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A SEMANTIC STUDY OF GEN Z SLANG: USER PERCEPTIONS OF "SLAY," "CRINGE," AND "COOKED"

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has accelerated the transformation of youth slang, making it a significant subject for semantic inquiry. This study investigated the denotative and connotative meanings of three Generation Z slang words, "slay," "cringe," and "cooked" as perceived by active social media users. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data gathered through a structured ten-item questionnaire administered to three respondents aged 17 to 25 years who actively used TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). The findings showed that all three words had undergone substantial transformation from their original literal meanings: "slay" shifted from denoting the act of killing to expressing exceptional performance or admirable appearance; "cringe" evolved from describing a physical recoiling motion to marking something socially embarrassing or awkward; and "cooked," while predominantly interpreted as describing a hopeless situation, revealed connotative ambiguity as two respondents associated it with impressiveness. Slang meaning was found to be shaped collectively by online communities rather than individual users, usage was restricted to informal communicative settings, and the degree of semantic shift was perceived as highly significant, with continued evolution anticipated. These findings advance the understanding of how lexical meaning is constructed and negotiated within digitally mediated youth communities.

Keywords: Connotative meaning, denotative meaning, Gen Z slang, semantic shift; user perception

INTRODUCTION

Language functions as a dynamic system, continually influenced by social, cultural, and technological developments. In the current digital era, the rapid expansion of social media platforms, especially TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), has significantly accelerated the emergence and spread of slang among younger generations, particularly Generation Z. Lexical items that previously possessed clear literal meanings have experienced substantial connotative transformations, often within notably brief periods.

Notable examples of this phenomenon include the lexical items "slay," "cringe," and "cooked." Etymologically, "slay" originates from the Old English verb *slēan*, meaning to strike or kill. In contemporary Gen Z vernacular, the term now signifies exceptional performance or outstanding appearance. Similarly, "cringe" has shifted from denoting a physical recoiling motion in response to fear or pain to representing social embarrassment or awkwardness. "Cooked," originally associated with culinary contexts, predominantly refers to a person or situation considered irreversibly hopeless or failed; however, a subset of users also applies it to describe something impressively executed. Collectively, these terms exemplify the fluidity of lexical meaning in digital communication and present a valuable focus for semantic analysis.

The theoretical orientation of this study draws upon Geoffrey Leech's (1974; 1981) foundational framework of meaning, which distinguishes between conceptual (denotative) meaning, dictionary-defined content of a word and connotative meaning, which encompasses the emotional, cultural, and associative dimensions that extend beyond the literal. Leech (1974, p. 9) characterizes conceptual meaning as "widely assumed to be the central factor in linguistic communication," while connotative meaning is described as "the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content" (Leech, 1974, p. 12). This dual framework provides the analytical lens through which respondents' perceptions are systematically examined.

Complementing Leech's semantic theory, Ullmann's (1962) taxonomy of semantic change offers a structural basis for categorizing the transformations observed in these three terms. Ullmann identifies several mechanisms of semantic shift, including narrowing, broadening, amelioration, pejoration, and metaphorical extension. Processes that are demonstrably at work in the evolution of Gen Z slang. Additionally, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle illuminates the pragmatic dimension of meaning-making, foregrounding the role of context and shared knowledge in interpreting slang terms. Labov's (1972) sociolinguistic model further contextualizes meaning variation as a socially embedded, community-driven process, providing theoretical grounding for the study's focus on user perception and speech community dynamics.

Prior scholarship on related themes has yielded several relevant contributions; however, notable lacunae persist. Pinasti et al. (2025) investigated slang on TikTok, including "slay" and "cringe," yet their methodology was limited to observational collection, without eliciting users' meanings or interpretations. Sitohang and Damanik (2025) engaged Gen Z respondents directly but distributed their analysis across an extensive range of slang terms, precluding depth of inquiry into any single item. Paula et al. (2024) examined generational variation in Gen Z and Gen Alpha slang; however, the three words examined appeared only as peripheral examples within a broader comparative framework, with no semantic analysis conducted at the level of individual user interaction. These gaps collectively underscore the need for a study that is simultaneously focused in scope, user-centred in methodology, and analytically grounded in both denotative and connotative dimensions of meaning.

This study addresses these gaps by focusing on three specific slang words, collecting data directly from Gen Z respondents via a structured questionnaire, and analyzing both the literal and associative meanings of each term as perceived and reported by active users. This approach advances understanding of how digital communities construct, negotiate, and perpetuate lexical meaning, a domain of growing importance within sociolinguistics and semantic research. The study is guided by five research questions: (1) What are the denotative and connotative meanings of "slay," "cringe," and "cooked" as perceived by Gen Z users? (2) How do Gen Z users interpret these slang terms in their everyday communicative experiences? (3) Does the meaning of these words vary depending on contextual factors such as formality or interlocutor? (4) Who determines the meaning of these slang words: individuals or online communities? (5) How significant is the semantic shift in these three words, and will their meanings continue to evolve?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, as conceptualized by Creswell (2009), which is well-suited to the goal of exploring and articulating participants' meanings, perceptions, and lived communicative experiences without reducing the data to numerical abstraction. The design prioritizes richness and nuance of description, enabling a grounded account of how Gen Z users understand and deploy the slang terms under investigation.

Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire comprising ten closed-ended questions, administered to three Gen Z respondents (designated R-01, R-02, and R-03), each of whom met the criteria of active social media engagement on at least one of the platforms identified as central to Gen Z slang dissemination: TikTok, Instagram, and X (Twitter). Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 25 years, corresponding to the broadly recognized age parameters of Generation Z. R-01 (aged 21–25) identified X (Twitter) as the primary platform for slang exposure; R-02 (aged 17–20) reported Instagram as the dominant platform; and R-03 (aged 21–25) similarly identified X (Twitter). Secondary data were drawn from foundational theoretical texts and peer-reviewed journal articles directly relevant to the study's analytical framework.

The questionnaire instrument was designed to elicit responses aligned with each of the five research questions. Questions 1 and 2 captured respondent profile data (age and primary social media platform). Questions 3 and 4 (RQ1) probed awareness of original denotative meanings and current connotative interpretations. Question 5 (RQ2) investigated user perception of contextual usage. Question 6 (RQ3) examined contextual variation in slang use. Questions 7 and 8 (RQ4) explored the locus of meaning construction. Questions 9 and 10 (RQ5) assessed the perceived degree of semantic shift and anticipated future trajectories. Data collection was conducted on March 29, 2026, with all responses recorded verbatim and subsequently annotated and colour-coded according to the relevant research question category.

Analysis followed a systematic process of coding, thematic categorization, and cross-respondent comparison. Each response was interpreted using the relevant theoretical framework: Leech's semantic typology for RQ1 and RQ2; Grice's Cooperative Principle for RQ3; Labov's sociolinguistic model for RQ4; and Ullmann's taxonomy of semantic change for RQ5. Patterns of convergence and divergence among respondents were identified and

discussed to produce findings representative of broader Gen Z semantic practices, while recognizing the interpretive variation inherent in user-driven meaning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents and interprets findings from the questionnaire responses of three Gen Z respondents (R-01, R-02, R-03), organized according to the five research questions. Where relevant, the analysis references the theoretical frameworks outlined above to contextualize and explain the identified patterns.

Denotative and Connotative Meanings of "Slay," "Cringe," and "Cooked" (RQ1)

The first research question examined whether Gen Z respondents retained awareness of the original, dictionary-defined (denotative) meanings of the three target words and how they characterized the current connotative meanings circulating within their communities. Table 1 summarizes the respondents' answers to Questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaires.

Table 1. Respondent Awareness of Denotative and Connotative Meanings

Respondent	Awareness of 'slay' denotative meaning (to kill)	Connotative meaning of 'cringe' in gen z usage	Platform
R-01 (21–25)	Yes (aware of original meaning)	Something embarrassing or awkward	X (Twitter)
R-02 (17–20)	Yes (aware of original meaning)	Something funny or entertaining	Instagram
R-03 (21–25)	Yes (aware of original meaning)	Something embarrassing or awkward	X (Twitter)

All three respondents demonstrated awareness of the original denotative meaning of "slay" (to kill), indicating that the older, literal sense of the word has not been entirely displaced from conscious knowledge. This finding aligns with Leech's (1981) observation that conceptual meaning constitutes a stable semantic core that persists even as connotative meanings transform. The co-existence of the traditional denotative meaning and the emergent connotative sense in Gen Z users' lexical knowledge attests to a layered semantic competence, one in which users consciously navigate between the historical and contemporary registers of a word. This awareness is particularly notable given the rapid pace at which "slay" has been semantically reconstituted within digital discourse, where it now predominantly functions as an expression of admiration for exceptional performance or outstanding appearance. From Ullmann's (1962) perspective, this transformation exemplifies amelioration, a shift toward a more favorable evaluative dimension as a once-violent term acquires strongly positive connotations within a socially affirming context.

The connotative meanings attributed to "cringe" reveal a dominant pattern of negativity across the respondent pool, with R-01 and R-03 converging on the interpretation of the word as denoting something embarrassing or socially awkward. This consensus reflects the lexical trajectory of "cringe" on social media platforms, where it functions as a form of social judgment, a marker of behavior or content perceived as violating community norms of coolness or appropriateness. The spread of this connotation is consistent with Labov's (1972) model of sociolinguistic variation, wherein shared linguistic norms emerge within defined speech communities through repeated and reinforced use.

A notable divergence was observed in R-02's interpretation of "cringe" as something funny or entertaining, a reading that suggests a partial ameliorative trajectory for this term within certain platform-specific communities. Instagram, identified as R-02's primary platform, tends to host ironic and self-deprecating content in which "cringe" is embraced rather than condemned. This divergence foregrounds the platform-mediated nature of connotative meaning and supports Grice's (1975) assertion that the communicative value of an utterance is shaped by shared contextual assumptions between interlocutors.

User Perception and Interpretation of Slang (RQ2)

The second research question examined how respondents perceive and use these slang terms in their everyday communicative practices, with particular focus on the word "cooked." Table 2 presents the reported usage contexts for this term.

Table 2. Respondent Perceptions of "Cooked" in Contextual Usage (Q5)

Respondent	Reported usage context for "cooked"
R-01	When someone is in a hopeless or failed situation
R-02	When someone does something impressive
R-03	When someone does something impressive

The responses regarding "cooked" reveal a meaningful divergence in user perception that warrants close analytical attention. R-01's interpretation associating the term with a hopeless or irreversibly failed situation, represents the dominant connotative usage documented in broader Gen Z discourse and is consistent with the pejoration of the term's original culinary denotation. From Ullmann's (1962) perspective, this constitutes a narrowing combined with a pejorative shift, whereby the word's semantic range contracts and acquires an evaluatively negative dimension.

By contrast, R-02 and R-03 both reported interpreting "cooked" as expressing impressiveness, a positive connotation that stands in direct opposition to the predominant usage. The convergence of two respondents on this alternative reading is analytically significant: it suggests that the term occupies a space of genuine semantic instability, simultaneously sustaining a pejorative and an ameliorative trajectory within overlapping but distinct subcommunities. This ambiguity aligns with Leech's (1981) characterization of connotative meaning as open-ended and culturally contingent, susceptible to variation across social and interactional contexts in which a word is deployed. The presence of competing connotations within the same generational cohort further corroborates Labov's (1972) model of intra-community linguistic variation, wherein speech communities are not monolithic but encompass divergent norms and practices shaped by subgroup identity and platform affordances.

Contextual Variation in Slang Use (RQ3)

The third research question examined whether the meanings and uses of these slang terms shift according to contextual variables, including the degree of formality in a given communicative setting and the identity of the interlocutor. All three respondents confirmed context-dependent variation in their slang use, though the nature of that variation differed between respondents. R-01 and R-03 indicated that they employ slang exclusively in informal contexts, such as casual social media exchanges and private messaging, while avoiding it entirely in formal settings such as academic communication or professional interaction. This binary distinction between formal and informal registers is well-established in sociolinguistic theory (Labov, 1972) and reflects an internalized awareness of situational appropriateness.

R-02 demonstrated a more nuanced contextual sensitivity, indicating that meaning varies not only with the formal/informal distinction but also with the identity of the conversational partner. This observation introduces an interpersonal dimension to the analysis: even within informal settings, the semantic value of a slang term may be adjusted based on the relationship, shared knowledge, and communicative expectations between speaker and addressee. This finding aligns with Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, which frames meaning as a co-constructed, context-sensitive phenomenon shaped by mutual recognition of communicative conventions. The pragmatic flexibility of terms such as "slay," "cringe," and "cooked" is therefore influenced not only by register but also by relational dynamics, enhancing the understanding of Gen Z slang as a socially indexical resource.

User-Driven Meaning Construction (RQ4)

The fourth research question investigated the locus of meaning construction for Gen Z slang: specifically, whether meaning is primarily determined by individual users or by broader online communities and social media networks. Table 3 summarizes respondent answers to Questions 7 and 8.

Table 3. Respondent Views on the Source of Slang Meaning (Q7 and Q8)

Respondent	Who shapes slang meaning? (Q7)	Personal deviation from community usage? (Q8)
R-01	Social media users and online communities	No (follows community norms)

R-02	Social media users and online communities	Yes (uses words with personal meaning)
R-03	Social media users and online communities	No (follows community norms)

All three respondents attributed the construction of slang meaning to social media users and online communities, a finding that corroborates the theoretical framework of user-driven meaning as elaborated through Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. Meaning, in this model, is not assigned by institutional authority or lexicographic convention but is negotiated through the collective communicative practices of engaged online participants. The social media ecosystem, with its algorithms, viral content mechanics, and community-specific discursive norms. Serves as the primary arena in which slang meanings are produced, contested, and stabilized.

A noteworthy divergence emerged in response to Question 8, which asked whether respondents had ever used these words with meanings that differed from prevailing community usage. R-01 and R-03 both reported strict adherence to community norms, identifying as participants in a shared semiotic system rather than as innovators of personal meaning. In contrast, R-02 acknowledged using these words with idiosyncratic personal meanings, representing individual semantic agency operating within, yet partially independent of, communal convention. This finding is theoretically significant, as it demonstrates that user-driven meaning construction is not uniformly collective but spans a spectrum from normative conformity to individualized interpretation. Labov's (1972) account of linguistic variation within speech communities accommodates this intra-group diversity, where individual actors may innovate at the margins even as the community maintains normative coherence.

Semantic Shift and Future Trajectories (RQ5)

The fifth research question examined the extent to which respondents perceived the meanings of these three words to have shifted from their original forms, and whether they anticipated continued semantic evolution. Table 4 presents the responses to Questions 9 and 10.

Table 4. Respondent Perceptions of Semantic Shift and Future Outlook (Q9 and Q10)

Respondent	Perceived degree of semantic shift? (Q9)	Expected meaning in 5 years (Q10)
R-01	Changed	Yes (meaning will remain stable)
R-02	Very much changed	Maybe (depends on trends and the internet)
R-03	Very much changed	Maybe (depends on trends and the internet)

The perceived degree of semantic shift was rated as highly significant by two of the three respondents (R-02 and R-03), with R-01 also acknowledging meaningful change, albeit with slightly less intensity. Collectively, these perceptions affirm that Gen Z users are reflexively aware of the gap between the historical denotative meanings of these words and their current connotative functions, an awareness that itself constitutes a form of metalinguistic competence. Ullmann's (1962) framework explains such shifts through mechanisms including amelioration (as in "slay"), pejoration (as in the dominant usage of "cooked"), and metaphorical extension (as in "cringe," which has moved from a physical action to a social-evaluative category).

Regarding future trajectories, R-02 and R-03 expressed uncertainty about the stability of these meanings, identifying internet trends and the broader digital ecosystem as the primary determinants of semantic longevity. This orientation reflects an intuitive grasp of the precarious nature of slang meaning: words that achieve rapid virality may be displaced just as quickly by successor terms as platform cultures shift and new communities emerge. R-01, by contrast, anticipated a degree of semantic stability, a minority view that may reflect differing platform experiences or a greater sense of personal investment in the current meanings of these terms. Ullmann's (1962) broader account of semantic shift as a socially driven and historically contingent process resonates with the majority outlook, supporting the conclusion that slang meanings in digitally mediated environments are intrinsically ephemeral and trend-sensitive.

CONCLUSION

This study undertook a semantic analysis of three Generation Z slang terms "slay," "cringe," and "cooked" through the perceptions and communicative experiences of Gen Z users, employing Leech's (1974; 1981) theory of meaning, Ullmann's (1962) framework of semantic shift, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, and Labov's (1972) sociolinguistic model as the analytical foundation.

The findings confirm that all three lexical items have undergone substantial semantic transformation from their original denotative meanings. "Slay" has been ameliorated from its literal sense of killing to a marker of excellence and admirable performance. "Cringe" has shifted from denoting physical recoil to signifying social embarrassment or awkwardness, though traces of an ironic, entertaining connotation are discernible among a subset of users. "Cooked," the most semantically unstable of the three, sustains competing pejorative and ameliorative trajectories simultaneously within the Gen Z speech community, underscoring the connotative indeterminacy that characterizes dynamically evolving slang.

The study further established that slang meaning is primarily constituted through collective social media practice rather than individual lexical innovation, with the majority of respondents positioning online communities as the principal arbiters of meaning. Usage is consistently confined to informal communicative contexts, with awareness of code-switching between slang-appropriate and formal registers. Respondents broadly perceived the semantic shifts as highly significant and anticipated continued evolution contingent on digital trends, consistent with Ullmann's model of socially driven semantic change.

A key limitation of this study is its reliance on a small sample of three respondents, which, while suitable for qualitative depth, limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should expand the participant pool and diversify platform representation. Corpus-based analysis of actual social media texts could complement questionnaire-derived perception data, enabling triangulation of user-reported meanings with patterns of naturalistic usage. Further investigation of additional Gen Z slang terms, such as "rizz," "mid," and "based," using the same dual denotative-connotative framework, would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of semantic practices within this generational speech community.

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MORPHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS IN CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS: UNPACKING WORD FORMATION STRATEGIES IN BBC.COM

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Abstract

Online journalism serves as a primary vehicle for linguistic evolution, often utilizing creative morphological strategies to engage readers and describe diverse realities. However, limited research explores how these processes function within cultural feature articles to bridge cross-cultural concepts. This study analyzes the word formation processes employed in the BBC.com article titled “The anti-materialist Christmas: Rituals around the world that swap gifts for meaning”. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, this research identifies, classifies, and interprets lexical items based on standard morphological theories. The findings reveal a strategic use of four distinct processes to achieve specific communicative goals. Derivation is predominantly used to construct the article’s ideological stance, while Compounding builds atmospheric imagery. Notably, Borrowing is extensively utilized to maintain cultural authenticity by retaining original terms like *Jólabókaflóð* and *Hygge*, whereas Clipping is employed to shift the narrative register. The study concludes that word formation in online news is not merely structural but acts as a vital stylistic device to convey cultural nuances effectively.

Keywords: Cultural morphology, online journalism, word formation

INTRODUCTION

Language is a dynamic and ever-evolving system that constantly adapts to the changing needs of human communication and social interaction (Mattiello, 2017). At the heart of this evolution lies morphology, the specific branch of linguistics concerned with the internal structure of words and the rules of their formation (Bauer et al., 2015). Through morphological processes, speakers and writers are able to generate new lexicons to express novel concepts, feelings, or technological advancements. This productivity is essential because it allows a finite set of morphemes to create an infinite number of words, ensuring that language remains relevant across generations (Hamawand, 2023). Consequently, the study of word formation is not merely an analysis of grammatical structure, but an exploration of human creativity and cognitive flexibility. By understanding how words are built through derivation, compounding, or borrowing, linguists can decode the underlying mechanisms that drive language expansion. Therefore, analyzing word formation processes provides critical insights into how a language functions as a living tool for describing the world.

In the digital era, online mass media platforms play a pivotal role in accelerating these morphological changes and disseminating new terminology to a global audience (Bednarek, 2023). News portals such as BBC.com are not only sources of information but also influential linguistic trendsetters that shape how English is used internationally (Page et al., 2022). Journalists and content creators often employ creative word formation strategies to craft headlines and narratives that are both catchy and concise. This practice is driven by the need to capture reader attention instantly in a highly competitive digital landscape where attention spans are short (Hassan, 2024). As a result, online news articles become a fertile ground for observing morphological phenomena, ranging from complex compounds to unique neologisms. Furthermore, the global nature of news reporting requires English to absorb foreign terms, leading to frequent borrowing and adaptation (Aliyeva, 2025). Thus, online journalism offers rich, authentic data for linguistic research, reflecting the immediate state of the English language.

This research focuses specifically on a feature article from BBC.com titled "The anti-materialist Christmas: Rituals around the world that swap gifts for meaning," which presents a unique linguistic case study. Unlike standard political or crime news which often uses rigid and formal diction, this cultural article requires a more descriptive and emotive vocabulary to explain diverse global traditions. The text discusses rituals from Iceland to Venezuela, necessitating the use of varied morphological strategies to bridge cultural gaps for English readers (Holliday et al., 2021). For instance, the author must use borrowing to introduce terms like *Jólabókaflóð*, while simultaneously using derivation to create adjectives that describe abstract feelings like anti-materialist. This interplay between maintaining cultural authenticity and ensuring English comprehensibility makes the article morphologically dense and interesting (Scammell & Bielsa, 2022). It demonstrates how morphology serves as a bridge between different linguistic cultures within a single English text. Consequently, this specific article serves as an excellent sample to observe how English morphology operates in a multicultural context.

Despite the abundance of morphological studies on mass media, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing on soft news or cultural feature articles. Most existing studies tend to analyze hard news headlines (Al-Jarf, 2021), political discourse, or the emergence of internet slang in social media comments (Apriliana & Rugaiyah, 2025). These previous studies often overlook the complex morphological processes found in descriptive long-form journalism, where the goal is storytelling rather than just reporting facts (Bednarek, 2023). There is a lack of attention given to how journalists use word formation to describe foreign concepts or emotional states in cultural reporting. This research aims to fill that gap by providing a detailed analysis of the word formation processes within a narrative-driven news piece. By shifting the focus from hard news to cultural features, this study highlights the stylistic functions of morphology. Therefore, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how different news genres utilize morphological tools differently.

The primary objective of this study is to identify, classify, and analyze the types of word formation processes found in the selected BBC article. The analysis will be grounded in established morphological theories, specifically focusing on derivation, compounding, borrowing, and clipping. By examining these processes, this paper seeks to explain how the author constructs meaning and integrates foreign cultural terms into English sentences. The significance of this research lies in its potential to help EFL students and linguistic learners understand how morphological theory is applied in real-world professional writing. Furthermore, it aims to demonstrate that word formation is not random, but a deliberate stylistic choice used to enhance the readability and cultural depth of a text. The article is structured systematically, beginning with a review of related literature, followed by the research methodology, data analysis, and concluding with a discussion of the findings. Ultimately, this study hopes to prove that morphology is a key element in effective cross-cultural communication in modern journalism.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design, as defined by Creswell (2007), to analyse the morphological processes in the selected text. This method is deemed most appropriate as the research focuses on understanding linguistic phenomena, specifically word formation through the analysis of words and phrases rather than numerical data or statistical quantification. The primary data source for this study is an online news article titled *The anti-materialist Christmas: Rituals around the world that swap gifts for meaning*, published on BBC.com. The unit of analysis encompasses all lexical items in the article that exhibit specific word formation processes, including derivation, compounding, borrowing, and clipping. By utilizing a qualitative approach, this research aims to provide a deep and comprehensive description of how these morphological forms are constructed and how they contribute to the semantic richness of the text in a journalistic context (Small, 2021).

The data collection and analysis procedures were conducted through a systematic documentation technique. First, the researcher performed a close reading of the entire article to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context and to identify potential words undergoing morphological changes. Second, data extraction was conducted and the results were classified in a table according to word formation processes, with reference to Yule's and O'Grady's theoretical models (O'Grady & De Guzman, 2016; Yule, 2020). The analysis process involved dissecting the internal structure of the identified words to determine their formation rules. Finally, the findings were interpreted and described to explain the function of these words within the text, leading to a conclusion that answers the research objectives regarding the use of morphology in online cultural journalism (Ancker et al., 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Data Presentation

This section presents the data obtained from the article "The anti-materialist Christmas" and provides a comprehensive analysis of the word formation processes involved. The findings are categorized into four main morphological processes: Derivation, Compounding, Borrowing, and Clipping. The data is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Occurrences of Word Formation Processes in the Selected Text

No	Word Formation Process	Selected Examples found in Text	Root/Base(s)	Original Language/Source
1	Derivation	<i>Anti-materialist</i> <i>Transactional</i> <i>Grounding</i> <i>Distinctly</i> <i>Departed</i>	Material Transaction Ground Distinct Depart	English English English English English
2	Compounding	<i>Candlelight</i> <i>Booklovers</i> <i>Spiderweb</i> <i>Firecrackers</i> <i>Graveyards</i>	Candle + Light Book + Lovers Spider + Web Fire + Crackers Grave + Yards	English English English English English
3	Borrowing	<i>Jólabókaflóð</i> <i>Kurisumasu keki</i> <i>Hygge</i> <i>Gløgg</i>	- - - -	Icelandic Japanese (from English) Danish Danish
4	Clipping	<i>Tinny</i>	Tin (Can)	Australian Slang

The analysis reveals that the author of the BBC article strategically utilizes different morphological processes to achieve specific communicative goals. While derivation is used to construct the argumentative framework of the article, compounding and borrowing are employed to evoke vivid imagery and cultural authenticity.

3.2 Discussions

3.2.1 Derivation: Constructing the Narrative Stance

Derivation, the process of forming new words by adding affixes to a base, is primarily used in the text to describe abstract concepts and modify the grammatical category of words to fit the narrative flow. The most significant example is the title word, "Anti-materialist." Morphologically, this adjective is formed through multiple layers of derivation:

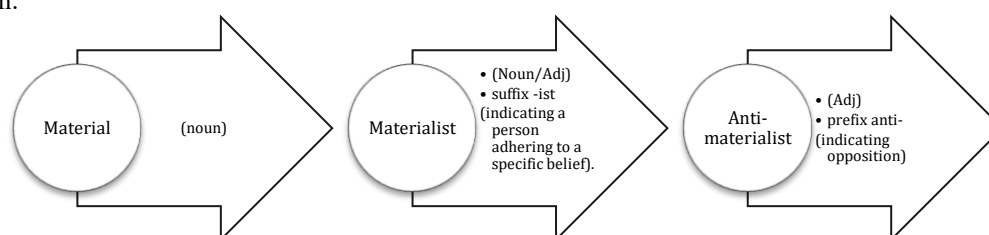


Figure 1. Figure of Derivational Morphology of the Word Anti-materialist

By creating this specific derivative, the author encapsulates the entire thesis of the article in a single word. It creates a binary opposition between the commercial Christmas and the meaningful Christmas. Similarly, the word "Transactional" (Transaction + suffix -al) is used to negatively describe the act of gift-giving when it loses its emotional value. The suffix -al transforms the noun into an adjective, allowing the author to critique the quality of modern relationships. These examples suggest that derivation is the tool the author uses to convey the article's ideological perspective (Norcliffe & Majid, 2024).

3.2.2 Compounding: Building Atmospheric Imagery

Compounding involves combining two free morphemes to create a new lexical item. In this text, compounds are heavily used to set the visual and atmospheric scene of the traditions (Scammell & Bielsa, 2022).

