morning breaks," which completes the meaning of *subuh*. Thus, a descriptive translation technique is used. In the last data, the term identified is *Isya*, which refers to the time of prayer in the evening. It is translated as *Isya*, which refers to the same time, though it has been naturalized into the Indonesian language pronunciation. This translation also uses the established equivalent technique as in the previous data. In the English target text, the term *Isa* is translated as "at night," referring to the term's general meaning.

Table 4. Section 4 (Other Activities and Rules)

No.	Source Language Text	Target Language Text (Indonesian)	Target Language Text (English)
1	<i>Lalab-lalaban anu halal</i>	<i>Lalap-lalapan yang bisa dimakan dan halal</i>	edible leaves
2	<i>santri</i>	<i>santri</i>	pious
3	<i>Dalem Haji Karanghantu</i>	<i>Dalem Haji Karanghantu</i>	Dalem Haji Karanghantu
4	<i>Haji Putih Jagariksa</i>	<i>Haji Putih Jaga Riksa</i>	Haji Putih Jaga Riksa
5	<i>Sukur lamun luyu jeung anu dipiutus tinangtu mulus rahayu</i>	<i>Jika setuju akan lamaran ini, tentu kamu akan selamat</i>	Should you accept, then you will be safe
6	<i>Sukur atuh!</i>	<i>Syukurlah.</i>	Thanks a lot
7	<i>Kaula suka lillahi taala</i>	<i>Saya merasa senang menerimanya</i>	I accept willingly
8	<i>Barokah</i>	<i>berkah</i>	The benefit
9	<i>Barokah ka balarea</i>	<i>Berkah untuk semua</i>	Favorable to everyone
10	<i>Haram batal nu dilarang ku agama</i>	<i>Haram batal yang dilarang agama</i>	To do what is forbidden
11	<i>insya Allah</i>	<i>insyaallah</i>	insyaallah
12	<i>Wasilah sareng wasiat</i>	<i>Pesan dan wasiat</i>	A message and a testament
13	<i>Bedug</i>	<i>Beduk</i>	A drum (more or less similar to the Japanes taiko)
14	<i>Nabi Nuh</i>	<i>Nabi Nuh</i>	Noah

Section 4 consists of various terms related to Islam. Data No. 1 identifies the term *halal* as referring to food that is permitted to be eaten. In the Indonesian target text, *halal* is translated as *yang bisa dimakan dan halal*, which involves an explanation of *yang bisa dimakan* as 'can be eaten' and *halal* as 'allowed by Islamic law.' This refers

to the same meaning of *halal* as in the source text, using a descriptive technique and an established equivalent. In the English target text, *halal* is translated as "edible," referring to its general meaning that it can be eaten and is not poisonous. Therefore, it is the generalization technique used in data no. 1. This technique is also evident in the English translation of data no. 6, where the term *sukur* is translated as "thanks a lot," referring to general gratitude rather than specifically thanking God. The same technique is used in data no. 7, where *lillahi taala*, referring to total acceptance because of Allah, is translated as *menerimanya*, meaning "to accept it." In the English target text, it is translated as "accepting willingly." Both generalize the meaning by omitting the specific information that it is accepted willingly because of Allah. The next use of this technique is in data no. 8, where the term *barokah*, referring to having more goodness as a blessing from Allah, is translated as "benefit," generalizing its specific meaning of having an advantage. This generalization is also identified in data no. 10, when the term *haram-batal* is translated as "forbidden," generalizing its meaning, as well as in data no. 12, when the term *wasiat* is translated as "testament," which has a general meaning.

The next term is "*santri*," as in data no. 2, which refers to someone from an Islamic boarding school, either a student or a teacher. In the Indonesian target text, it is also translated as "*santri*," with the same spelling and meaning as in the source text. The translation technique used is established equivalence. The same technique is used to translate the term *barokah*, which refers to having more goodness as a blessing from Allah, as seen in data no. 8 and no. 9. It is translated as *berkah* in both data no. 8 and no. 9 of the Indonesian target text. The term *wasiat*, referring to a message given by a person before he or she dies, is translated using the established equivalent technique in data no. 12. In the Indonesian target text, a recognized equivalent is provided in a dictionary, so the term *wasiat* is used directly. The last data in Table 4 is Data No. 14, "Nabi Nuh," which refers to the name of one of the prophets written in the Holy Qur'an. It is translated literally into the Indonesian target text as "*Nabi Nuh*," so the technique used is literal translation. In the English target text, however, it is translated as "Noah," referring to the same prophet, using the established equivalence technique. According to Sakulpimorat, using an established equivalence produces an accurate translation. (Sakulpimorat, 2019). In the English target text, the term *santri* in data no. 2 is translated as "pious," referring to one of the characteristics of a *santri*: performing obligations and avoiding prohibitions. In other words, a *santri* is religious. Therefore, it is the translation technique that modulates as part of the whole.

The term "*haji*" refers to the title given to male Muslims who have performed the Hajj, and it appears in data no. 3 and no. 4. There is no lexical or syntactic substitute for this term in the target language, which leads to a case of untranslatability (Bassnett, 2002). One solution is borrowing, but borrowing alone is not enough; it needs a description to avoid misinterpretation by non-Muslim readers (Shehab et al., 2020). Both the Indonesian and English target texts use borrowing techniques to address this term. The meaning is the same as in the source text. Using the same technique, the term *insya Allah*, meaning "by Allah's permission," is translated as "*insyaallah*" in both the Indonesian and English target texts, though with different morphological forms: written without a space. According to Newmark (1988), this is a case of naturalization. The term *sukur*, as in data no. 5, refers to thanking God. Both target texts use reduction to make its meaning implicit.

In data no. 6, the term *sukur* is translated as *syukurlah*, which refers to thanking God, as in data no. 5. However, the addition of the suffix *-lah* emphasizes the act of thanking God, thereby changing the tone of the text. The translation technique identified in the Indonesian text is variation, as defined by Molina and Albir (2002), which involves changing linguistic or paralinguistic elements to create different types of linguistic variation. This technique may involve the use of euphemisms, as in translating slang words (Resta Permana, 2022).

In data no. 9, the noun *barokah* is translated as the adjective favorable. Therefore, the translation technique used is transposition. Molina and Albir (2002) define transposition as a change in grammatical category. According to Newmark's translation procedures (1988), translation includes changes from singular to plural, changes in linguistic units, and changes in structure. Catford (1969) calls this technique a shift; it involves a grammatical change from the source language to the target language (Hartono, 2014).

The term in data no. 10 is "*haram-batal*," which indicates a condition in which an action is forbidden (*haram*), and if performed, no good reward will be received because it is canceled (*batal*). The second word emphasizes the meaning of "*haram*." In the Indonesian target text, the term *haram-batal* is used, which refers to the same meaning and uses the same syntactic structure as the source text. Therefore, the translation technique used is a calque. Newmark (1988) refers to this as "through translation," which is translating a word or phrase into a word or phrase recognized in the target language.

The next term, stated in data no. 13, is "*bedug*," which refers to a type of drum found in mosques that is used to alert Muslims to perform their obligatory prayers before the call to prayer is sounded. In the Indonesian target text, this term is translated as *beduk*, which has the same meaning as in the source text. As in the English target text, it is translated as "*drum*" (more or less similar to the Japanese *taiko*), describing what a *bedug* is. Two techniques are used together in the equivalent: the word "*drum*" involves generalization, while the information in brackets involves description. These two techniques are part of the domestication strategy, as opposed to borrowing, which is part of the foreignization strategy (Khaleel, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Of the thirty-four pieces of data analyzed, it can be concluded that the translation techniques used in the English target text are more varied than those used in the Indonesian target text. The Indonesian text uses seven techniques, including amplification, literal translation, reduction, established equivalents, borrowing, calques, and variations. The English text uses nine techniques. These nine techniques include generalization, adaptation, modulation, reduction, description, particularization, borrowing, transposition, and an established equivalent. The most frequent technique in the Indonesian text is an established equivalent, while the most frequent technique in the English text is generalization. Therefore, it can be concluded that the meaning of the equivalent in the Indonesian text is mostly the same as in the source text, whereas in the English text, it is mostly generalized.

Furthermore, this research suggests further research on the translation of terms related to Islam, for example, using other tools such as translation procedures and strategies. Further research on related topics may also reveal the ideology of translation.

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CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS OF DELL HYMES' SPEAKING MODEL IN DONALD TRUMP AND VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY MEETING

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Abstract

This study examines the communicative dynamics of the public meeting between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky by integrating Conversation Analysis (CA) with Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model. The research aims to uncover how power relations, diplomatic strategies, and communicative norms are constructed through real-time interaction. Using eight selected excerpts from the meeting, the analysis focuses on turn-taking, interruptions, preference organization, tone, footing, and the broader contextual elements that shape meaning. The findings reveal that Trump consistently dominates the discourse through extended turns, directive speech acts, and repeated interruptions, positioning himself as the controlling figure in the interaction. Zelensky, in contrast, employs politeness strategies, emotional appeal, and self-repair to maintain diplomatic face, though Trump's assertive style frequently overshadows these attempts. The SPEAKING model further demonstrates that the Setting and Participants' roles create a performative atmosphere influenced by media presence. At the same time, the Key and Norms reflect a shift away from conventional diplomatic politeness toward confrontational framing. Overall, the study shows that diplomatic encounters are not merely informational exchanges but sites where political identities, power asymmetries, and strategic messaging are negotiated through interaction.

Keywords: conversation analysis, diplomatic discourse, preference organization, SPEAKING model, turn-taking

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INTRODUCTION

Conversation Analysis (CA) is a methodological approach that focuses on the systematic study of talk-in-interaction. Originating from the work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (Peräkylä, 2004), CA seeks to understand how participants organize their speech and actions to create meaningful, coherent communication. Unlike approaches that analyze language solely through grammatical or structural features, CA views conversation as a collaborative process where speakers actively co-construct meaning (Wagner & Park, 2022). Every pause, overlap, intonation shift, and sequence of turns is treated as significant because it reflects how participants manage social relationships, negotiate roles, and interpret each other's intentions (Sidnell & Stivers, 2012). CA therefore provides an in-depth understanding of how interaction unfolds in real time.

In political discourse, CA becomes especially valuable because interactions between leaders are often scripted yet strategically flexible. Political figures such as Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky rely not only on the content of their messages, but also on how those messages are delivered, responded to, and sequenced. Turn-taking practices, for instance, can reveal levels of assertiveness or deference (Schegloff, 2007), while adjacency pairs, such as question-answer or request-acceptance sequences, can expose patterns of cooperation or subtle resistance (Heritage & Clayman, 2011). Repair mechanisms, where speakers correct or modify their statements, may indicate attempts to maintain face, avoid conflict, or signal diplomatic sensitivity (Schegloff, 1992). By analyzing these micro-level features, CA helps uncover the interactional strategies employed by political leaders during high-stakes diplomatic encounters.

Moreover, CA emphasizes the importance of context, but it treats context as something created within the conversation itself rather than imposed externally (Godwin-Jones et al., 2023). Participants display their

understanding of the situation through their linguistic choices, which allows analysts to infer power relations, institutional roles, and shared expectations directly from the interaction. This perspective aligns well with ethnographic frameworks like Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model, which accounts for broader sociocultural factors surrounding communication (Hymes, 1971; Saville-Troike, 2003). By integrating CA with the SPEAKING model, researchers can examine not only how Trump and Zelensky organize their talk, but also how their conversation is shaped by setting, political goals, cultural norms, and diplomatic protocols. This combined approach provides a more holistic understand.

Communication lies at the heart of human interaction, shaping social relations, influencing power dynamics, and constructing cultural meanings. In political settings, communication is not merely a tool for information exchange but a complex performance embedded in cultural, social, and ideological contexts (Van Dijk, 2023). Political discourse, especially at the international level, functions as a stage for identity construction, persuasion, and the negotiation of meaning. The ethnography of communication (EoC) offers a powerful lens to examine these dynamics by focusing on how communicative events reflect the norms and values of particular speech communities (Saville-Troike, 2003).

Developed by Dell Hymes in the 1960s and expanded through sociolinguistic and anthropological research, the ethnography of communication investigates how language use is influenced by social structures, cultural norms, and situational contexts. Hymes introduced the SPEAKING model, which is an acronym for Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre as a framework to analyze communicative events holistically (Hymes, 1971). Through this model, researchers can uncover how meaning, intention, and power operate in speech events that go beyond literal language use.

The meeting between former U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the White House presents a compelling case for such analysis. This encounter, which attracted global attention, was marked by strategic language use, varying degrees of politeness, and implicit negotiation of political alignment. Analyzing this event through Hymes' SPEAKING model allows for a deeper understanding of how communication constructs political identity and power relations within intercultural and diplomatic contexts.

Political communication operates as both a symbolic and pragmatic practice. It involves not only the exchange of ideas but also the management of impressions, authority, and face (Scollon et al., 2011). In the Trump–Zelensky interaction, both leaders engaged in verbal strategies shaped by their cultural backgrounds and political motivations. Trump's direct and assertive style contrasted with Zelensky's deferential yet strategic responses, reflecting different communication norms and power positions. Such differences align with Scollon et al. (2011) view that intercultural communication often reveals how cultural values, such as hierarchy and solidarity, are expressed through discourse.

From an ethnographic perspective, the communicative event between Trump and Zelensky can be understood as a culturally situated performance. Each element of the SPEAKING model reveals aspects of the sociopolitical context and the setting of the White House as a symbol of power, the participants as representatives of nations, and the ends as both diplomatic negotiation and public performance. The act sequence of their exchange, particularly the tension between assertiveness and politeness, exemplifies how linguistic choices serve ideological and relational purposes (Van Dijk, 2021).

Furthermore, EoC emphasizes that communication is patterned and culturally meaningful. It highlights how speech acts, turn-taking, and even silence function according to shared norms within a speech community (Duranti, 1997). By applying Hymes' framework to this political interaction, the study moves beyond textual analysis to uncover how communication reflects power asymmetry, cultural differences, and strategic language behavior in diplomatic discourse.

The analysis also draws from critical discourse perspectives that link communication with ideology and dominance. According to Van Dijk (2023), discourse in political contexts often embodies implicit ideologies and serves to maintain or challenge existing power structures. Through EoC, this research bridges micro-level linguistic analysis with macro-level social interpretation, providing a comprehensive understanding of how discourse functions as both a cultural and political act.

In addition, this study contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation about language and globalization. Political meetings today are performed under global media visibility, where every utterance is scrutinized and reinterpreted by international audiences (Fairclough, 2020). The ethnography of communication, therefore, offers a way to analyze not only the interaction between two leaders but also the broader sociocultural meanings that emerge when national identities and communicative norms intersect in global discourse.

The relevance of this study extends to the field of applied linguistics and intercultural communication studies. By analyzing the Trump–Zelensky meeting, the research highlights how communication competence in international contexts involves sensitivity to cultural norms, awareness of audience, and mastery of pragmatic strategies (Nasution et al., 2025). This ethnographic approach can be applied to educational, political, and media settings to understand how communication shapes relationships across cultural and ideological boundaries.

Ultimately, this research underscores the enduring significance of Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication in analyzing contemporary discourse. Even in the digital and globalized age, Hymes' framework remains a vital tool for uncovering how communication operates as a form of cultural practice, political performance, and meaning-making process. The Trump–Zelensky meeting, as a communicative event, provides a rich context for examining how speech reflects and constructs power, culture, and diplomacy in the modern world.

Conversation Analysis (CA)

Conversation Analysis (CA) is a methodological approach that examines the structure of talk-in-interaction by focusing on how participants co-construct meaning through turn-taking, sequence organization, repair, and actions (Schegloff, 2007; Sidnell & Stivers, 2012). CA considers talk as orderly, systematic, and context-shaped while simultaneously context-renewing. The foundational work by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) introduced the turn-taking model, demonstrating that conversation is cooperatively managed through transition relevance places (TRPs) where speakers may take or yield turns.

In political interactions, CA is especially relevant because power relations can be observed through interactional practices such as interruptions, withholding responses, extended turns, and topic control (Heritage & Clayman, 2011). Dominant speakers typically use long turns, evaluations, directives, and strategic interruptions to shape the trajectory of talk (Bull & Fetzer, 2010). These practices allow CA to reveal how institutional actors enact authority in public contexts, including press conferences and diplomatic meetings.

Ethnography of Communication and Dell Hymes' SPEAKING Model

The Ethnography of Communication, introduced by Hymes (1962, 1974), examines communication as a culturally situated practice. Hymes argues that speech must be understood not only through linguistic form but also through participants' roles, goals, norms, and social context. His SPEAKING model – Setting, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre – provides a systematic framework for describing communicative events.

The SPEAKING model is widely used in studies of intercultural and political communication because it highlights how communicative behavior is shaped by institutional roles, cultural expectations, and sociopolitical motivations (Nasution, 2024). In political diplomacy, the model is effective for analyzing how presidents, diplomats, and government officials frame messages in ways that align with national interests, public image, and power negotiations. Integrating SPEAKING with CA allows a researcher to account for both micro-level conversational structures and macro-level sociocultural influences.

Political Discourse and Power Relations

Political discourse involves the strategic use of language by political actors to influence public perception, negotiate roles, and legitimize authority (Van Dijk & van Dijk, 1997). Power in political discourse is often enacted through linguistic choices such as evaluative statements, directives, moral judgments, and dominance of speaking turns (Fairclough, 2015). According to van Dijk (2006), political elites often use discourse to reinforce ideological positions and hierarchical relationships.

Interruptions are particularly significant in political discourse, as they may serve to control the conversation, challenge opponents, or assert higher social status (Nasution et al., 2024). Similarly, tone, or “key,” in Hymes' terms, affects how messages are interpreted. Hostile or authoritative tone can index dominance, while polite or defensive tone often indicates a lower-status participant (Heritage & Clayman, 2011). Thus, examining tone and interruption patterns helps reveal the underlying power dynamics of political interactions.

Combining CA and SPEAKING in Political Interaction Studies

Recent research has shown that combining CA and the Ethnography of Communication allows for a more comprehensive analysis of political encounters. CA provides insights into how interaction is sequentially organized, while SPEAKING explains why participants behave in certain ways given their roles, goals, and cultural expectations (Fitch & Sanders, 2004).

Studies integrating both frameworks show that political conversations often exhibit asymmetrical patterns: leaders with higher institutional authority generally take longer turns, interrupt more frequently, and use direct or evaluative language (Mey, 2001). Meanwhile, less powerful participants tend to use alignment markers, hesitations, and polite forms to maintain diplomatic face.

This combined approach is particularly useful for analyzing confrontational or high-stakes diplomatic talk, such as press conferences, negotiations, or crisis communication. It reveals not only how dominance is enacted (through CA features like interruptions and turn-taking) but also why it occurs (through SPEAKING elements like participants' roles, goals, and norms of diplomatic behavior).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach within the framework of ethnography of communication to analyze the communication behavior demonstrated in the Trump–Zelensky meeting: Full Fiery Exchange at White House video. Qualitative descriptive research seeks to understand social phenomena and describe meanings, contexts, and processes through words rather than numerical data (Cresswell & Clark, 2015). In this research, the focus is to describe the elements of Dell Hymes' (1974) SPEAKING model such as Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre as realized in the interaction between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky during the White House meeting.

The study applies Dell Hymes' ethnography of communication as the main theoretical lens, which aims to explore how language operates as a cultural and communicative system (Saville-Troike, 2003). Ethnography of communication views communication as situated in social contexts that reflect the norms, values, and identities of participants (Scollon et al., 2011). Thus, analyzing this exchange between two world leaders provides insight into how political discourse, power, and politeness are negotiated across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The primary data of this research were taken from a YouTube video titled Trump, Zelensky Meeting: Full Fiery Exchange at White House, uploaded in 2025. This version was selected because it represents how digital audiences currently encounter and interpret the interaction, thus aligning with the ethnographic interest in communication as it is mediated and contextualized through online platforms.

Data were collected through observation and documentation. The researcher repeatedly viewed the video to identify verbal and non-verbal cues, speech patterns, and contextual factors influencing the interaction. Field notes were taken to document communicative events, while transcripts were created manually to ensure accuracy in capturing utterances, tone, gestures, and turn-taking (Spradley, 2016).

After the transcription process, the data were analyzed using Hymes' SPEAKING framework. Each element of the model was applied systematically to the transcript:

- 1) Setting and Scene (S) to describe the physical and psychological environment of the event;
- 2) Participants (P) to identify the communicators and their roles;
- 3) Ends (E) to interpret the goals and expected outcomes;
- 4) Act Sequence (A) to map the order of speech acts;
- 5) Key (K) to observe tone and manner;
- 6) Instrumentalities (I) to identify linguistic channels or codes;
- 7) Norms (N) to assess conventions of interaction; and
- 8) Genre (G) to determine the type of speech event.

The interpretation was conducted qualitatively by connecting these communicative components to their social and cultural meanings. The analysis also considered the broader sociopolitical context and media framing surrounding the Trump–Zelensky interaction as presented in the 2025 upload. Finally, the results were described narratively to reflect how communicative behavior in this political setting embodies both intercultural and power-related dimensions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal how communication between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky during their White House meeting reflects both the structural organization of interaction and the sociocultural dynamics embedded in political discourse. By examining the recorded exchange through Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model and Conversation Analysis (CA), the researcher identified key patterns that highlight not only what the leaders said, but also how their communicative choices were shaped by institutional roles, power relations, and diplomatic expectations. These findings demonstrate that language used in high-level political encounters is deeply influenced by context, purpose, and participants' identities.

The analysis also shows that the communicative behavior displayed in the interaction operates on two interconnected levels. At the micro-interactional level, features such as turn-taking, tone, topic control, and repair sequences illuminate how Trump and Zelensky co-constructed their dialogue in real time. These patterns align with principles of CA, which emphasize the importance of conversational structure in shaping meaning. At the macro-contextual level, elements of the SPEAKING model, such as setting, participants, norms, and ends to reveal the broader sociopolitical forces guiding the exchange. Together, these two frameworks provide a complementary perspective that captures both the immediacy of conversational performance and the cultural and political factors that influence it.

Overall, the integration of CA and the ethnography of communication enriches the interpretation of this political encounter. The findings highlight how the White House meeting functions not only as a communicative

event but also as a symbolic representation of international relations and leadership styles. Before detailing the results of the analysis, it is essential to understand how the SPEAKING model operates within this context and how its components manifest in the Trump–Zelensky interaction. The following sections therefore present the analysis of each SPEAKING element and discuss its relationship to the principles of Conversation. The results of the study are presented in the form of tables below.

Table 1. The Turn-Taking Dominance (Overall %)

Speaker	Percentage of Floor
Trump	78%
Zelensky	18%
Vance	4%

Table 2. Interruption Frequency

Feature	Count	Percentage
Interruption by Trump	4	67%
Interruption by Vance	1	17%
Interruption by Zelensky	1 (minor overlap)	17%
Total Interruptions	6	100%

Table 3. Tone (Key) Distribution

Tone Category	Occurrences	Percentage
Hostile/Dominant	4	50%
Confrontational	1	12.5%
Threatening/Coercive	2	25%
Emotional/Polite/Defensive	1	12.5%

Table 4. Alignment/Resistance

Behavior Type	Occurrences	Percentage
Zelensky Aligning (polite, cooperative)	2	25%
Zelensky Resisting (counter-framing)	3	37.5%
Zelensky Blocked (no space to talk)	3	37.5%

These quantifications demonstrate clear asymmetry in the interaction. Trump dominates 78% of the total floor, while Zelensky occupies only 18%, reflecting a structurally unequal conversation. Interruptions also favor Trump and Vance, with 84% of interruptions coming from the U.S. side. Tone analysis shows that half of the excerpts use hostile or dominant language, while Zelensky's contributions mostly reflect defensive or emotional responses. Additionally, 37.5% of Zelensky's turns are blocked or overridden, revealing the limited space he receives to construct meaning. These findings collectively show that the interaction is shaped by power imbalance, aggressive tone, and institutional hierarchy.

Dell Hymes' SPEAKING Model Analysis

Using Dell Hymes' SPEAKING framework, this study examined the communicative elements present in the interaction between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky during their White House meeting. The analysis reveals how each element of the model contributes to the overall structure and meaning of the exchange.

S – Setting and Scene

The meeting took place in the Oval Office at the White House, a formal and symbolic place for international diplomacy. The scene was both official and public, since members of the media were present to record the discussion. This makes the situation both a diplomatic meeting and a media performance. The formal setting expected polite and respectful communication, but the conversation turned tense and emotional as the discussion went on. The symbolic nature of the Oval Office shows that this meeting was not only for private negotiation but also meant to send a message to the public both in the U.S. and internationally.

P – Participants

The main participants were:

- 1) Donald Trump, President of the United States, acting as the host and a powerful figure in the conversation.
- 2) Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, acting as the guest and representative of a country at war.
- 3) J.D. Vance, Vice President of the U.S., acting as a supporter of Trump and a mediator who often joined the discussion.
- 4) Media or Journalists, who asked short questions and represented the public audience.

The relationship between participants was unequal. Trump and Vance had more political power and control over the setting, while Zelensky tried to defend his position and his country's situation. The presence of journalists increased the pressure, making the conversation more performative than cooperative.

E – Ends (Purposes or Goals)

The general goal of the meeting was to discuss peace and diplomacy between Ukraine and Russia. However, each participant had different specific goals:

- 1) Trump and Vance wanted to show that the U.S. was leading diplomatic efforts and that Ukraine should be thankful for American help.
- 2) Zelensky wanted to explain the seriousness of the war, the suffering of his people, and the broken promises from past agreements.

In the end, the meeting did not achieve harmony. Instead, it showed a conflict of perspectives with Trump emphasizing U.S. power and aid, while Zelensky focused on justice and moral responsibility.

A – Act Sequence

The conversation developed in several stages:

1. Trump's opening statement emphasized alignment with global peace but criticized Zelensky's attitude toward Putin.
2. Vance supported Trump by saying diplomacy is better than strong words.
3. Zelensky responded by recalling the history of Russian occupation since 2014 and criticizing world leaders for failing to stop it.
4. Vance interrupted and accused Zelensky of being disrespectful and ungrateful.
5. Trump joined again, saying that Zelensky should not "dictate" to the U.S. and reminded him of American aid.
6. Zelensky defended Ukraine's position and mentioned the country's sacrifices.
7. The conversation ended with Trump repeating that Ukraine should be "thankful" and that the U.S. could withdraw support if attitudes did not change.

Overall, the act sequence shows turn-taking competition, interruptions, and emotionally charged language that reveal unequal power relations.

K – Key (Tone or Manner)

The tone of the interaction was tense, confrontational, and defensive. Trump and Vance spoke in a dominant and commanding way, using a mixture of authority and sarcasm. Zelensky spoke with emotion and tried to explain the suffering of his people. The discussion lacked warmth or empathy, and instead became a verbal conflict. This key contrasts with what is normally expected in diplomacy, where politeness, respect, and calm negotiation are valued.

I – Instrumentalities (Channels and Forms of Speech)

The main channel was a face-to-face meeting. Trump, Vance, and Zelensky all used informal and direct language, which is unusual in formal diplomacy. Trump's speech used short, strong sentences and repetition ("you don't have the cards," "say thank you") to show power. Zelensky used narrative and explanation ("in 2014... he occupied Crimea") to give historical context and justify his actions. As journalists were present, the speech style mixed personal conversation and public performance.

N – Norms (Rules of Interaction and Interpretation)

Diplomatic meetings typically adhere to norms of mutual respect, politeness, and gratitude. In this case, the norms were repeatedly broken. Trump and Vance interrupted frequently, demanded thanks, and spoke in a confrontational tone. Zelensky resisted by defending his position and challenging their claims. This shows different cultural expectations: the American side expected visible gratitude and agreement, while the Ukrainian side expected understanding and empathy. The violation of norms resulted in a communication breakdown and public embarrassment, turning diplomacy into an argument.

G – Genre

The genre of this event is a political and diplomatic meeting, but it also functions as a press conference or media event. Because of the cameras and journalists, the participants did not speak only to each other but also to the global audience. This mixed genre caused tension: Trump and Vance used performative, persuasive language to impress viewers, while Zelensky used emotional storytelling to represent Ukraine's suffering.

The Relationship between Dell Hymes' Study and Conversation Analysis (CA)

Excerpt 1 (0:00–0:39) — Trump introduces the frame of the meeting

The meeting opens with Trump holding an extended turn in which he frames the situation by commenting on Zelensky's alleged "hatred" toward Putin and asserting that his own alignment is with Europe. CA reveals that this turn is long, uninterrupted, and strategically used to claim the conversational floor. Trump performs a framing action, positioning Zelensky as emotive and unreasonable while positioning himself as a rational negotiator. Preference organization shows that Trump's turn is not a response but a preferred act of self-assertion, allowing him to control the direction of talk. Through shifts in footing, he alternates between narrator and authoritative evaluator, asserting, "You're never going to get a deal that way." From a SPEAKING perspective, the tone (Key) is paternalistic, the Ends revolve around setting his preferred negotiation agenda, and the Norms of typical diplomatic openings are disrupted as he implicitly criticizes Zelensky. Together, the CA structure and SPEAKING components reveal an asymmetrical interactional field shaped by Trump's dominance from the very beginning.