Words like "Candlelight" (Candle + Light) and "Spiderweb" (Spider + Web) are endocentric compounds where the second element determines the category. The frequent use of descriptive compounds helps the reader visualize

the setting. For instance, the use of "candlelight" instead of just light immediately evokes a sense of warmth, intimacy, and tradition, which supports the hygge concept mentioned in the Danish section. Furthermore, "Booklovers" (Book + Lovers) identifies a specific community in Iceland efficiently. Instead of using a phrase like "people who love books," the compound noun creates a sense of identity and group cohesion, reflecting the communal nature of the Jólábókaflóð tradition.

3.2.3 Borrowing: Preserving Cultural Authenticity

Borrowing is the most distinctive feature of this article, given its focus on global traditions. The author chooses to retain the original terms rather than translating them into English equivalents. For example, the Icelandic term "Jólábókaflóð" is kept intact. Translating this merely as Christmas Book Flood would strip away its cultural uniqueness. Morphologically, this is a direct loanword. Similarly, the Japanese term "Kurisumasu keki" is fascinating. It is a case of re-borrowing: the Japanese originally borrowed Christmas Cake from English, adapted it phonologically to Kurisumasu keki, and now the English text borrows it back to refer specifically to the Japanese style of sponge cake.

By using borrowing, the author performs a linguistic act of respect. It signals to the reader that these traditions are unique to their specific cultures and cannot be fully encapsulated by standard English vocabulary (Aliyeva, 2025; Wardana, 2023). This aligns with the article's theme of swapping gifts for meaning in this case, swapping translation for cultural immersion (Scammell & Bielsa, 2022).

3.2.4 Clipping and Register Shift

The analysis also identifies a unique instance of Clipping in the Australian section with the word "Tinny".

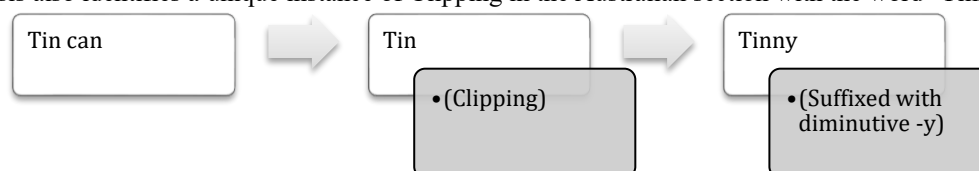


Figure 2. Figure of Clipping and Register Shift in the Formation of Tinny

This word choice is highly significant for the register (level of formality) of the text. While the rest of the article is relatively formal and descriptive, the section on Australia adopts a casual, colloquial tone. The use of the slang "tinny" mirrors the relaxed, egalitarian nature of the Australian Christmas cricket match described in the text. This demonstrates how morphological choices can shift the tone of a text to match the subject matter (Mehriban Monsumova, 2022).

The interplay of these four processes demonstrates that morphology in online journalism is not arbitrary. Derivation provides the descriptive adjectives needed for the article's anti-materialist argument. Compounding offers the concrete nouns required to visualize the scenes (graveyards, firecrackers). Borrowing serves as a bridge to foreign cultures, maintaining authenticity. Finally, Clipping adds local flavor to specific sections. Thus, word formation serves as a critical stylistic device that enhances both the clarity and the cultural depth of the narrative (Krasina & Souadkia, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the word formation processes employed in the BBC article "The anti-materialist Christmas" specifically derivation, compounding, borrowing, and clipping function as deliberate stylistic strategies rather than mere grammatical constructions. The analysis reveals that derivation and compounding are pivotal in establishing the article's ideological stance against materialism and constructing vivid atmospheric imagery, while the extensive use of borrowing preserves the cultural authenticity of the global traditions discussed. Additionally, clipping is effectively utilized to modulate the narrative register to suit specific cultural contexts. Ultimately, morphology in online journalism serves as a critical bridge for cross-cultural communication, allowing complex foreign concepts to be integrated seamlessly into English narratives to enhance reader engagement.

Beyond the textual analysis, the findings of this research offer significant prospects for development in the fields of Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT). The results can be transformed into authentic instructional materials, shifting the pedagogical focus from isolated affix memorization to understanding how morphology shapes meaning in real-world contexts. Furthermore, this study opens broad avenues for future

research, particularly in comparing morphological patterns across different news genres such as hard news versus cultural features or utilizing corpus-based approaches to statistically determine dominant word formation trends in British digital media. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the English language continues to evolve in the digital age.

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THE STRATEGY OF TRANSLATING BATAK CULTURAL TERMS IN THE ENGLISH SUBTITLE OF THE FILM *NGERI-NGERI SEDAP*

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Abstract

This study addresses the critical challenge of preserving cultural identity in audiovisual translation, specifically focusing on the English subtitles of the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*. The research aims to identify the translation techniques applied to Batak cultural terms and evaluate their impact on audience acceptability. Using a qualitative case study approach, the researcher analyzed 20 data occurrences of Batak cultural terms within the film's dialogue. The data were classified according to Molina and Albir's (2002) framework and assessed based on their ability to maintain sociocultural accuracy. The findings reveal that Adaptation is the most dominant technique (55%), followed by Borrowing (20%). While these strategies prioritize reading fluency, the analysis highlights a significant loss of cultural depth. Specifically, the overuse of Adaptation for kinship terms like *Tulang* and *Oppung* erodes the complex Batak social system by reducing it to generic English equivalents. This study concludes that the use of the Amplification technique is an essential obligation rather than a mere choice to prevent the loss of sociocultural foundations. These results contribute to the field of translation studies by providing guidelines for more culturally responsible subtitling of regional languages.

Keywords: Acceptability, adaptation, amplification, cultural terms, translation techniques

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental principle for humans, acting as the primary vessel to communicate thoughts, feelings, and the vast array of information they wish to convey to one another (Ahdillah et al., 2020). In our globalized world, the role of translation has become indispensable. Meanwhile, translation itself is defined as the intricate process of conveying a message from a source language into a target language. This must be done without changing the core meaning or the essential ideas contained in the original text, ensuring that the essence of the message remains stable across linguistic borders (Nida and Taber, 1982, as cited in Ulya, Sriyono, & Siti Hanifa, 2024). Therefore, a translator does not merely swap words but carries the heavy responsibility of maintaining the original author's intent while adapting it for a new audience.

However, this process often becomes highly complex due to the presence of cultural terms. These are specific words referring to concepts or customs unique to a certain culture that may not have direct equivalents in the target language culture, or they might appear in a significantly different form (Newmark, 1988, as cited in Simanjuntak, 2025). Because language and culture are so deeply intertwined, the translation of these terms often presents a significant challenge. Consequently, the appropriate translation method must be accurately considered by a translator the moment the source language text is interpreted (Fahruri, 2022). This challenge is amplified even further when the translation is done through audiovisual media such as films. In the realm of subtitling, translators must contend with strict time and space constraints on the screen, all while ensuring a faithful message transfer and maintaining the delicate cultural nuances of the story.

If this balance is not achieved, several problems can be caused by inadequate translation. These issues range from the loss of significant cultural values and the spread of misinformation to the triggering of genuine cross cultural misunderstanding among viewers (Simanjuntak, 2025). For a film like *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*, which is deeply rooted in Batak culture, these risks are very real. While some previous studies suggest that high readability can sometimes

compensate for inaccurate translations, other research (such as Siboro, 2022 and Swandani et al., 2022) emphasizes that cultural integrity is often sacrificed for the sake of simplicity. This study, therefore, seeks to dive deeper into how these Batak cultural terms are handled, specifically to see if the chosen techniques still allow the audience to grasp the richness of the Batak kinship system and social values.

The complexity of translating cultural terms and their application across various audiovisual media has been underscored in previous studies. The translation of cultural terms, particularly in audiovisual media such as film subtitling, remains a critical area of research because the original cultural meaning needs to be maintained while strict technical and time constraints are adhered to. The strategic application of translation techniques is necessitated by this challenge, as highlighted by Siboro (2022) in the analysis of subtitling techniques used in the film *Queen of Katwe*, which emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive theoretical framework like the one proposed by Molina & Albir (2002). The issue of translation quality becomes more visible in the context of Indonesian domestic films. In a study by Swandani, Nababan, & Santosa (2022), which examined the translation quality of code-switching and code-mixing in the film *Yowis Ben*, it was found that although many translations were deemed inaccurate, a high level of acceptability and readability was achieved. However, this finding is significantly contrasted by another study, namely Simanjuntak (2025) on the English subtitles for the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*. In Simanjuntak's research, the Adaptation technique was identified as the most dominant for translating Batak Social Cultural terms, yet a high rate of 'Unacceptable' ratings was resulted. This failure was attributed to the loss of cultural meaning stemming from the improper choice of technique. The difference in translation quality between the films *Yowis Ben* and *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* suggests that we still know little about the fundamental reasons why the translation of certain cultural terms is accepted or rejected by the audience. Therefore, this research is relevant to fill this gap by identifying the translation techniques used and conducting an in-depth analysis of the acceptability level of the translation of Batak cultural terms in the *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* subtitles.

This research aims to identify and classify the translation techniques based on Molina & Albir's theory, used in translating Batak cultural terms in the English subtitles of the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*, and to analyze the acceptability level of the translation of Batak cultural terms in the English subtitles of the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*.

This study is expected to provide insights into the complexity of the translation process, demonstrating that the process does not depend solely on linguistic aspects but also on deep cultural considerations, through the analysis of the application of appropriate translation techniques and subtitling strategies.

METHOD

A qualitative approach with a case study focus is applied in this research to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subtitling translation process. According to Moleong (as cited in Satori & Komariah, 2009), qualitative research is research that aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, and others, socially and through descriptions in the form of words and language, within a natural context. Methodologically, a descriptive qualitative approach is used in an effort to generate scientific statements regarding film subtitle translation issues (Aziz & Adika, 2023).

The identification of translation techniques based on Molina & Albir (2002) applied to Batak cultural terms is intended as the main objective of this research, as well as the testing of the acceptability level of these translations in the English subtitles of the film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*. Textual data, namely the original term (Source Text) and its equivalent in the subtitle (Target Text), are treated as the main material analyzed. Challenges similar to idioms are posed by cultural terms because they are a unit of words with a meaning that deviates from or is inconsistent with their lexical meaning, so specific strategies in translating them are required (according to Yamusa et al). Significant challenges for translation systems are known to be presented by complicated sentences like these (Nurcahyani et al, 2024). Therefore, this research is considered important because human translation techniques are analyzed within it.

Data collection was conducted entirely independently by the researcher through direct observation of the film. The film *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap*, which has a duration of 1 hour and 53 minutes, was observed repeatedly by the researcher to record every occurrence of Batak cultural terms. Each data point was meticulously captured by noting the dialogue and the corresponding translation displayed on screen. The collected data are then neatly organized in a digital spreadsheet, ensuring that each column contains the elements of ST, TT, and Context or Time of Occurrence. The stage of data analysis and interpretation is also conducted descriptively and interpretatively by the researcher. First, for the analysis of translation techniques, each ST-TT pair is compared and classified based on Molina and Albir's techniques by the researcher. The results of this classification are processed through coding to identify the

dominant patterns. Second, the assessment of acceptability levels is carried out meticulously and independently, guided by appropriate theories. This assessment is based on how well the translation succeeds in conveying cultural meaning without causing misinterpretation or misunderstanding for the target audience.

The presentation of research findings will be conducted argumentatively and organized within the Findings and Discussion chapter. Quantitative data in the form of frequencies and percentages of the identified techniques will be presented in a tabular format. The number of collected findings or frequencies is then converted into percentages to clearly demonstrate the comparison of each category. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of findings for each category by the total number of analyzed data, and then multiplying by 100%. The formula used is:

$$\text{Percentage}(\%) = \frac{\text{Frequency of Findings}(f)}{\text{Total Number of Data}(N)} \times 100\%$$

Figure 1.

Formula for Calculating Translation Technique Percentage (Visual generated with assistance from AI tool, ChatGPT)

Meanwhile, the core discussion will focus on narrative interpretation, connecting the translation techniques used with their impact on the level of translation acceptance. This explanation will be strengthened by analyzing the context and comparing it with previous research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Identification and Classification of Translation Techniques

Based on the analysis, it is indicated that the translation process tends to prioritize the recipient. The primary goal is for the audience to easily understand the story while remaining comfortable watching the film and reading the subtitles. The distribution of the five main translation techniques used is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Translation Techniques

No.	Translation Technique (Molina & Albir, 2002)	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Adaptation	11	55%
2.	Borrowing	4	20%
3.	Modulation	2	10%
4.	Generalization	2	10%
5.	Reduction	1	5%
	Total	20	100%

As shown in the table above, the Adaptation technique is identified as the primary choice, reaching more than half (55%) of the overall techniques employed. This is followed by the Borrowing technique in second place with a percentage of 20%. Meanwhile, the Modulation and Generalization techniques are recorded at 10% each, and the Reduction technique is found at 5%.

To examine these findings in more detail, specific examples of the translation of Batak cultural terms into English subtitles are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Specific Examples of Batak Cultural Term Translation Data

No.	Source Text (ST) / Dialogue	Batak Cultural Term	Target Text (TT) / Subtitle	Dominant Translation Technique
1.	"Boha tanggapan Anakku Boruku"	Anakku Boruku	"Do you have anything to say?"	Adaptation
2.	"Kau yang melanjutkan marga, kau yang melanjutkan adat"	Marga	"You will carry our family name, you will carry our tradition."	Adaptation
3.	"Bangga kali Oppung sama keluarga kalian"	Oppung	"I'm so proud of your family"	Adaptation
4.	"Halo, Eda"	Eda	"Hello, Ma'am"	Adaptation
5.	"Eh, ada Amang"	Amang	"You're here, Priest?"	Adaptation
6.	"Iya, Tulang"	Tulang	"Right, Uncle"	Adaptation
7.	"Gini, Bapauda."	Bapauda	Uncle	Adaptation
8.	"Tiru Mamak kalian"	Mamak	"Do what your mother does"	Adaptation
9.	"Pahoppu ku"	Pahoppu	"Grandchildren"	Adaptation
10.	"Parjolo hami, Angkang"	Parjolo hami, Angkang	"See you, Brother"	Adaptation
11.	"Iya, nang"	Nang	"Take care, sweetie"	Adaptation
12.	"Horas!"	Horas	"Horas!"	Borrowing
13.	"Pulang tengah malam dari lapo"	Lapo	"It's when you go home past midnight from the lapo"	Borrowing
14.	"Domu, tolong ambilkan ulos di lemari"	Ulos	"Domu, please grab my ulos from the cabinet"	Borrowing
15.	"Aku kalau pulang dari Lapo,"	Lapo	"Everytime I come back from the lapo,"	Borrowing
16.	"Ke rumah Oppung. Ke rumah mamaknya mamak."	Oppung	"To her mother's house."	Modulation
17.	"Ngapain kita biar mereka bisa di sini terus sampai pesta nya Inang?"	Inang	"What can we do so they stay here until Mom's ceremony?"	Modulation
18.	"Silakan duduk, Lae dan Ito"	Lae, Ito	"Have a seat, you two"	Generalization
19.	"Mauliate, aman Pandita"	Mauliate	"Thank you, Priest."	Generalization
20.	"Iya. Hati-hati ya, nang"	Nang	"Take care"	Reduction

Analysis of the Acceptability of Batak Cultural Term Translation

Although translation techniques that prioritize audience comfort and a recipient oriented approach are heavily employed in the subtitles, it is observed that the original cultural meaning and the deep sociocultural nuances inherent in the source text are often at risk of being lost in the process.

1. Excessive Use of the Adaptation Technique

The discussion is initiated with the dominant finding from the quantitative data, namely the use of the Adaptation technique, which accounts for 55.0% of the total analyzed cases. While this technique is aimed at maximizing comprehension and maintaining reading flow, serious problems regarding cultural accuracy are created by such excessive use. Batak kinship terms such as *Tulang*, *Oppung*, *Bapauda*, *Amang*, and *Namboru*, which are rich in specific customary meanings, are simplified into overly generic English equivalents such as "uncle", "grandpa", "mother", and "brother". As a result, a deep understanding of the Batak kinship system is lost by the audience. Consequently, the cultural meaning inherent in these terms fails to be conveyed, and a high risk of being judged as unacceptable in terms of accurate cultural transfer is run.

2. Successful Retention of Cultural Identity with the Borrowing Technique

In contrast to Adaptation, a more successful approach to maintaining acceptability is demonstrated by the Borrowing technique, which is found in 20% of the cases. When the original term is left in its source language, the specific cultural and geographical identity is effectively maintained. It is ensured by this technique that the audience is made aware that the word refers to a unique element of Batak culture. Although more cognitive effort might be required from the audience, the richness of the original term is retained.

3. The Missed Solution: Minimal Contextual Explanation

It is clearly shown in the analysis that the application of the Amplification technique was not found within the collected data of this research. This absence is highly regretted, as cross cultural differences between the source and target languages can be effectively bridged by this particular technique. While high levels of readability and audience comfort are achieved through the frequent use of Adaptation, the opportunity to communicate the specific cultural values accurately to an international audience is inevitably sacrificed. Furthermore, it is strongly asserted in this study that for the translation of complex kinship terms such as *Tulang* and *Oppung*, the use of Amplification is not merely a technical suggestion to improve quality, but is considered an essential obligation to preserve the Batak sociocultural foundation and its unique identity in the subtitles.

The main finding of this study is that the Adaptation technique is used as the most dominant translation method, while the Amplification technique is rarely applied in translating cultural terms in subtitling studies. Specifically, this result is supported by another case study analyzing Batak cultural terms in the *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* subtitles by Simanjuntak (2025). Through these similar results, a strong tendency among audiovisual media translators to prioritize fluent and easily understood text for the audience is clearly observed.

Although it is agreed with Simanjuntak (2025) that a decline in meaning accuracy is caused by the overuse of Adaptation, it is further analyzed in this study that a high risk to the cultural meaning within the Batak kinship sphere, such as *Tulang* and *Oppung*, is posed by this dominance. According to Budiman (2018, as cited in Yuliarta et al., 2025), the principle of translation is the transfer of meaning or message from the source language to the target language. However, a good translation should preserve not only the message but also the feelings, values, and cultural context of the source language (Andiyani et al., 2025).

To achieve such translation quality, according to Saputra and Adika (2024), the translator would need to consider the linguistic and cultural context of the target language when performing an adaptation. This requires the translator to have a deep understanding of cultural and technical aspects to ensure that the translated text maintains its accuracy and effectiveness. Therefore, because these standards of accuracy and cultural value are often threatened by the dominance of Adaptation, this research asserts that Amplification is not merely a suggestion, but an obligation to preserve the Batak sociocultural foundation from being lost in subtitles.

Research Benefits and Limitations

Significant benefits in the field of translation, particularly regarding the preservation of cultural integrity, are provided by this research. It was discovered through this study that the Adaptation technique, which involves replacing foreign cultural terms with common target language equivalents, is more frequently employed by translators than the Amplification technique for Batak cultural terms.

Furthermore, it is clearly demonstrated by the research findings that a translation which is categorized as easy to read is actually at a high risk of being considered inaccurate in terms of conveying the true essence of the culture. It is argued that cultural accuracy should be regarded as a primary prerequisite for a translation to be fully accepted in a sociocultural context. For practical application in the industry, it is strongly suggested that the addition of explanations should be treated as a crucial obligation for translators when regional languages such as Batak are being translated, so that the inherent richness of cultural meaning is neither lost nor overly simplified.

Despite these contributions, certain limitations are held by this research, as the focus is restricted to cultural terms from a single film only. Consequently, it is understood that the findings cannot be generalized to encompass the entire Batak cultural vocabulary. Furthermore, since the analyzed data is derived from only one specific production, the results may be influenced by particular creative directions from the producer or the filmmaking party. Thus, it is concluded that the same results might not necessarily be encountered in all regional language subtitling works.

CONCLUSION

It is indicated by the results of this study that the translation process of Batak cultural terms in the *Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap* film subtitles is dominated by recipient oriented techniques, where Adaptation (55%) is made the primary choice, while the Amplification technique is rarely used. This finding is aligned with previous research, which focuses on audiovisual media translators' reading fluency and acceptability. Although reading convenience is increased by Adaptation, it is critically concluded by this study that a high risk of causing the loss of cultural

meaning in Batak kinship terms is carried by this choice of technique. Therefore, the main contribution of this study is to assert that the use of Amplification is not merely a suggestion to improve translation accuracy, but is an obligation that must be fulfilled by translators to prevent the loss of the Batak sociocultural foundation.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct a cross-cultural analysis by analyzing kinship terms from domestic films representing other regional cultures in Indonesia. Furthermore, it is also important to conduct a direct audience comprehension test on subtitles using the Amplification technique versus Adaptation, to produce subtitling guidelines that ensure the text is easy to read without sacrificing the accuracy of cultural meaning.

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SEXUAL OPPRESSIONS AGAINST WOMEN IN *LUSTER* NOVEL BY RAVEN LEILANI 2020

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Abstract

This thesis explores the theme of sexual oppression against women as portrayed in Raven Leilani's *Luster* (2020). Using Patricia Hill Collins' Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory, the study examines how the main character, Edie, experiences oppression in the form of sexual violence, fetishization, and workplace exploitation. Through qualitative textual analysis, the research highlights how overlapping factors of race, gender, class, and age shape Edie's vulnerability and limit her agency. The findings show that oppression in the novel is not only enacted through intimate relationships but also reinforced by professional and social structures, reflecting the systemic inequalities faced by many women of color. At the same time, the study analyzes how Edie navigates and resists these oppressions, revealing strategies of endurance and survival in response to intersecting pressures. By centering Edie's narrative, this thesis contributes to discussions on sexual oppression and demonstrates how contemporary fiction can critique structural inequalities while amplifying marginalized voices.

Keywords: Gender inequality, intersectionality, *Luster*, Raven Leilani, sexual oppression, survival strategies, women of color

INTRODUCTION

Sexual oppression is one of the persistent forms of gender inequality that continues to affect women in both private and public life. It does not only appear through physical violence, but also through exploitation, objectification, racial discrimination, and unequal power relations that limit women's autonomy. According to Patricia Hill Collins (2020), oppression is shaped by intersecting systems of race, gender, class, and sexuality that operate together within social structures. These systems influence how women experience discrimination differently depending on their social position. Because of its close relation to gender, race, and power, sexual oppression has become an important issue discussed in literature, sociology, and feminist studies.

One contemporary novel that critically portrays these issues is *Luster* (2020) by Raven Leilani. The novel tells the story of Edie, a young Black woman living in New York City who struggles with unstable employment, loneliness, financial insecurity, and exploitative relationships. Although the story centers on Edie's personal life, the novel gradually reveals broader issues of racial inequality, gender oppression, and sexual exploitation that shape her experiences as a Black woman in contemporary society. Throughout the novel, Edie is positioned within unequal relationships and social environments that expose her to different forms of sexual oppression. Her relationship with Eric, an older white man in an open marriage, reflects unequal dynamics of race, gender, age, and class. At the same time, her experiences in the workplace reveal how professional spaces can also reinforce exploitation and discrimination against women, particularly Black women. These conditions can be analyzed using Patricia Hill Collins's theory of Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory, which explains how systems of oppression intersect and reinforce one another within everyday life. Through this perspective, Edie's experiences are not only personal struggles but also representations of broader structural inequalities embedded in patriarchal and racialized societies.

In responding to oppression, individuals often develop forms of survival, resistance, and self-awareness shaped by their lived experiences. Collins (2020) explains that marginalized women may create strategies of endurance and adaptation while navigating unequal social structures. In *Luster*, Edie demonstrates several responses to sexual oppression through critical reflection, emotional endurance, artistic expression, and awareness of the racialized and gendered treatment directed toward her. This study focuses on the depiction of sexual oppression experienced by Edie and the ways she responds to those oppressive conditions. Through this analysis, the writer aims to explain how *Luster* portrays the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality in shaping women's experiences within contemporary society.

METHOD

This study applied a qualitative approach to analyze sexual oppression and the main character's responses in *Luster* (2020). The qualitative method was chosen because this study focused on descriptive data in the form of narrations, dialogues, character experiences, and social interactions that reflected the oppression experienced by the main character, Edie. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meaning of social or human problems through interpretation and detailed description. This approach was considered appropriate because the study emphasized interpretation, meaning, and the representation of social issues within literary works. The primary data source of this study was the novel *Luster* written by Raven Leilani, while the supporting data were obtained from books, journals, articles, and other academic sources related to intersectionality, sexual oppression, gender inequality, and feminist literary criticism.

The writer repeatedly read the novel to gain a deeper understanding of the storyline, characterization, and social issues presented throughout the narrative. During the process, important narrations, dialogues, and passages related to sexual oppression, racial fetishization, workplace exploitation, and survival strategies were identified and noted as the primary data of the study. The collected data were analyzed using Patricia Hill Collins's theory of Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory to examine how race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect in shaping Edie's experiences within unequal social structures. In addition, narrative elements such as characterization, conflict, setting, and point of view were also analyzed to support the interpretation of the social and psychological struggles experienced by the main character throughout the novel.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sexual Oppression

Patricia Hill Collins (2020) explains that oppression operates through intersecting systems of race, gender, class, and sexuality that shape unequal social experiences. Sexual oppression is not only expressed through physical violence but also through exploitation, fetishization, objectification, and unequal power relations that limit women's autonomy. In *Luster*, sexual oppression is portrayed through Edie's experiences as a young Black woman who faces exploitation in both personal and professional spaces. The novel reveals how patriarchal and racialized systems position Black women in vulnerable situations where their bodies and identities are controlled, judged, and reduced to objects of desire.

Throughout the novel, Edie often experiences unequal treatment in her relationships, workplace, and social environment. Her relationship with Eric reflects imbalances of race, age, gender, and economic power, while her experiences at work reveal how institutional structures can reinforce exploitation and discrimination. Through narrations, dialogues, and Edie's reflections, the novel portrays how sexual oppression affects not only women's physical experiences but also their emotional and psychological conditions. At the same time, the story shows how Edie develops awareness, endurance, and survival strategies while navigating systems of oppression surrounding her. Therefore, *Luster* presents sexual oppression as a complex and systemic issue closely connected to racial inequality, gender discrimination, and social power structures.

Sexual Oppression through Violence and Exploitation.

(*Luster*, 2020, p. 14):

'You fucking slut,' he says, and then releases me. 'Come up.'

This quotation captures how Edie is subjected to a degrading act that blurs the boundary between desire and coercion. Eric's words and actions objectify her, reducing her to a sexualized role defined entirely by his authority.

Although Edie verbally agrees to participate, the encounter reflects how power imbalances rooted in age, race, and economic differences compromise genuine consent. The insult "slut" functions as a tool of domination, reinforcing her position as vulnerable and disposable in the relationship.

Leilani's depiction highlights that sexual violence is not always enacted through overt assault, but can also manifest in subtle, normalized dynamics where coercion and humiliation are embedded in intimacy. For Edie, this moment reveals the broader structures of oppression that shape her relationships: her body is not her own, but something subjected to male power and control. The scene emphasizes how sexual oppression in *Luster* functions on both physical and psychological levels, illustrating the ways women's agency can be undermined within unequal and exploitative systems.