Excerpt 2 (1:24–2:01) — Zelensky reconstructs historical grievances

In the second excerpt, Zelensky takes a long narrative turn after Trump gives him the floor with a minimal "sure, yeah." CA shows that Zelensky uses this turn to recount historical grievances, listing Russian actions since 2014 and highlighting deaths and territorial occupation. The turn includes minor self-repairs, which signal emotional involvement and urgency. From a preference standpoint, Zelensky's turn constitutes a dispreferred response because he implicitly counters Trump's framing without directly contradicting him. In the SPEAKING model, Zelensky shifts the Act Sequence from Trump's evaluative stance to a historical recounting meant to reframe the discussion. His Key becomes emotional and serious, and his communicative Ends involve redirecting the focus toward Ukrainian suffering and failed diplomacy. Overall, this excerpt illustrates Zelensky's attempt to regain moral footing, even as CA reveals the defensive structure of his contribution.

Excerpt 3 (3:05–3:49) — Vance delivers a face-threatening accusation

The third excerpt features a striking shift when Vance interrupts Zelensky's narrative with a direct accusation, declaring it "disrespectful" for Zelensky to speak in such a manner in the Oval Office. CA highlights that this abrupt intervention disrupts the ongoing sequence and constitutes a highly dispreferred response because it rejects Zelensky's account entirely. Vance's footing aligns him with Trump as an institutional enforcer, amplifying the power imbalance. Within the SPEAKING framework, the Participants variable becomes crucial: a U.S. Vice President correcting a foreign president violates expected diplomatic Norms and intensifies asymmetry. The Key is confrontational and scolding, deviating sharply from typical political politeness strategies. By combining CA and SPEAKING, this excerpt is revealed as not only conversationally aggressive but diplomatically inappropriate, marking a significant escalation in the interaction.

Excerpt 4 (4:07–4:33) — Trump intensifies dominance

The fourth excerpt shows Trump interrupting Zelensky mid-turn, delivering a direct rebuke: "Don't tell us what we're going to feel." CA analysis indicates clear overlap and interruption that an intentional breach of turn-taking norms used to assert control. The action is a dominance move rather than a negotiation, and the absence of repair confirms that Trump does not seek mutual understanding. His footing becomes explicitly parental and disciplinary. Under SPEAKING, Trump again violates diplomatic Norms that typically emphasize reciprocity and mutual respect. The Key becomes increasingly hostile, and the press conference Genre shapes the turn into a performative act meant for public display. This excerpt demonstrates how overlapping turns and direct imperatives expose interactional power, while the SPEAKING model situates this dominance within a broader diplomatic context.

Excerpt 5 (4:34–5:02) — Trump reframes Zelensky as powerless

Trump continues asserting dominance by telling Zelensky that he "doesn't have the cards," accusing him of gambling with lives and disrespecting the country supporting him. CA shows a long, uninterrupted turn with evaluative and moralizing components. Preference organization reveals that Trump delivers a dispreferred blaming

action as if it were preferred, further emphasizing his authority. His footing shifts into that of a moral guardian and provider (“the country that backed you”), enhancing asymmetry. From the SPEAKING model, Trump’s Ends involve reframing Zelensky as dependent, and the Key adopts a threatening, judgmental tone. Norms of diplomatic politeness are again violated as Trump imposes cultural expectations of gratitude on a foreign head of state. This excerpt illustrates how CA uncovers dominance mechanisms, while SPEAKING reveals the cultural framing of power.

Excerpt 6 (5:19–5:39) — Zelensky resists through counter-assertion

In this excerpt, Zelensky attempts to defend himself by stating that Ukraine is thankful and that he has repeatedly expressed gratitude “in this cabinet.” CA shows that Zelensky’s turn constitutes self-defence, that a dispreferred action designed to restore face. However, before he can finish, Trump interrupts again with a dismissive remark (“he’s not speaking loudly”), demonstrating Zelensky’s lack of conversational space. Minor repairs in Zelensky’s phrasing reveal his effort to soften the tone and maintain diplomatic decorum. Using SPEAKING, we see that Zelensky appeals to diplomatic Norms such as gratitude and respect, and his Key remains calm despite the confrontation. His Ends shift toward restoring cooperation rather than prolonging conflict. The combined analysis reveals that Zelensky’s attempts at politeness are systematically overridden through CA-mechanisms of interruption and dominance.

Excerpt 7 (6:31–7:04) — Trump produces a conditional threat

Trump continues to dominate, delivering a conditional directive framed as a threat—telling Zelensky that he is “running low on soldiers” and must “take the ceasefire.” CA reveals that Trump monopolizes the floor for more than 30 seconds, leaving Zelensky no opportunity for a response. The action combines warning, directive, and coercion. From a preference perspective, Zelensky is placed in an impossible position: the turn demands compliance and allows no alternative. Trump’s footing blends that of adviser, commander, and superior geopolitical actor. In the SPEAKING model, Trump’s Ends involve redefining negotiation as compliance dictated by the United States, the Key becomes coercive and urgent, and the Genre of the press event turns this into a public performance of dominance. The excerpt strongly demonstrates how CA structures contribute to power asymmetries reinforced by cultural and institutional factors described in SPEAKING.

Excerpt 8 (8:10–10:27) — Trump monologues to close the session

The final excerpt shows Trump taking a two-minute monologue that blends self-praise, historical reinterpretation, warnings, and moral evaluations. CA identifies this as a complete monopolization of the turn space, marking the transition into the closing sequence initiated solely by Trump (“I think we’ve seen enough”). No repairs occur, and the speech is linear and authoritative, signaling that the interaction has become unilateral. Through SPEAKING, the Act Sequence highlights Trump’s unilateral control over the closing, while the Key becomes triumphant and self-legitimizing. The Participants variable again reflects hierarchy: Trump positions Zelensky as a subordinate beneficiary rather than an equal partner. The Genre of political performance dominates, overshadowing diplomatic dialogue. This final excerpt exemplifies how CA reveals the structure of domination within the interaction, while SPEAKING explains how institutional and cultural power shape those structures.

CONCLUSION

The interaction between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky reflects how communication is deeply influenced by social, political, and cultural contexts. Based on Hymes’ (1974) SPEAKING model, the meeting can be understood as a complex speech event in which both leaders attempted to maintain a positive public image while navigating sensitive political issues. The formal setting and the presence of the media required cautious word choices and a polite tone. Both participants were aware that their conversation would be interpreted not only by each other but also by a global audience. Therefore, their interaction was characterized by a controlled atmosphere, diplomatic gestures, and careful linguistic performance, showing that meaning in communication depends greatly on situational context.

Together, CA and SPEAKING show that the interaction is not merely a political disagreement but a performance of power. Trump constructs the encounter as one in which the United States sets the agenda, defines the moral terms, and reserves the right to lecture, correct, and close the conversation unilaterally. Zelensky’s appeals to gratitude, diplomacy, and shared democratic values remain conversationally marginalized because the interactional structure itself prevents him from establishing an equal footing. Ultimately, the analysis demonstrates how geopolitical hierarchy is enacted and reproduced through the micro-level organization of talk. The meeting becomes a public display of dominance, where diplomatic dialogue is replaced by political performance and where conversational control becomes a tool for asserting national power.

From the perspective of power relations, the analysis reveals that Trump dominated the conversation through assertive language and self-assured tone, reflecting his position as the President of the United States. Zelensky, on the other hand, adopted a cooperative and respectful communication style, using politeness strategies such as agreement, humor, and gratitude to maintain harmony. This asymmetrical exchange illustrates how power shapes communicative behavior, a notion also supported by Saville-Troike (2003), who explains that speech events often mirror social hierarchies and cultural expectations. The contrast between Trump's directness and Zelensky's diplomatic caution demonstrates how cultural background and political status influence one's speaking style in international contexts.

The findings also emphasize the central role of politeness and communicative norms in diplomatic interactions. Both leaders followed conventions typical of political discourse that avoided open disagreement, expressing mutual respect, and highlighting cooperation. These behaviors align with Hymes' (1972) argument that communication is governed by shared social rules that determine what is considered appropriate in a given community. The use of humor and positive remarks functioned as tools to ease tension and project solidarity, reflecting how participants manage their "face" in public settings (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Such strategies underscore that effective diplomacy depends not only on political decisions but also on linguistic sensitivity.

In conclusion, the analysis of the Trump–Zelensky meeting through the SPEAKING framework shows that language serves as both a medium of negotiation and a performance of identity. The interaction was not merely informational; it was a symbolic act of diplomacy and image management. By applying Hymes' ethnography of communication, this study highlights that successful communication involves understanding cultural norms, social relationships, and situational contexts. Thus, the ethnographic approach provides valuable insight into how language constructs meaning, power, and cooperation in political discourse.

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REIMAGINING NATURE-BASED EDUCATION: ECO-PEDAGOGY IN PRACTICE AT SANGGAR ANAK ALAM (SALAM) ECO-SCHOOL YOGYAKARTA

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Abstract

Ecological consciousness develops through lived experience, not instruction alone. This qualitative case study examines how Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) Eco-School in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, enacts eco-pedagogy through nature-based learning, community participation, and local ecological knowledge. Data were collected over three months through interviews with students, parents, and educators, participant observation of daily activities, and analysis of curriculum documents and student projects. Four findings emerged. Students developed ecological sensitivity through direct engagement with gardens, animals, and natural cycles rather than through classroom teaching. The school's emphasis on autonomy allowed children to pursue projects aligned with their interests, fostering creativity and intrinsic motivation. Educators functioned as facilitators who accompanied inquiry rather than authorities who transmitted knowledge. Community members participated actively in learning, and parents reported that children's environmental awareness influenced household practices. SALAM's model suggests that eco-pedagogy requires structural transformation—permeable boundaries between school and environment, between institution and community. For Indonesia and other nations facing ecological challenges, such alternatives to conventional schooling merit serious attention.

Keywords: eco-pedagogy, environmental awareness, local wisdom, nature-based education, sustainable learning

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has brought environmental crises of unprecedented scale. Climate change, biodiversity collapse, and resource depletion now threaten not only ecosystems but the very foundations of human society. These challenges have prompted educators worldwide to ask a difficult question: is traditional schooling, with its standardized curricula and classroom walls, capable of nurturing the ecological consciousness that future generations will need? For many scholars, the answer is no. Orr, (1944) argues that conventional education has largely failed to connect learners with the natural world, producing graduates who are literate in the abstract but illiterate in the ecological systems that sustain life. Sterling, (2010) echoes this concern, noting that education systems remain stubbornly oriented toward economic productivity rather than environmental stewardship.

Out of this critique has emerged eco-pedagogy, an educational philosophy that seeks to bridge the gap between learning and living ecologically. The roots of eco-pedagogy lie in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, which conceived of education as a practice of freedom rather than a mechanism of social reproduction (Freire, 1970). Freire believed that genuine learning occurs through dialogue, reflection, and transformative action. Moacir Gadotti, a Brazilian educator and close collaborator of Freire, extended these ideas toward environmental and planetary consciousness. In his view, eco-pedagogy is not simply environmental education repackaged; it is a fundamental reorientation of educational purpose

toward what he calls "planetary citizenship"—an awareness that human well-being is inseparable from the health of the Earth (Gadotti, 2007). Kahn, (2010) further developed this framework, positioning eco-pedagogy as both an ethical stance and a political project that challenges the consumerist logic underlying much of modern schooling.

Indonesia offers a particularly urgent context for exploring how these ideas might be put into practice. The archipelago is one of the most biodiverse places on Earth, yet it faces severe environmental degradation. Over the past two decades, Indonesia has lost nearly ten million hectares of primary forest to agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and fires (WALHI, 2021). Coastal ecosystems have suffered from pollution and overexploitation, while rapid urbanization continues to strain the relationship between communities and their natural surroundings. For a nation whose cultural identity is deeply intertwined with its landscapes—from the rice terraces of Java to the rainforests of Kalimantan—this degradation carries not only ecological but also social and spiritual costs.

The Indonesian government has recognized the importance of environmental education. Policy documents speak of cultivating ecological awareness and sustainable development values among the young. Yet the reality in most schools falls short of these aspirations. Environmental themes, when they appear at all, tend to be confined to science textbooks or occasional tree-planting ceremonies. Pramesti et al., (2021) observes that environmental education in Indonesia remains largely theoretical, disconnected from the lived experiences of students and communities. There is a gap, in other words, between what policy envisions and what pedagogy delivers. This gap calls for alternative models—educational spaces where ecological values are not taught as content to be memorized but practiced as ways of being in the world.

Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) Eco-School in Yogyakarta represents one such space. Founded as a community-based learning environment in Nitiprayan, Bantul, SALAM operates outside the conventions of formal schooling. There are no uniforms, no rigid timetables, no standardized tests. Children learn by doing: planting rice, composting waste, observing insects, and building with recycled materials. The natural environment is not a backdrop to learning but its primary medium. Teachers see themselves as facilitators rather than instructors, accompanying children in exploration rather than directing them toward predetermined answers. Central to SALAM's philosophy is the integration of local ecological knowledge, or local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*), which grounds education in the wisdom of place and community rather than abstract, universal standards.

Despite growing scholarly interest in eco-pedagogy, few empirical studies have examined how it is actually practiced in Indonesian community-based settings. Much of the existing literature remains conceptual, discussing what eco-pedagogy should be rather than documenting what it looks like when enacted (Rati et al., 2017). This study addresses that gap. It explores how SALAM implements eco-pedagogy as a model of nature-based education, examining three interrelated dimensions: the cultivation of ecological awareness among students, the fostering of creativity and autonomy through nature-based practices, and the role of community engagement in shaping the educational ecosystem. Through qualitative case study methodology, this research contributes to understanding how eco-pedagogy can be localized within Indonesia's sociocultural landscape while offering insights relevant to the broader global discourse on sustainable education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Eco-Pedagogy: Theoretical Foundations

Eco-pedagogy emerged from a marriage of critical education theory and environmental ethics. Its intellectual roots trace back to Paulo Freire, whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) reimagined education as a tool for liberation rather than domestication. Freire rejected what he called the "banking model" of education, where teachers deposit knowledge into passive students. He proposed instead a dialogical approach in which learners and educators engage as co-investigators of reality, questioning the structures that shape their lives. This emphasis on critical consciousness—the ability to perceive social and political contradictions and take action against oppressive conditions—became foundational to later educational movements concerned with justice and transformation.

Moacir Gadotti, who worked closely with Freire at the Paulo Freire Institute in São Paulo, extended these ideas toward ecological concerns. Writing in the early 2000s, Gadotti observed that Freire's framework, while powerful, had remained largely silent on humanity's relationship with the non-human world. Eco-pedagogy, as Gadotti (2008) conceived it, addresses this gap by integrating environmental awareness into the project of human emancipation. The oppression Freire wrote about, Gadotti argued, extends beyond social relations to include the domination of nature itself. A truly liberatory education must therefore cultivate what he termed "planetary citizenship"—an identity grounded not in nation-states or ethnic groups but in our shared membership in the Earth community.

Richard Kahn, (2010) brought eco-pedagogy into conversation with broader currents of environmental thought. Drawing on deep ecology, ecofeminism, and animal liberation philosophy, Kahn positioned eco-pedagogy as a direct challenge to industrial capitalism and its educational apparatus. Schools, in his analysis, function largely to produce compliant workers and consumers, training young people to accept ecological destruction as the price of progress. Eco-pedagogy disrupts this logic by foregrounding questions that conventional curricula avoid: Who benefits from environmental degradation? Whose knowledge counts when we talk about nature? What ways of living have been suppressed in the pursuit of economic growth? For Kahn, these are not peripheral concerns but central to any education worthy of the name.

More recently, Misiaszek, (2016) has elaborated eco-pedagogy as a form of critical environmental literacy. This involves not simply learning facts about ecosystems or climate change, but developing the capacity to read the world ecologically—to see how environmental issues connect to patterns of inequality, colonialism, and cultural domination. A student who understands deforestation only as a biological problem, Misiaszek argues, has not yet achieved ecological literacy. True understanding requires grasping the economic pressures, political decisions, and historical processes that drive forest loss. It also requires recognizing that different communities experience environmental harm differently, with marginalized populations typically bearing the heaviest burdens.

From this perspective, one can draw one key insight, which is that eco-pedagogy is less about what is taught and more about how a school is built and lived. What makes it different from other educational approaches is that it treats ecology as a way of organising the school itself. The principle is suitable for SALAM Eco-School. It is not only a school that adds environmental activities to its curriculum, but also one that tries to live its ecological values in every aspect of how it runs.

Nature-Based Education: From Theory to Practice

While eco-pedagogy provides the philosophical framework, nature-based education offers practical pathways for implementation. The two are not identical: nature-based education can occur without explicit attention to critical consciousness, just as eco-pedagogy can be pursued through means other than outdoor learning. Yet the overlap is substantial, and many practitioners see direct engagement with natural environments as essential to cultivating ecological awareness.

David Sobel's work on place-based education has been particularly influential. Sobel, (2014) argues that environmental concern develops through an intimate, sustained connection with particular places. Children who grow up exploring local woods, streams, and fields develop what he calls "ecophilia," a love of place that motivates care and stewardship. Abstract knowledge about distant environmental problems, by contrast, often produces anxiety or apathy rather than engagement. Sobel's pedagogical prescription follows from this insight: start local, start concrete, start with the places children already know and love. Global environmental awareness, in this view, grows from local roots.

Richard Louv, (2008) has popularized related concerns through his concept of "nature-deficit disorder." Though not a clinical diagnosis, the term captures Louv's worry that contemporary children, increasingly confined to indoor and digital environments, are growing up disconnected from the natural world. The consequences, he suggests, include diminished creativity, attention difficulties, and a weakened sense of wonder. Nature-based education responds by creating structured opportunities for children to play, explore, and learn outdoors. Louv's work has influenced educational policy in several countries and helped fuel the growth of forest schools, outdoor kindergartens, and similar initiatives.

The researchers see this clearly at SALAM. A child who waters plants every day, watches them grow, and eats what s/he harvest is not just learning about the nature but building a relationship with it.

This kind of learning cannot likely happen in a textbook. Therefore, it is important to highlight that this is exactly what most schools are missing and why nature-based approaches matter these days.

Indigenous Knowledge and Sustainability in the Indonesian Context

Indonesia's diverse cultural traditions offer rich resources for grounding eco-pedagogy in local wisdom. The Balinese Hindu concept of *tri hita karana*, simply translated as harmony among humans, nature, and the divine, provides one such framework. Sihombing et al., (2025) have explored how this philosophy can inform sustainability-oriented education, suggesting that indigenous cosmologies offer alternatives to the anthropocentric worldview that underlies much environmental destruction. Similar principles exist across the archipelago, from Javanese notions of *keselarasan* (harmony) to various *adat* (customary) practices that regulate human relationships with forests, rivers, and agricultural lands.

Integrating such knowledge into formal education poses challenges. School curricula in Indonesia, as elsewhere, tend toward standardization and centralization, leaving limited space for local variation. Yet community-based initiatives have found ways to work around these constraints. Pramesti et al., (2021) and Rati et al., (2017) documents how nature schools and alternative learning spaces have emerged as sites where indigenous ecological knowledge can be preserved and transmitted alongside, or in creative tension with, national educational standards.

Rather than seeing this as a conflict, people can see it as an opportunity. Schools like SALAM Eco-school show that local wisdom and national curriculum do not have to compete. They can work side by side, with each enriching the other. In the researchers' perspectives, local wisdom is not just cultural heritage to be preserved. It is living knowledge that can guide how children learn to care for the world they live in. These developments provide the backdrop for understanding SALAM Eco-School's distinctive contribution. As a community-based institution that explicitly integrates local wisdom with eco-pedagogical principles, SALAM represents a concrete attempt to realize the theoretical visions outlined above within Indonesia's particular sociocultural context.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative case study design. Case study methodology suits research that seeks to understand complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Eco-pedagogy, as practiced at SALAM, is precisely such a phenomenon that is inseparable from the community, landscape, and daily rhythms in which it unfolds. A qualitative approach allowed for the kind of thick description necessary to capture how ecological values are transmitted, negotiated, and embodied in everyday educational encounters (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The choice of methodology also reflected the epistemological commitments of eco-pedagogy itself. Freire's dialogical approach to knowledge, which underpins eco-pedagogical theory, resists the reduction of human experience to quantifiable variables. It calls instead for engaged, participatory inquiry that honours the voices and perspectives of those being studied. This study attempted to embody that spirit by privileging participant narratives, attending to context, and remaining open to unexpected themes that emerged from the data.

Research Site and Participants

Fieldwork was conducted at SALAM Eco-School between March and May 2023. The three-month period encompassed a full academic term, allowing observation of recurring routines as well as special events such as harvest celebrations and community gatherings. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their active involvement in SALAM's programs and their capacity to offer diverse perspectives on eco-pedagogical practice (Patton, 2001). The final sample included eighteen individuals across three groups:

Students (n=8): Four boys and four girls ranging in age from seven to fourteen years. Selection aimed for diversity across age levels (elementary and junior high) and length of enrolment at SALAM (ranging from one to six years). Students were invited to participate based on teacher recommendations and willingness to engage in conversation about their learning experiences. *Parents* (n=6): Mothers and

fathers whose children had attended SALAM for at least two years. This criterion ensured familiarity with the school's practices and philosophy. Parents represented varied occupational backgrounds, including farmers, small business owners, and university employees. *Educators* (n=4): Two full-time facilitators and two part-time community teachers. All had worked at SALAM for a minimum of three years and played active roles in curriculum development and daily instruction.

Informed consent was obtained from all adult participants. For student participants, parental consent was secured alongside the child's verbal assent. Participants were assured of confidentiality; pseudonyms replace actual names in all reporting.

Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were employed: interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. This triangulation strengthened the study's validity by enabling cross-verification of findings across data sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). *Interviews* were conducted individually with all eighteen participants. Each session lasted between thirty and sixty minutes and followed a semi-structured format. Core questions addressed participants' understanding of SALAM's educational philosophy, their experiences with nature-based learning activities, and their perceptions of how ecological values were cultivated. Students were asked to describe their favourite activities and what they had learned from working with plants, animals, or natural materials. Parents reflected on changes they observed in their children's attitudes and behaviour at home. Educators discussed their pedagogical intentions and the challenges of facilitating learning outside conventional classroom structures. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim.

Participant observation took place over twenty-four visits during the fieldwork period, totaling approximately seventy-two hours of direct observation. The researcher attended regular learning sessions, outdoor activities, communal meals, and weekly reflection circles. Field notes documented physical settings, interactions between students and facilitators, the kinds of questions children asked, and the ways ecological themes surfaced in everyday conversation. Particular attention was paid to moments when learning appeared to emerge spontaneously from engagement with the natural environment. *Document analysis* examined institutional materials, including SALAM's founding philosophy statement, curriculum guidelines, sample lesson plans, and examples of student project documentation. These materials provided insight into the school's articulated values and how those values were translated into pedagogical practice.

Data Analysis

Analysis followed the six-phase thematic approach outlined by Braun & Clarke, (2008). The process began with familiarization—reading and rereading transcripts and field notes to develop an initial sense of patterns in the data. This was followed by systematic coding, conducted inductively without a predetermined framework. Codes were then grouped into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined through iterative comparison with the original data. Final themes were defined and named before the writing phase.

Four major themes emerged from this process: ecological sensitivity among students, creativity and autonomy in learning, the facilitator role of educators, and community participation in the educational ecosystem. Observational and documentary data were used to corroborate and deepen interpretations derived from interviews. Trustworthiness was addressed through several strategies. Member checking involved sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to verify accuracy and resonance. An audit trail documented analytical decisions through dated memos and reflective journal entries. Prolonged engagement over three months allowed for deeper familiarity with the research context and reduced the likelihood of superficial interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

FINDINGS

The results of this study reveal that Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) Eco-School implements eco-pedagogy through a combination of experiential learning, community participation, and environmental stewardship. The integration of nature-based activities into the daily learning process allows children to develop environmental awareness, creativity, and responsibility in ways that transcend conventional

classroom learning. From the collected data: interviews, observations, and document analysis, four major patterns emerged: (1) children's ecological sensitivity, (2) the cultivation of creativity and autonomy, (3) the transformative role of educators, and (4) community engagement as part of the educational ecosystem.

Children's Ecological Sensitivity

The first finding highlights the growth of ecological awareness among children. Students at SALAM displayed increasing familiarity with and appreciation for their natural surroundings. They participated in activities such as organic gardening, composting, and waste management, which helped them understand ecological interdependence in tangible ways. Observations showed that students were able to articulate concepts like "balance in nature" and "caring for living things" through their own experiences. The learning process encouraged observation and reflection rather than rote memorization, making environmental knowledge personally meaningful. For many students, daily interaction with soil, plants, and animals cultivated a sense of belonging to their environment and fostered responsibility toward it.

Creativity and Autonomy in Learning

The second pattern concerns creativity and autonomy in learning. SALAM's curriculum provides students with the freedom to pursue subjects and projects aligned with their interests. This autonomy was evident in diverse learning outcomes: some children focused on art and crafts using recycled materials, others on food production or environmental storytelling. Documentation and interviews confirmed that children were more motivated when learning emerged from their own curiosity rather than external instruction. The emphasis on open-ended projects allowed them to develop initiative, problem-solving skills, and confidence in expressing ideas. Such autonomy also strengthened students' sense of agency as they realized their capacity to contribute meaningfully to the environment and community.

The Transformative Role of Educators

The third result underscores the transformative role of educators as facilitators of learning. Teachers at SALAM see themselves not as instructors who deliver fixed knowledge but as co-learners who accompany children in exploration and inquiry. Observations showed that lessons were rarely confined to classrooms; instead, learning often took place outdoors, such as by the river, in gardens, or on local farms. Educators guided students to ask questions, investigate environmental phenomena, and make connections between daily life and ecological principles. Their approach encouraged dialogue and mutual respect, creating a learning atmosphere that was democratic and nurturing. Teachers frequently emphasized ethical values such as empathy, care, and collaboration as integral to environmental learning.

Community Participation as Educational Ecosystem

The fourth finding reveals that community participation is essential to SALAM's educational ecosystem. Parents, neighbours, and local artists contribute actively to school activities, sharing local knowledge about farming, traditional crafts, and cultural rituals. Interviews with parents showed that their children became more responsible at home as they started living with awareness, like reducing waste, appreciating food sources, and initiating small-scale environmental projects. Many parents also reported feeling inspired to adopt more sustainable habits in their daily lives. This reciprocal relationship between school and community blurs the boundary between formal and informal education, turning the local environment into a living classroom. In this context, learning extends beyond academic goals to encompass social and ecological transformation within the wider community. Overall, the findings indicate that SALAM Eco-School successfully embodies eco-pedagogical principles by merging environmental education with creativity, collaboration, and community engagement. The school's practices demonstrate that learning grounded in nature and local wisdom can cultivate children's ecological consciousness while reinforcing values of empathy, cooperation, and sustainability.

The findings presented earlier illustrate how Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) embodies eco-pedagogical principles through an organic integration of learning, nature, and community life. This section discusses these findings in relation to the broader theoretical perspectives on eco-pedagogy, nature-based education, and transformative learning. Through this analysis, SALAM's model is positioned as both a reflection of and a contribution to global conversations on sustainability-oriented education, particularly within the Indonesian socio-cultural context.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study illuminate how eco-pedagogy can be enacted within a community-based Indonesian educational setting. Rather than treating environmental awareness as curricular content to be transmitted, SALAM cultivates ecological consciousness through lived experience, relational learning, and community participation. This section interprets these findings in dialogue with the theoretical literature, considers the study's limitations, and reflects on implications for practice and future research.

Ecological Sensitivity as Embodied Knowledge

The ecological awareness observed among SALAM students differs qualitatively from what conventional environmental education typically produces. Students did not simply recite facts about ecosystems; they demonstrated what Sobel, (2014) calls a "sense of place"—an affective bond with their immediate environment developed through sustained, embodied interaction. When Sinta described the cyclical relationship between chickens, compost, and vegetables, she was not repeating textbook information but articulating understanding that had emerged from direct participation in those cycles.

This finding resonates with Louv's (2008) argument that ecological concern develops through intimate contact with nature rather than abstract instruction about distant environmental problems. The students at SALAM who cared most deeply about their gardens were those who had invested time and attention in them. Their knowledge was personal in a way that information about rainforest destruction or polar ice melt cannot easily be. This suggests that eco-pedagogy's emphasis on local, experiential learning is not merely a pedagogical preference but an epistemological necessity, certain kinds of understanding can only emerge through certain kinds of engagement.

The findings also support Misiaszek, (2016) conception of ecological literacy as the capacity to read environmental relationships critically. Students at SALAM did not simply observe nature; they questioned it, experimented with it, and reflected on their own role within it. The composting session where children designed an experiment to test worm preferences exemplifies this critical dimension. Ecological sensitivity, in this model, involves not passive appreciation but active inquiry.