Oppressions through Fetishization of Black Female Sexuality.

(*Luster*, 2020, p. 22)

'I am not the first black woman he has been with. I am just the first he has admitted to his wife.'

First quotation captures how Edie sexuality is shaped by fetishization. Eric's attraction to her is not unique, but his willingness to acknowledge her to his wife makes her stand out as a novelty within his white, middle-class world, it explains Edie's presence is not about genuine intimacy but about how she can fit into Eric's narrative. First quotation captures how Edie sexuality is shaped by fetishization. Eric's attraction to her is not unique, but his willingness to acknowledge her to his wife makes her stand out as a novelty within his white, middle-class world, it explains Edie's presence is not about genuine intimacy but about how she can fit into Eric's narrative of transgression and experimentation. She is reduced to a symbol of difference, her value tied to how her Blackness can be used to define him.

Collins (2019) explains that oppression operates through intersecting systems of race, gender, and sexuality that create unequal relationships. Edie's experience illustrates this matrix of domination: her identity is not recognized for its individuality but is filtered through controlling images that position Black women as objects of desire and proof of masculine power. Fetishization here is not simply personal curiosity but part of broader structures of inequality that normalize the exploitation of Black female sexuality.

The Main Character's Responses to Sexual Oppression in Luster

According to Patricia Hill Collins (2020), Black women experience oppression through interconnected systems of race, gender, class, and sexuality that shape their everyday lives and social positions. Within these unequal structures, marginalized women often develop strategies of survival, adaptation, self-awareness, and resistance to navigate oppression. Intersectionality theory explains that responses to oppression are not always expressed through confrontation, but may also appear through emotional endurance, critical reflection, and personal resilience. In *Luster*, Edie responds to sexual oppression through complex emotional and social strategies shaped by her experiences as a young Black woman living within patriarchal and racialized systems. Her responses reflect the limited agency available to women who experience overlapping forms of discrimination and exploitation.

According to Collins (2020), lived experiences play an important role in developing awareness and knowledge about oppression. Through her experiences, Edie gradually becomes aware of the unequal power relations surrounding her, particularly in her intimate relationships, workplace, and social environment. Rather than openly resisting oppressive structures, she often responds through observation, irony, emotional endurance, and artistic expression. Her reflections reveal an understanding of how racial fetishization, workplace exploitation, and sexual objectification shape her identity and vulnerability. At the same time, Edie's connection to painting and self-expression becomes a subtle form of resistance that allows her to reclaim fragments of autonomy and identity. Therefore, Edie's responses to sexual oppression illustrate how marginalized women negotiate survival and resilience within intersecting systems of inequality.

Responding to Racial Fetishization

(Luster, 2020, p. 66)

'I interview well despite my nerves, and while I wish I could take credit for that, my ability to maintain human form and make a good impression is all about my skin. The expectations of me in these settings are frequently so low, it would be impossible not to surpass them.'

In this quotation, Edie's awareness of how her Blackness shapes her relationships and opportunities demonstrates how she deals with fetishization by reframing it through irony and self-conscious reflection. Instead of ignoring the way others perceive her, she critically acknowledges that her racial identity produces both marginalization and a distorted form of advantage. This shows that Edie responds to fetishization not by openly rejecting it, but by becoming aware of how racial stereotypes shape the way she is treated.

This quotation explain how Edie recognizes that the low expectations tied to her Blackness allow her to stand out in professional settings, though not in a way that validates her true abilities. She frames this reality with a tone of irony; her "good impression" is not seen as evidence of her skill but as an effect of the stereotypes that surround her. By naming this dynamic, Edie exposes how fetishization operates not only in intimate relationships but also in social and professional spaces, where Black women's worth is distorted through the lens of race.

Collins (2019) explains that Black women often develop awareness of how race, gender, and class shape their experiences. In this case, Edie does not simply accept the stereotypes directed toward her, but recognizes the bias behind them. Her ironic perspective becomes a subtle way of responding to fetishization, showing that although she cannot fully escape it, she still maintains awareness of the unequal system surrounding her.

Surviving Workplace Sexual Exploitation

(Luster, 2020, p. 17)

'Now I am social. I show my teeth to my coworkers and feign surprise at the dysfunction of the MTA. There is a part of me that is proud to be involved in these small interactions, which confirm that I am here and semi-visible and that New York is squatting over other people's faces too, but another part of me is sweating through the Kabuki, trying to extend my hand and go off script.'

This quotation highlights how Edie uses performance as a coping mechanism in the workplace. By smiling, laughing, and engaging in casual conversations, she masks her deeper feelings of alienation and the exploitation that shapes her presence in the office. The description of her behavior as "Kabuki" underscores the artificiality of her performance; her interactions are less about authentic connection and more about maintaining survival in a space where her value is precarious. While these small social exchanges give her a fleeting sense of recognition, they also leave her exhausted, as she constantly negotiates between invisibility and hyper-visibility.

Collins (2019) explains that Black women often have to adjust themselves in professional spaces shaped by racial and gender inequalities. This can be seen in Edie's experience, where she feels pressured to perform friendliness and sociability to be accepted. Although this strategy does not remove the exploitation she faces, it allows her to survive within a workplace environment that constantly makes her feel both visible and isolated.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined how Raven Leilani's *Luster* portrays the layered realities of sexual oppression against women, particularly through the life of Edie, a young Black woman. The novel reveals that sexual oppression does not occur in isolation but is embedded in everyday experiences, from intimate relationships to professional spaces. Edie's encounters with sexual violence, fetishization, and workplace exploitation show how power imbalances rooted in race, gender, class, and age continually shape her life. These oppressions strip away her agency, reducing her to an object of desire or blame, and highlight the systemic inequalities that persist in contemporary society.

At the same time, *Luster* illustrates how Edie navigates and copes with these oppressions. Her attempts to endure, adapt, and reclaim parts of herself reflect not just survival but a form of quiet resistance. Drawing on Patricia Hill Collins' theory of intersectionality, this study has shown that Edie's struggles and strategies are situated within a broader matrix of domination, where overlapping systems of power constrain but also shape the possibilities of resistance. Collins' framework helps us see how Edie's personal story resonates with the collective experiences of many women of color, whose identities are constantly negotiated under intersecting forms of oppression.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that *Luster* is not merely a story of one woman's vulnerability, but a critique of the structures that normalize and perpetuate sexual oppression. It amplifies the voices of those often silenced by systemic inequalities and challenges readers to recognize the persistence of gendered and racialized oppression in modern life. At the same time, it affirms the resilience of women like Edie, who continue to navigate, endure, and resist. In doing so, *Luster* underscores the importance of literature as a space for confronting social injustice and imagining more equitable futures.

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RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE FILM *EMANCIPATION* BY ANTOINE FUQUA (2022)

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Abstract

This study examined the representation of racial discrimination and resistance experienced by African Americans as depicted in the film *Emancipation* (2022). The topic is significant as the film reflects historical and social realities of racial oppression that continue to influence contemporary discussions on race and inequality. The study aimed to identify the forms of racial discrimination portrayed in the film and to explain how the main character, Peter, resisted such discrimination. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected from selected scenes and dialogues that illustrated acts of oppression and resistance. The analysis revealed that the film depicted two main forms of racial discrimination: individual discrimination, shown through verbal abuse and physical violence, and institutional discrimination, represented by the legalized and systematic practice of slavery. In addition, the findings demonstrated that Peter exhibited several forms of resistance, including refusing submission, escaping captivity, and actively confronting his oppressors. His transformation from an enslaved man into a soldier symbolized not only his personal struggle for freedom but also the collective resistance of African Americans against racial oppression. Overall, the study concluded that *Emancipation* presented racial discrimination as a deeply rooted system of oppression while emphasizing resistance as a powerful response to injustice and dehumanization.

Keywords: African Americans, emancipation, film, racial discrimination, resistance

INTRODUCTION

Racial discrimination remains a persistent social problem that manifests in various forms across different societies. In everyday life, unfair treatment based on physical differences continues to occur in social environments such as schools, workplaces, and public spaces. In Indonesia, despite its cultural and ethnic diversity, prejudice and unequal treatment are still experienced by certain communities. People from Eastern Indonesia, particularly Papuans, are often subjected to stereotypes, ridicule, and social exclusion due to their darker skin tone and distinctive physical features. Similar patterns of racial prejudice are also evident in the United States, where racial discrimination has deep historical roots dating back to the era of slavery. Millions of Africans were forcibly brought to America and treated as property, a legacy that continued to shape racial inequality even after the abolition of slavery (Berlin, 2003).

Racial discrimination refers to unfair treatment or rejection directed at individuals or groups based on racial or ethnic differences. It includes actions that limit access to social, economic, and political opportunities and reinforce unequal power relations. Discrimination may appear in overt forms such as physical violence and verbal abuse, as well as in more subtle forms embedded in social practices and institutions. Differences in physical appearance, including skin color and other biological traits, often become the basis for prejudice and exclusion, which may escalate into social conflict and oppression (Allport, 1954). In the United States, conflicts between White and Black communities represent one of the most prominent forms of racial discrimination, in which Black Americans frequently experience injustice and violence not because of their actions, but solely because of their race.

Racial discrimination not only affects individuals on a personal level but is also deeply embedded within institutional systems. Structural racism influences access to education, employment, healthcare, and the criminal justice system, resulting in long-term social inequalities. Incidents of racial violence, such as the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in 2020, demonstrate that racial discrimination remains an urgent issue in American society and continues

to provoke public outrage and demands for justice (CBC News, 2021). These realities highlight the importance of examining racial discrimination not only as a historical phenomenon but also as an ongoing social problem.

Literature and film often function as powerful media to reflect social realities and critique injustice. One such film is *Emancipation* (2022), directed by Antoine Fuqua, which portrays the experience of an African American enslaved man named Peter. The film depicts various forms of racial discrimination experienced by the main character, including physical violence, psychological abuse, and systematic oppression under the institution of slavery. Through Peter's struggle to escape captivity and reclaim his freedom, the film presents resistance as a response to racial injustice and dehumanization.

Previous studies on racial discrimination in film have largely focused on representation, stereotypes, and historical narratives. However, limited attention has been given to examining racial discrimination in *Emancipation* by distinguishing between individual and institutional forms of discrimination and connecting them to acts of resistance portrayed by the main character. Therefore, this study is necessary to fill this gap by analyzing how racial discrimination is represented in the film and how resistance is articulated through the character's actions. This study aims to examine the forms of racial discrimination depicted in *Emancipation* and to explain how the main character resists racial oppression, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of racial injustice and resistance as reflected in cinematic narratives.

Previous studies on racial discrimination

Several previous studies have examined racial discrimination in films using different theoretical perspectives. Sufiana, Natsir, and Asanti (2021) analyzed racial discrimination in *Belle* by applying Allport's theory and identified several discriminatory acts experienced by the main character. Julan, Surya, and Valiantien (2021) examined racial discrimination in *12 Years a Slave*, focusing on the experiences of enslaved Black characters under the system of slavery. Aisyia (2021) explored racial discrimination in *The Butler* and highlighted its psychological impacts on Black characters.

Although these studies contribute valuable insights into racial discrimination in film, they mainly focus on identifying discriminatory acts and their impacts. Limited attention has been given to examining racial discrimination in *Emancipation* (2022) by distinguishing individual and institutional discrimination and analyzing resistance as an active response to oppression. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by focusing on the representation of racial discrimination and resistance through the main character within the historical context of slavery.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to analyze the representation of racial discrimination and resistance in the film *Emancipation* (2022). The data were obtained from selected scenes and dialogues that depict acts of discrimination and resistance experienced by the main character, Peter. The researcher collected the data by repeatedly watching the film and identifying relevant visual and verbal elements related to the research focus.

The collected data were analyzed descriptively by classifying the forms of racial discrimination into individual and institutional discrimination. Acts of resistance demonstrated by the main character were then identified and interpreted as responses to racial oppression. The analysis also considered cinematic elements such as camera shots, angles, lighting, sound, and color to support the interpretation of how discrimination and resistance were portrayed in the film.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is dedicated to examining the forms of racial discrimination experienced by the main character in *Emancipation* (2022). By applying Fred L. Pincus's theory (1996) of racial discrimination, the analysis focuses on both individual discrimination and institutional discrimination, revealing how verbal abuse, physical violence, and the system of slavery function to maintain racial oppression.

Racial Discrimination Experienced by the Main Character

In *Emancipation* (2022), racial discrimination experienced by Peter is represented through both individual discrimination and institutional discrimination. Individual discrimination appears in the form of hate speech and physical violence committed by white overseers, while institutional discrimination is reflected in the legalized system of slavery that enables and normalizes such acts of oppression.

One of the clearest examples of individual discrimination is how the slave owners and overseers talk to Peter and the other enslaved people. They often use hateful and hurtful words to insult them and make them feel less important, just to keep them in a lower position.

The scene when Peter was insulted (05:26)



Peter	: “Stay together”
White Overseer	: “I said now, boy”
Peter	: “Do no touch me. I will walk”
White Overseer	: “Damn animat bit me”

The dialogue above reflects individual discrimination through hate speech used by the white overseer toward Peter. The terms “boy” and “animal” are not neutral expressions, but racial slurs intended to humiliate and dehumanize him. By reducing Peter to a child and an animal, the overseer asserts racial superiority and reinforces the power imbalance between white authority and enslaved Black individuals.

One of the clearest examples of individual discrimination in *Emancipation* (2022) is portrayed through physical violence committed by white soldiers against enslaved people. This violence functions as a direct method of control to discipline enslaved individuals.

The Scene When a Soldier Whips an Enslaved Man Who is Exhausted (12:53)



(The worker grunts and yelps in pain)

The sound above functions as an important indicator of violence in the scene. Even in the absence of verbal dialogue, the audible expressions of pain clearly show the physical suffering experienced by the enslaved man. The whipping is used by the soldier to assert dominance and maintain racial hierarchy. This act reflects individual discrimination through violence, as physical force is intentionally inflicted by a white authority figure to control and dehumanize an enslaved Black individual.

In the film *Emancipation*, institutional discrimination is shown through the system that keeps slavery in place. Acts of racial discrimination in the form of Institutional discrimination are shown when a slave owner complains about the government taking his enslaved people to be used for the war. He is upset because he sees them as his property and does not agree with the government’s decision.



Slave Owner : “You tell General Beall, should he impress any more of my property, I will take it up with Jefferson Davis himself. Gonna ruin my business, this taxation. The n*gger’s my best blacksmith.”

The dialogue above illustrates institutional discrimination, as the slave owner refers to the enslaved man as “property” and values him solely for economic benefit. His complaint is directed to a government official, indicating that slavery is protected and regulated by institutional authority. By threatening to report the issue to Jefferson Davis, the slave owner shows how the political system supports his power and prioritizes economic interests over human rights. This scene demonstrates that racial discrimination is not only practiced by individuals but is embedded within legal and governmental structures that normalize the exploitation of Black people.

Resistance Against Racial Discrimination

This section discusses the forms of resistance shown by Peter in *Emancipation* (2022) by applying Carmichael and Hamilton’s concept of Black Power (1967). Peter’s resistance reflects courage, unity, and a refusal to submit to racial oppression, even when facing physical violence.

A powerful demonstration of resistance happens when Peter stands up for a young enslaved boy, Thomas, who the Sergeant is abusing.

The Scene When Peter Stood up for Thomas When Accused by the Sergeant (22:50)



Peter : “He is just a child”

The dialogue above represents a clear act of resistance against racial discrimination. By defending Thomas, Peter refuses to remain silent in the face of injustice and challenges the authority of the Sergeant. His statement shows moral courage and a strong sense of responsibility toward another enslaved person, emphasizing that resistance is not only personal but also collective. Peter’s action reflects Carmichael and Hamilton’s idea of Black Power (1967), particularly the development of a new consciousness and unity among oppressed people. By standing up for Thomas despite the risk of punishment, Peter demonstrates that resistance involves protecting one another and refusing to accept cruelty as normal. This moment shows that true resistance emerges when the oppressed assert their dignity and humanity, even within a violent and oppressive system.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *Emancipation* (2022) presents racial discrimination as a complex phenomenon operating at both individual and institutional levels. Individual discrimination is shown through hate speech and physical violence committed by white authorities, while institutional discrimination is embedded in the legalized system of slavery that normalizes the exploitation and dehumanization of Black people. By applying Fred L. Pincus's theory, this study highlights how personal acts of cruelty are sustained and legitimized by broader social and political structures.

The study also reveals that resistance against racial discrimination is portrayed through the character of Peter as an act of courage, dignity, and collective awareness. Using Carmichael and Hamilton's concept of Black Power (1967), Peter's resistance is not limited to personal survival but extends to protecting others and asserting shared humanity. His actions illustrate that resistance emerges through unity, moral consciousness, and the refusal to accept injustice as normal.

One advantage of this study lies in its combined analysis of discrimination and resistance within a single cinematic narrative, allowing a more holistic understanding of racial oppression and struggle. However, this study is limited to one film and focuses only on selected scenes, which may not represent all possible portrayals of racial discrimination in historical films. Future research may expand the scope by comparing multiple films or applying different theoretical perspectives.

The findings of this study may be applied to literary and film studies, particularly in discussions of race, power, and resistance in historical narratives. Additionally, this research can contribute to educational contexts by encouraging critical awareness of racial injustice and the importance of resistance against oppression.

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AN ANALYSIS OF COORDINATION AND SUBORDINATION IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S SONG BACK TO DECEMBER

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in Taylor Swift's song "Back to December". The focus of this study is to identify, classify, and determine the most dominant types of conjunctions used, as well as explain their contribution to the syntactic structure and emotional meaning in the song lyrics. This study uses a mixed method that combines two methods, namely qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method is used to identify and categorize conjunctions found in the lyrics, while the quantitative method is used to calculate the frequency of their use. The results show that coordinating conjunctions are used more frequently than subordinating conjunctions. The most dominant coordinating conjunction is "and", which functions to connect ideas sequentially and express emotional continuity. Meanwhile, the dominant subordinating conjunctions used such as "because", "when", and "if" function to form logical and conditional relationships between clauses. The use of these conjunctions not only strengthens syntactic cohesion but also contributes to creating a consistent flow of emotions throughout the song lyrics. Thus, the syntactic structure in the lyrics of the song "Back to December" is not only linguistically coherent but also plays an important role in building grammatical harmony and emotional expression.

Keywords: Back to December, coordinating conjunction, subordinating conjunction, syntax, Taylor Swift

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human life. Language can also be used as a medium for self-expression. Not only can self-expression through language, a person can also convey ideas, feelings, and their thoughts and emotions through words. According to Mailani et al. (2023), "Language is the most powerful communication tool in society. Humans use language in everyday life. Language is crucial to the whole of human life. If the use of language can be understood at least according to the speaker's intent and purpose, then the language has achieved its goal, namely, conveying a message in communication." This statement shows that language not only functions in practical communication but also in conveying deeper meanings.

The science that studies a language is known as linguistics. According to Hassan, A. (2012), linguistics is a field of science that studies language scientifically. Which means a language is studied with systematic, structured, accountable methods and has a methodological basis. M. Syahrin Effendi (2012) also stated that "linguistics is a science that studies, analyzes, or analyzes the nature and intricacies of language, especially language in general that humans have as a means of communication, or linguistics is the science of language or the science that investigates language scientifically." Based on this opinion, the emphasis is that the object of linguistic study is language in its entirety, encompassing its various aspects and uses.

Syntax is a branch of linguistics that studies the rules and patterns used to form words into sentences. The word syntax comes from the Greek, specifically, sun meaning "with," tassein meaning "to place." And etymologically, it means putting together words into groups or sentences. Saragi, C. N. (2024) states that "syntax is a branch of linguistics that concerns the arrangement of words in sentences. The arrangement of words must be linear, orderly,

and, of course, must be meaningful." Based on this opinion, it can be said that syntax is closely related to language because it allows words to be arranged into meaningful and easy-to-understand sentences.

Syntax has several important elements, one of which is conjunctions, which connect words, phrases, and clauses to form structured and easy-to-understand sentences. Conjunctions have two parts: the first is the coordinating conjunction. Coordinating conjunctions are conjunctions that connect words or phrases that have the same grammatical structure. Rismayana, Marhum, and Budi (2015) explain, "Coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases, or clauses in the same structure (what is on one side of these words must be parallel to what is on the other side)." Parts of coordinating conjunctions include the words For, And, Nor, But, or, Yet, So. If abbreviated to FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So) to make it easier to remember. Coordinating conjunctions can stand alone and do not depend on other sentences or clauses. Meanwhile, subordinating conjunctions have two functions. First, they are used to subordinate one independent clause to another clause, thereby making it a dependent clause. Second, subordinating conjunctions connect independent and dependent clauses. These subordinating conjunctions are after, although, as if, because, before, even if, although, if, if only, than, since, that, although, unless, until, when, where, whereas, wherever, whether, which, and while. (Illinois Wesleyan Writing Center, 2021.)

We can see that these two types of conjunctions show that syntax not only regulates word order, but also regulates logical relationships between clauses in a sentence. With the presence of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in syntax, ideas in a language can be structured, logical, and expressive. This also applies in literary works, which will be discussed specifically at this time, namely in song lyrics. Thus, syntax through the role of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions is not only a language rule, but also functions as an artistic means in building meaning and the beauty of language in song lyrics.

Lyrics can also be a means of communication that expresses feelings and emotions. Lyrics are a part of music that function as a tool to convey the message of the music. Nathaniel, A., & Sannie, A. W. (2018) stated, "In the lyrics, there are words that are conveyed, like poetry. Song lyrics themselves can be used as a means of depicting important social realities, meaning they are useful for humans to monitor their existence and relationships in the reality of social life."

Literature review

There have been several previous studies on conjunctions in song lyrics, particularly coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Kodong G. (2015) stated that the function and meaning of conjunctions play an important role in a song and that currently most people pay less attention to small things like conjunctions in sentences. Similarly, Nurbaiti's (2022) research shows that many people currently pay less attention to the use of conjunctions in sentences as well. Therefore, she used songs from the album "Mahar Zein" to examine the importance of using conjunctions in every sentence contained in song lyrics. In this study, Taylor Swift's song "Back to December" was chosen as the object of research because the lyrics contain connotative meaning and are quite poetic in expressing feelings and because currently the albums published by Taylor Swift are very popular among teenagers and adults. Through syntactic analysis, this study aims to identify and group sentences that have coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, and ultimately, will determine the use of which conjunction is more dominant in the lyrics of this song.

METHOD

This study used mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). This method provides deeper understanding and analysis of a phenomenon by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The goal of the qualitative method was to identify and classify words in the song lyrics that contain coordination and subordination conjunctions, and to explain the grammatical functions of each type as sources of information. Moreover, the quantitative method sought to identify the most prevalent conjunctions (coordination and subordination) by computing their frequency and percentage in the examined song lyrics.

While the research subject is the source of information for data collection, the object of the study is the primary focus of analysis. The song lyrics, particularly the sentences that contain syntactic elements of coordination and subordination conjunctions, serve as the research object for this study. Meanwhile the collection of clauses and sentences from Taylor Swift's song Back to December serves as the research topic and serves as the foundation for recognizing and examining coordination and subordination patterns.

A research instrument is a particular tool that a researcher uses to gather data for a study in a methodical manner. Because they directly identify and analyze linguistic features the researcher is the main instrument in this study. A number of tools support this function such as data organization tables and typographic markers (bold and italic) to draw attention to words that contain coordination and subordination.

In the analysis of this study, the researchers used a mixed method, qualitative and quantitative. In the qualitative stage, The researchers read to find the words which are conjunctions then marked by using typographic emphasis (bold and italic) to highlight words that functioned as conjunctions in the lyrics. Furthermore, those conjunctions were classified by their type (coordinating or subordinating) and explain their function grammatically to show how these conjunctions contribute to the syntactic structure of the lyrics. In the quantitative stage, the researchers calculated frequency and percentage of each type of conjunction that were found in the song lyrics to reveal the frequency and the most of the conjunction within the song lyric.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Taylor Swift's song "Back to December" reveals the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions to link concepts, feelings, and actions within the lyrics. The conjunctions were classified as either coordinating or subordinating to illustrate their grammatical function, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Identified Conjunctions in the Lyric

No.	Conjunction	Lyric Line	Type	Function
1	and	<i>We small talk, work and the weather</i>	Coordinating	Connects two nouns in a series (work + the weather).
2	and	<i>Your guard is up and I know why</i>	Coordinating	Connects two related independent clauses.
3	because	<i>Because the last time you saw me Is still burned in the back of your mind</i>	Subordinating	Gives the reason or cause for the main clause.
4	and	<i>You gave me roses and I left them there to die</i>	Coordinating	Connects two related independent clauses.
5	and	<i>Standin' in front of you sayin' I'm sorry for that night and I go back to December all the time</i>	Coordinating	Connects two related independent clauses.
6	but	<i>It turns out freedom ain't nothin' but missin' you</i>	Coordinating	Expresses contrast between two ideas (freedom vs. missing).

7	when	<i>Wishin' I'd realized what I had when you were mine</i>	Subordinating	Introduces a temporal clause (shows when the realization relates to).
8	and	<i>I'd go back to December, turn around and make it alright</i>	Coordinating	Connects verb phrases or actions.
9	when	<i>When your birthday passed and I didn't call</i>	Subordinating	Introduces a temporal clause showing when the event occurred that links two clauses.
10	and	<i>When your birthday passed and I didn't call</i>	Coordinating	Connects two verb phrases/actions occurring at the same time.
11	and	<i>I watched you laughin' from the passenger's side and realized I loved you in the fall</i>	Coordinating	Links two sequential independent clauses showing consecutive actions/events.
12	and	<i>And then the cold came, the dark days...</i>	Coordinating	Connects two noun phrases in a sequence of events.
13	when	<i>...the dark days when fear crept into my mind</i>	Subordinating	Introduces a temporal clause (time during which fear appeared).
14	and	<i>You gave me all your love and all I gave you was goodbye</i>	Coordinating	Links two contrasting but balanced independent clauses.
15	and	<i>Standin' in front of you sayin' I'm sorry for that night and I go back to December all the time</i>	Coordinating	Connects two related independent clauses. (Same as no.6)

16	but	<i>It turns out freedom ain't nothin' but missin' you</i>	Coordinating	Expresses contrast between two ideas. (Same as no.7)
17	when	<i>Wishin' I'd realized what I had when you were mine</i>	Subordinating	Introduces a temporal clause. (Same as no.9)
18	and	<i>I'd go back to December, turn around and change my own mind</i>	Coordinating	Connects verb phrases or actions.
19	and	<i>So good to me, so right. And how you held me in your arms...</i>	Coordinating	Links another related idea to show addition or continuation.
20	but	<i>Maybe this is wishful thinkin' ... But if we loved again...</i>	Coordinating	Introduces contrast or shift between two related ideas.
21	if	<i>But if we loved again, I swear I'd love you right</i>	Subordinating	Introduces a conditional (hypothetical) clause.
22	and	<i>I'd go back in time and change it</i>	Coordinating	Connects two verbs/actions in sequence. (Same as no.10)
23	but	<i>I'd go back in time and change it, but I can't</i>	Coordinating	Expresses contrast between two clauses/ideas.
24	if	<i>So if the chain is on your door, I understand</i>	Subordinating	Introduces a conditional clause.
25	but	<i>But this is me swallowin' my pride</i>	Coordinating	Connects the previous clause with the next one to show contrast.
26	and	<i>And I go back to December</i>	Coordinating	Connects to the previous line to continue the story or idea.

27	but	<i>It turns out freedom ain't nothin' but missin' you</i>	Coordinating	Expresses contrast between two ideas (freedom vs. missing).
28	when	<i>Wishin' I'd realized what I had when you were mine</i>	Subordinating	Introduces a temporal clause (shows when the realization relates to).
29	and	<i>I'd go back to December, turn around and make it alright</i>	Coordinating	Connects verb phrases or actions.
30	and	<i>I'd go back to December, turn around and change my own mind</i>	Coordinating	Connects verb phrases or actions.

The following table presents the frequency and percentage of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions that are found in song lyrics, providing a clearer picture of the most frequently used conjunctions.

Table 1. Identified Conjunctions in the Lyric

Type of Conjunction	Conjunctions Found	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Dominant Form
Coordinating	And	16	53%	<i>and</i>
	But	6	20%	
Subordinating	Because	1	3%	<i>when</i>
	When	5	17%	
	If	2	7%	
Total		30	100%	

The findings show that coordinating conjunctions occur more frequently than subordinating ones. The most dominant form is and, reflecting the songwriter's preference for linking ideas smoothly and maintaining emotional continuity. Meanwhile, but serves to contrast emotions and express regret.

Based on the findings and analysis, coordinating conjunctions are found to be used more frequently than subordinating conjunctions in the lyrics of Taylor Swift's song "Back to December." This indicates that the sentence structure in the song's parallel and repetitive sentence structure reflects the songwriter's emotional flow and feelings continuing to exist. In general, a conjunction functions as a connector between words, phrases, and clauses to form a coherent and meaningful sentence.

These findings align with previous research conducted by Kodong G. (2015) and Nurbaiti (2022), which emphasized that conjunctions play a crucial role in forming cohesion and sentence meaning in song lyrics. Consistent with this research, this study also shows that conjunctions are not merely grammatical elements but also function as tools to express and reflect emotional flow. In contrast, this study focuses on analyzing the syntax of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions more specifically in the context of one of Taylor Swift's song lyrics, "Back to December." The following is an in-depth explanation of the use of conjunctions in the song's lyrics.

There are numerous conjunctions in this song's lyrics both subordinating (when, if, because) and coordinating (and & but). This facilitates comprehension, gives the lyrics a smooth flow and accomplishes other goals.

a. Coordinating Conjunctions

1) And

In the lyrics:

*"You gave me roses **and** I left them there to die."*

The use of the conjunction *and* in this lyric combines two actions that occur sequentially within a single context. Syntactically, *and* functions as a coordinating link between two independent clauses. In line with Kodong G. (2015), who stated that conjunctions function to connect one idea chronologically to another, creating a smooth flow of meaning within song lyrics. In this case, the conjunction links two related actions that unfold in sequence, reflecting emotional continuity and coherence in the lyric.

2) But

In the lyrics:

*"It turns out freedom ain't nothin' **but** missin' you"*

The conjunction "but" in the construction "nothin' but" does not connect two clauses, but rather connects two nominal elements in one predicate phrase, functioning as a connector or boundary. This is in line with Kodong (2015), who explains that the conjunction "but" generally expresses contrast, affirmation, or exclusion between two ideas. In this lyric, the use of "but" conveys a relationship that indicates a boundary, thus reflecting how conjunctions can fulfill different syntactic roles while still maintaining their cohesive and expressive functions in song lyrics.

b. Subordinating Conjunctions

1) Because

In the lyrics:

*"Your guard is up **because** the last time you saw me..."*

Because is a subordinating conjunction that introduces an adverbial clause of reason. In this lyric, the conjunction serves to connect the main clause with its causal clause, thus creating a logical connection and deeper emotional meaning. This finding is supported by Kodong (2015), who states that conjunctions express relationships between clauses, such as cause and effect, to clarify the logical meaning of an utterance. Thus, the use of because in this lyric not only fulfills its grammatical function as a marker of reason, but also increases emotional depth by explicitly indicating the cause behind the singer's regret.

2) When

In the lyrics:

*"**When** your birthday passed and I didn't call"*

When acts as a subordinating conjunction that functions as a time adverb clause. In these lyrics, the conjunction "when" is used to mark a temporal and emotional relationship that connects a moment to a memory or connects two actions in a time series. This finding aligns with Kodong (2015), who explains that the conjunction "when" expresses the meaning of time or the interval in which an event occurred. Therefore, in these lyrics, "when" not only indicates a temporal relationship but also strengthens the emotional connection between past events and the singer's feelings in the present.

3) If

In the lyrics:

*"**If** we loved again, I swear I'd love you right"*

“If” is a subordinating conjunction that functions as a conditional clause, stating a condition or requirement. In these lyrics, it expresses an unreal condition, marked by the use of the past tense (loved) and the modal would in the main clause. In line with Kodong (2015), who explains that the conjunction “if” indicates the result or consequence of something that might happen or become reality. In these lyrics, “if” introduces a hypothetical situation that reflects the singer's longing and regret, connecting the grammatical condition with the emotional expression in the lyrics.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in the song “Back to December” not only strengthens the cohesion between clauses but also contributes to creating a consistent and deep flow of emotional nuances in the lyrics of this song.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Taylor Swift’s song Back to December uses both coordinating and subordinating conjunctions to structure its lyrics and convey emotions. Coordinating conjunctions, especially and and but, dominate the text, connecting ideas, actions, and clauses while emphasizing contrasts and emotional shifts. Subordinating conjunctions such as because, when, and if create causal, temporal, and conditional relationships that link events and reflections, adding depth and coherence.

Overall, the combination of these conjunctions strengthens the cohesion and flow of the lyrics, making them both grammatically coherent and emotionally expressive. This analysis demonstrates that conjunctions play a crucial role in shaping meaning, narrative sequence, and emotional impact in song lyrics, highlighting the interplay between linguistic structure and artistic expression.

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WINE, URBAN CULTURE, AND SOCIAL CRITICISM IN ABU NUWAS'S ABBASID POETRY

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Abstract

This study examines how wine imagery in Abu Nuwas's poetry reflects urban culture and functions as social criticism in Abbasid Baghdad. Abu Nuwas (c. 756–814 CE) is one of the most celebrated poets of classical Arabic literature, renowned for his *khamriyyat* (wine poetry). While his wine poems are often read as celebrations of hedonism, this study argues that they serve a more complex cultural function. Using New Historicism as the theoretical framework, this qualitative research analyzes eight selected poems through close reading. The findings reveal that wine imagery operates on multiple levels: representing the cosmopolitan character of Baghdad, negotiating religious authority, exposing social contradictions, and revealing the tension between worldly pleasure and spiritual consciousness. The tavern emerges as a micro-cosmopolitan space where religious and cultural boundaries are crossed. Wine becomes a literary lens through which Abu Nuwas diagnoses and critiques the fragmented nature of Abbasid urban society. This study contributes to the understanding of how classical Arabic poetry engaged with urban experience and social critique, offering insights into the relationship between literature and society in medieval Islamic civilization.

Keywords: Abu Nuwas, Abbasid Dynasty, New Historicism, social criticism, urban culture, wine poetry

INTRODUCTION

The Abbasid Dynasty, spanning from 750 to 1258 CE, stands out as one of the most important periods in Islamic history. The empire witnessed significant advances in politics, trade, science, and the arts (El-Hibri, 2021, p. 1). At the centre of this transformation was Baghdad, which developed into one of the largest urban centres of the medieval world (El-Hibri, 2021, p. 5). Scholars, traders, poets, and craftsmen from diverse backgrounds converged in the capital, creating a lively, cosmopolitan environment characterized by new ideas and cultural exchange (El-Hibri, 2021, pp. 4–6; Kennedy, H., 1981, pp. 18–22).

Arabic poetry changed significantly during this time. Poets began moving away from the old pre-Islamic *qasidah* style and started writing about everyday urban life instead. Abu Nuwas (c. 756–814 CE) became one of the most famous among them. His name is practically tied to *khamriyyat* (wine poetry). His poems do more than just praise drinking. They depict scenes from taverns, musicians playing, merchants doing business, religious figures, and lavish gatherings. His verses provide vivid documentation of Abbasid Baghdad's social and cultural landscape (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 9–10).

Previous scholarship has examined Abu Nuwas from a wide range of perspectives, reflecting the richness of his poetic legacy. Among the most influential studies is Kennedy's *Abu Nuwas: A Genius of Poetry* (2005), which positions Abu Nuwas as the poet who transformed *khamriyyat* from a conventional poetic theme into a sophisticated literary genre. Kennedy (2005, pp. 13–15) argues that wine in Abu Nuwas's poetry is not merely a reference to intoxication but a complex literary image that accommodates themes of pleasure, desire, rhetorical play, and religious ambiguity. He further suggests that the flourishing of wine poetry in an Islamic society where wine was religiously prohibited reveals the cultural complexity of the Abbasid period rather than a simple rejection of religious values (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 57–58). Bencheikh (1963–64, pp. 7–84) provides a comprehensive

analysis of the themes and characters in Abu Nuwas's wine poetry, emphasizing the genre's sophistication and its reflection of Abbasid social life.

Kennedy's interpretation has become a significant foundation for understanding Abu Nuwas's literary achievement. However, his discussion primarily concentrates on the development of *khamriyyat* as a poetic genre and its aesthetic qualities. While he frequently relates the poems to Abbasid society, the relationship between wine imagery, urban culture, and social criticism is not examined as the central focus of his study (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 96–97). This leaves room for further investigation into how wine imagery operates as a representation of everyday urban experience while simultaneously functioning as a vehicle for social critique. Additionally, Wagner (1965, pp. 1–15) offers a comprehensive study of Abu Nuwas's poetry within the context of early Abbasid literature, yet his analysis similarly prioritizes formal and aesthetic considerations over the socio-cultural dimensions of the wine imagery.

Other scholars have approached Abu Nuwas from different analytical perspectives. Nashihah (2024, pp. 10–13), for example, employs Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory to analyze *Al-I'tiraf*, arguing that the poem is structured around the matrix of hope, repentance, and divine forgiveness. Likewise, Khalilah and Siagian (2025, pp. 6–8) examine the metaphors and similes found in the same poem, demonstrating how figurative language communicates the speaker's awareness of sin and the urgency of seeking God's mercy. Montgomery (1996, pp. 114–124) examines Abu Nuwas's poems about Christian boys, revealing the complex interplay between religious identity, desire, and poetic expression. Fathoni (2012, pp. 1–20) analyzes the stylistic features of *Al-I'tiraf*, identifying various figures of speech including *litotes*, *hyperbole*, and *simile*. Zarawaki (2022, pp. 67–68) discusses the stylistic features of Abu Nuwas's poetry, noting that his language style in *Al-I'tiraf* reflects popular diction combined with high literary logic. These studies contribute valuable insights into Abu Nuwas's later religious poetry and the linguistic mechanisms through which spiritual experience is represented.

Documentation and analysis from these recent studies focus primarily on *Al-I'tiraf*, emphasizing repentance and religious symbolism rather than the broader cultural significance of Abu Nuwas's wine poetry (Nashihah, 2024, pp. 3–4; Khalilah & Siagian, 2025, pp. 2–3; Hunaini & Akastangga, 2020, pp. 43–50). Consequently, they provide only limited discussion of how wine imagery engages with the realities of urban life or how it may function as an instrument of social criticism within Abbasid society.

The socio-economic context of Abbasid Baghdad provides essential background for understanding the urban environment in which Abu Nuwas composed his poetry. As Makhmashobrova (2026, pp. 3–5) observes, the Abbasid period witnessed unprecedented urbanization, with Baghdad growing to become the largest city in the world, with population estimates ranging from 500,000 to over one million inhabitants at its peak in the ninth and tenth centuries. The city's extraordinary growth was driven by its position as the political capital, administrative center, and commercial hub of a vast empire, attracting merchants, scholars, artisans, and migrants from across the caliphate and beyond (Makhmashobrova, 2026, p. 4; Kennedy, H., 1981, pp. 86–89). Lassner (1970, pp. 45–60) documents Baghdad's transformation from a military camp into the most cosmopolitan city in the world, while Ashtor (1976, pp. 89–102) provides detailed analysis of the economic conditions that supported this urban growth. The structure of Abbasid metropolitan life was characterized by a high degree of functional specialization and institutional complexity, with markets organized by trade and craft specialization, public infrastructure including elaborate water supply systems, public baths, hospitals, and libraries (Makhmashobrova, 2026, p. 5; Hitti, 2002, p. 346). Goitein (1967, pp. 45–60) demonstrates through analysis of the Cairo Geniza documents that Jewish merchants operated at every level of the Abbasid commercial system, reflecting the cosmopolitan character of Abbasid society.

The cosmopolitan character of Abbasid society is further documented by historians. Kennedy, H. (2004, pp. 1–15) provides a definitive political and social history of the early Abbasid period, noting that the empire encompassed territories stretching from Tunisia to the Indus Valley, incorporating peoples of various ethnicities, languages, and religions. El-Hibri (2021, pp. 4–6) observes that the Abbasid state opened up access to circles of power to new converts to Islam, promising an equality of sorts between Arabs and non-Arabs. This diversity is reflected in Abu Nuwas's poetry, particularly in his depiction of taverns as spaces where religious and cultural boundaries were crossed.

To address the research gap, the present study adopts the perspective of New Historicism, which understands literary texts as products of the historical and cultural conditions from which they emerge while simultaneously participating in the construction of those conditions. Instead of treating Abu Nuwas's poems merely as aesthetic expressions or personal confessions, this study interprets wine imagery as a cultural symbol closely connected to

the cosmopolitan environment of Abbasid Baghdad (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 9–10; El-Hibri, 2021, pp. 4–6). Through close reading of eight selected poems, this research seeks to demonstrate that wine imagery serves multiple functions: representing urban culture, negotiating religious and social tensions, and articulating criticism of the moral contradictions embedded in Abbasid society.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design because its primary objective is to interpret literary texts rather than measure numerical data. The research focuses on understanding how wine imagery functions in Abu Nuwas's poetry and how those images reflect the urban culture and social conditions of the Abbasid Dynasty. Since the study examines meanings, symbolism, and historical context, qualitative literary analysis is considered the most appropriate approach. The research is conducted through the lens of New Historicism, which views literary texts as products of their historical moment while simultaneously recognizing their role in constructing cultural discourse (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 9–10; El-Hibri, 2021, pp. 4–6).

Data Sources

The data for this study are divided into two distinct categories:

Primary Data: The primary data consist of eight selected poems by Abu Nuwas that belong to the *khamriyyat* (wine poetry) tradition. These poems were selected purposively because they contain recurring representations of wine, taverns, urban life, religious figures, and social interactions relevant to the research question. The selection is mainly based on Philip F. Kennedy's *Abu Nuwas: A Genius of Poetry* (2005), focusing on the works discussed in his analysis of wine poetry (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 57–78). The following poems were selected

No.	Poem Title	Diwan Reference	Kennedy Reference
1.	Beloved Wine	D. iii, 188–189	Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 61
2.	Dialogue with a Jewish Taverner	D. iii, 130–132	Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 69–70
3.	Numinous Wine	D. iii, 269–271	Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 71–72
4.	Two Views of Time	D. iii, 316–317	Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 65
5.	Trumping the Theologian	D. iii, 2–7	Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 67–68
6.	Failed Cross-Wooing and an Orgy	D. iii, 256	Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 61–62
7.	Jonah Comes Out of the Whale	D. iii, 61–64	Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 76–77
8.	Al-I'tiraf	Al-I'tiraf, lines 1–10	Nashihah, 2024; Khalilah & Siagian, 2025

Secondary Data: The secondary data include books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and historical studies concerning Abu Nuwas, Abbasid civilization, the development of Baghdad as an urban center, Classical Arabic poetry, and New Historicism. These sources provide the critical historical and theoretical framework necessary for interpreting the poems (Nashihah, 2024, pp. 3–4; Khalilah & Siagian, 2025, pp. 2–3; El-Hibri, 2021, pp. 4–6; Kennedy, H., 1981, pp. 15–22; Makhmashobrova, 2026, pp. 3–5; Zarawaki, 2022, pp. 66–68; Bencheikh, 1963–64, pp. 7–84; Wagner, 1965, pp. 1–15; Montgomery, 1996, pp. 114–124; Fathoni, 2012, pp. 1–20; Hunaini & Akastangga, 2020, pp. 43–50; Ashtor, 1976, pp. 89–102; Lassner, 1970, pp. 45–60; Goitein, 1967, pp. 45–60; Kennedy, H., 2004, pp. 1–15).

Data Collection Technique

The data were collected through library research. Books, scholarly articles, and other academic publications related to Abu Nuwas and Abbasid society were thoroughly reviewed to establish the historical and literary context. The selected poems were then examined repeatedly using close reading techniques to identify recurring images, metaphors, symbols, and themes associated with wine, urban culture, and social criticism (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 13–15). Relevant textual evidence from both the primary poems and secondary historical sources was documented and categorized systematically according to the research objectives.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed through a systematic four-stage process:

1. Identification: Textual units containing wine imagery, metaphors, and related symbols were identified within each of the eight selected poems.
2. Classification: The identified textual findings were classified into specific thematic categories, including representations of urban culture, religious negotiation, and social criticism.
3. Contextualization: The categorized data were interpreted using the principles of New Historicism, explicitly relating the literary representations to the historical, cultural, and social conditions of Abbasid Baghdad (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 9–10; El-Hibri, 2021, pp. 4–6; Kennedy, H., 1981, pp. 86–89).
4. Synthesis: The findings from the textual and historical analyses were synthesized to explain how wine imagery functions as a deliberate literary strategy for portraying urban life and expressing social critique in Abu Nuwas's poetry.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Wine as a Reflection of Urban Culture in Abbasid Baghdad

Before analyzing the selected poems, it is essential to reconstruct the socio-historical reality of the Abbasid period. During this era, Baghdad transformed into a massive, bustling metropolis. The city grew rapidly to become the largest urban center of the medieval world, perhaps only matched in size by Constantinople (El-Hibri, 2021, p. 5). It became an economic and intellectual powerhouse, with goods brought from India, Sind, China, Tibet, the lands of the Turks, the Daylam, the Khazars, the Ethiopians, and others, to such an extent that the products of various countries were more plentiful in Baghdad than in the countries from which they came (El-Hibri, 2021, p. 59). The city's learned society benefited from numerous bookshops and public libraries, becoming a hub for students traveling in search of knowledge (El-Hibri, 2021, p. 5). The urban development of Baghdad was unprecedented in its scale and sophistication. As Makhmashobrova (2026, p. 4) notes, Baghdad grew within a century into the largest city in the world, with population estimates ranging from 500,000 to over one million inhabitants at its peak in the ninth and tenth centuries. Kennedy, H. (1981, pp. 86–89) emphasizes that the city's extraordinary growth was driven by its position as the political capital, administrative center, and commercial hub of a vast empire, attracting merchants, scholars, artisans, and migrants from across the caliphate and beyond. Lassner (1970, pp. 45–60) documents how Baghdad's transformation from a military camp into a cosmopolitan metropolis was facilitated by its strategic location and the caliphs' deliberate policies of urban development. The structure of Abbasid metropolitan life was characterized by a high degree of functional specialization and institutional complexity, with markets organized by trade and craft specialization, and public infrastructure including elaborate water supply systems, public baths, hospitals, and libraries (Makhmashobrova, 2026, p. 5; Hitti, 2002, p. 346).

Driven by commercial prosperity, an influx of diverse cultures, and intense intellectual energy, the city also witnessed widening socioeconomic disparities and profound moral tensions. The rapid expansion of the capital fostered the growth of new social spaces, including taverns, entertainment venues, and private elite gatherings. These spaces became institutionalized fixtures of urban life and, consequently, found a prominent place in contemporary poetry. Abu Nuwas rarely addresses the theme of wine in a vacuum of personal indulgence. Instead, he systematically anchors *khamriyyat* within vivid urban settings. His verses frequently depict wine alongside taverns, performing musicians, active merchants, intellectual companions, and even religious authorities. This recurring pattern demonstrates that wine functions as more than a mere intoxicant; it serves as a social signifier of city life. It highlights a cosmopolitan culture defined by luxury, cross-cultural encounters, and leisure. Through these representations, wine becomes a primary literary lens through which Abu Nuwas maps the realities of Abbasid Baghdad (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 57–58). Bencheikh (1963–64, pp. 7–84) provides extensive analysis of the social contexts depicted in Abu Nuwas's wine poetry, noting that the poet's tavern scenes accurately reflect the diversity and complexity of Abbasid urban society.

It should be noted, however, that Abu Nuwas's perspective is that of an elite male poet closely connected to the caliphal court and urban literary circles. His representation of urban life therefore reflects a particular social stratum rather than providing a comprehensive portrait of Abbasid society. The poems depict taverns, courtly gatherings, and elite leisure, while the lives of ordinary Baghdadis, peasants, and women remain largely absent from his verses

except as objects of desire or social commentary (Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 15). This limitation should be kept in mind when interpreting the social significance of his wine poetry.

Kennedy, P. (2005, p. 57) argues that Abu Nuwas elevated *khamriyyat* into a sophisticated genre capable of carrying deeper cultural meanings. He suggests that the flourishing of wine poetry in an Islamic society where wine was religiously prohibited reveals the cultural complexity of the Abbasid period rather than a simple rejection of religious values (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 57–58). This assertion gains weight when the poems are contextualized historically. The wine imagery captures a shifting social world where newfound wealth and multicultural interactions were forging distinct urban identities. From a New Historicist perspective, these poems function as discursive responses to the poet's immediate environment rather than detached, fictional celebrations of intoxication. El-Hibri (2021, pp. 4–6) notes that the Abbasid state brought radical change after the Umayyad period in the way it opened up the Islamic empire, transitioning from the "Arab" kingdom to a more inclusive society that opened access to circles of power to new converts to Islam.

This cultural embedding is evident in *Beloved Wine*, where wine is personified using language traditionally reserved for a revered companion, signaling its centrality in the speaker's cultural landscape:

Do not reproach me over wine, my friend,
Do not scorn me with a frown for drinking;
Merciful God has decreed a love for her of me
And of those with whom I pass the time;
My heart has fallen for her, and this passion has made me think little
Of spending upon her all the valuables I own;
I have become insane for [this] delicate virgin
Who is excessively violent in the glass and headstrong.
You would consider her cup in the mixing to be decked out
In the headdress of a bride;
She rends the veil of one's heart, provoking
Innermost secrets to be divulged.
(D. iii, 188–189; Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 61)

Similarly, in *Dialogue with a Jewish Taverner*, the text positions the tavern as a heterogeneous space where commerce, diverse religious identities, and urban leisure intersect:

Remember true friends whose mounts I led
To a taverner's house, arriving at midday;
His "zunnar" girdle told us he was not a Muslim,
So we thought well of him though he thought ill of us...
When the time for prayer drew near, you would see them
Ask for more wine so that it might pass them over in a drunken state!
(D. iii, 130–132; Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 69–70)

These literary examples demonstrate that wine is deeply woven into the social fabric of Abbasid Baghdad, operating simultaneously as a rhetorical device and a cultural symbol for the complexities of urban life.

Abu Nuwas's wine poetry did not emerge in isolation; it was part of a broader tradition that included pre-Islamic poets such as al-A'sha (d. c. 629), whom Abu Nuwas frequently acknowledged as his literary forebear (Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 14). Al-A'sha's wine poetry, like that of Abu Nuwas, often depicted drinking scenes and the pleasures of intoxication, though without the same degree of urban sophistication that characterized the Abbasid period. By building on this tradition while transforming it to reflect the cosmopolitan realities of Abbasid Baghdad, Abu Nuwas demonstrated both his literary debt to earlier poets and his innovative engagement with contemporary urban culture.

The Tavern as a Cosmopolitan Space

Among the selected poems, *Dialogue with a Jewish Taverner* offers a stark representation of Abbasid urban geography. In contrast to classical Arabic poetry, which traditionally anchors its themes within desert landscapes or tribal encampments, Abu Nuwas deliberately shifts the setting to the indoor tavern. This spatial transition is highly significant; the tavern is depicted not merely as a site for consumption, but as a dynamic social arena where individuals cross religious and cultural boundaries. The tavern, therefore, serves as a micro-cosmopolitan

reflection of greater Baghdad. The cosmopolitan character of Abbasid society is well documented by historians. El-Hibri (2021, pp. 4–6) observes that the Abbasid state opened up access to circles of power to new converts to Islam, promising an equality of sorts between Arabs and non-Arabs. Kennedy, H. (1981, pp. 18–22) describes the vast diversity of the Abbasid Empire, which encompassed territories stretching from Tunisia to the Indus Valley, incorporating peoples of various ethnicities, languages, and religions. Makhmashobrova (2026, p. 6) notes that the cosmopolitan character of Abbasid society, in which Arab, Persian, Turkic, Indian, African, and Central Asian populations interacted within a shared cultural and economic framework, contributed significantly to the dynamism and creative productivity of the Golden Age. Goitein (1967, pp. 45–60) demonstrates through analysis of the Cairo Geniza documents that Jewish merchants operated at every level of the Abbasid commercial system, from local retail trade to major transcontinental partnerships, reflecting a degree of economic integration that was exceptional by pre-modern standards. This diversity is reflected in Abu Nuwas's poetry, particularly in his depiction of taverns as spaces where religious and cultural boundaries were crossed.

A striking element of the poem is the characterization of the Jewish tavern keeper. Instead of portraying him as a marginalized outsider, Abu Nuwas depicts him as an active participant in everyday urban commerce. Economic transactions, linguistic wit, and shared leisure occur seamlessly across sectarian lines. This representation implies that daily life in the capital operated through pragmatic interactions that often bypassed rigid theological divisions:

We asked, "Are you of the religion of Christ, the son of Mary?"
At which he turned away from us and uttered some foul words;
[No he was] a Jew who appears to love you
Yet secretly harbors betrayal;
We asked, "What is your name?" He replied, "Samuel;
However, I am known by the "Kunya" Abu 'Amr ("Father of 'Amr")
Though I have no son of that name!
An Arab "Kunya" has done me no honor,
Nor filled me with pride, or given me high rank,
But the name is light and has few letters,
And is not burdensome like others."
So we said to him, admiring the grace of his speech:
"You speak eloquently, so do as well with the
wine that you serve us!"
(D. iii, 130–132; Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 69–70)

The narrative also deliberately subverts religious expectations. When the call to prayer sounds, the speaker and his companions choose to remain in the tavern, requesting another round of wine to evade the sober responsibilities of worship. This moment functions less as a dogmatic rejection of Islam and more as an exposure of the friction between institutional piety and urban realities. This contrast highlights a society where personal desire, public morality, and religious mandates existed in a constant state of negotiation.