Figure 1. SALAM – Sanggar Anak Alam Eco-School

A key feature of SALAM's approach is its flexible and inclusive learning environment. In contrast to conventional schools characterized by uniforms, strict schedules, and fixed tuition fees, SALAM promotes autonomy and community dialogue. Parents are encouraged to negotiate contributions according to their capacity, often through non-monetary means such as agricultural produce. This practice reinforces a culture of mutual care and local solidarity while reducing economic barriers to learning. The school environment itself embodies openness: rather than enclosed classrooms, learning spaces are designed to resemble gardens, playgrounds, and communal pavilions, encouraging students to move freely and learn from nature's rhythms.

Students at SALAM come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including children who were previously unable to access formal education. The school accommodates learners across five developmental levels which are playgroup, kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and senior high within an integrated learning community. This structure allows interaction across age groups and promotes peer learning, empathy, and cooperation. Observations show that younger students often learn from older peers through shared projects and storytelling, while older students develop leadership and mentoring skills. Such cross-age collaboration reflects SALAM's belief that learning is most meaningful when grounded in community and shared experience.

In this setting, education becomes a living practice rather than a mechanical process. The school's non-hierarchical atmosphere dissolves distinctions between teacher and learner, formal and informal, theory and practice. Learning unfolds through participation, dialogue, and reflection, qualities that align closely with the principles of eco-pedagogy and transformative learning. By reimagining education as a social, ecological, and ethical act, SALAM positions itself as a model of alternative schooling that challenges the conventional dichotomy between institutional instruction and everyday life.



Figure 2: Classrooms at SALAM School

Autonomy, Creativity, and the Rejection of Banking Education

The second theme: creativity and autonomy, speaks directly to Freire's (1970) critique of banking education. SALAM's pedagogical structure rejects the model in which teachers deposit knowledge into passive students. Instead, learning emerges from children's own questions and interests, with facilitators serving as resources rather than authorities. The diversity of student projects observed during fieldwork, such as irrigation systems, bird songs, and traditional recipes, reflects this orientation. No predetermined curriculum could produce such variety; it emerges only when learners are granted genuine agency.

This finding aligns with Gadotti's (2008) vision of eco-pedagogy as education for freedom extended to planetary consciousness. At SALAM, freedom is not abstract but concrete: the freedom to

spend a morning building, the freedom to pursue curiosity wherever it leads, the freedom to learn at one's own pace. Students reported that this autonomy made them more invested in their work. When Dewi noted that she tried harder on projects she chose herself, she was describing a phenomenon well documented in educational research: intrinsic motivation produces deeper engagement than external compulsion.

Yet autonomy at SALAM is not individualistic. Projects frequently involved collaboration, and the school's physical and social structure encouraged interaction across age groups. This combination of individual freedom and collective participation is described as eco-pedagogy's challenge to both authoritarian education and atomistic individualism (Kahn, 2010). Learning at SALAM is neither teacher-directed nor solitary but dialogical and communal.

Facilitation and the Transformation of Teaching

The educators at SALAM described and enacted a role fundamentally different from conventional teaching. They saw themselves as co-learners, companions in inquiry rather than dispensers of knowledge. This stance has theoretical grounding in Freire's dialogical pedagogy, which positions teacher and student as mutual subjects engaged in understanding the world together. When Ibu Ratna observed that students sometimes notice things she never saw, she was articulating this reciprocal relationship.

The facilitative approach observed at SALAM also resonates with literature on nature-based education. Effective outdoor learning, researchers have noted, requires teachers who can tolerate uncertainty, follow children's lead, and resist the impulse to provide immediate answers. The river session, where a facilitator responded to a child's question with another question, "What could we do to find out?" exemplifies this pedagogical restraint. The goal is not efficiency in knowledge transfer but depth in understanding.

Community as Educational Ecosystem

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of SALAM's model is the permeability between school and community. Parents, neighbours, and local artisans are not occasional visitors but integral participants in the educational process. This finding extends eco-pedagogy's theoretical framework in important ways. While the literature emphasizes relationships between learners and nature, SALAM demonstrates that these relationships are always mediated by community. Children learn to care for the environment within webs of social relationships with parents who farm, neighbours who share traditional knowledge, and facilitators who model ecological attentiveness.

The reciprocal effects reported by parents, saying that children influence household practices, prompting adult reflection on environmental habits, suggest that eco-pedagogy's transformative potential extends beyond the immediate educational context. When Pak Bambang admitted that his children teach him about pesticides and water conservation, he was describing a reversal of the usual direction of knowledge transmission. This intergenerational dialogue, flowing from children to adults as well as from adults to children, represents a form of community transformation that aligns with Freire's vision of education as social change.

Limitations

Several limitations constrain the interpretation of these findings. The sample, though appropriate for qualitative inquiry, was small and drawn from a single institution. SALAM is an unusual school, and its practices may not transfer readily to other contexts. The three-month fieldwork period captured a limited slice of the school's annual rhythm; longer engagement might have revealed different patterns. Additionally, the study relied primarily on self-reported perceptions; observing long-term outcomes in students' ecological attitudes and behaviours would require longitudinal research that was beyond this study's scope.

The researchers' own interest in eco-pedagogy may have influenced data collection and interpretation. While reflexive practices were employed to mitigate this risk, complete neutrality is neither possible nor, from a Freirean perspective, desirable. The findings should be read as one interpretation of SALAM's practice, not as the definitive truth.

Implications and Future Directions

For practitioners, this study suggests that eco-pedagogy requires more than adding environmental content to existing curricula. It demands structural changes: physical environments that connect learners with nature, pedagogical relationships that honour student agency, and institutional boundaries permeable to community participation. These are not minor adjustments but fundamental reorientations.

For researchers, SALAM's model raises questions that warrant further investigation. How do graduates of eco-pedagogical programs differ from conventionally educated peers in their environmental attitudes and behaviours over time? Can elements of SALAM's approach be adapted to formal school settings constrained by national curricula and standardized assessments? How do eco-pedagogical practices vary across Indonesia's diverse cultural contexts?

For policymakers, the findings suggest that alternative educational models like SALAM deserve recognition and support. Indonesia's ecological challenges require citizens capable of thinking ecologically and acting responsibly. Schools that cultivate these capacities, even when they operate outside conventional structures, contribute to national goals that extend far beyond education.

CONCLUSION

SALAM Eco-School demonstrates that ecological consciousness cannot be taught through textbooks alone; it must be lived. The findings of this study reveal that when children engage directly with soil, plants, and community, they develop an environmental understanding that is personal, embodied, and enduring. This understanding emerges not from instruction but from participation: tending gardens, designing projects, asking questions that matter to them. Three insights carry weight beyond this single case. First, eco-pedagogy requires structural change, not merely curricular adjustment. Physical spaces, pedagogical relationships, and institutional boundaries must all shift to allow nature-based learning to flourish. Second, educators function most effectively as facilitators who accompany inquiry rather than authorities who dispense answers. Third, the line between school and community must blur; environmental learning gains depth when parents, neighbours, and local knowledge holders participate as partners. Indonesia's ecological challenges demand citizens who think and act with environmental responsibility. Schools willing to reimagine their purpose, as SALAM has done, offer one path toward cultivating such citizens.

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PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING UNDER THE MERDEKA BELAJAR CURRICULUM IN UNDER-RESOURCED SCHOOL CONTEXT

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Abstract

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum has introduced a major shift in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia by emphasizing flexibility, learner-centered pedagogy, and contextual adaptation. However, empirical evidence on how these principles are enacted in under-resourced school contexts remains limited. This study addresses this gap by examining pedagogical practices in ELT under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in an under-resourced junior secondary school. The study aims to describe how English teachers implement curriculum principles and how these practices are adapted to contextual constraints. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis involving an English teacher, school stakeholders, and students. Data were analyzed inductively through thematic analysis to identify recurring pedagogical patterns. The findings reveal that English teaching was characterized by learner-centered and adaptive practices supported by genre-based pedagogy, collaborative learning, and pragmatic differentiation. Teachers selectively integrated technology as a pedagogical support while relying primarily on printed and local learning resources. Pedagogical practices were extended beyond the classroom through the Pancasila Student Profile Project and an English Club, which enhanced communicative competence, character development, and learner confidence. These practices reflected a hybrid pedagogy balancing curriculum ideals with contextual realities. This study contributes empirical insights into classroom-level enactment of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in under-resourced ELT contexts, highlighting the critical role of teacher agency. Limitations include the focus on a single school context. Future research is recommended to adopt comparative or longitudinal designs to further explore curriculum implementation across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, English Language Teaching, Pedagogical Practices, Under-Resourced School Context, Learner-Centered Pedagogy.

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INTRODUCTION

Since its nationwide introduction, the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum has marked a major paradigm shift in Indonesian education by promoting flexibility, learner autonomy, and contextualized learning practices. Initiated as part of a broader educational transformation agenda, the curriculum responds to global educational challenges, rapid technological development, and learning loss experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Susilowati, 2022). By early 2026, the curriculum has moved beyond the pilot phase and entered wider implementation across diverse educational settings, making empirical examinations of its classroom enactment increasingly urgent.

In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum emphasizes communicative competence, multimodal literacy, intercultural awareness, and learner-centered pedagogy. English is positioned not merely as a subject of knowledge

transmission but as a tool for developing critical thinking, creativity, and global citizenship aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile (Aprianti et al., 2023; Sari, 2023). This shift requires teachers to redesign pedagogical practices that move away from rigid, textbook-driven instruction toward more adaptive and student-responsive learning environments.

Pedagogical practices under the Merdeka Belajar framework are characterized by student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and the integration of technology where possible (Darmayanti, 2023; Atikah et al., 2023). Teachers are expected to act as facilitators who design meaningful learning experiences based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Such expectations significantly reshape classroom dynamics and challenge traditional teacher-centered instructional models long embedded in Indonesian schools (Sihombing et al., 2021).

Despite its progressive vision, the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is not uniform across contexts. Schools with limited infrastructure, restricted access to technology, and constrained professional development opportunities face distinct challenges in translating curriculum principles into effective pedagogical practices (Jasrial et al., 2023; Pratikno et al., 2022). These under-resourced school contexts demand adaptive strategies that reconcile curriculum ideals with on-the-ground realities.

Research on curriculum implementation consistently highlights the central role of teachers in mediating policy and practice. Teachers' pedagogical decisions, instructional strategies, and classroom management practices largely determine how curriculum reforms are experienced by students (Prakoso et al., 2021; Riskianto et al., 2023). In ELT, this mediation becomes even more complex due to language proficiency demands, learner affective factors, and the need for sustained interaction in the target language (Jon et al., 2021).

One of the defining pedagogical features promoted by the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is differentiated learning. Differentiation allows teachers to adjust content, process, and learning products to accommodate students' varying abilities and learning needs (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Shihab, 2020). While theoretically promising, differentiated instruction requires careful planning, diagnostic assessment, and instructional flexibility-resources that may be limited in under-resourced schools (Atikah et al., 2023).

Another prominent pedagogical orientation within the curriculum is the use of genre-based approaches in English instruction. Genre-Based Approach (GBA) emphasizes meaningful language use through structured stages of learning, including modeling, joint construction, and independent production of texts (Emilia, 2022; Zhai & Razali, 2023). This approach aligns well with the curriculum's emphasis on communicative competence and multimodal literacy but requires sustained instructional support and teacher expertise to be effectively implemented.

Technology integration is also encouraged within the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum as a means to expand learning resources and foster autonomous learning (Fahrudin et al., 2024; Ansori, 2025). However, studies indicate that limited access to digital infrastructure, unstable internet connectivity, and insufficient technological literacy among teachers and students often constrain the realization of technology-based pedagogy in under-resourced contexts (Novita et al., 2022; Jasrial et al., 2023).

Recent empirical studies have examined various aspects of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, including teacher perceptions, policy readiness, assessment practices, and curriculum alignment (Prakoso et al., 2021; Cantika et al., 2022; Sari, 2023). While these

studies provide valuable insights into curriculum adoption, many focus on administrative implementation or generalized teacher attitudes rather than detailed classroom-level pedagogical practices, particularly in ELT settings.

Moreover, existing research tends to concentrate on schools with relatively adequate resources or those designated as flagship implementation sites. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence on how English teachers in under-resourced schools operationalize Merdeka Belajar principles in daily classroom practices (Pratikno et al., 2022; Jasrial et al., 2023). This gap is critical, as under-resourced schools represent a substantial portion of Indonesia's educational landscape.

Understanding pedagogical practices in such contexts is essential for evaluating the practical feasibility of curriculum reform and identifying adaptive strategies that support meaningful learning despite structural constraints. Examining how teachers interpret curriculum guidelines, select instructional approaches, and engage students provides nuanced insights into the lived realities of curriculum implementation (Jain et al., 2025; McCloskey, 1999).

Within ELT, pedagogical practices shape not only language acquisition outcomes but also students' confidence, participation, and attitudes toward learning English. Learner-centered and context-sensitive instruction has been shown to enhance engagement and promote more sustainable language development, particularly in environments where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom (Deswalantri et al., 2024; Romadhon et al., 2024; Sulistiyo, 2020). Against this backdrop, the present study addresses the need for in-depth qualitative exploration of pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum within an under-resourced school context. By focusing on classroom enactment rather than policy discourse, the study offers empirical insights into how curriculum ideals are translated into instructional realities.

Specifically, the study aims to describe how pedagogical practices aligned with the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum are implemented in English language classrooms, including instructional approaches, learning activities, and teacher-student interactions. Through this focus, the study seeks to illuminate patterns of practice that reflect both curriculum alignment and contextual adaptation.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on curriculum implementation in ELT by providing context-sensitive evidence from under-resourced schools. The study offers practical implications for English teachers, school leaders, and policymakers by highlighting pedagogical practices that support meaningful learning under constrained conditions and informing more inclusive and realistic curriculum development and support strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review further discusses the concept of Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and ELT Pedagogy and Pedagogical Adaptation in Under-Resourced School Contexts.

Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and ELT Pedagogy

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum represents a fundamental shift in Indonesian education toward learner autonomy, flexibility, and contextualized learning. Introduced as part of a national education reform, the curriculum emphasizes student-centered pedagogy, competency-based learning, and the integration of character education through the Pancasila Student Profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Ni'mah & Susanto, 2023). Rather than prescribing rigid instructional procedures, the curriculum grants teachers greater autonomy to design pedagogical practices that align with students' developmental stages, learning needs, and local contexts (Fahrudin et al., 2024). This orientation places pedagogical practice at the center of curriculum implementation, particularly in classroom-level decision-making.

This pedagogical orientation redefines the role of teachers as designers of learning experiences rather than mere implementers of prescribed content. Teacher autonomy under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is closely linked to the expectation that instruction be adaptive, responsive, and meaningful for learners in diverse educational settings. As a result, classroom practices become the primary site where curriculum intentions are interpreted, negotiated, and enacted in daily teaching activities.