From a New Historicist viewpoint, this textual episode reflects the broader cultural atmosphere of Abbasid Baghdad, where material prosperity and intellectual pluralism reshaped everyday experience. El-Hibri (2021, pp. 4–6) notes that the Abbasid state brought radical change after the Umayyad period in the way it opened up the Islamic empire, transitioning from the "Arab" kingdom of the Umayyads to a more inclusive society. The Abbasid state instead opened up access to circles of power to new converts to Islam, promising an equality of sorts between the Arabs and non-Arabs (El-Hibri, 2021, p. 5). The tavern symbolizes an urban space where normative social structures are suspended, identities interface, and cultural boundaries become fluid. Through this setting, Abu Nuwas portrays Baghdad not as a static ideological capital, but as a complex urban center defined by coexistence and internal contradictions. These poems do not merely reflect cosmopolitan realities; they participate in constructing cultural discourse by presenting the tavern as a legitimate space for cross-cultural interaction and intellectual exchange.

This cosmopolitan consciousness is further reinforced in *Numinous Wine*, where the poet attributes a historical lineage to the wine, linking the immediate act of consumption to an ancient, pre-Islamic heritage:

Youth answered to her call
After she had passed quite beyond old age,
For she is a wine [preserved] for the day when she is pierced,
Though an edge ahead of Time in years;

She is so antique that were she to acquire
An eloquent mouth and tongue,
She would sit like an elder among the people, upright,
And regale them with tales of ancient nations.
A hand created for the pen or the sword
"Struck" her [with water] in the mixing
Among elite and noble companions
Who take their pleasures when they are within reach...
(D. iii, 269–271; Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 71–72)

Negotiating Religious Authority through Wine Imagery

Wine imagery in Abu Nuwas's poetry extends beyond mere descriptions of hedonistic pleasure; it serves as a vehicle for interrogating religious authority and exposing the divergence between doctrinal ideals and social practice. Rather than launching a direct assault on religious institutions, Abu Nuwas constructs literary scenarios where sacred values and profane desires are forced to coexist, generating the thematic tension central to his *khamriyyat*. The religious context of Abbasid Baghdad was complex and multifaceted. As El-Hibri (2021, pp. 4–6) notes, the Abbasid state was characterized by religious diversity, with Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Sabians enjoying a legally protected status. Kennedy, H. (1981, pp. 15–17) observes that the early Abbasid system represented a sustained attempt to reconcile the ideals of Islam with the demands and constraints of secular government. This tension between religious ideals and political realities is reflected in Abu Nuwas's poetry, particularly in his negotiation of religious authority through wine imagery.

This strategy is evident in *Two Views of Time*, which contrasts two competing philosophies of existence. One voice advocates for ascetic restraint and preparation for the eschatological future, while the opposing voice emphasizes the fleeting nature of time and the urgency of immediate worldly gratification. Abu Nuwas allows both perspectives to occupy the same poetic space without offering an immediate moral resolution:

Stop at the abode of the departed,
And cry if you are melancholy;
Ask the abode, "When did your residents leave?" We have asked
But it refuses to reply.
O Daughter of the Sheikh, give us drink this morning!
Why do you linger so?
A lissome sap runs through you,
Now make wine flow through us.
We only ever drink, Be certain of this,
That which is anathema
To the draught of the pious.

Turn the wine away from a miser
Who has found religion in frugality;
Time begins to drag on for him
So he fears the Hour approaching.
(D. iii, 316–317; Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 65)

A parallel rhetorical approach governs *Trumping the Theologian*, where the speaker pits the authority of lived, sensory experience against scholastic orthodoxy. The poem is famous in medieval texts for the first line and the last two, which are directed against the Mu'tazilite theologian Ibrahim al-Nazzam. Among the tenets of Mu'tazilism is that there can be no divine forgiveness for grave sins (*Kaba'ir*), only for relative misdemeanors (*Sagha'ir*) (Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 68). Wine emerges as a symbol of liberation, whereas the theologian personifies moral discipline and doctrinal certainty. Utilizing irony and humor, the poem challenges the absolute jurisdiction of moral dogmatism over human nature:

Do not scold me for it tempts me all the more,
Cure me rather with the cause of my ill
A pale [wine] whose house is not visited by sorrows
Which imparts joy even to the rock that touches it...
Tell him who would claim philosophy as part of his knowledge:

"You have learned some things, but much more escapes you;
Do not deprive [me] of God's forgiveness, if you yourself
Would abstain from sin;
To deprive me of this would be a blasphemy."
(D. iii, 2–7; Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 67–68)

This juxtaposition does not necessarily invalidate religious tenets. Instead, it exposes the operational gap between ideal principles and urban conduct.

Through a New Historicist lens, these poems illuminate the intellectual climate of the Abbasid court and capital, where theological debates, legal scholarship, elite indulgence, and literary innovation advanced simultaneously. The coexistence of these conflicting forces created a highly contested cultural field. Abu Nuwas captures this friction by refusing to reify religion and pleasure as absolute binaries, converting wine imagery into a contested literary site where opposing values collide without immediate resolution. This negotiation between religious authority and worldly desire reflects the broader social dynamics of Abbasid Baghdad, where the caliphal court, religious scholars, and urban elite all competed for cultural influence while participating in a shared urban environment (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 9–10). By staging theological debates within poetic texts, Abu Nuwas participates in the construction of cultural discourse rather than merely recording it.

Wine as a Vehicle of Social Criticism

Reducing Abu Nuwas's khamriyyat to simple hedonistic celebrations overlooks their function as a medium for social critique. Wine frequently operates as a literary device to expose the structural contradictions of Abbasid society. Rather than relying on overt moralizing, Abu Nuwas allows scenes of drinking, courtly entertainment, and urban excess to lay bare these societal paradoxes. The socio-economic context of Abbasid Baghdad provides important background for understanding this critical function. As Makhmashobrova (2026, p. 5) documents, the Abbasid period witnessed the development of sophisticated financial instruments that facilitated long-distance trade and generated enormous commercial wealth. El-Hibri (2021, p. 5) notes that Baghdad grew rapidly to become the largest urban center of the medieval world, becoming an economic and intellectual powerhouse. Ashtor (1976, pp. 89–102) demonstrates that the kharaj (land tax) collected from agricultural producers constituted the single largest source of caliphal revenue, generating an annual income estimated at 300–400 million dirhams during the peak Abbasid period. However, this wealth simultaneously widened the chasm between public piety and private behavior among the ruling class.

Kennedy, H. (1981, pp. 15–17) observes that the early Abbasid period was characterized by intense rivalries within the ruling elite, with succession disputes and provincial rebellions serving as mechanisms for expressing political differences.

This critical tendency is prominent in poems such as *Failed Cross-Wooing* and *an Orgy*, where consumption is inextricably linked to courtly luxury, wealthy patrons, and extravagant banquets. These depictions mirror the material realities of the Abbasid ruling class, whose private indulgences often stood in direct opposition to the Islamic moral standards they publicly upheld. Abu Nuwas adopts an ambiguous stance; he neither explicitly condemns nor idealizes this elite sphere, inviting the reader to discern the moral vacuum beneath the luxury:

Quick to your morning drink and delight yourself, my man!
Defy those who boorishly fault your love.
Throw off all shame and amuse [those] that are sad;
Follow them around wherever they go.
May the light-hearted libertine experience joy
And an easy life and obtain the good things!
May it rain upon a gathering of youths with whom I carouse,
Among whom there is no idiocy!
This one is for that one just as this one and this other are for that:
A gathering all in order, its rope of union utterly intact.
(D. iii, 256; Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 61–62)

The same mechanism underpins *Beloved Wine*. By elevating wine to the status of a beloved entity, the poetic language displaces traditional social and religious commitments. Devotion is transferred from orthodox virtues to aestheticized pleasure, quietly challenging the dominant hierarchy of values in urban society:

Merciful God has decreed a love for her of me
And of those with whom I pass the time;
My heart has fallen for her, and this passion has made me think little
Of spending upon her all the valuables I own;
I have become insane for [this] delicate virgin
Who is excessively violent in the glass and headstrong.
(D. iii, 188–189; Kennedy, P., 2005, p. 61)

Historically, these poems respond directly to the unique economic shifts in Baghdad. El-Hibri (2021, p. 5) notes that Baghdad grew into an economic powerhouse characterized by unparalleled commercial influx and material prosperity. The resulting wealth opened vast avenues for cultural experimentation. However, this economic boom simultaneously widened the chasm between public piety and private behavior among the ruling class. Abu Nuwas documents these fractures without offering prescriptive solutions, forcing the reader to confront a society negotiating the pressures of wealth, dogma, and political power.

While the primary focus of this study is wine poetry, it is worth briefly noting that the hunting poems from Abu Nuwas's corpus further illustrate this connection between elite leisure and social critique. In poems such as *A Saluki Hound*, the poet celebrates the aristocratic pursuit of hunting with detailed descriptions of hounds, cheetahs, and falcons (Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 111–117; Smith, 1990, pp. 1–15). While these poems appear to focus on the chase itself, they also reveal the privileged lifestyle of the Abbasid elite, for whom such pursuits were markers of status and refinement. The hunting poem, like the wine poem, thus functions as a cultural document that records the leisure activities of the ruling class while simultaneously exposing the gap between their public piety and private indulgence.

Between Pleasure and Repentance: The Contradictory Voice of Abu Nuwas

A defining characteristic of Abu Nuwas's literary corpus is its refusal to remain anchored to a singular moral position. The same poet who celebrated the transgressions of the tavern also composed profound verse detailing guilt, human frailty, and eschatological anxiety. Rather than viewing these two trajectories as mutually exclusive anomalies, New Historicism treats them as dual expressions of the fragmented Abbasid urban experience.

This psychological and spiritual split is clear in *Jonah Comes Out of the Whale*, where the poet invokes the prophetic narrative of Jonah to symbolize human transgression and the subsequent quest for redemption. The scriptural allusion introduces a solemn dimension that directly confronts the hedonism of the *khamriyyat*, demonstrating that spiritual consciousness persists despite a life spent in excess. As Kennedy, P. (2005, pp. 75–77) notes, the poem's essential antithesis is contrived through a redemption story that lies latent in the imagery to the same degree as the events of the narrative. Spiritual reflection remains achievable even within a literary corpus famous for its worldly focus:

Frivolity could not divert me from plunging into the midst of [wine's] fray
And I did not fail to respond to its rallying cries
Until, lo! Grey hair surprised me by its appearance,
How hateful is the appearance of cursed grey hair
In the eyes of beautiful women; when they see its appearance,
They announce severance and separation from love.
Now I regret the mistakes I have made
And the misuse of the times prescribed for prayer.
I pray to you, God, praised be Your name!, forgive me
Just as You, Almighty One, forgave Him of the
Fish (Jonah)!
(D. iii, 61–64; Kennedy, P., 2005, pp. 76–77)

This thematic shift culminates in *Al-I'tiraf*, a text starkly removed from the celebratory tone of his wine poetry. Here, the poetic persona stands stripped of urban pretense, directly acknowledging personal sin while appealing to divine grace. The poem explicitly documents Abu Nuwas's expressions directed toward God, detailing a raw confession of sins that increased daily alongside his urgent pleas for repentance (Nashihah, 2024, p. 2).

Zarawaki (2022, pp. 67–68) notes that Abu Nuwas's style in *Al-I'tiraf* reflects popular diction, characterized by simple vocabulary such as "*firdaus*" (paradise), "*taubah*" (repentance), and "*dzunub*" (sins), yet these simple words

are combined with high literary logic that conveys deep meaning. Fathoni (2012, pp. 1–20) identifies that the poem employs various figures of speech including litotes, hyperbole, simile, and anaphora, demonstrating Abu Nuwas's mastery of rhetorical devices even in his religious poetry. Hunaini and Akastangga (2020, pp. 43–50) analyze the psychology of the main character in Al-I'tiraf, revealing the depth of emotional struggle and spiritual transformation that the poet experiences.

Nashihah (2024, pp. 12–13) posits that the semantic matrix of the poem is grounded in "the hope of a servant," while the structural model relies on "repentance and forgiveness," with its conceptual variants explicitly unfolding across the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth stanzas. Similarly, Khalilah and Siagian (2025, pp. 6–8) observe that the metaphors and similes underscore the immense weight of transgression alongside the temporal urgency of seeking mercy:

إِلَهِي لَسْتُ لِلْفِرْدَوْسِ أَهْلًا
وَلَا أَقْوَى عَلَى النَّارِ الْجَبِيمِ
فَهَبْ لِي تَوْبَةً وَاعْفُ ذُنُوبِي
فَإِنَّكَ غَافِرُ الذَّنْبِ الْعَظِيمِ
ذُنُوبِي مِثْلُ أَعْدَادِ الرَّمَالِ
فَهَبْ لِي تَوْبَةً يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ

Al-I'tiraf, lines 1–6)

"O my God, I am not worthy of Paradise,
And I cannot endure the torment of Hell.
So grant me repentance and forgive my sins,
For You are the Forgiver of great sins.
My sins are like the number of sands,
So grant me repentance, O Lord of Majesty!"
(Al-I'tiraf, lines 1–6; Nashihah, 2024, pp. 7–8; Khalilah & Siagian, 2025, p. 4)

وَعُمْرِي نَاقِصٌ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ
وَذَنْبِي زَائِدٌ كَيْفَ اخْتِمَالِي
إِلَهِي عِنْدَكَ الْعَاصِي أَتَاكَ
مُقِرًّا بِالذُّنُوبِ وَقَدْ دَعَاكَ

(Al-I'tiraf, lines 7–10)

"My life decreases every day,
And my sin increases—how can I bear it?
O my God, Your sinful servant comes to You,
Confessing his sins, and he has called upon You."
(Al-I'tiraf, lines 7–10; Khalilah & Siagian, 2025, pp. 7–8)

When read alongside his wine poetry, these verses reveal a multifaceted literary identity. Abu Nuwas does not transition linearly from sinner to saint; rather, his work showcases a continuous, cyclical negotiation between worldly desire and spiritual dread. Rather than viewing these two poetic registers as contradictory anomalies, New Historicism understands them as dual expressions of the fragmented Abbasid urban experience, where spiritual consciousness and worldly desire existed in continuous negotiation (El-Hibri, 2021, pp. 4–6). While the khamriyyat celebrate worldly pleasure, Al-I'tiraf represents the other side of the same urban experience—the guilt and spiritual anxiety that coexisted with material indulgence in Abbasid Baghdad. This contrasts sharply with the celebratory tone of the khamriyyat, where wine is personified and praised, suggesting that the same urban experience could generate both indulgence and guilt.

This internal contradiction mirrors the structural divisions of Abbasid Baghdad itself. The city was concurrently a global epicenter of material wealth, intellectual freedom, orthodox Islamic scholarship, and institutional power. By leaving his poetic voice suspended between the tavern and the mosque, Abu

Nuwas delivers an authentic cultural record of his historical moment. Wine, ultimately, ceases to be a simple motif and becomes the precise critical lens through which the poet diagnoses, challenges, and immortalizes the fragmented nature of Abbasid civilization.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that wine imagery in Abu Nuwas's poetry serves multiple functions that extend far beyond mere celebration of intoxication. The analysis of eight selected poems reveals that wine operates as a sophisticated literary device for representing urban culture, negotiating religious authority, exposing social contradictions, and articulating the tension between worldly pleasure and spiritual consciousness in Abbasid Baghdad.

The findings show that Abu Nuwas systematically anchors his *khamriyyat* within vivid urban settings, depicting taverns, musicians, merchants, and religious figures as integral components of the cosmopolitan landscape of Baghdad. The tavern emerges as a micro-cosmopolitan space where religious and cultural boundaries are crossed, reflecting the diverse and inclusive character of Abbasid society. Wine imagery also serves as a vehicle for interrogating religious authority, exposing the gap between doctrinal ideals and social practice without necessarily rejecting religious tenets outright.

Furthermore, wine functions as a medium for social criticism, exposing the structural contradictions of Abbasid society—particularly the disparity between public piety and private indulgence among the ruling class. The study also reveals that Abu Nuwas's literary voice remains suspended between celebration and repentance, reflecting the fragmented nature of Abbasid urban experience where material wealth, intellectual freedom, religious orthodoxy, and institutional power coexisted without resolution.

The study has several limitations. First, it focuses exclusively on eight selected poems, which may not fully represent the breadth of Abu Nuwas's *khamriyyat* corpus. Second, the analysis relies primarily on Kennedy's translations and interpretations, which may limit the scope of original interpretation. Third, the study adopts the perspective of New

Historicism, which, while valuable, represents only one of many possible theoretical approaches to Abu Nuwas's poetry. Future research could explore other theoretical frameworks, such as postcolonial theory or gender studies, to examine different dimensions of Abu Nuwas's work. Additionally, comparative studies with other Abbasid poets or with wine poetry from other traditions could provide further insights.

This research contributes to the understanding of how classical Arabic poetry engaged with urban experience and social critique, offering insights into the relationship between literature and society in medieval Islamic civilization. By examining how Abu Nuwas's notorious reputation for wine poetry coexists with his ascetic and repentance poems, this study reveals the complex negotiation between worldly desire and spiritual consciousness that characterizes his literary corpus. Wine, ultimately, ceases to be a simple motif and becomes a critical lens through which the poet diagnoses and immortalizes the fragmented nature of Abbasid civilization.

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NETIZENS'S ASSERTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN INDONESIAN AND FILIPINO CELEBRITIES' INSTAGRAM COMMENT SECTIONS

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Abstract

This study examines the use of assertive speech acts by netizens in two celebrities' Instagram comment sections from different countries: Nikita Mirzani, an Indonesian actress with a controversial public image, and Christian Bautista, a Filipino singer widely recognized for his positive reputation. The main objective of this research is to identify the function of assertive speech acts employed by netizens when responding to the posts uploaded by both celebrities. Using a qualitative approach, the data were collected from one Instagram post from each celebrity featuring their daily life activities and analyzed based on Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, classification of speech acts. The findings reveal that evaluation was the most dominant function of assertive speech acts used by netizens in both Instagram accounts. However, there were differences in the focus of assertive speech act use between the two accounts. In Nikita Mirzani's account, netizens tended to use assertive speech acts related to her personal life, family relationships, and public image. In contrast, comments on Christian Bautista's account primarily focused on the activities presented in the post.

Keywords: Assertive, comments, function, netizen, speech act

INTRODUCTION

An important area of study in pragmatics is the study of speech acts, which focuses on how language is used to perform social actions. (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). Mention that a speech act is an action done in uttering, an act done in saying something. This means that when a person speaks, they are not just arranging a series of words but also performing a social action through their utterance. He further divided speech acts into five main categories. Assertive binds the speaker to the truth of a proposition, such as stating, reporting, or claiming. Directives aim at getting the interlocutor to do something, such as by requesting, ordering, or suggesting. Commissive commits the speaker to some course of action in the future, like promising, swearing, or offering. Expressive expresses the speaker's psychological state or attitude, e.g., praising, thanking, criticizing. Finally, declarations change social reality by being uttered, for example, in announcing, deciding, or pronouncing marriage.

Previous research has shown that the distribution of speech acts is very context-dependent. Directive speech acts are dominant in classroom interactions, as found by (Ghozali et al., 2024), due to the role of teachers in organizing, guiding, and managing student participation. Similar research was done by (Rostiana & Novari, 2021) in the context of public interviews. For example, in the podcast between Deddy Corbuzier and Siti Fadilah Supari the assertive speech acts were used more to express opinion, report information and claim facts. On the other hand, (Fahmi & Rustono, 2018) researched speech acts in argumentative debates. They found that assertive speech acts were also dominant because they were used to convince and defend arguments.

Another research study conducted by (Izyra & Sartini, 2023) investigated the use of speech acts in promotional videos for rural tourism in Indonesia (Pesona Indonesia) and Malaysia (Malaysia Truly Asia). They found that both promotions frequently used assertive speech acts to convey information using Searle's (1979) theory.

Furthermore, (Zalikha & Dian Budiarti, 2024) analyzed the speech acts of judges on Indonesia's Next Top Model. Their results showed that assertive speech acts were the most frequently used ones to convey opinions or evaluations, followed by expressives like praise, criticism, disappointment, appreciation, directives such as suggestions or directions, commissives, such as promises to provide opportunities, and declaratives, used when the judges announce contestant eliminations.

The rise of digital media has also paved new ways to study speech acts, especially in social media interactions. For example, (Paradifa & Fatmawati, 2024) investigated netizens' comments on Nadiem Anwar Makarim's Instagram account. This research found various directive speech acts such as asking for solutions, recommending policies, asking for follow-up, criticizing and even forbidding some policies. These findings suggest that social media serves as a pragmatic space where people communicate their aspirations in a direct way. In another context, (D. L. Ramadhani et al., 2025) investigated the expressive speech acts in the comment section on the Instagram account @pratiwinoviyanthi_real2. They identified a range of expressive forms, from praise, prayers, empathy, and gratitude to criticism or sarcasm. This finding indicates that social media commentary is a space for varied emotional expression, encompassing both positive sentiments (support, appreciation) and negative ones (criticism, protest). (F et al., 2024). Mention that Instagram comments served as a medium through which netizens expressed various attitudes and perceptions toward public issues by employing different types of speech acts. (Nafila & Ningsih, 2024). Shows that Instagram comment sections serve as an active space for pragmatic interaction. (Simanullang & Fatmawati, 2024). Their research findings indicate that social media comments contain diverse communicative functions. (Nafi et al., 2026). Found that representative speech acts were employed to explain ideas, express statements, and deliver information to the audience. (Novelly & Indriyani, 2025). In their research finding got the diverse functions of assertive speech acts in Instagram-based communication. (K. S. Ramadhani & Rido, 2025). In their research found that expressive illocutionary acts help maintain a balance between emotion, humor, and authority in her message, which can help her to build solidarity with the audience, deliver inspiration, and emphasize the values of resilience and self-acceptance.

In general, previous studies have validated that social media is a rich pragmatic platform. Speech acts are not only found in directive forms such as requests, demands, and prohibitions but also in expressive forms like praise, empathy, and criticism. In this sense, assertive speech acts are of particular interest to study as they are often used by netizens to express opinions, claims and information about public figures. This study pays attention to assertive speech acts in netizen comments on Instagram posts of two celebrities, Nikita Mirzani as the representative artist from Indonesia and Christian Bautista as the representative artist from Philippines. Nikita Mirzani was chosen because she represents a controversial public figure in Indonesia who has elicited diverse netizen responses, while Christian Bautista was chosen because he represents a public figure with a positive image in the Philippines. The comparison of the two gives rise to opportunities for a more in-depth analysis of the variation of assertive speech acts on social media across cultures. Due to their different cultural backgrounds and different public reputations, the netizens' comments are expected to have special assertive patterns.

Instagram, being a global platform, offers a more open space for communication, so that assertive speech acts are more varied than those found in formal contexts. No comparative study has previously investigated the function of assertive speech acts in the comments of netizens on two celebrities from different countries. This study is therefore important in filling that gap by extending the analysis of speech acts from formal settings to the cross-cultural digital one. It sheds light on the public's negotiation of opinions, criticisms, and social judgments through language on social media, and at the same time, it uncovers how the identities and perceptions of Indonesians and Filipinos are reflected in their assertive language choices towards public figures.

METHOD

The data source for this study was taken from netizens' comments when interacting with Indonesian and Filipino celebrities through the comments section on Instagram social media posts. The object of this study was the assertive speech acts used by netizens in their comments. The observed posts were limited to one Instagram post from each celebrity: Nikita Mirzani from Indonesia and Christian Bautista from the Philippines. The posts observed were posts from 2024, to ensure that the comment section in that year had stabilized and there were minimal new comments. Furthermore, the selection of post themes was also limited to posts that showcased the daily activities of the two celebrities to find more diverse and natural netizen speech acts. Christian Bautista's Instagram post was uploaded on September 27, 2024. The post was a tutorial video showing him cooking his own breakfast. This video attracted 1,866 likes and 52 comments. Nikita Mirzani's post, which served as the data source, was uploaded on January 2, 2024, with 241 comments from netizens. The post shows eight family photos,

including Nikita and her two sons, Arkana and Azka, while abroad. Nikita Mirzani's appearance appears more reserved than usual. Data were collected using the observation method. The techniques used were documentation and note-taking. The data were then analyzed qualitatively using pragmatic theory from (Yule, 2017) and speech act theory from (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). The stages of data analysis are data reduction, classification, interpretation, and concluding. The results of the analysis are presented in formal form supported by tables and informally in the form of descriptive descriptions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that netizens actively use assertive speech acts when commenting on Nikita Mirzani and Christian Bautista's Instagram posts. The functional categories of assertive speech acts and their frequency of use can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Use of Assertive Speech Acts in Celebrity Instagram Comments

No	Assertive Function	Nikita Mirzani's Instagram Account	Christian Bautista's Instagram Account
1	Statement of Opinion	4 (19%)	1 (8%)
2	Providing Information	4 (19%)	2 (17%)
3	Claim	3 (14%)	1 (8%)
4	Evaluating	10 (48%)	8 (67%)
	Total	21 (100%)	12 (100%)

Table 1 shows the use of assertive speech acts by netizens. The four categories of functions are: expressing opinions, conveying information, evaluating, and claiming. On both accounts, assertive speech acts were most frequently used by netizens to provide assessments. On Nikita Mirzani's Instagram account, assertive speech acts were most frequently used to provide assessments of Nikita Mirzani's physical appearance, character, and life changes. On Christian Bautista's account, assertive speech acts were used to provide assessments of Christian Bautista's lifestyle and appearance. The interactions found in Christian Bautista's comments section illustrate the admiration and positive appreciation from his followers for Christian Bautista as a celebrity. Meanwhile, the interactions depicted on Nikita Mirzani's account show personal assessments and subjective interpretations of Nikita Mirzani made by netizens. The use of assertive speech acts by netizens in the comments sections of the two celebrities' Instagram accounts is discussed below.

1. Statement of Opinion

(Searle & Vanderveken, 1985) states that this opinion statement function is used to convey the speaker's subjective views, beliefs, or interpretations of a particular situation, event, or object. The tendency seen among netizens when commenting is to express their personal views on the character, physical appearance, and lives of these two celebrities from Indonesia and the Philippines. The use of this function in the comment's column of Nikita Mirzani's Instagram account can be seen in data 1- 4.

Data 1

@ririvelani_ : *"saya paling respect sama nyai... karena nyai sangat sayang sama putra putrinya"*
 "I really respect to Nyai... because Nyai really loves her sons and daughters"

Data 2

@Anakameh09 : *"aku suka dengan nyai yang sekarang"*
 "I like the current version of Nyai."

Data 3

@Aphiah644 : *"gw jadi suka niki karena dukung perabowo"*
 "I've started to like Niki because she supports Prabowo."

Data 4

@anonimanonim8965: *"Menurutku musuh yang paling nyata NM adalah n4mir4h dan dr.o, akibat ulah mereka berdua yang suka ngompor2in utk melakukan pemerasan PD rg, bijaklah dlm memfilter teman. Enak tuh dr.O udah live di tik tok jualan"*.
 "In my opinion, NM's biggest enemies are N4mir4h and Dr. O. Because of the things they did, they often provoked her into allegedly extorting RG. People should be wiser

in choosing and filtering their friends. Meanwhile, Dr. O seems to be doing well now, going live on TikTok and selling products."

Data 1- 4 above are categorized as an assertive speech act based on (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985) classification of speech acts. These four data contain statements of opinion conveyed by the speaker, showing the speaker's subjective views on the character, attitudes and actions carried out by Nikita Mirzani. In data 1, the speaker says "I really respect nyai", this utterance is a marker used by the speaker to provide a subjective view when commenting on Nikita Mirzani's attitude as a mother. The part "because nyai really loves her sons and daughters" is a reason that supports the previous phrase and causes the speaker to have this opinion. Nikita Mirzani is a celebrity who is often in the spotlight regarding her personal life. She is a single mother raising her children. Seeing Nikita Mirzani's post with her two sons shows that Nikita is a strong mother figure and continues to strive to give the best love to all her children.

The same function is also seen in the utterance of data 2. The comment from this speaker is a subjective view of Nikita's character, who is currently more closed and focused on her children. Nikita Mirzani is an artist with always controversial news, but through this post, Nikita seems to want to change her bad image to the public. The utterance "I like the current version of nyai" shows a change in Nikita's character observed by the speaker, and the phrase "I like" is a subjective marker used by the speaker. Data 3 contains the speaker's subjective view of Nikita's actions. Nikita openly supports the Prabowo and Gibran pair in the 2024 Presidential Election. This action taken by Nikita influences the speaker's perception, who states, "I like Niki because she supports Prabowo". The phrase "I like it" shows a subjective view marker, and the part "because I support Prabowo" explains the reason for the speaker's positive response in her comment. Data 4 is a statement of opinion because it begins with the linguistic marker "in my opinion," which confirms that at that time the speaker was giving his opinion about the parties who influenced the legal case that Nikita was facing. The function of expressing opinions on Christian Bautista's Instagram account can be seen in data 5.

Data 5

@amelmimha: "if there is an easy way, why choose the hard way?"

The utterance used by netizens in data 5 is an assertive speech act that functions to express an opinion. The speaker provides a subjective view of an action, namely a cooking method considered more practical. The comment is delivered rhetorically to emphasize the speaker's opinion. This opinion refers to the simple cooking technique used by Christian Bautista to prepare breakfast as a more efficient choice than more complex methods. This utterance indicates that the speaker agrees with Christian Bautista's actions.

Nikita Mirzani's post with her children can change netizens' perceptions and present a more positive image of her, thus eliciting positive comments expressing opinions. The four data points above represent netizens' use of the opinion-expressing function in Nikita Mirzani's comments section. Netizens provide subjective views of Nikita's personal life, depicted through the use of linguistic markers such as "I respect the most," "I like," "I like it," and "in my opinion." The cooking post on Christian Bautista's account fosters more positive interactions with netizens. Netizens used the comments section to share their opinions about Christian Bautista's simple lifestyle despite being a famous singer in both Indonesia and the Philippines.

2. Providing Information

According to (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985), the function of conveying information is also part of assertive speech acts because it is used by speakers to convey facts, observations, or certain situations believed to be true based on their knowledge or observations. In posts uploaded by Nikita Mirzani and Christian Bautista, netizens also used the comments section as a medium to convey situations believed to be true based on their knowledge and observations of the lives of the two celebrities.

Data 6

@lisa_yuliska : "kurang 1 anaknya ☹"
: 1 child missing ☹"

Data 7

@kimvjk01 : "kedua anaknya happy aja sama mami nya gak protes gimana pun dia seorang ibu yang melahirkan nya".

"Both children are happy with their mother and don't complain, no matter what, she is the mother who gave birth to them."

Data 8

@abdulazis_zein : "*Prabowo presiden 2024*"
"Prabowo the President in 2024"

Data 9

@ mayones1709 : "*topinya kembaran sama Toni*"
"The hat is same as Toni's"

Data 6 contains the function of conveying information because the speaker conveys information based on facts. Nikita Mirzani is known to have three children, and in this post, Nikita is only seen photographed with her two sons and her eldest daughter, Loli, is not there. This comment shows information that, according to the speaker's observation, the photo is incomplete because there is one child who is not present, as in her statement, "one child is missing." This post also seems to depict Nikita Mirzani's determination as a mother whose family's condition is under public scrutiny. Data 7 also contains the function of conveying information because the speaker conveys her observations about the photo post. What the speaker observed was the happy expression of Nikita's two children so the speaker conveys her observations by using the phrase "both children are happy with their mother." Data 8 has the function of conveying information because the speaker conveys factual information regarding the political results in 2024. The reason why the speaker put this information in the comments section of Nikita's post is that Nikita is active and gave her support for Prabowo. Data 9 also contains the function of conveying information because the speaker conveys her observations regarding the similarities in attributes worn by Nikita. This comment is descriptive because it only conveys information about the similarity of Nikita's hat to the hat of someone named Toni. The use of the information function in Christian Bautista's account can be seen in Data 10-11.

Data 10

@ bujibabiera : "*walang natapon...nung kumakain*"
"*tidak ada yang tumpah saat makan*"
"Nothing was spilled while eating."

Data 11

@ jstensoloq : "The oil"

Data 10 and data 11 are examples of utterances used by netizens to convey information. A cooking video uploaded by Christian Bautista invited netizens to comment, sharing their direct observations of the cooking activity depicted in the video. The information in data 10 concerns with the way of Christian Bautista enjoy his breakfast without any spills. This information was observed by the speaker while watching the video posted by Christian Bautista. In data 11, the speaker provides information about the ingredients used when Christian Bautista cooked. Netizens pay attention to visual details, which are then relayed in descriptive and factual form based on their observations of the posts.

The information conveyed by netizens on Nikita Mirzani and Christian Bautista's accounts is influenced by their respective celebrity images. On Nikita Mirzani's account, netizen provide the information by connecting the post to Nikita Mirzani's personal life, while the information provided by netizens on Christian Bautista's account is obtained from direct observation of the activities depicted in the content.

3. Evaluation

According to (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985), the assessment function in assertive speech acts is used to convey the speaker's evaluation, appreciation, or assessment of a person, object, or situation. The use of the assessment function can be seen in Data 12-15.

Data 12

@dina_honesty : "*mirip banget yg bungsu sama pamannya... sama2 handsome boys*"
"The youngest one looks so much like his uncle... they're both handsome boys."

Data 13

@tentang_tiw82 : "*dia bukan cuma wanita yang hebat tapi ibu yang tangguh, sehat selalu Niki*"
"She is not only a great woman but also a strong mother. Stay healthy, Niki."

Data 12 and 13 are assertive speech acts that function to provide an evaluation. The speaker uses the phrase "the youngest one looks so much like his uncle". This phrase indicates an evaluation made by netizens by comparing

the physical appearance of Nikita's youngest child and his uncle, which netizens consider to be similar. The next phrase, "they are both handsome boys," also strengthens the previous netizen evaluation. In data 12, netizens provide an assessment of the physical characteristics they see in the post. In data 13, netizens provide an assessment of Nikita Mirzani's character and role as a woman and mother. The phrases "a great woman" and "a strong mother" are associated by netizens with Nikita Mirzani's life journey as a single mother and her career journey in the celebrity world. Nikita is known as a controversial artist and is often reported in the media.

Data 14

@ezr4leonardo : *"ang sgrap naman nito... breakfast mo Po.Kuya ko si @xtianbautusta Stay healthy always Po. God Bless"*
"Sarapanmu terlihat sangat lezat. Tetap sehat selalu. Tuhan memberkati."
"Your breakfast looks very delicious. Stay healthy always. God bless."

Data 15

@ali.muklis.359126 : "very simple breakfast"

Data 14 and 15 are assertive speech acts that function to provide an assessment. The element of assessment in data 14 is found in the phrase "ang sarap naman nito" or "your breakfast looks very delicious". This phrase indicates that the speaker is evaluating the food that looks delicious. Data 15 is a netizen's evaluation of the breakfast type in the post. The phrase "very simple" indicates that the speaker thinks the breakfast prepared by Christian Bautista looks simple.

Netizens consider Christian Bautista to have a simple lifestyle, unlike most celebrities. The video of him cooking his own breakfast is a plus point for Christian because it makes him even more admired by netizens. The evaluating function on Nikita Mirzani's account is more directed at Nikita's personal assessment, while the evaluating function on Christian Bautista's account is more situational, referring to the activities depicted in the post.

4. Claim

Claims are a form of assertive speech act used by netizens to state a proposition that is believed to be true, even though its truth cannot be proven directly (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). The use of this function can be seen in data 16-18.

Data 16

@finniarahma : *"kenapa anaknya ga ada yang mirip sama bapaknya ya, si Aska bapaknya bule padahal"*
"Why don't any of her children look like their father? Even Azka's father is a foreigner."

Data 17

@aanmirzani94 : *"tapi aku sangat yakin kalo kakak loly akan kembali ke pelukan aminya soon ya teman-teman, trust me deh"*
"But I'm very sure that Lolly will return to her mother's embrace soon, guys. Trust me."

Data 16 and 17 are utterances that have a claim function. Netizens already have prior knowledge about Nikita Mirzani's ex-husband, who is a foreign citizen. In data 16, the speaker is making a claim about the face of Azka, the son of Nikita and her ex-husband, who is a foreigner. The claim is made in the form of a question by the netizen to convey a belief they have. From this utterance, it appears that the netizen implicitly claims that Nikita Mirzani's child does not show any resemblance to their father's face. In contrast to data 17, the claim made by the netizen is about an event that has not yet occurred. The phrases "I am very sure" and "trust me deh" indicate a very high confidence held by the speaker. The speaker is very confident that Nikita's eldest child, Loly, will regain consciousness and reunite with Nikita. This comment is related to the news that was attracting public attention at that time about the family conflict experienced by Nikita and her eldest daughter, Loli. Data 18 illustrates the use of assertive speech acts with a claim function in Christian Bautista's account.

Data 18

@hello.jerome : *Vegan tapos biglang may Mayo? 🤔*
"Katanya vegan, tapi tiba-tiba ada mayones? 🤔"
"They said it was vegan, but then suddenly there's mayonnaise? 🤔"

Data 18 also represents an utterance with a claim function. Here, the speaker is making a claim regarding alleged inconsistencies in the menu and ingredients. The speaker watched the video and assumed that the breakfast menu Christian wanted to make was vegan, but mayonnaise was included as one of the ingredients in the video. The speaker claims that mayonnaise is not vegan. The claim is based on the speaker's interpretation of the video posted by Christian.

The claim function found in Nikita Mirzani's account is constructed by netizens by making assumptions and predictions about something in the post and connecting it to information they know from previous media coverage. In contrast, on Christian Bautista's account, netizens use the claim function in their utterances by constructing interpretations purely based on Christian Bautista's activities in the video post.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Indonesian and Filipino celebrity Instagram accounts, four assertive speech acts were used by netizens in the comments section: expressing opinions, conveying information, evaluating, and claiming. Assertive speech acts were most frequently used by netizens to provide evaluation. On Nikita Mirzani's Instagram account, assertive speech acts functioned to provide evaluation of Nikita Mirzani's physical appearance, character, and life changes. On Christian Bautista's account, assertive speech acts were used to provide evaluation of Christian Bautista's lifestyle and appearance. The interactions found in Christian Bautista's comments section reflected the admiration and positive appreciation of Christian Bautista as a celebrity from his followers. Meanwhile, the interactions depicted on Nikita Mirzani's account showed personal assessments and subjective interpretations of Nikita Mirzani by netizens. The expression of opinion function was used by netizens to express subjective views about the characters and activities displayed by both celebrities in their posts. On Nikita Mirzani's account, netizens' opinions were mostly related to character, changes in self-image, the role of motherhood, and political choices. Meanwhile, on Christian Bautista's account, netizens' opinions focused more on the daily activities and simple lifestyle displayed by Christian in the video. The information conveying function on Nikita Mirzani's account was related to family life and relationships between family members. In contrast, on Christian Bautista's account, information focused more on cooking activities and visual details contained in the posts. The claim function found on Nikita Mirzani's account was constructed by netizens by making assumptions and predictions about something in the post and connecting it with information they knew from previous media reports. In contrast, on Christian Bautista's account, netizens carried out the claim function in their speech by constructing interpretations purely based on the activities carried out by Christian Bautista in the video post. Overall, the results of the study indicate that there are differences in the focus of the use of assertive speech acts. Comments on Nikita Mirzani's account tended to be related to Nikita Mirzani's personal life, family relationships, and public image, while comments on Christian Bautista's account focused on commenting on the activities in the posts displayed.

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SOUND PATTERNING AND MEANING CONSTRUCTION IN LEAVES OF GRASS: SONG OF MYSELF A PHONO-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse how sound patterning contributes to meaning construction in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* through a phono-stylistic approach. The study addresses the limited attention given to phonological features as a meaning-making mechanism, since previous research has focused mainly on thematic and lexical aspects. Employing a qualitative method supported by quantitative sound-frequency analysis, the study examines selected lines from *Song of Myself*. Data were collected through close reading and phonetic transcription using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The analysis focuses on consonants, vowels, alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetition, and phonological foregrounding (Simpson, 2004; Leech & Short, 2007). The findings show that soft consonants support themes of harmony and unity, while plosive consonants reinforce identity construction. Long vowels enhance musicality and reflection, whereas repetition and parallelism emphasize key ideas. The study concludes that sound patterning functions not only aesthetically but also semantically in constructing poetic meaning.

Keywords: Meaning construction, poetry analysis, phonological features, phono-stylistics, sound patterning, Walt Whitman

INTRODUCTION

Language is an important tool in human life because it serves as a means of communication that conveys a wide range of information. All human activity is basically interconnected through communication. In the absence of communication, humans tend to live independently and even in opposition to one another. As social creatures, humans cannot live alone and have always needed interaction with others. Language is a written and spoken form of communication based on a system of symbols (Santrock, 2010, p. 67). Such opinions indicate that language plays a key role in building social relationships and the process of transmission of meaning between individuals. In addition, Abdul Chaer (2014) explains that language is an arbitrary system of non-existent sound that humans use for cooperation, communication, and identification. Language can also be a means of self-expression because through one's language one can convey his feelings, ideas, and thoughts to others (Karyaningsih, 2018, p. 130). In literary studies, language is recognized not only as a tool for communication but also as an artistic medium used to create aesthetic value and meaning. According to René Wellek and Austin Warren (1949), literature reflects human life and experiences through imaginative language. Fundamentally, literary works are manifestations of human self-expression that integrate experiences, thoughts, and beliefs into concrete forms to evoke a sense of wonder through the medium of language (Sumardjo & Saini, 1997). As a creative endeavor, literature possesses a complex, interrelated structure that gives rise to a cohesive artistic whole (Wellek & Warren, 2014).

Therefore, the linguistic aspects of literary works are creatively constructed through the selection of vocabulary, the intensity of imagery, and the interplay of symbols and sound patterns to create a profound aesthetic impression on the reader. Sound patterns in literary texts are not merely decorative auditory elements, but rather an organization of phonetic elements that play a functional role in reinforcing tone and emotional atmosphere (Pradopo, 2014). Technically, these patterns are manifested through the orchestration of sounds such as alliteration, assonance, and rhyme, which work simultaneously to create a specific musicality or rhythm. As explained by Sayuti (2002), the presence of sound patterns or rhythm is the "soul" that breathes life into literary language,

enabling the text to transform denotative meaning into a profound aesthetic experience for the reader. Through the mechanisms of euphony (melodious sounds) and cacophony (harsh sounds), the author consciously directs the reader's inner perception to align with the intensity of the message being conveyed.

According to Geoffrey N. Leech (1969), stylistics is the study of language use in literary works, focusing on the relationship between linguistic form and its aesthetic effects. Thus, stylistic analysis is essential for understanding how meaning is constructed in literary works. Stylistic studies have long been at the heart of literary and linguistic analysis, focusing on how linguistic choices through vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical devices shape meaning, tone, and emotional resonance in a text. Stylistic analysis allows researchers to explore how writers and speakers make deliberate decisions in their use of language and how these choices contribute to the overall aesthetic and communicative impact of their work. According to Bradford (2013), stylistics is the study of how language is used in literary and non-literary texts, focusing not only on the meaning of words but also on how the structure and form of language shape the meaning and emotional impact of a text. Wales (2014), on the other hand, offers a more detailed perspective, describing stylistics as the study of expressive language use and its function in various communicative contexts. Wales emphasizes that stylistics goes beyond structural analysis of texts and seeks to understand the relationship between language, power, and ideology, specifically how certain linguistic features are used to influence and engage readers. Simply put, stylistics emphasizes language structure, focusing on the rules, patterns, and conventions that govern meaning. However, a more nuanced and critical approach has emerged with the development of phonostylistics, a subdiscipline that investigates the role of sound in communication. Phonostylistics extends stylistic analysis into the realm of phonetics, examining how sound through pitch, stress, rhythm, and timbre interacts with language to evoke emotions, enhance thematic content, and convey meaning (Al-Hindawi & Hussien, 2020).

In phonostylistics, auditory features such as intonation, prosody, and timbre play a crucial role in influencing the emotional and cognitive interpretation of a text. Alowonle (2013) highlights the importance of phonological patterns, demonstrating that writers and performers deliberately manipulate sounds to evoke specific emotional responses. This expands traditional linguistic perspectives by demonstrating that sound patterns, whether in speech or music, are just as important in shaping meaning as the words themselves. Phonostylistic devices such as rhythmic variation, alliteration, and vocal stress are not mere embellishments but essential tools that artists use to enhance the emotional depth and resonance in their works (Gafurov, 2020). Among the literary genre that highlights the use of aesthetic language is poetry. Poetry is so concise, expressive, and imaginative that each language element has a meaning and function. In poetry, poets often use the elements of sticism such as reps, metaphors, rhythm, alliteration, and origination to strengthen messages and create musical effects. Roman Jakobson (1960) explains that the function of language pickling emphasizes the shape of the message itself so that the sound pattern and the structure of the language become important elements of poetry. Thus, fonosticism studies can be used to analyse the relationship between sound patterns and the construction of meaning in the poetry.

One of the poems known for the richness of figures and sound patterns is *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. It is regarded as a significant milestone in American literature because of the use of the innovative free verse form and the exploration of strong sound and rhythm. According to Harold Bloom (2003), Whitman had a profound impact on the development of modern American poetry through the free and expressive use of language. In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman explored the themes of individuality, democracy, humanity, and human relationships with nature through the peculiar use of poetic language. According to Harold Bloom (2003), Whitman had a profound impact on the development of modern American poetry through the free and expressive use of language. In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman explored the themes of individuality, democracy, humanity, and human relationships with nature through the peculiar use of poetic language. Hence, it is interesting to examine through the fonosticism approach to understand how sound patterns and figures of speech are used to build meaning and create aesthetic effects in poetry. Previous studies on phonostylistics have been conducted by several researchers. For instance, Zhu (2021) investigates stylistic changes across different editions of the work using computational methods, revealing shifts in lexical choice and emotional tone over time. Meanwhile, Akakpo-Dome (2022) examines linguistic elements in Whitman's death poems, highlighting phonetic, syntactic, and semantic features that contribute to the poet's distinctive style. Additionally, Pedada (2020) analyses the dynamics of language in *Leaves of Grass*, focusing on symbolism, metaphor, and Whitman's representation of human experience.

However, previous research has primarily emphasized stylistic elements without specifically addressing the relationship between sound patterns and meaning construction in *Leaves of Grass*. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by applying a phonostylistic approach to analyze how sound devices contribute to meaning construction in Whitman's poetry.

Literature review

Stylistics and Phono-Stylistics

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics that studies language use in literary and non-literary texts. It focuses on how linguistic choices create meaning and aesthetic effects in a text. According to Geoffrey N. Leech and Mick Short (2007), stylistics connects linguistics and literary criticism by analyzing how language functions in literary works. Through stylistic analysis, readers can understand how authors use language creatively to express ideas, emotions, and artistic values.

One important area in stylistics is phono-stylistics, which examines the relationship between sound patterns and meaning in literary texts. Phono-stylistics studies phonological elements such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhythm, and rhyme to identify how sound contributes to aesthetic and emotional effects in literature (Verdonk, 2002). In poetry, sound devices are often used intentionally to strengthen themes, create musicality, and influence readers' interpretations. Paul Simpson (2004) explains that repeated sound patterns can function as foregrounding because they attract readers' attention and make certain expressions more significant. Likewise, Mick Short (1996) states that phonological repetition helps create cohesion and symbolic meaning in literary texts. These ideas show that sound patterns in poetry are not only decorative elements but also contribute to meaning construction.

Previous studies have explored phonological features in poetry through stylistic approaches. For instance, Verdonk (2002) emphasized the role of sound patterns in creating aesthetic effects in literary texts. Similarly, Simpson (2004) examined foregrounding and phonological repetition as important stylistic devices in poetry. However, these studies mainly focused on general stylistic analysis rather than the relationship between sound patterning and meaning construction in *Leaves of Grass*. Therefore, this study focuses on the phonostylistic analysis of selected poems in *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. This research aims to explain how sound devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhythm contribute to meaning construction and aesthetic effects in Whitman's poetry. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the relationship between sound patterns and meaning using a phonostylistic approach, especially in Whitman's free verse poetry.

Foregrounding Theory

Foregrounding theory was developed by the Prague School linguists to explain how literary language becomes more noticeable through deviation and repetition. Jan Mukařovský (1964) argues that literary language differs from ordinary language because it creates artistic emphasis. Repeated sound structures, such as alliteration and assonance, help readers focus on important parts of a text. In addition, Geoffrey N. Leech (1969) states that foregrounding can appear at phonological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic levels. In poetry, phonological foregrounding is commonly found through repeated consonant and vowel sounds that strengthen rhythm and meaning.

Sound Patterning in Poetry

Sound patterning is one of the important elements in poetry because it creates rhythm, musicality, and emotional effect. According to M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham (2015), alliteration refers to the repetition of initial consonant sounds, while assonance refers to repeated vowel sounds and consonance refers to repeated consonant sounds within nearby words. These sound devices help make poetry more expressive and memorable. Research in stylistics also shows that certain sounds may create particular emotional impressions. Katie Wales (2014) explains that soft sounds such as /s/ and /m/ often create calm and smooth impressions, while stronger sounds such as /t/ and /d/ may produce emphasis and intensity. In Whitman's poetry, repeated sounds contribute to the flowing and reflective atmosphere that characterizes his free verse style. Based on these theories and previous studies, this research applies a phonostylistic approach to analyze sound patterning and meaning construction in selected poems from *Leaves of Grass*.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative stylistic approach to analyze how sound patterning contributes to meaning construction in *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. Stylistics is concerned with the analysis of linguistic features in literary texts to explain how meaning is constructed through language use (Leech & Short, 2007). In this study, a phonostylistic perspective is used to examine phonological elements such as consonants, vowels, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and repetition. In addition, this research applies a limited quantitative element through

frequency counts of phonological features to support the qualitative interpretation, following Creswell's (2014) view that qualitative research may incorporate simple quantitative data to strengthen analysis.

Data Source

The data source of this study is selected poems from Leaves of Grass, especially Song of Myself, which is widely recognized for its rich sound patterns and free verse style. The data were selected purposively by focusing on lines containing dominant phonological features such as repetition, alliteration, and assonance. This selection was intended to ensure that the data were relevant to the objectives of the study and representative of Whitman's poetic style.

Data Collection

The data were collected through close reading, which is commonly used in literary studies to identify significant linguistic elements in a text (Carter, 2010). The selected poetic lines were then transcribed into the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to facilitate phonological analysis. After that, phonological features were identified and classified into several categories, including consonant sounds, vowel sounds, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and repetition.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted through two stages: phonological analysis and stylistic interpretation. First, the phonological features were analyzed to identify dominant sound patterns in the selected poetic lines. Frequency counts were also applied to determine the occurrence of particular sound features. Second, the identified sound patterns were interpreted stylistically to explain their contribution to meaning construction in the poems. The concept of phonological foregrounding proposed by Simpson (2004) and Leech and Short (2007) was used to examine how repeated sounds create emphasis and attract readers' attention. Through this approach, the study explains how sound patterning functions not only as an aesthetic device but also as a meaningful stylistic strategy in Whitman's poetry.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents two tables featuring transcribed lines of the poem, highlighting selected segments for consonants and vowels.

Table 1. Sound of Consonant

Poem	Phonetic Transcription	Dominant Sound Pattern	Stylistics Effect
I celebrate myself	/aɪ 'sɛləˌbreɪt maɪ'sɛlf/	Repetition of /s/ and /l/	Creates a soft and flowing rhythm that reflects calm self-expression
And what I assume you shall assume	/ænd wʌt aɪ ə'su:m ju ʃæl ə'su:m/	Repetition of /s/ and /ʃ/	Produces harmony and emphasizes connection between speaker and reader
For every atom belonging to me	/fɔr 'ɛvri 'ætəm bɪ'lɔ:ŋŋ tə mi:/	Repetition of /m/ and /b/	Suggests continuity and unity through smooth consonant sounds
As good belongs to you	/æz gʊd bɪ'lɔ:ŋz tə ju:/	Repetition of /g/ and /b/	Creates emphasis on inclusiveness and equality
I loafe and invite my soul	/aɪ loʊf ænd mɪ'vaɪt maɪ sʊl/	Repetition of /l/ and /v/	Builds a relaxed and reflective atmosphere
I lean and loafe at my ease	/aɪ li:n ænd loʊf æt maɪ i:z/	Repetition of /l/ and /m/	Produces a calm and meditative tone

Observing a spear of summer grass	/əb'zɜrvɪŋ ə spɪr əv 'sʌməɹ græs/	Repetition of /s/ and /r/	Enhances musicality and natural imagery
Houses and rooms are full of perfumes	/'haʊzɪz ænd ru:mz ər fʊl əv pər'fju:mz/	Repetition of /f/ and /r/	Creates sensory richness and smooth rhythm
The shelves are crowded with perfumes	/ðə ʃɛlvz ər 'kraʊdɪd wɪð pər'fju:mz/	Repetition of /f/ and /f/	Strengthens the poetic sound texture and atmosphere
I breathe the fragrance myself	/aɪ bri:ð ðə 'freɪgrəns maɪ'sɛlf/	Repetition of /f/ and /ð/	Produces softness and intimate sensory expression

Table 2. Sound of Vowels

Poem	Phonetic Transcription	Dominant Sound Pattern	Stylistics Effect
I celebrate myself	/aɪ 'sɛlə breɪt maɪ'sɛlf/	Repetition of /aɪ/ and /e/	Creates openness and lyrical flow
And what I assume you shall assume	/ænd wʌt aɪ ə'su:m ju ʃæl ə'su:m/	Repetition of /u:/ and /ə/	Produces rhythmic continuity and harmony
For every atom belonging to me	/fɔr 'ɛvri 'ætəm bɪ'lɔ:ŋŋ tə mi:/	Repetition of /ə/ and /v/	Creates balanced and reflective sound quality
As good belongs to you	/æz gʊd bɪ'lɔ:ŋz tə ju:/	Repetition of /u:/ and /ə/	Reinforces smoothness and emotional warmth
I loafe and invite my soul	/aɪ loʊf ænd ɪn'vaɪt maɪ soul/	Repetition of /oʊ/ and /aɪ/	Creates a meditative and expansive tone
I lean and loafe at my ease	/aɪ li:n ænd loʊf æt maɪ i:z/	Repetition of /i:/ and /eɪ/	Produces softness and relaxed rhythm
Observing a spear of summer grass	/əb'zɜrvɪŋ ə spɪr əv 'sʌməɹ græs/	Repetition of /ə/ and /æ/	Enhances natural imagery and musicality
Houses and rooms are full of perfumes	/'haʊzɪz ænd ru:mz ər fʊl əv pər'fju:mz/	Repetition of /u:/ and /ə/	Creates richness and sensory impression
The shelves are crowded with perfumes	/ðə ʃɛlvz ər 'kraʊdɪd wɪð pər'fju:mz/	Repetition of /e/ and /u:/	Produces rhythmic cohesion and poetic texture
I breathe the fragrance myself	/aɪ bri:ð ðə 'freɪgrəns maɪ'sɛlf/	Repetition of /i:/ and /eɪ/	Strengthens reflective and intimate mood

The findings show that sound patterning plays an important role in constructing meaning and aesthetic effects in *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. Rather than functioning merely as decorative elements, repeated consonant and vowel sounds contribute to rhythm, emphasis, emotional tone, and thematic reinforcement throughout the poem. The phonological patterns found in the selected lines demonstrate how Whitman uses sound strategically to support the reflective and expansive nature of his free verse poetry.