In English Language Teaching, the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum promotes communicative competence, multimodal literacy, and learner-centered instruction. English learning is expected to foster not only language skills but also critical thinking, creativity, and intercultural awareness (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Sari, 2023). Pedagogical practices encouraged under this curriculum include student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and the use of authentic and multimodal texts (Darmayanti, 2023; Marwan, 2017). These practices require teachers to function as facilitators who guide students in constructing knowledge rather than as sole transmitters of content.

Differentiated learning constitutes a key pedagogical principle within this framework, enabling teachers to adjust content, learning processes, and learning products based on students' readiness and learning profiles (Atikah et al., 2023; Kemdikbudristek, 2022). In ELT classrooms, differentiated pedagogy is frequently operationalized through the Genre-Based Approach, which structures language learning through staged activities such as modeling, joint construction, and independent production of texts (Emilia, 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that genre-based pedagogy supports meaningful language use and student engagement when teachers provide adequate scaffolding and align instruction with curriculum objectives (Shihab, 2020).

Pedagogical Adaptation in Under-Resourced School Contexts

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum also encourages the integration of educational technology to support autonomous and flexible learning. Digital tools are expected to expand access to learning resources and promote independent exploration (Fahrudin et al., 2024; Deswalantri et al., 2024). However, pedagogical practices in under-resourced school contexts

are often shaped by limited infrastructure, inadequate digital facilities, and unstable internet connectivity (Novita et al., 2022; Jasrial et al., 2023). These conditions require teachers to adapt curriculum ideals pragmatically by combining low-tech strategies with available resources while maintaining learner-centered instruction.

Recent empirical studies on the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum have largely focused on teachers' perceptions and institutional readiness, leaving limited insight into classroom-level pedagogical enactment, particularly in English teaching contexts (Prakoso et al., 2021; Cantika et al., 2022; Riskianto et al., 2023). Research conducted in rural and under-resourced schools highlights persistent challenges related to instructional facilities, assessment literacy, and teacher professional development (Pratikno et al., 2022; Jasrial et al., 2023;). These gaps underscore the need for context-sensitive investigations that examine how pedagogical practices are enacted in English Language Teaching under the Merdeka Belajar framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum within an under-resourced school context. The qualitative descriptive method as a research approach based on post-positivism philosophy (Sandelowski, 2000). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate as the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of classroom-level instructional practices rather than to test hypotheses or measure causal relationships. Qualitative descriptive research enables researchers to capture participants' perspectives, teaching practices, and contextual realities as they naturally occur in educational settings.

The study focused on describing how curriculum principles were enacted in English classrooms, emphasizing instructional approaches, learning activities, and teacher–student interactions. By adopting this design, the research sought to provide a rich and contextualized account of pedagogical practices that reflect both curriculum intentions and contextual adaptations.

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in a public junior secondary school implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum under the *Mandiri Berubah* (Independent Change) option in one of the school in Kutai Timur, Indonesia. The school is situated in an under-resourced context characterized by limited educational infrastructure and restricted access to digital learning facilities. Such contextual conditions made the site relevant for examining pedagogical practices under constrained circumstances.

Participants were selected purposively to ensure direct relevance to the research focus on pedagogical practices. The primary informant was the English teacher (T1), as she was directly responsible for planning and implementing English instruction under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. Her central role enabled in-depth exploration of instructional strategies, differentiation practices, assessment approaches, and classroom decision-making processes.

To obtain a broader institutional perspective, two key school stakeholders were included: the Vice Principal of Curriculum (T2) and the Pancasila Student Profile Project Coordinator (T3). T2 was selected because of her involvement in curriculum planning and institutional decision-making regarding the adoption of the *Mandiri Berubah* option. T3 was included to provide insights into the implementation of co-curricular projects that extend

English learning beyond formal classroom instruction. Their inclusion allowed triangulation of classroom practices with school-level curriculum policies.

In addition, ten Grade 7 students (S1-S10) were selected to represent learner perspectives. Grade 7 was chosen because it marked students' initial formal exposure to English at the junior secondary level, making it a critical stage for examining early curriculum enactment. The students were selected based on variation in learning experiences and engagement levels to capture diverse responses to English instruction. Including students enabled the study to examine not only instructional design but also how pedagogical practices were experienced and interpreted by learners.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to ensure data richness and credibility. The primary data collection methods included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis.

Classroom observation was conducted in three stages: preliminary observation (grand tour), informal observations, and focused classroom observation. The preliminary grand tour was carried out to obtain a general understanding of the school context, organizational structure, and the integration of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum into school culture, enabling the researcher to map institutional readiness and identify relevant instructional settings. This was followed by several informal observations conducted over a two-week period to familiarize the researcher with classroom routines and instructional patterns; during these sessions, field notes were taken without audio or video recording. The main classroom observation was conducted in Class VII C, consisting of two consecutive sessions of 40 minutes each (totaling 80 minutes). The observation focused on lesson structure (pre-, whilst-, and post-activities), instructional strategies, student engagement, differentiation practices, use of learning resources, and teacher-student interactions. An observation checklist complemented by detailed field notes was used to systematically document classroom practices while allowing flexibility to capture emergent pedagogical phenomena.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher and selected school stakeholders to gain insights into pedagogical decision-making, curriculum interpretation, and instructional challenges. Interviews with students were carried out to explore their learning experiences and perceptions of English instruction. The language used was Bahasa Indonesia. The semi-structured format allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences while maintaining alignment with the research focus. While, documentation analysis included lesson plans, teaching modules, and curriculum-related documents to triangulate observed practices with planned instruction.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an inductive qualitative process. All data from observations, interviews, and documents were organized and examined systematically. The collected data, obtained through the abovementioned techniques, was analyzed in stages recommended by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, including data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Matthew et al., 2014).

First, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, while observation data were organized from detailed field notes, and relevant documents were compiled for analysis.

These data sources were then categorized based on emerging themes related to pedagogical practices, such as instructional approaches, learning activities, differentiation strategies, and contextual adaptation. Next, the categorized data were displayed in narrative and thematic forms to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and relationships across interviews, classroom observations, and documents, with particular attention to how pedagogical practices reflected Merdeka Belajar principles in an under-resourced context.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were systematically applied. Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation by comparing evidence derived from interview transcripts, classroom observation field notes, and curriculum-related documents such as lesson plans and the School Operational Curriculum. This cross-source comparison enabled the researcher to verify the consistency of pedagogical practices across different forms of data.

Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with the primary informants, particularly the English teacher (T1) and the vice principal of curriculum (T2), to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's understanding of instructional practices and curriculum implementation. Their feedback was incorporated to refine emerging themes and clarify contextual meanings.

To enhance dependability, the researcher maintained consistent observation procedures and systematically documented all stages of the research process, including data collection schedules, field notes, transcription processes, and coding decisions. Confirmability was supported by revisiting raw data, interview transcripts, and observation notes to ensure that interpretations and conclusions were grounded in empirical evidence rather than personal assumptions. Together, these strategies ensured that the findings accurately represented pedagogical practices within the research context.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research aimed to understand students' experiences, motivations, and challenges related to their participation in school-based English clubs. It also examined the impact of the school-based English Club on students' language skills. Data were collected through online questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 21 high school students who are active members of a combined English club at Benteng Rotterdam, Makassar.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study on pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in an under-resourced school context. The findings are organized to illustrate how curriculum principles were enacted through intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular practices, highlighting the ways teachers adapted instruction to contextual constraints while maintaining learner-centered and character-oriented learning.

Curriculum Adoption and Pedagogical Orientation

The findings indicate that English Language Teaching was implemented under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum through the *Mandiri Berubah* option. Document analysis of the School Operational Curriculum and interviews with school leaders revealed that this option was selected after careful consideration of school readiness, teacher capacity, student characteristics, and environmental conditions. As explained by a curriculum leader:

"We chose Mandiri Berubah based on a study of school conditions, teacher human resources, student characteristics, and the surrounding environment." (T2, interview)

Supporting document analysis of the KOSP shows that the school had formally structured its curriculum into three interconnected domains, intra-curricular, co-curricular (Pancasila Student Profile Project), and extracurricular activities, indicating institutional alignment with national policy guidelines. The document also outlines the allocation of learning hours, project implementation schedules, and integration of character dimensions within subject instruction, demonstrating systematic curriculum planning rather than ad hoc adaptation.

Classroom observation data further confirm this orientation. Teachers explicitly communicated learning objectives derived from *Capaian Pembelajaran* at the beginning of lessons and linked them to character dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, such as independence, cooperation, creativity, and critical thinking. This indicates that curriculum principles were not merely administrative documents but were operationalized in classroom practice.

The *Mandiri Berubah* orientation granted teachers pedagogical flexibility, allowing them to adapt instructional practices to classroom realities rather than rigidly following centralized procedures. The curriculum was therefore enacted as a unified framework integrating academic learning, character development, and student interest exploration, reflecting context-responsive curriculum implementation.

Intra-Curricular Pedagogical Practices in English Classrooms

Classroom observation data show that intra-curricular English lessons followed a learner-centered instructional structure consistent with Merdeka Belajar principles. Lessons typically began with pre-activities such as greetings, prayer, attendance, and explicit communication of learning objectives derived from *Capaian Pembelajaran*. Document analysis of the teaching module (*modul ajar*) confirms that each lesson plan specified learning outcomes, success indicators, and targeted Pancasila Student Profile dimensions (e.g., independence, critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and global diversity), indicating alignment between planning documents and classroom enactment.

As an opening activity, students were encouraged to observe visual materials, such as pictures or short videos, followed by guided question-and-answer sessions to activate prior knowledge. Observation notes recorded that students responded voluntarily to teacher prompts and related the topic to their own extracurricular experiences. The *modul ajar* also outlined staged learning procedures consistent with scaffolded instruction, including modeling, guided practice, and independent production.

Core instructional activities emphasized collaborative learning and gradual scaffolding. Students worked in pairs and small groups to match vocabulary with images, practice dialogues, and construct descriptive texts. Observation notes indicated that:

Students actively discussed in groups, completed structured templates, practiced dialogues, and produced individual written texts.

Document analysis further shows that structured worksheets and templates were prepared to guide text organization and language use, supporting students with varying proficiency levels. Assessment documentation indicates that teachers applied formative strategies, including observation checklists, performance tasks, and written products aligned with lesson objectives. Throughout the learning process, teachers monitored not only students' linguistic performance but also their attitudes, such as self-confidence, responsibility, curiosity, and cooperation. Post-activity stages involved sharing student work and reflective discussion, reinforcing both academic understanding and character development in accordance with curriculum expectations.

Genre-Based Pedagogy and Differentiated Learning

The findings reveal that the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) was consistently employed as the primary pedagogical framework in English instruction. Document analysis of the *modul ajar* and lesson plans shows that each unit was structured around staged learning cycles, including modeling of target texts, joint construction through guided practice, and independent text production. Classroom observations confirmed that teachers first provided sample dialogues or descriptive texts, highlighted key linguistic features, and explicitly explained text structure before asking students to construct texts collaboratively and individually. This staged process enabled students with limited vocabulary and grammatical control to gradually build confidence and textual competence.

Interview data further indicate that teachers intentionally relied on modeling and structured templates to support learners. One teacher explained that many students required clear examples and guided exercises before being able to write independently, particularly when producing descriptive paragraphs. Observation notes recorded that worksheets contained structured outlines to guide idea organization, suggesting deliberate scaffolding to bridge students' proficiency gaps.

Differentiated learning was implemented pragmatically rather than comprehensively. Document analysis shows that lesson plans included alternative task options and varied output formats, while classroom observations indicated that students were allowed to choose topics related to their interests, such as specific extracurricular activities, when writing descriptive texts. Interview data confirm that differentiation focused primarily on task complexity, topic selection, and product choice rather than fully individualized instruction. As stated by the English teacher:

"Differentiated learning needs a lot of preparation. So, we usually adjust the task level and allow students to choose topics or products they feel comfortable with." (T1, interview)

Observation data also indicate that higher-proficiency students were encouraged to elaborate their texts with additional details, while others were allowed to focus on basic text structure and essential vocabulary. This adaptive strategy enabled students to participate meaningfully across varying proficiency levels while remaining within practical constraints related to time, class size, and instructional resources. Collectively, these findings suggest that genre-based pedagogy and pragmatic differentiation functioned as complementary strategies to support equitable language learning in a context with limited resources.

Integration of Technology, Learning Resources, and Assessment Practices

Despite being situated in an under-resourced context, teachers integrated available technology selectively to support English learning. Observation data indicate that digital tools such as laptops, LCD projectors, speakers, Canva, and Google Forms were used to present visual materials, display model texts, and facilitate interactive activities. In several observed sessions, students were asked to create digital greeting cards or access shared links provided by the teacher, demonstrating the use of technology to enhance creativity and engagement rather than to replace traditional instruction.

Interview data further reveal that technology use was shaped by practical considerations. The English teacher explained that digital tools were primarily used when internet access was stable, while printed worksheets and textbooks remained the most reliable resources. As stated:

“Technology helps, but internet access and facilities are limited. So we combine digital tools with printed materials and textbooks.” (T1, interview)

Document analysis of the *modul ajar* and instructional materials confirms that government-issued textbooks and teacher guidebooks served as the primary learning references. These were supplemented by locally relevant materials, such as regional folklore texts, and curated online resources when feasible. Lesson plans also indicated blended instructional strategies, combining visual presentations with structured worksheets to ensure accessibility for all students.

Assessment practices under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum emphasized formative, performance-based, and observational approaches. Observation data show that teachers monitored students’ participation, collaboration, and task completion during classroom activities. Document analysis of assessment instruments revealed the use of observation checklists, performance rubrics, and project evaluation sheets aligned with learning objectives. Interview data indicate that teachers conducted initial diagnostic observations to identify students’ proficiency levels and learning preferences, followed by ongoing feedback during practice and project tasks. These practices reflect an emphasis on continuous assessment and instructional adjustment rather than reliance on summative, high-stakes testing, aligning assessment procedures with the curriculum’s learner-centered orientation.

Co-Curricular Pedagogical Practices through the Pancasila Student Profile Project

Findings from document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews indicate that English learning under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum was extended beyond formal classroom instruction through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project as a structured co-curricular activity. Based on the School Operational Curriculum (KOSP), the project was implemented three times within one academic year, each focusing on themes derived from the Pancasila Student Profile and contextual issues surrounding the school environment. These themes included anti-bullying, local wisdom, and environmental sustainability, which were selected to foster students’ social awareness, character development, and real-world problem-solving skills.

Document analysis revealed that the project was organized using a block system, with each theme implemented intensively over a defined period rather than being distributed in short daily sessions. This approach was adopted after reflective evaluation of earlier implementation models. As explained by the project coordinator:

"At first, the project was conducted one hour every day, but it felt less effective. When we applied the block system, the project became more effective because students were fully involved and the learning ecosystem was formed." (T3, interview)

The block system allowed students to engage deeply in project activities, collaborate more consistently, and experience a cohesive learning process.