Dominant Consonant Sounds and Stylistic Function

The analysis indicates that soft consonant sounds such as /s/, /l/, /m/, and /f/ appear dominantly in many poetic lines. The repetition of /s/ creates a smooth and flowing rhythm that contributes to the calm and meditative atmosphere of the poem. For example, in the lines “I celebrate myself” and “Observing a spear of summer grass,” the recurring /s/ sound produces musicality and softness, reinforcing Whitman’s reflective tone. Similarly, the repetition of /l/ in lines such as “I lean and loafe at my ease” creates a relaxed and fluid sound quality that reflects the speaker’s peaceful state of mind.

In addition, consonant repetition functions as phonological foregrounding because repeated sounds attract readers’ attention to specific expressions and ideas (Simpson, 2004). The repeated use of /m/ and /b/ sounds in “For every atom belonging to me” strengthens the sense of continuity and unity, which are central themes in Whitman’s

poetry. These consonant patterns help emphasize ideas of interconnectedness between the self, humanity, and nature.

Dominant Vowel Sounds and Meaning Construction

The findings also show that repeated vowel sounds contribute significantly to the poem's musicality and emotional resonance. Vowel sounds such as /aɪ/, /u:/, and /ə/ frequently occur throughout the selected lines. The repetition of /aɪ/ in expressions like "I celebrate myself" creates an open and expansive sound that reflects self-awareness and individuality. Meanwhile, the repeated /u:/ sound in "And what I assume you shall assume" produces rhythmic continuity and harmony, reinforcing the intimate relationship between the speaker and the reader. Furthermore, vowel repetition creates emotional and symbolic effects within the poem. Soft and elongated vowel sounds contribute to the meditative and flowing quality characteristic of Whitman's free verse style. These sound patterns support meaning construction by reinforcing themes of freedom, unity, self-expression, and spiritual reflection. In this sense, phonological elements do not function independently from meaning, but rather work together with diction and imagery to shape readers' interpretation of the poem.

Sound Repetition and Aesthetic Effect

The repetition of consonant and vowel sounds also contributes to the aesthetic beauty of the poem. Whitman's use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance creates rhythmic harmony despite the absence of regular rhyme patterns typical of traditional poetry. This stylistic feature reflects the flexibility of free verse while maintaining poetic musicality. Through repeated sounds, Whitman develops a natural rhythm that mirrors the organic flow of thought and emotion in the poem.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that sound patterning in *Leaves of Grass* functions not only as an aesthetic device but also as a meaningful stylistic strategy. The dominant sounds and repeated phonological structures reinforce thematic meanings and strengthen the emotional impact of the poem. Therefore, the phonostylistic approach helps reveal how sound and meaning are closely interconnected in Whitman's poetry.

Table 4. Total of Vowels Sounds (20 Vowels)

No	Vo we ls	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L1 0	L1 1	L1 2	L1 3	L1 4	L1 5	To tal
1	/i:/	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	17
2	/ɪ/	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
3	/e/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
4	/æ/	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18
5	/ʌ/	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	17

6	/ɑ:/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
7	/ɒ/	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
8	/ɔ:/	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	8
9	/ʊ/	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
10	/u:/	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
11	/ə/	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	33
12	/ɜ:/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
13	/eɪ/	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	10
14	/aɪ/	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5
15	/ɔɪ/	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	8
16	/aʊ /	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	8
17	/əʊ /	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
18	/ɪə/	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7

19	/eə/ /			0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
20	/ʊə/ /			0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	5

Based on Table 4, the most dominant vowel sound is the schwa /ə/ with a total frequency of 33 occurrences. This vowel is followed by /ɪ/ (19), /æ/ (18), and /i:/ and /ʌ/ (17 each). The high frequency of schwa indicates the natural rhythm and conversational tone characteristic of Whitman's free verse poetry. According to Verdonk (2002), neutral vowels such as schwa contribute to the smooth flow of poetic language because they reduce rhythmic rigidity and create a more natural speaking pattern. This supports Whitman's attempt to imitate everyday speech and spontaneous expression in poetry.

Long vowels such as /i:/ and diphthongs like /aɪ/ and /əʊ/ also appear repeatedly in the poem. These vowel sounds create a sense of openness, continuity, and musical resonance. For example, the repetition of /aɪ/ in "I celebrate myself" and "I loafe and invite my soul" emphasizes the speaker's personal identity and individuality. The prolonged articulation of long vowels contributes to the reflective and expansive tone of the poem.

Moreover, front vowels such as /i:/ and /æ/ generate a lighter and brighter sound quality, while back vowels such as /ɔ:/ and /ʊ/ create deeper and calmer acoustic effects. The alternation between these vowel types enhances the emotional variation within the poem and strengthens its auditory aesthetic. Abrams and Harpham (2015) state that repeated vowel sounds, or assonance, help establish rhythm, emotional tone, and cohesion in poetry.

The dominance of vowel repetition in Whitman's poem demonstrates that sound patterning plays an important role in constructing poetic meaning. The interaction between long vowels, diphthongs, and neutral vowels creates musicality while simultaneously reinforcing the poem's themes of self-expression, harmony, and spiritual contemplation. Thus, vowel sounds in *Leaves of Grass* function not only as phonetic features but also as stylistic devices that contribute significantly to meaning construction.

Table 5. Total of Consonant Sounds (24 Consonants)

No	Co ns	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L1 0	L1 1	L1 2	L1 3	L1 4	L1 5	T ot al
1	/p/	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
2	/b/	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	7
3	/t/	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
4	/d/	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
5	/k/	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	11

6	/g/	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
7	/f/	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	8
8	/v/	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
9	/θ/	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	5
10	/ð/	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	5
11	/s/	2	3	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	28
12	/z/	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	7
13	/ʃ/	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	5
14	/ʒ/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	/h/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
16	/m /	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	19
17	/n/	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	34
18	/ŋ/	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	5
19	/l/	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16
20	/r/	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	23
21	/w/	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	9
22	/j/	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	5

23	/t/	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	5
24	/dʒ/ /	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4

Based on Table 5, the most dominant consonant sound found in the selected lines of *Leaves of Grass* is /n/ with a total frequency of 34 occurrences, followed by /s/ (28), /r/ (23), and /t/ and /m/ (19 each). The frequent use of nasal consonants such as /n/ and /m/ creates a soft, flowing, and harmonious sound effect. These sounds contribute to the reflective and meditative atmosphere of Whitman's poetry, especially in lines such as "I lean and loafe at my ease" and "For every atom belonging to me." Nasal sounds are often associated with continuity and smoothness, which support Whitman's themes of unity, nature, and human connection.

In addition, the repetition of the consonant /s/ produces an alliterative and whispering effect that enhances the musicality of the poem. According to Simpson (2004), repeated consonant sounds function as phonological foregrounding because they attract readers' attention and strengthen poetic expression. The dominance of /s/ in several lines also creates a calm and gentle tone that reflects the peaceful relationship between the speaker and nature.

Meanwhile, plosive consonants such as /t/ and /d/ appear frequently throughout the poem. These sounds produce a stronger and firmer rhythm, emphasizing the speaker's confidence and self-assertion in lines like "I celebrate myself." Wales (2014) explains that plosive sounds often create emphatic and forceful effects in poetic discourse. Therefore, the combination of soft consonants and plosive consonants in Whitman's poem balances smooth musicality with strong personal expression.

Furthermore, liquid consonants such as /l/ and /r/ contribute to the fluid movement of the poem. The repetition of /l/ in words such as "loafe," "lean," and "soul" creates a lyrical quality that supports the free verse style of Whitman. This finding shows that consonant sound patterns are not merely decorative elements, but function stylistically to reinforce meaning and emotional effect within the poem.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how sound patterning contributes to meaning construction in Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* from *Leaves of Grass* through a phono-stylistic approach. The findings reveal that phonological features play a significant role in shaping both the aesthetic and semantic dimensions of the poem. Through the use of consonants, vowels, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and repetition, Whitman creates rhythm, musicality, emotional depth, and thematic emphasis within his free verse poetry.

The analysis demonstrates that soft consonant sounds such as /s/, /l/, and /m/ contribute to a calm, reflective, and harmonious atmosphere, while stronger consonants provide emphasis and reinforce themes of individuality and self-expression. Repeated vowel sounds enhance the poem's musicality and support the construction of meaning by strengthening themes of unity, freedom, and spiritual reflection. Furthermore, the occurrence of repeated sound patterns functions as phonological foregrounding, drawing readers' attention to important ideas and enhancing the interpretative impact of the text.

Overall, the study confirms that sound patterning in *Song of Myself* functions not only as an aesthetic device but also as a meaningful stylistic strategy that contributes to poetic meaning construction. The findings highlight the close relationship between sound and meaning and demonstrate the value of phono-stylistic analysis in literary studies. Future research may examine a broader range of poems from *Leaves of Grass* or compare Whitman's sound patterns with those of other poets to gain a deeper understanding of the role of phonological features in literary expression.

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IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN THE BROOKLYN NINE-NINE MOVIE SERIES

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Abstract

This study looks at idiomatic expressions in dialogues of the Brooklyn Nine-Nine Movie Series. I want to find idioms, classify them into pure, semi, and literal idioms, and explain their meaning in context. The research uses qualitative observation by watching episodes carefully and writing down idiomatic expressions. The study shows that idioms are used to convey humour, feelings, and natural conversation. Understanding context is very important because the meaning is often different from the literal meaning. This study shows the role of idioms in making spoken English more natural and expressive, and provides help for English learners and a guide for future research about idioms in TV shows.

Keywords: Brooklyn Nine-Nine, idiomatic expressions, literal idiom, pure idiom, semi-idiom

INTRODUCTION

Idiomatic expressions are often used in daily communication and can be found in many types of media, like TV series, movies, and social media. Fernando (1996) explains that idioms are fixed expressions whose meaning is not always understood from the meaning of single words. Idioms are important because they help people speak in a more natural and interesting way. Native speakers usually use idiomatic expressions in everyday talk, especially in informal situations. Idioms are also commonly used to show feelings, opinions, and reactions in a short and more creative way. But idioms can be difficult for English learner because their meaning is not always literal and they are related to culture and context. Without enough practice and exposure, learner maybe misunderstand idioms or use them in the wrong way. So, learning idiomatic expressions is important for improving communication skills in English. (Fernando, 1996)

Fernando (1996) divides idiomatic expressions into three types: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. Pure idioms have a meaning that is very different from the meaning of single words. For example, the expression spill the beans means to tell a secret, not drop beans. Semi-idioms have both literal and figurative meanings, so some parts of the expression can still be understood directly. Literal idioms are fixed expressions that have a meaning close to the literal. This classification helps researchers understand how idioms are formed and used in communication. It also shows idioms can have different levels of figurative meaning depending on context. Also, this classification makes it easier to know characteristics of idiomatic expressions in spoken language. (Fernando, 1996)

Besides knowing the types of idioms, it is also important to know their meaning in context. Leech (1981) explains that meaning in language can be understood by conceptual meaning and contextual meaning. Conceptual meaning is the basic or dictionary meaning of a word or expression, but contextual meaning is the meaning from situation where expression used. In idiomatic expressions, contextual meaning is very important because the meaning is often different from the literal or dictionary meaning. For example, the expression spill the beans not literally mean dropping beans, but in context means telling a secret. This shows that idioms cannot be understood only from the word's meaning. Listeners or readers need to understand context, situation, and speaker intention to

know real meaning of the expression. So, contextual meaning theory is important to analyze idiomatic expressions in spoken communication and TV dialogue. (Leech, 1981).

Idiomatic expressions also important in language learning. Fernando (1996) says idioms help speakers to express idea more natural and effective. By learn idioms, students can improve vocabulary and understand figurative language better. Idioms often use in conversation, entertainment media, and books. Because this, understand idiomatic expressions can help learners communicate better in real life. Idioms also help learners understand jokes, feelings, and informal talk more easily. Many times, people use idioms to make communication sound more friendly and natural. So, learning idioms is an important part of learning English. (Fernando, 1996).

One type of media that has many idiomatic expressions is TV series, especially sitcoms. Sitcoms usually use informal language like everyday talk. Rozikin (2021) says TV series give real example of language use because characters speak naturally in different situations. Sitcoms also have humor, feelings, and active talk between characters, which makes idiomatic expressions appear more in dialogue. The conversation in sitcoms is usually simple and easy to understand, so viewers can learn language from context. Also, viewers can see how idioms are used in different situations and relationships between characters. So, sitcoms is useful source for study idiomatic expressions in spoken English. (Rozikin, 2023).

This study uses the TV series Brooklyn Nine-Nine as main source of data. The series was chosen because it shows natural and fun conversations between characters in work and daily life situations. The dialogue often has informal language, jokes, and expressive talk that includes many idiomatic expressions. Auliyah (2023) says Brooklyn Nine-Nine show modern spoken English and shows how language is used in social talk. Through dialogue, viewers can see how idioms are used to show feelings, make humour, and build relationships between characters. The series also shows communication between people with different personalities and backgrounds. Because of this, the series gives many examples of idiomatic expressions used in natural conversation. (Auliyah, 2023).Klik atau ketuk di sini untuk memasukkan teks.

Some previous studies talk about idiomatic expressions in audiovisual media. In Indonesia, Hasriah (2022) study of idioms in movie dialogue focuses on meaning and types. Ikhsan (2022) looks at idioms in English films and explains meaning in context. Yulyana (2015) also studied idioms in movie subtitles and find films can help learners understand figurative language more easily. These studies show audiovisual media are useful for learning idioms, but most of them focus more on meaning than structure. Most researchers only explain the meaning of idioms without saying how idioms are classified by structure. Because of this, talk about pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms is still limited in previous studies. (Hasriah, 2022; Ikhsan, 2022; Yulyana, 2015)Klik atau ketuk di sini untuk memasukkan teks.

Researchers from outside Indonesia also study idiomatic expressions. Cooper (1999) explains that understanding idioms depends on context and cultural knowledge. Liu (2008) finds that idioms are important for communication because they are often used in daily talk. Simpson and Mendis (2003) studied idioms in spoken English and find idioms are usually used in natural talk. These studies help readers know the importance of idioms in spoken language and communication. They also show idioms close to social interaction and language use in real situations. Even though these studies talk about idiom meaning and use, they give less attention to types of idioms by structure, especially in sitcom dialogue. (Cooper, 1999; Liu, 2008; Simpson and Mendis, 2003)

Based on previous studies, there is still a gap in the study of idiomatic expressions, especially in the analysis of types by structure in TV series dialogue. Most previous studies focus more on meaning than structure, and only a few studies use sitcoms as the main data source. Also, talk about pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms in natural spoken talk is still limited. So, this study wants to analyze idiomatic expressions in Brooklyn Nine-Nine using Fernando's (1996) classification of idioms. This study is expected to help readers know how idioms are formed and used in daily communication. The findings may also help English learners and future researchers understand idioms more easily in real life. Also, this study can give more information about the use of idioms in modern English TV series. (Fernando, 1996)

To guide the analysis based on the data found in the appendix table, this study formulates the following research questions:

What idiomatic expressions are found in the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine Movie Series?

What are the meanings of the classified found idiomatic expression in the Brooklyn Nine-Nine Movie series?

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design to look at idiomatic expressions in the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine Season 1 Episodes 1–10. A qualitative approach was used because this study focuses on understanding language in a natural context. Nassaji (2015) say qualitative research helps researchers describe and explain language phenomena in detail. In this study, researcher focus on finding idiomatic expressions, classifying their types, and explaining their contextual meaning from dialogue. This approach good because idiomatic expressions often have figurative meanings that cannot be understood literally. So, understanding the context is important in analyze the data. (Nassaji, 2015).

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. This method is used to describe the forms, types, and meanings of idiomatic expressions in the series. The researcher classifies idioms based on Fernando's (1996) theory, which divides idioms into three types: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. Also, researchers explain the meaning of idiomatic expressions by using Leech's (1981) theory of contextual meaning. This theory helps researchers understand the meaning of idioms from the situation, context, and speaker intention in dialogue. So, a combination of these theory help researcher analyze data more clearly and systematically. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981).

The data of this study were taken from the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine Season 1 Episodes 1–10. The data are utterances said by characters in the series. These episodes were chosen because they have many examples of natural and informal talk. As a sitcom, the series shows daily communication that often uses idiomatic expressions in different situations. The dialogue also has humour, feelings, and social talk between characters. Because of this, the series gives many examples of idiomatic expressions used in spoken English.

The data is collected by observation and note-taking. First, researchers watch selected episodes carefully to understand dialogue and context. Second, the researcher rewatches episodes to find idiomatic expressions used by characters. Third, the researcher writes down every idiomatic expression with episode number, timestamp, utterance, and dialogue context. After that, the researcher checks expressions again to make sure they match characteristics of idioms from Fernando's (1996) theory. Expressions that only have literal meaning not included in data. (Fernando, 1996)

The data is analyzed in several steps. First, researchers find idiomatic expressions in dialogue. Second, researchers classify expressions into pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms based on Fernando's (1996) theory. Third, researchers explain the contextual meaning of idiomatic expressions by using Leech's (1981) theory. Fourth, the researcher explains why each expression belongs to a certain type of idiom. Finally, all data is put in tables with episode number, timestamp, utterance, idiomatic expression, type of idiom, and contextual meaning. These tables help researchers show findings clearly and systematically. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981).

The findings of this study are presented in descriptive form and are supported by tables in the appendix. The tables show idiomatic expressions with their types and contextual meanings. This helps readers understand how idiomatic expressions are used in the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine. Also, the appendix makes the analysis more organised and easier to understand. So, the findings can answer research questions clearly and help the discussion of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter shows findings of idiomatic expressions in the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine Season 1 Episodes 1–10. The idiomatic expressions classify in three types based on Fernando's (1996) theory: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. Also, the contextual meaning of idiomatic expressions analyze by using Leech's (1981) theory. The findings are shown in frequency and percentage tables with explanations and some examples of each type of idiom.

Distribution of Idiomatic Expression Types

To provide a clearer overview of the distribution of idiomatic expression types, the frequency and percentage of each category are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Idiomatic Expression Types

NO	TYPE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	PURE IDIOM	21	51%
2	SEMI IDIOM	14	34%
3	LITERAL IDIOM	6	15%
TOTAL		41	100%

Based on Table 2, pure idioms are the most dominant type found in the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine Season 1 Episodes 1–10. There are 21 data points, or 51% counted as pure idioms. Semi-idioms appear 14 times, or 34%, and literal idioms appear 6 times or 15%. The findings show characters in the series mostly use figurative expressions in informal talk. Pure idioms become the dominant type because characters often use funny, emotional, and expressive language in their conversation. Semi-idioms and literal idioms are usually used in daily talk and simple interactions between characters. (Fernando, 1996).

A. Pure Idioms

Pure idioms are expressions that have a meaning completely different from the literal meaning of the words. In the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine, pure idioms are usually used in emotional and funny situations. The meaning of expressions only can understand from context of the conversation. (Fernando, 1996).

Data 6:

Utterance: “Spill the beans.”

Idiomatic Expression: “spill the beans”

The expression spill the beans is a pure idiom because the meaning cannot be understood directly from the words spill and beans. Literally, it means dropping beans by accident. But in dialogue, it means to tell secret information. The speaker uses this expression to ask another person to tell the truth or share hidden information. So, this expression is pure idiom because the figurative meaning is completely different from the literal meaning. Based on Leech’s (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is telling a secret. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

Data 13 :

Utterance: “You’re pulling my leg.”

Idiomatic Expression: “pulling my leg”

The expression pulling my leg is a pure idiom because the meaning is not related to the literal meaning of the words. Literally, it means physically pull someone’s leg. But in dialogue, it means to joke or tease someone. The speaker uses this expression because they think another person is not serious. So, this expression is pure idiom because the figurative meaning is completely different from the literal meaning. Based on Leech’s (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is joking or teasing another person. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

Data 24:

Utterance: “Don’t steal my thunder.”

Idiomatic Expression: “steal my thunder”

The expression steal my thunder is a pure idiom because the meaning cannot be understood literally from the words steal and thunder. Literally, thunder cannot steal. In dialogue, it means to take attention, praise, or credit from another person. The speaker uses this expression to show annoyance because another person takes attention that should be theirs. So, this expression is pure idiom because the figurative meaning is completely different from the literal meaning. Based on Leech's (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is taking someone else attention or recognition. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

B. Semi Idioms

Semi-idioms are expressions that contain both literal and figurative meanings. Some parts of the expressions still keep their literal meanings, while the whole expressions have figurative meanings. In the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine, semi-idioms are usually used in casual conversations between the characters. (Fernando, 1996).

Data 2:

Utterance: "Get it together, man."

Idiomatic Expression: "get it together"

The expression get it together is a semi-idiom because some part of the expression still keeps its literal meaning. The word together still relates to the idea of becoming organised or controlled. But the whole expression has figurative meaning. In dialogue, speakers use this expression to tell another person to calm down and control their emotions. So, this expression is semi-idiomatic because it combines literal and figurative meaning. Based on Leech's (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is to calm down and get self-control. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

Data 38:

Utterance: "Check it out."

Idiomatic Expression: "check it out"

The expression check it out is a semi idiom because word check still have literal meaning of looking or examining something. But the whole expression is often used as an informal phrase in conversation. In dialogue, speakers use this expression to ask another person to look at or pay attention to something. So, this expression is semi-idiomatic because it has both literal and figurative meanings. Based on Leech's (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is to ask someone to look at something carefully. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

Data 16:

Utterance: "You need to figure it out."

Idiomatic Expression: "figure it out"

The expression figure it out is a semi idiom because word figure still relates to thinking or understanding. But the whole expression has figurative meaning in talk. In dialogue, speakers use this expression to tell another person to find a solution to a problem. So, this expression is semi-idiomatic because it combines literal and figurative meaning. Based on Leech's (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is find a solution or understand something. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

C. Literal Idioms

Literal idioms are fixed expressions whose meaning is still close to the literal meaning. These expressions are usually use in daily talk and more easy to understand than pure idioms and semi-idioms. (Fernando, 1996)

Data 19:

Utterance: "Be careful."

Idiomatic Expression: "Be careful."

The expression be careful is a literal idiom because the meaning is still close to the literal meaning of the words. It directly means act carefully or pay attention to danger. In dialogue, speakers use this expression to warn another person to act safely. So, this expression is a literal idiom because meaning still can understand literally, even it is often used as a fixed expression in communication. Based on Leech's (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is to ask someone to act carefully. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

Data 25:

Utterance: "By the way."

Idiomatic Expression: "By the way."

The expression, by the way, is a literal idiom because meaning still can understand from the words in the expression. In conversation, it is often used to start a new topic or add extra information. The speaker uses this expression to change the conversation direction naturally. So, this expression is a literal idiom because the meaning is still close to the literal meaning. Based on Leech's (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is to start another topic in conversation. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

Data 29:

Utterance: "Take care."

Idiomatic Expression: "Take care."

The expression take care is a literal idiom because the meaning is still close to the literal meaning of the words. It is often used to tell someone to stay safe or healthy. In dialogue, speakers use this expression as a friendly goodbye. So, this expression is a literal idiom because the meaning can still be understood directly. Based on Leech's (1981) theory, the contextual meaning of this expression is to wish someone safety and good health. (Fernando, 1996; Leech, 1981)

The analysis shows that pure idioms are the most used type in the dialogue of Brooklyn Nine-Nine Season 1 Episodes 1–10, making up 51% of the data. This shows that series often use figurative expressions to give humor, feelings, and natural, informal talk. The frequent use of pure idioms shows characters like expressions whose meaning cannot be understood from single words, making dialogue more lively and interesting. Examples like spill the beans and pulling my leg show how figurative language gives more fun and humor to talk, and the audience needs to understand the context to know the full meaning.

Semi-idioms are the second most common type, making up 34% of the data. These expressions mix literal and figurative meaning, allowing listeners to understand some meaning directly but still give extra meaning. Expressions like get it together and check it out show this. Semi idioms good for everyday casual talk, giving clear meaning without losing expressiveness.

Literal idioms appear least, making up only 15% of the data. Their meaning is still close to the literal meaning, like be careful or take care. Even though they are easy to understand, these fixed expressions still help the natural flow of talk, especially in simple or normal conversation, and help learners understand idioms without needing much context.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that show the role of idioms in audiovisual media. Idiomatic expressions help make talk more natural, show feelings, and keep attention between characters (Young, 2020; Madina, 2023; Stephani, 2021). But this study focuses more on idioms by structure, showing pure, semi, and literal types. This way shows patterns in idiom use: pure idioms are often in funny or emotional scenes, semi-idioms help quick and easy talk, and literal idioms help clear meaning in normal conversation.

By looking at idiom types with their frequency and function, this study gives a more detail understanding of how idiomatic expressions help humor, feelings, and social talk in sitcom dialogue. Compared to previous research, that often focus on meaning or function only, the structure view show why some idioms like in certain situations, and show connection between figurative language and story.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed idiomatic expressions in the dialogues of Brooklyn Nine-Nine Season 1 Episodes 1–10. The idioms were classified into three types: pure idioms, semi-idioms, and literal idioms. The study shows that pure idioms are often used in funny and emotional situations. Their meanings cannot be understood from the words alone, so understanding the context is very important. Semi-idioms are used in casual conversations and are easier to understand because part of the expression has a direct meaning. Literal idioms have meanings close to the words themselves and are used in simple and clear conversations.

The findings show that idioms play an important role in making dialogue more natural, expressive, and interesting. Pure idioms create humor and emotional effect, semi-idioms help smooth and quick conversation while keeping figurative meaning, and literal idioms make dialogue clear and easy to follow. Understanding the context, speaker's feelings, and situation is essential to fully comprehend the idioms.

Overall, this study provides useful insights for English learners to understand how idioms work in real-life conversations. It also offers guidance for future researchers who want to study idioms in TV shows. The results show that idioms can make spoken English more natural, expressive, and fun, and they help learners and viewers understand feelings, humor, and social interaction in communication.

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TRAUMA IN THE FILM *THE GIRL WHO ESCAPED: THE KARA ROBINSON STORY* BY SIMONE STOCK (2023)

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Abstract

This study is entitled Trauma in the Film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* by Simone Stock (2023). This study aims to analyze trauma in the film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* (2023). This research focuses on two main objectives: (1) to find out how trauma is portrayed in Simone Stock's *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, and (2) to analyze how the main character struggles to get out of her trauma in the film. This research uses Judith Herman's (1992) theory of trauma and recovery as the main theoretical framework and employs descriptive qualitative methods to analyze data from scenes and dialogues in the film. The findings show that the depiction of trauma includes three main reactions: hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction. This research also describes how Kara deals with the trauma through three stages of recovery: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. Her journey not only represents personal psychological resilience but also demonstrates the ability of survivors to transform traumatic experiences into strengths that allow them to regain control of their future.