Observational data show that project activities were conducted both inside and outside the classroom and facilitated by a team consisting of homeroom teachers and subject teachers. These facilitators guided students through collaborative, project-based learning tasks such as creating anti-bullying campaign infographics and dramas, producing local cultural artifacts, and developing environmentally oriented products, including composters and school gardens. These activities emphasized cooperation, creativity, independence, and moral values aligned with the intended profile dimensions.

Differentiated learning was particularly evident in the project outputs and learning processes. According to interview data, students were given the freedom to choose the type of product they wished to create, such as liquid or solid composters, without rigid procedural constraints. As described by the project coordinator:

"There was no compulsion to follow one guideline. Students were free to choose products, and facilitators also had flexibility in delivering the learning process." (T3, interview)

This differentiation enabled students to engage according to their interests and abilities while maintaining alignment with the project's core objectives.

Student interview data further highlighted high levels of engagement and positive learning experiences. Students reported that the project-based activities were enjoyable, fostered collaboration, and strengthened peer relationships. One student stated:

"It is exciting and fun. It can strengthen relationships between friends because it is project-based, so you can do it together." (S10, interview)

Other students expressed similar sentiments, noting that the projects allowed them to work in groups, interact with different facilitators and resource persons, and use digital devices in meaningful ways. These experiences contributed to students' enthusiasm and sustained participation.

In addition, document analysis revealed that students' progress in the Pancasila Student Profile Project was formally recorded through an annual Project Profile Progress Report. This report assessed students' development across selected profile dimensions, such as creativity and critical reasoning, using descriptive performance scales. According to interview data, this assessment approach differed significantly from previous curricula by emphasizing character development alongside cognitive outcomes. As emphasized by the project coordinator, the ultimate goal of the project was not merely academic achievement but the formation of students with strong character, collaboration skills, and life competencies.

Extracurricular Pedagogical Practices through the English Club

Extracurricular English learning was facilitated through a weekly English Club designed to provide students with additional opportunities to practice English in a relaxed and interactive learning environment. Document analysis and observation data indicate that the English Club functioned as a complementary space to formal classroom instruction, emphasizing functional language use and communicative competence rather than rigid curricular targets.

Observation results show that each English Club session followed a structured yet flexible instructional sequence consisting of initial, main, and closing activities. At the beginning of the session, the teacher greeted students, recorded attendance, and clearly communicated the learning objective, which focused on the use of adverbs of time in written expression. The teacher also assessed students' prior knowledge through guided questioning to ensure conceptual understanding before proceeding to more complex tasks.

During the main activities, the teacher introduced key linguistic features by providing definitions and concrete examples of adverbs of time, such as *yesterday*, *today*, *tomorrow*, *later*, and *soon*. Students were actively involved in generating additional examples, asking questions, and analyzing a short narrative text containing multiple time adverbs. The teacher guided students to identify and highlight these adverbs and facilitated discussion on how they contributed to sequencing events in a text. Students then worked collaboratively to compose short stories or personal recounts using adverbs of time, after which each student produced an individual written paragraph. Peer review was incorporated by allowing students to exchange their work and provide feedback, particularly on the appropriate use of time-related adverbs.

Closing activities reinforced learning outcomes through reflective discussion and formative assessment. Students discussed selected texts collectively, and a brief quiz was administered to assess their understanding and ability to use adverbs of time accurately in sentences. As a follow-up task, students were assigned to write a diary entry incorporating multiple adverbs of time, allowing them to apply the target language feature independently. Throughout the session, observation data indicate high levels of student participation, confidence, and engagement. These extracurricular pedagogical practices provided meaningful additional exposure to English, strengthened students' writing skills, and supported learner-centered instruction beyond the formal classroom context.

DISCUSSIONS

Curriculum Flexibility and Learner-Centered Pedagogy

The adoption of the *Mandiri Berubah* option highlights the role of school-level autonomy in operationalizing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. This option enables schools to transition toward curriculum reform based on institutional readiness rather than compliance alone. The findings demonstrate that curriculum decisions were shaped by school capacity, student characteristics, and environmental conditions, confirming that Merdeka Belajar functions as a context-responsive curriculum rather than a uniform mandate. This supports recent studies emphasizing that curriculum decentralization enhances instructional relevance, particularly in under-resourced or peripheral regions (Jasrial et al., 2023; Pratikno et al., 2022).

Within this flexible framework, intra-curricular English instruction was characterized by learner-centered pedagogical practices emphasizing active engagement, collaboration, and reflection. Lessons were structured around clear learning objectives, apperception activities, and scaffolded tasks, enabling students to gradually develop language skills. Consistent with prior research, learner-centered approaches were found to promote communicative competence and meaningful learning (Darmayanti, 2023; Marwan, 2017). However, the findings also reveal that learner-centered pedagogy in under-resourced contexts relies on structured scaffolding and guided interaction rather than full learner autonomy. Teachers functioned as facilitators while remaining actively involved in directing learning, resulting in a hybrid pedagogical model shaped by students' limited proficiency and learning confidence.

Genre-Based, Differentiated, and Technology-Supported Pedagogy in Under-Resourced Contexts

The consistent use of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) reflects alignment with national English curriculum guidelines and supports students' literacy development through structured learning cycles. Modeling, joint construction, and independent production were systematically applied, allowing students to engage with English texts despite limited exposure and vocabulary. This reinforces earlier findings on the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy in Indonesian EFL classrooms (Shihab, 2020).

Although differentiated learning is a core principle of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, its implementation was found to be selective and pragmatic. Differentiation primarily occurred through task complexity, topic selection, and learning products rather than individualized instruction. This confirms previous studies indicating that differentiated learning is conceptually promoted but operationally challenging, particularly in large classes with limited resources (Atikah et al., 2023). Importantly, this study demonstrates that partial differentiation can remain pedagogically meaningful by reducing learner anxiety and increasing participation.

Technology integration further reflected adaptive pedagogical practices shaped by contextual constraints. Teachers selectively utilized available tools, such as Canva, Google Forms, and basic audiovisual equipment, to support visualization, creativity, and formative assessment. Rather than serving as the core instructional medium, technology functioned as a pedagogical supplement, aligning with recent studies on adaptive digital pedagogy in low-resource contexts (Fahrudin et al., 2024; Deswalantri et al., 2024). However, persistent limitations in infrastructure and internet access continue to constrain broader digital innovation, highlighting structural inequities in curriculum reform implementation (Jasrial et al., 2023).

Extended Pedagogical Spaces for Language and Character Development

In the participating public junior secondary school in Kutai Timur, which operates in an under-resourced setting with limited digital infrastructure and modest educational facilities, English learning was extended beyond formal classroom instruction through structured co-curricular and extracurricular programs. Within this context, the Pancasila Student Profile Project functioned as a central co-curricular mechanism for integrating language learning with character education. Given the school's peripheral location and students' limited exposure to English outside the classroom, the project provided meaningful experiential learning opportunities that connected language use with real-life and community-based issues. Implemented through a block system, the project enabled sustained engagement with socially relevant themes such as anti-bullying, local wisdom, and environmental sustainability, issues closely related to students' immediate social environment. These findings support existing research highlighting project-based learning as an effective approach for fostering collaboration, creativity, and character development under the Merdeka Belajar framework (Sari et al., 2023; Hadiansah, 2022)

Similarly, extracurricular English learning through the English Club provided a low-anxiety environment that emphasized functional language use, peer interaction, and confidence building. Activities such as storytelling, peer review, and reflective discussion allowed students to experiment with language beyond formal assessment pressures. Consistent with previous studies, these extracurricular practices enhanced affective

engagement and communicative confidence, particularly for EFL learners with limited exposure (Jon et al., 2021). Together, these extended pedagogical spaces illustrate how holistic curriculum enactment supports both linguistic development and character formation in under-resourced school contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching under the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in an under-resourced school context. The findings indicate that curriculum implementation was characterized by flexible and adaptive pedagogical practices rather than rigid procedural compliance. English instruction was predominantly learner-centered and supported by genre-based pedagogy, collaborative learning, and pragmatic differentiation. Teachers adjusted instructional strategies to accommodate students' varied proficiency levels and contextual constraints, while technology was integrated selectively as a pedagogical support rather than as the primary mode of instruction.

The study also found that pedagogical practices extended beyond the classroom through co-curricular and extracurricular programs. The Pancasila Student Profile Project and the English Club functioned as complementary learning spaces that supported communicative competence, character development, and learner confidence. These extended pedagogical spaces enabled a more holistic enactment of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum by integrating academic learning with social and affective development.

This study contributes empirical insight into how the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum is enacted at the classroom level in under-resourced contexts, highlighting the central role of teacher agency in mediating curriculum reform. It is recommended that policymakers and school leaders provide sustained, context-sensitive professional development to support realistic differentiated instruction and optimize co-curricular and extracurricular programs. Future research may explore longitudinal and comparative perspectives to further understand the diverse implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum across educational contexts.

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HUMANISTIC LEARNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

This conceptual paper proposes principles for humanistic learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) and focuses on psychological safety, emotional involvement, worthwhile communication, and learners' actualization in language learning through an effective, holistic approach. There have been studies on humanistic learning, but they tend to treat it separately. The objective of this conceptual paper is to draw together the concepts of humanistic in ELT through the incorporation of humanistic theory and the pedagogical tradition of language. This paper places humanistic learning not only as a fragmentary instructional approach, but also as a systemic pedagogical philosophy, referring to the theory of humanistic learning proposed by Carl Rogers, the need hierarchy of Abraham Maslow, and the principles in the humanistic language teaching tradition. This paper suggests an integrated concept through conceptual analysis and theoretical synthesis to show how humanistic learning affects the learners, teachers, pedagogical practice, and assessment in ELT.

Keywords: Humanistic learning, English language teaching, language teaching traditions

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the development of English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone significant changes, shifting from a teacher-centered approach and linguistic mastery to a student-centered approach. These can happen because learning a language does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also affective, emotional, social, and psychological aspects of students. In this context, humanistic learning stands as a teaching method that focuses on language learning as a personal and meaningful process. It also aims at the development of humanity as a whole (Changli, 2025; Manohar & Reddy, 2018; Slamet & Kweldju, 2025).

The learner-centered strategy is influenced by the humanistic school of psychology. Referring to the philosophies of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, it sees the learner as an individual who can develop psychologically and reach self-actualization. This perspective in ELT also views learners as more than passive recipients of linguistic input and takes into account their emotional, social, and experiential backgrounds, as well as their personal values and individual needs. First language (L1) learning occurs most successfully within instructional environments that nurture psychological safety, provide emotional validation, and promote positive teacher-student relationships (Shirkhani & Danesh, 2013).

Evidence from empirical research indicates that the implementation of humanistic-oriented pedagogy contributes positively to the development of learners' language proficiency, particularly in oral communication, by fostering classroom environments characterized by support, openness, and meaningful interaction (Harefa & Zebua, 2025). A humane learning

environment helps students overcome the fear of making mistakes and encourages more meaningful use of language.

Besides its impact on learners, the humanistic approach immensely reorients teachers' pedagogical orientations and instructional behaviors. If teachers of language who themselves have adopted a humanistic philosophy view language learning as a relationship between mentor and pupil in the process of growth, not only of linguistic but also of emotional development, they are better able to guide students. Empirical and systematic investigations also show that humanistic pedagogy fosters formative, reflective, and empathetic assessment practices, in which feedback is conceptualized as a driver of ongoing learning rather than simply an evaluative measure of attainment. (Harefa & Zebua, 2025; Khatib et al., 2013; Rido et al., 2024)

Despite extensive acknowledgment of the advantages associated with humanistic learning in ELT, the existing body of literature reveals notable conceptual and empirical gaps. A considerable proportion of prior studies adopt a fragmented perspective, concentrating primarily on isolated classroom practices, particular language skills, or context-specific applications. Consequently, humanistic learning is frequently reduced to a collection of instructional techniques, rather than being articulated as a coherent and comprehensive pedagogical framework (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020; Rido et al., 2024; Shirkhani, 2013).

This paper aims to understand humanistic learning in ELT as a conceptualized integrated pedagogy by synthesizing primary research components and outcomes. The central objective of this paper is to provide an insight into the humanistic learning perspective in ELT and to defend its place in the integrated pedagogy framework with particular emphasis on language learning as a process of whole-person development.

Carl Rogers' Humanistic Learning Theory in English Language Teaching

The most relevant aspect of humanistic learning is the learner-centered theory by Carl Rogers (1969). Learning is an individual and personal process, which is best supported in a warm, nurturing, and emotionally secure environment. According to Rogers, learning becomes deep and meaningful when a student is involved and is allowed to speak out and to do so in a safe environment.

Figure 1 below depicts the interrelation of the dominant constructs of Rogers' humanistic theory within the ELT context. The principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity of the teacher facilitate a psychologically safe classroom, thereby fostering active engagement, linguistic risk-taking, and meaningful communication in English.

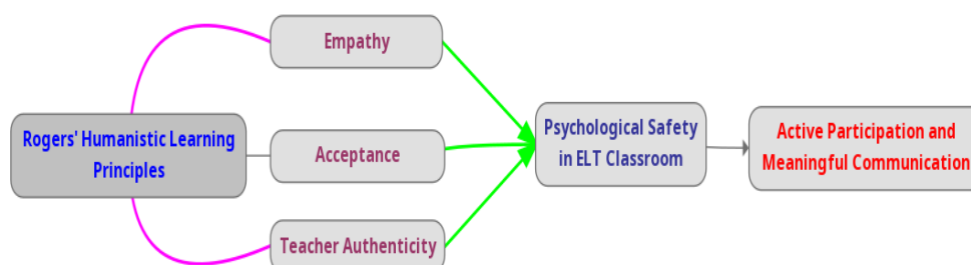


Figure 1. Rogers' Humanistic Learning Theory (Rogers, 1969)

The application of Carl Rogers' theory in ELT is crucial because acquiring a new language is an emotionally challenging process. Students endure a lot of anxiety about making mistakes, speaking in front of others, or being evaluated and judged negatively. Teaching environments that focus on formal evaluations and corrective feedback exacerbate the emotional strain and result in reducing the amount of effort expended by the learners. The humanistic principles of Rogers, in this particular scenario, provide a different pedagogy of empathy, unconditional acceptance, and genuineness as central tenets of the teacher–learner relationship (Changli, 2025; Harefa & Zebua, 2025; Khatib et al., 2013; Soviyah, 2015).

The three features of Rogers' pedagogy are: empathy, unconditional positive appraisal, and teacher genuineness. In the English Language Teaching field, these principles can be put into practice by fostering constructive teacher-student rapport, regularly employing endorsement and supportive speech, and framing constructive recognition-based instructional strategies, which focus on learners' efforts and developmental progress, as opposed to results. When learners are psychologically safe, they seem willing to take linguistic challenges and are more involved in real communication tasks in English (Shirkhani & Danesh, 2013; Harefa & Zebua, 2025).

One significant consequence of Rogers' theories in ELT is the change that is required of teachers' roles. Humanistic approaches place teachers less in the role of knowledge transmitters (passivized) and more in the role of mediators who have created an environment for learners to develop. This reconstructs the pedagogical position that teachers have to take to create environments for students to develop cognitive and affective skills. This means she has to be in tune with students, emotionally, and navigate different pathways for different students to facilitate different forms of knowledge. This means the emphasis is on the learner's involvement in the process of language learning. It positions the learners to be more active, engaged, and less passive in taking in what is taught (Amini et al., 2025; Khatib et al., 2013).

Moreover, Rogers explains why teaching in a humanistic way and positive attitudes, motivation, and self-confidence in language learning align. Students who believe that they are treated in a respectful and caring way develop positive attitudes towards learning English and develop better relations with the language. These results relate to the contemporary approach of modern English Language Teaching focusing on genuine communication, active involvement, and the construction of meaning as integral constituents of beholders (Harefa & Zebua, 2025; Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020).

In this case, Rogers' humanistic learning theory is the most appropriate for infusing humanistic values in ELT. However, the theory should not be considered in isolation, and it is just one piece of the puzzle in a broader theory of pedagogy. Therefore, the next section broadens the scope of the discussion to include the application of Maslow's theory of human needs to analyze the motivational and emotional facets of the language learning process (Khatib et al., 2013).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in English Language Teaching

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is the cornerstone of the humanistic approach to learning. Maslow (1954) posited a hierarchical model of human motivation, where needs at a lower level are fulfilled before progressing to the next. The fulfillment of these needs in sequence is held to be a prerequisite for optimal human development; this includes the ability to function effectively in learning situations (Khatib et al., 2013)

Maslow's theory is useful in the field of ELT because it provides helpful information about which affects and emotional states affect second language learning. Learning a language often requires a willingness to practice in front of others, attempt new modes of expression, and be okay with the possibility of making mistakes. Because learners whose basic needs are not being met—especially those that address things like safety and belonging—are at increased risk of finding it hard to engage and participate. High levels of stress, heavy negative feedback, or competitive practices that are perceived as unfair in classroom environments will necessarily be obstructions to the fulfilment of these needs (Amini et al., 2025; Harefa & Zebua, 2025; Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020).

Figure 2 below illustrates an adaptation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954) as applied to English language learning, highlighting the close relationship between the satisfaction of learners' emotional needs and their level of engagement in the language learning process.

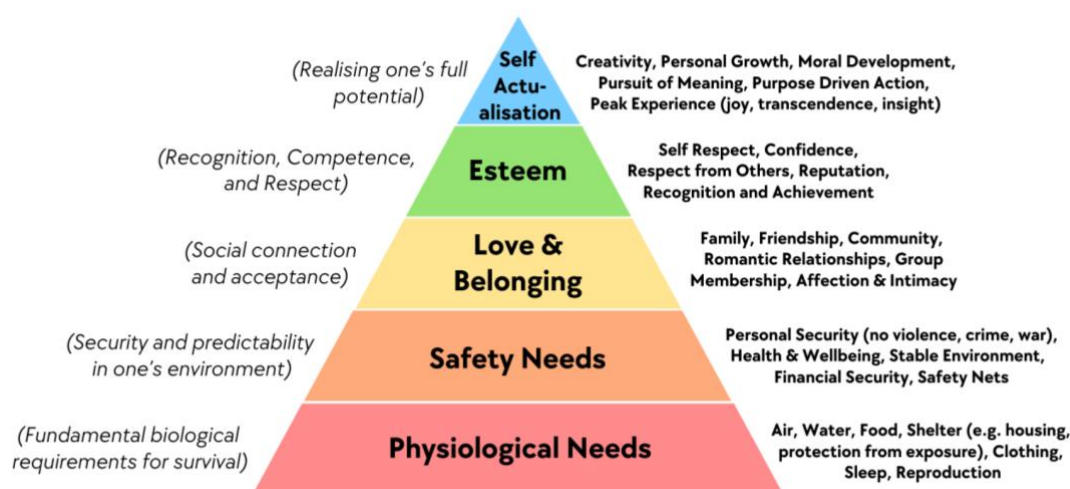


Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954)

ELT at the bottom-most level of physiological comfort and psychological safety needs a learning environment conducive to both physical well-being and emotional security. The secure space where students can feel comfortable performing in English is provided by the classroom that promotes encouragement, non-judgmental interaction, and acceptance of errors as part of learning. When these necessities of life are met, students tend to be more likely to engage and take risks with the target language without the interference of an extreme amount of anxiety (Amini et al., 2025).

The role of belongingness also operates in language learning. Language learning is based on social interaction, so working together in pairs, groups, and teams can make students feel part of a community of learners. Such a belongingness fosters students' social and emotional engagement, which develops motivation to learn English. In a humanistic framework, language classes are seen as a learning community, not just an instructional space (Changli, 2025; Slamet & Kweldju, 2025).

At the esteem level of Maslow's hierarchy, constructive feedback, acknowledgment of learners' efforts, and sustained teacher support play a pivotal role. The ELT considers various student factors outside the prism of language acquisition, including the students' desire to communicate, take on challenges, and engage in self-enhancing practices which develop self-belief and a constructive disposition towards learning a new language, critical to the development of communicative competence (Harefa & Zebua, 2025).

Self-actualization, the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy, within the context of ELT, represents learners' ability to experience the empowerment that using the English language brings. Language, then, moves beyond being a mere academic tool to being a resource through which learners express and communicate their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs and construct their identities. With a humanistic type of ELT, the self-actualization of learners is achieved through the provision of spaces and opportunities for creative expression, reflective practices, and meaningful learning that is anchored in the lived experiences of the learners (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020).

Therefore, Maslow's theory supports the claim that for effective language learning to take place, the emotional and social aspects of the students must be addressed. This theory complements Rogers' views by bringing in the motivational aspect and the relevance of the emotional and social aspects of learning. In the next section, the discussion will be expanded to discuss *the humanistic language teaching* tradition to show how these humanistic principles are translated into ELT pedagogical practice more concretely (Khatib et al., 2013).

Khatib's Humanistic Language Teaching Traditions in English Language Teaching

Beyond the humanistic psychological frameworks proposed by Rogers and Maslow, the evolution of humanistic learning in ELT has also been informed by a range of language teaching traditions that foreground the affective and human dimensions of learning. These humanistic-oriented pedagogies emerged largely in response to structuralist and behaviorist models, which tend to prioritize the technical manipulation of linguistic forms while marginalizing learners' emotional experiences and personal engagement in the learning process (Khatib et al., 2013). Table one below illustrates features and characteristics of the humanistic teaching tradition.

Table 1. Features and Characteristics of Humanistic Language Teaching Traditions in English Language Teaching (Khatib et al., 2013)

Features	CHARACTERISTICS
Community Language Learning	▪ Teacher as counselor ▪ Student as client ▪ Trust ▪ Security
Suggestopedia	▪ Relaxed and stress-free ▪ Security ▪ Comfort
Humanistic Principles in ELT	▪ Students' engagement ▪ Learning motivation ▪ Courage

Community Language Learning constructs the approach as a counselor/client relationship, emphasizing the importance of trust and psychological safety in the learning process. This model draws on elements of Carl Rogers, where empathy and positive regard are essential in creating an effective learning environment. In contrast, Suggestopedia places primary importance on cultivating a calm, comfortable, and low-anxiety learning environment, a focus that indirectly corresponds to the fulfillment of safety and comfort needs articulated in

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020; Khatib et al., 2013; Rido et al., 2024).

In the context of contemporary ELT, the principles of *humanistic language teaching* remain relevant even though the form of implementation has undergone adaptation. Activities such as reflective discussions, group work, experiential projects, and creative expression through English reflect humanistic values that place students as learning subjects. (Khatib et al., 2013; Soviyah, 2015)

Empirical findings are consistent with the argument that integration of humanistic goals in ELT tends to help students become more involved in learning processes, and that when intrinsic motivation grows stronger, they tend to make a greater effort to use English in real-life communicative situations. Meaning-focused and personally relevant instruction allows learners to form more positive, emotionally rich relationships with the target language in order to help offset some of the anxiety frequently associated with linguistic learning (Shirkhani & Danesh, 2013).

Nevertheless, existing scholarship also reveals that humanistic language teaching is frequently implemented in a fragmented and disconnected manner. Many studies fail to articulate a cohesive conceptual framework that systematically links humanistic psychological theories with classroom practices in ELT. As a result, humanistic pedagogy is often described as simply a collection of disconnected methodologies or discrete language learning exercises that do not convey it as a unified educational vision underpinning the whole process. Seeing the inadequacies, there is an urgent requirement for a unified model that genuinely reflects and combines the theoretical underpinnings and pedagogical approaches of ELT.

Proposed Conceptual Framework of Humanistic Learning in English Language Teaching

Based on the discussion of Carl Rogers' humanistic learning theory, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and the principles of humanistic language teaching tradition, this section proposes an integrative conceptual framework to understand the position and role of humanistic learning in ELT. This proposed framework was developed to address the limitations of previous studies that tended to discuss humanistic learning separately, both as a psychological theory and as a specific pedagogical technique.

The theoretical outline suggested that human sentimental learning was a type of global pedagogic theory for all the vital elements in ELT. This value is based on the belief that language learning is inherently a uniquely human activity; an activity which involves not only cognition but also affective, social, and personal aspects. Consequently, the effectiveness of English language learning cannot be evaluated solely through measures of linguistic attainment, but must also be understood in relation to the quality and depth of learners' educational experiences. (Khatib et al., 2013)

Humanistic learning in this context-based learning is defined as an underpinning philosophy that integrates the three key theories: Carl Rogers' humanistic learning theory, Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, and the tradition of language teaching from a humanistic perspective. The intellectual work of Rogers is illuminating because he insists on the importance of relationships, empathetic conversations, and psychological safety in order to make meaningful learning. Maslow's theory supports this explanation and is partly similar to the self-regulation model, which stresses that learners cannot learn effectively unless their motivational and emotional needs are met incrementally from one stage to another in order to

sustain learning and personal growth. On a pedagogical level, the humanistic tradition in language teaching instantiates these humanistic values by incorporating them into ELT practices that focus on meaning-making, learner experience, and the subjective aspects of learning a language (Changli, 2025; Harefa & Zebua, 2025; Khatib et al., 2013).

Figure 3 below presents an integrative conceptual framework of humanistic learning in ELT, illustrating how humanistic theories inform learners, teacher roles, pedagogical practices, and assessment to support meaningful and holistic language learning.

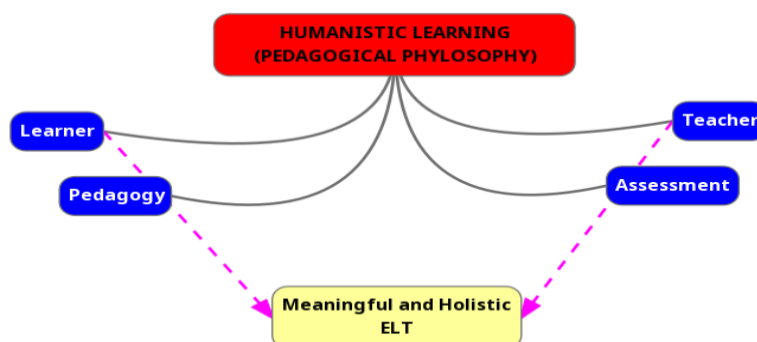


Figure 3. Proposed Conceptual Framework of Humanistic Learning in English Language Teaching

The merging of all three theoretical foundations subsequently restructures the four essential elements of ELT, including students, instructors, pedagogy, and evaluation. Within the learner component, the framework particularly emphasizes the acknowledgment of students' emotional states, individual stories, and unrecognized possible future abilities. Learners are regarded as meaning-makers and, as such, are recognized as active participants who create understanding through a process of individual reflection and social interaction. Likewise, within the teacher component, educators are reconceptualized as compassionate guides who are tasked with the creation of learning scenarios that are psychologically safe and supportive and are optimally focused on the needs and development of the learners (Harefa & Zebua, 2025; Khatib et al., 2013; Soviyah, 2015).

From a pedagogy perspective, the framework suggests teaching approaches that prioritize authentic communication, meaningful participation, and active learning through collaborative work and reflection. Similarly, assessment is reconceptualized as not merely a tool to quantify learners' achievements, but rather an empathetic and constructive process aimed at the continuous development of learners. Constructive and dialogic feedback is employed to support learners' reflection on their progress and to strengthen their confidence as developing users of the language.(Harefa & Zebua, 2025)

Taken together, the proposed thematic framework claims that successful and enduring learning of English only occurs if all parts of ELT are provided according to humanistic values. By placing humanistic learning as the foundation for unity, this framework presents a picture of how humanistic principles, as they apply to ELT, can be better understood in an integrated and systematic manner, contributing at the same time to dynamic theories of teacher welfare which foreground pedagogical approaches that are inherently sympathetic and politics that are more inclusive rather than hierarchical and controlling.

CONCLUSION

The conceptual synthesis in this article illustrates that the quality of language learners' educational experience is more important than the learners' language outcome. According to Carl Rogers, meaningful learning occurs when there are safe relationships and empathetic interactions. Also, in the context of language teaching, learners' emotional and social fulfillment explains their active participation and high achievement. These social and emotional needs are articulated in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Humanistic language teaching draws on these psychological principles, putting the humanistic values of teaching into practice through genuine communication, active participation of students in the learning process, and the fostering of autonomy.

The article's main scholarly contribution is developing an integrative conceptual model of humanistic learning in ELT, which combines three compatible but separate models into one model. The model shows that humanistic learning simultaneously and interdependently impacts all four core components of ELT—learners, teachers, teaching methods, and assessment. The model places humanistic learning as the core philosophy and, in doing so, expands the scope of understanding of language teaching and learning to include the socioemotional, personal, and holistic development of learners, in addition to linguistic proficiency.

Finally, the paper advances the field of ELT by offering an interconnected and comprehensive conceptual framework of humanistic learning. From a pedagogical standpoint, the proposed framework serves as a guideline for English language teachers as they design and arrange classroom space in humane, inclusive, and meaningful ways. Moreover, this study lays the groundwork for further empirical research on the implementation and effects of humanistic language learning within ELT.

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