Keywords: Judith Herman, psychoanalysis, stages of recovery

INTRODUCTION

Trauma is a pervasive psychological condition in contemporary society, frequently resulting from tragic occurrences such as accidents, natural disasters, human-inflicted abuse, and profound emotional distress. The World Health Organization (2024) estimates that 3.9% of the global population suffers from trauma or stress-related disorders, with approximately 70% of people exposed to events that could potentially trigger such psychological responses. Supporting this, Benjet et al. (2016) highlight that lifetime exposure to traumatic events affects a vast majority of the global population, transcending age and gender demographics. Psychologically, trauma emerges when an individual's trust and well-being are significantly violated by the people or institutions they depend on, ultimately overwhelming their natural coping mechanisms (Freyd, 2008). The enduring effects on physical, mental, and emotional health often manifest as anxiety, depression, flashbacks, and an overarching sense of hopelessness. Consequently, affected individuals frequently experience a loss of control and cognitive disruption, severely impacting their interpersonal relationships and necessitating professional therapeutic intervention to restore their sense of self (Ulman & Brothers, 1988).

The psychological severity of trauma is particularly pronounced in cases of kidnapping or sexual abuse, where victims endure profound anxiety, fear, and chronic stress. When individuals are unable to effectively process these harrowing experiences, they develop severe trauma characterized by three primary symptoms: hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction or numbness (Herman, 1992). To navigate the debilitating effects of these experiences, survivors must undergo a complex and layered psychological struggle. Herman (1992) conceptualizes this healing process through a Stage-Specific Trauma Recovery Model, which outlines three essential phases: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. The urgency of understanding and supporting this recovery process is reflected in real-world occurrences, such as the severe trauma experienced by military sexual assault survivors, which underscores the devastating long-term impacts of social abuse and the critical need for institutional recognition, structural support, and holistic therapy (CBC News, 2023).

Beyond real-life clinical observations, the profound psychological struggle associated with trauma is a central theme in modern cinematic arts. Film serves as a multifaceted medium combining visual imagery, narrative

structure, and dialogue to compellingly reflect the human experience and evoke deep empathetic responses to a character's emotional distress. A highly relevant contemporary work exploring this theme is Simone Stock's (2023) film, *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*. Based on a true narrative, the film vividly illustrates the intense psychological aftermath of kidnapping and sexual abuse, portraying the protagonist's resilient journey toward healing. While the film has garnered significant critical acclaim and nominations at major industry events, such as the Directors Guild of Canada (2023) and the Canadian Screen Awards (2024), there is a noticeable gap in academic literature critically analyzing the film's portrayal of trauma through established psychoanalytic frameworks. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring the cinematic representation of trauma and emotional resilience in the film. The objective of this research is to analyze the psychological impacts of violence on the main character and evaluate her recovery process, providing valuable insights into the dynamic intersection of psychoanalysis, trauma recovery, and literary representation.

Literature Review

The first related study was conducted by Umer and Aziz (2022) from Air University and Riphah International University, titled "*Trauma in the movie Ordinary People (1980): An Investigation of Psychological Trauma and Recovery from a Traumatic Experience.*" The study aimed to analyze the depiction of trauma and the stages of psychological recovery in the main character, Conrad. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach, the researchers applied the American Psychiatric Association's (1980) PTSD diagnostic criteria alongside Judith Herman's (1997) three-stage trauma recovery model. The findings revealed that Conrad exhibited various PTSD symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, and social withdrawal, but ultimately achieved emotional stability by completing all three stages of recovery.

The second related study is from Setiawan and Puspita (2023) at Indonesian Technocrat University, titled "*Trauma on the Main Character in Get Out Movie by Jordan Peele: Psychological Approach.*" The focus is on analyzing the trauma experienced by Chris Washington and exploring its psychological impact on his emotions, thoughts, and behavior. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a general psychological approach to reveal the causes and effects of the character's trauma. The findings indicate that Chris's trauma originated from a childhood tragedy, the death of his mother, which resurfaced when triggered by similar situations, resulting in emotional instability, deep fear, and prolonged sadness.

The third related study was conducted by Ramadhani (2023) from Universitas Negeri Surabaya, titled "*Cruella's Childhood Trauma in Cruella (2021).*" The study aimed to identify forms of childhood trauma and analyze how these experiences affected the main character's adult life, behavior, and interpersonal relationships. This study employed a qualitative method with a psychological approach, drawing upon Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The findings show that the main character suffered emotional abuse and psychological distress during childhood, which directly impacted her adult mental condition and actions throughout the film's storyline.

The writer's study analyzes psychological trauma in the film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* (2023). The similarities between the writer's analysis and the three related studies are that all utilize qualitative methodologies to examine films as the primary object, specifically focusing on characters experiencing psychological trauma. The difference between this study and the previous research lies in the selected film and the theoretical framework. While the previous studies utilized the APA's PTSD criteria, general psychological approaches, or Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, this study relies specifically on Judith Herman's theory to analyze the trauma.

METHOD

The writer used a qualitative approach to support data collection and analysis, as the data is presented in the form of text and images rather than numbers and statistics. Ary et al. (2010) state that qualitative research formulates and analyzes data through these non-numerical forms. The qualitative method is the most effective for this thesis because it makes it easier for the writer to examine and analyze the movie's images and dialogue to conduct an in-depth examination of the emotional and physical aspects shaping the representation of trauma.

The primary source in this study is the movie *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* (Simone Stock, 2023). The images and dialogues depicting the trauma experienced by the main character are the primary focus that the writer wants to analyze in this study. The data is collected by watching the film, reading the film script, identifying topic-related data, and classifying it. After all the data are collected, they are analyzed using Judith Herman's theory from *Trauma and Recovery* (1992). This theory is used to examine the three main features of trauma (hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction) and to explore how the main character progresses through Herman's six Stages-Specific Model from trauma to recovery.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyzes the research findings based on the problem statements introduced in Chapter One. Utilizing Judith Herman's (1992) trauma theory, the data analysis is divided into two main sections. The first part is about how trauma is depicted in the film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* (2023), and the second part is about how the main character struggles to get out of her trauma in the film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* (2023).

The Portrayal of Trauma in The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story (2023)

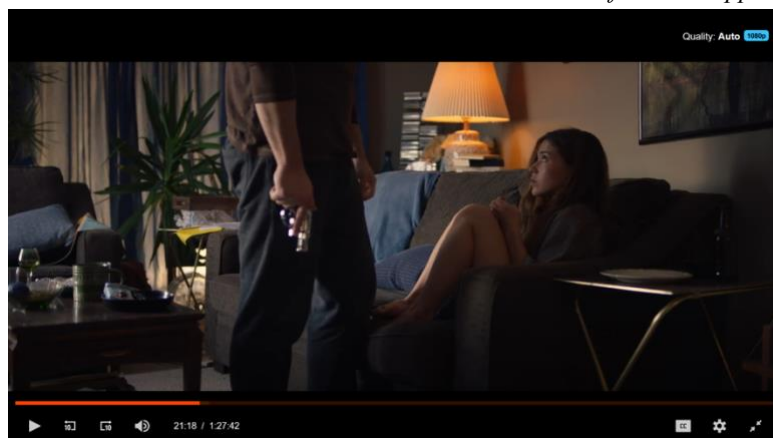
Psychological trauma manifests when an individual is overwhelmed by profoundly distressing events such as natural disasters, violence, or severe accidents that shatter their mental and emotional equilibrium. Drawing on Judith Herman's (1992) framework, trauma arises from the failure to effectively process these severe occurrences, resulting in sustained physical, mental, and emotional repercussions. Herman categorizes the primary responses to such trauma into three distinct behaviors: hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction. Utilizing this framework, this study investigates the manifestation of trauma in the protagonist of the film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*.

Hyperarousal

In *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, the protagonist illustrates hyperarousal through her relentless hypervigilance, both during her captivity and following her escape. The intense psychological distress, physical violence, and constant threats she faced forced her nervous system into a continuous state of high alert. As a result, Kara exhibits symptoms such as severe tension, a heightened startle response, and an ongoing compulsion to scan her environment for threats. This portrayal effectively highlights not only her profound terror but also the deep physiological consequences of trauma, revealing that her internal threat-detection system remains stuck in overdrive.

Figure 1

Kara Robinson shows extreme tension under the threat of her kidnapper.



Note. From *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, by Simone Stock (Director), 2023.

Kara sits huddled on the sofa, visibly tense as the perpetrator stands right in front of her. Even though he isn't using physical violence and has explicitly promised not to harm her, the threat feels real, the perpetrator says, "*You know I don't want to hurt you, not if you don't fight me, I'll let you go when I'm done with you*" (Stock, 2023, 20:52-21:03). This statement still triggers a strong fear response in Kara. Kara's tense, silent state and constant monitoring of the perpetrator's movements reflected the symptoms of hyperarousal as conceptualized by Herman (1992). The perpetrator's sweet promises failed to calm Kara because she was aware that she was in a life-threatening situation. The inability to relax or believe these words indicated that trauma had dominated her physiological response, where every small movement from the perpetrator was automatically interpreted as a fatal threat, trapping her in a state of extreme alertness.

Through the use of a medium shot, this scene highlights the stark physical disparity between Kara's tense, withdrawn body language and the perpetrator's authoritative, upright stance. The eye-level framing aligns the viewer's perspective directly with Kara's, while low-key lighting and deep shadows heighten the overall suspense.

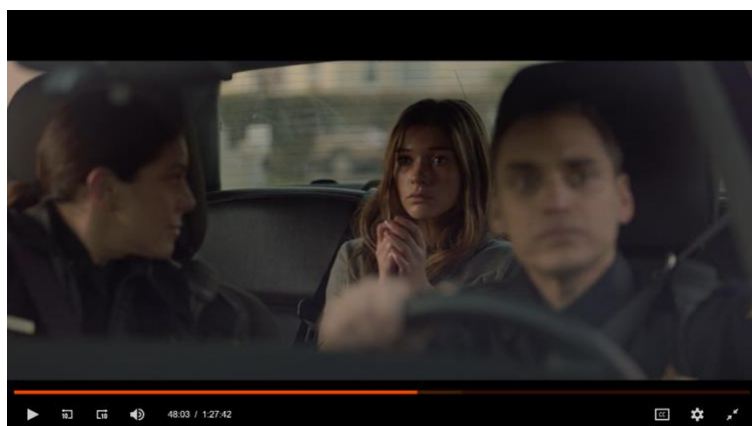
By utilizing solely diegetic sound, the scene emphasizes Kara's labored breathing against the quiet backdrop. This cinematic approach illustrates that her trauma is deeply physiological, not just psychological, persisting even as the abuser feigns calmness. Her involuntary physical reactions reflect a desperate, early attempt to manage the collapse of her psychological defences following the preceding tragedy.

Intrusion

The film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* explores the concept of intrusion by showing how Kara is haunted by memories of her kidnapping long after she gets away. The trauma she endured triggers uncontrollable psychological and emotional reactions, with sudden waves of fear making it feel like the abuse is recurring. These moments of intrusion serve to emphasize Kara's internal anguish and highlight how deeply trauma alters a survivor's mental and emotional state.

Figure 2

Kara Robinson shows fear and tension as she returns to the scene.



Note. From *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, by Simone Stock (Director), 2023.

In this scene, a police officer drives Kara around the attacker's neighbourhood to locate the crime scene. Asked if "Anything looks familiar?" (Stock, 2023, 48:02-48:04), a trembling Kara answers, "Yeah, I just... It looks the same" (Stock, 2023, 48:06-48:14). This exchange demonstrates that the physical setting strongly triggers her memories. It is a clear case of intrusion; seeing the location of the event suddenly forces the survivor to recall and mentally relive the terror of their trauma.

This scene employs an eye-level medium shot that keeps Kara's face in sharp focus against a blurred police officer, creating a realistic and neutral perspective. Soft natural lighting contrasts sharply with Kara's internal anxiety. The audio combines diegetic engine noises and dialogue with a tense, non-diegetic background score to amplify the drama. Finally, saturated colors emphasise the scene's seriousness, reflecting how intensely even minor visual details weigh on Kara as she tries to heal.

Constriction

In *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, Kara's behavioral patterns exemplify constriction, a survival mechanism described by Herman (1992) in which trauma survivors subconsciously shut down to shield themselves from unbearable pain. While this emotional detachment serves as an attempt to regain control, it often results in profound alienation, numbness, and a fractured connection to one's own feelings. Throughout the film, Kara frequently employs this strategy by suppressing her outward emotional reactions. Rather than reacting with overt panic, she often presents as rigid, silent, and detached from her immediate environment. By exhibiting a state of resignation and diminished reactivity, Kara demonstrates an instinctive, albeit involuntary, effort to "turn off" her emotions as a way to buffer herself against the overwhelming terror of her ordeal.

Figure 3

Kara Robinson rejects attention and empathy from her social circle.



Note. From *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, by Simone Stock (Director), 2023.

In this scene, Kara exhibits visible distress upon realizing she is still surrounded by a heavy police presence. Her question, “*why are the police still here? What happened?*” (Stock, 2023, 1:02:20-1:02:21). underscores her lingering unease, suggesting that the very authorities intended to provide safety have become a trigger for her trauma, likely reminding her of the chaos and danger she barely escaped. The police officer explains that Kara is being protected and given special attention,

“Some officers are here to protect you because we don’t know where Evonitz is yet. We need to take precautions. There are many officers in both areas, and now the FBI is involved. So, they might show up here for information or reports. But the final reason is understanding. You know, they all know you escaped on your own, so they are impressed, or curious, or just concerned. The same reason why you see strangers show up with concerned words and pecan bars” (Stock, 2023, 1:02:23-1:02:58).

Kara’s flat response says, “*I don’t want that. I don’t want any of this*”(Stock, 2023, 1:02:59-1:03:02). serves as a poignant example of emotional constriction. By pushing away offers of empathy and attention, she is actively retreating from social engagement to prevent emotional flooding. This refusal to accept external support functions as a defensive manoeuvre; by withdrawing from the public eye and avoiding potentially overwhelming interactions, Kara attempts to safeguard her precarious mental state and maintain a sense of control in the wake of her trauma.

This scene utilizes an eye-level medium shot to realistically capture Kara’s physical discomfort. Soft, natural lighting devoid of warmth creates a bleak atmosphere, reflecting her internal emotional emptiness despite her reputation for bravery. Sound is used strategically: the diegetic dialogue between Kara and the police officer is underscored by low-pitched, non-diegetic music that emphasizes the psychological burden of public attention. Finally, the low color saturation of the environment and Kara’s clothing visually reinforces the narrative that trauma strips survivors of their ability to feel joy or connect emotionally with their surroundings.

The main character struggles to get out of her Trauma in the film Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story (2023).

The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story (2023) highlights the complex, progressive nature of trauma recovery. Kara Robinson’s physical escape does not instantly bring emotional peace; instead, she is plagued by ongoing fear, withdrawal, and psychological distress. This gradual healing process reflects Judith Herman’s (1992) three-stage model of trauma recovery: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection.

Safety

The first stage of trauma recovery is safety, which requires rebuilding shattered trust and securing both physical and emotional well-being. In *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story* (2023), Kara’s fight for safety starts even before she escapes her captor. Her efforts to protect herself are highlighted by several deliberate, strategic actions she takes while still in captivity.

Figure 4

Kara Robinson managed to escape.



Note. From *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, by Simone Stock (Director), 2023.

In this critical scene, Kara flees the captor's apartment building and runs toward the highway to find help. She stops a motorist, desperately shouting, "*Hey, help, I'm being kidnapped! That's the apartment, can you take me to the police station, please?*" (Stock, 2023, 42:18-42:33). This moment clearly illustrates her struggle to re-establish personal safety. By demanding to be taken to the authorities, she actively seeks a protective environment to neutralize the immediate threat. Ultimately, her escape allows Kara to take back control of her body from the perpetrator.

This scene employs an eye-level medium shot to realistically immerse viewers in Kara's rapid movements, highlighting her fearful yet determined expression alongside the handcuffs still binding her wrists. Bright, natural high-key lighting floods the outdoor setting, creating a powerful visual contrast with the dim apartment she just left to emphasize her escape into freedom. The sound design pairs diegetic elements like Kara's heavy breathing and running footsteps with a fast, non-diegetic musical score to heighten the urgency. Furthermore, the bright, naturally saturated colors of the outside world signal a cognitive shift, demonstrating that as Kara fights for safety, her world changes from the narrow distortion of captivity to a clear, open reality where she can finally regain control.

Remembrance and Mourning

Remembrance and mourning, the second stage of trauma recovery, involves revisiting and coming to terms with the painful events behind a survivor's distress so they can fully confront their buried emotions. In the film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, Kara engages in this difficult process by courageously detailing the horrific realities of her captivity to help police catch her kidnapper.

Figure 5

Kara Robinson gives a statement at the police station.



In this scene, Kara meets with investigators to report her kidnapping, providing a detailed account to Lieutenant Rowland *"I was kidnapped yesterday by a white man, medium-sized, brown-haired, with a gun yesterday morning. He raped me repeatedly. I escaped this morning while he was sleeping."* (Stock, 2023, 44:21-44:42). Here, Kara deliberately processes her trauma, transforming chaotic, terrifying memories into a clear timeline. While she tries to stay calm, her vacant stare and trembling voice during the mention of sexual assault signal her deep internal struggle. This reflects the essence of the mourning phase, where the survivor stops suppressing the pain and actively confronts the grief caused by the violation.

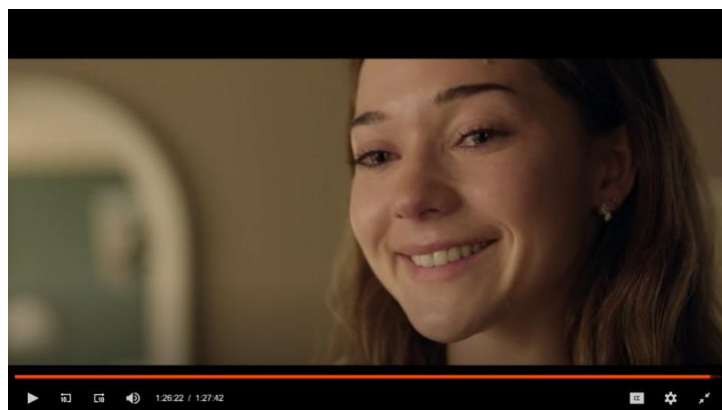
This scene utilizes an eye-level medium close-up to honestly and neutrally emphasize Kara's facial expressions and emotional distress. Dim, low-key lighting and a palette of muted, gloomy colors work together to establish a highly serious, emotional tone free of visual distractions. Audiologically, the scene pairs the diegetic conversation between Kara and Lieutenant Rowland where Kara's low voice trembles and catches as she details the sexual assault with a slow, non-diegetic melancholic score. This background music heightens the psychological tension and deepens the sense of sorrow, helping viewers connect with the profound pain Kara is experiencing.

Reconnection

Reconnection marks the third and final stage of Judith Herman's (1992) trauma recovery model, a phase where individuals redefine their identity, process their past, and outgrow the traits forced upon them by trauma. In the film *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, this stage is reflected in Kara's evolution. She breaks free from the identity of a helpless victim and transitions into an individual with a meaningful path forward.

Figure 6

Kara Robinson claims to be a survivor.



Note. From *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*, by Simone Stock (Director), 2023.

The provided data highlights the film's deeply emotional conclusion, featuring an intimate conversation between Kara Robinson and her mother in her bedroom. When her mother remorsefully expresses her helplessness, saying, *"I'm sorry, I tried. I didn't know what to do, I just really wanted to be here for you"* (Stock, 2023, 1:25:10-1:25:23), Kara responds with an extraordinary acceptance of her history: *"I know...and I'll try to tell you when you're ready, okay. But you can't change what happened. It was fate...But I'm still here, I'm still me, I survived"* (Stock, 2023, 01:25:24-01:26:03). This exchange serves as the definitive embodiment of the reconnection stage outlined in Judith Herman's (1992) framework. Here, survivors integrate their past and deliberately reclaim the facets of their identity that were fractured by the ordeal. Kara's assertion, "I am still me," underscores that her fundamental sense of self endured despite the terror she faced. As Herman posits, the evolution from victim to survivor materializes when an individual retakes ownership of their narrative and looks toward the future liberated from constant fear. Ultimately, the subtle smile that concludes her statement marks the achievement of psychological integration, indicating that she has successfully restored her self-worth and autonomy.

This scene employs an eye-level close-up shot to intimately connect the audience with Kara, highlighting the visible shift from sadness to calm strength on her face. Soft, warm lighting gently falls on her, symbolizing her achieved healing and returned emotional warmth during this climax. The natural, stable color saturation reinforces a feeling of peace and reclaimed normalcy. Sound design is used strategically: diegetic, the dialogue shows Kara's voice has lost its previous tremor and turned calm; non-diegetic, a soft, melodic background track swells to

underscore hope and empowerment. This audio choice perfectly closes her narrative, confirming that Kara has evolved from a prisoner of her memories into a survivor ready to move forward.

CONCLUSION

After analysing the data, it can be concluded that there are several trauma reactions along with the recovery stages that occurred in the movie *The Girl Who Escaped: The Kara Robinson Story*. These trauma reactions and recovery stages appear in the main character in the movie. For trauma reactions, there are three types of trauma reactions based on Judith Herman's theory. For hyperarousal, it can be seen when Kara is in a state of extreme vigilance, excessive physical tension, and is unable to relax even after the immediate threat has passed. For intrusion, it can be seen when Kara's traumatic memories suddenly reappear, triggered by the scene of the incident or visual stimuli such as photographs of the perpetrator. For instance, it can be seen when Kara withdraws from social interactions, becomes emotionally numb, and acts defensively against the help of those closest to her.

In recovery stages, three stages of recovery can be found in that movie, such as safety, which can be seen when Kara cleverly gathers information about the perpetrator while still in captivity, escapes, and establishes autonomy within her home environment. For remembrance and mourning, it can be seen when Kara is willing to recall horrific details and confront painful emotions to aid the police investigation. For reconnection, it can be seen when Kara rejects parts of herself shaped by the trauma and firmly asserts herself as an empowered survivor.

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INDONESIAN FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN VOCABULARY LEARNING AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

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Abstract

The study investigated the role of the Indonesian first language in supporting English vocabulary acquisition among university students. The study purpose was to examine how learners perceived the use of their native language in vocabulary learning, to identify its benefits and disadvantages, and to determine effective applications in classroom pedagogy. The employed method was a survey, with the subject being English Department undergraduate students who provided the data regarding their experience and preference. The findings revealed that the majority of students viewed Indonesian first language (L1) usage as a positive influence, with 83 per cent reporting that it aided comprehension of difficult vocabulary and 93 per cent agreeing that a combination of first language (L1) and second language (L2) use was the most effective approach. However, 33 per cent expressed concern that over-reliance on their first language reduced exposure to English. The study concluded that the most effective approach is the selective application of the first language for complex or abstract vocabulary, while maintaining English as the primary medium of instruction.

Keywords: language learning, Indonesian first language, student perceptions, bilingual scaffolding, vocabulary learning,

INTRODUCTION

Developing a strong vocabulary is one of the most essential factors in learning any language. Vocabulary knowledge plays a direct role in how well learners will be able to read, write, and have conversations in the target language. Learners with an incomplete vocabulary often have a difficult time creating meaning or delivering their thoughts within the target language (Nation, 2001). In Indonesia, English is a foreign language and therefore, vocabulary learning will be even more difficult due to the limited exposure learners receive when they are not in a classroom setting. Because of this situation, there has been a call for effective ways for learners to overcome difficulties they experience with Vocabulary.

Using the first language (L1) as a method to provide support for developing vocabulary has become increasingly popular in the last several years. Studies have shown that L1 can function as a way to provide cognitive scaffolding; therefore, learners can comprehend and acquire new abstract/complex Vocabulary terms more easily. An example of how the use of L1 can be used to build Vocabulary is Szlapak (2024), who provides evidence of translanguaging practices where L1 allowed for brainstorming and greater comprehension and subsequently, delivered final products in English. Another example of the use of L1 to support Vocabulary Acquisition is found in the study by Riyantika, Hanafi, and Aini (2024), in which they report that Indonesian students often use L1-based strategies for Vocabulary retention, which indicates that L1 continues to be a useful tool in the post-secondary level. The above studies and findings indicate that L1 continues to provide valuable support for learners within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education and pedagogy.

The question of whether or not L1 plays a formative role in learning new vocabulary is open to interpretation. Some researchers argue that using L1 to find meaning in target vocabulary will diminish the amount of time spent exposed to the target language and impede development of fluency (Krashen, 1985). However, recent studies show that students tend to prefer a more balanced approach to using L1 while learning target words. For example,

Hendrawaty et al. (2025) found positive results from formative assessments of bilingual scaffolding that revealed improvements in vocabularies, particularly for synonyms or complex word forms. Likewise, Clenton, Brooks & Laufer (2025) noted the strong relationship between vocabularies and reading comprehension, as well as that the use of multiple modalities (including glosses in L1) enhances retention rates. These findings emphasize the need to strategically and selectively use L1 as a support mechanism when learning vocabulary.

A gap identified in the literature is that students enrolled in Indonesian universities have not had their perceptions of using L1 in vocabulary learning explored fully. Many international studies have identified relationships between vocabularies and comprehension, but few investigations have considered the student perspective on how they believe using L1 assists them in their learning process. Understanding the perceptions of students is an important step in developing effective instruction and pedagogical practices.

For this research project we will discuss and analyse how L1 can be beneficial and disadvantageous for learners when learning new vocabulary, the frequency of use and how useful or helpful it is to use L1 for comprehension, confidence and motivation. The main aim of this research is to provide teachers with some guidelines to develop a balanced approach to support students' academic success without reducing their experience of learning through the English language.

Literature review

A handful of new studies have sought to explore the role of first language (L1) on vocabulary acquisition as a mechanism for encouraging students' vocabulary comprehension and knowledge acquisition of complex words. Szlapak (2024) focused on translanguaging procedures to support L1 learners' brainstorming and understanding of complex words through the use of their first language, while English remained as the final output of their vocabulary. He also illustrates how L1 serves as a bridge to filling in the students' comprehension gaps. Similarly, researchers (Riyantika, Hanafi, & Aini, 2024), focused on examining the way Indonesian students often utilize L1 based strategies to retain vocabulary; thus validating that L1 remains a valid means of supporting student learning in higher education.

Hendrawaty et al. (2025) illustrated that formative assessments that included a bilingual (L1) scaffold improved student outcomes in vocabulary, specifically with respect to increasing vocabulary acquisition of synonyms and complex vocabulary forms. The relationship between vocabulary skills and reading comprehension has been addressed in multiple studies (Clenton, Brooks, & Laufer, 2025). In particular, the authors illustrated various examples of how providing multimodal input (e.g., L1 glosses) maximizes the retention of vocabulary learned and enhances a depth of processing.

Overall, the collective results of the studies reveal that although there has been an increasing amount of research surrounding the use of L1 to support vocabulary acquisition, the application of L1 to enhance vocabulary knowledge and student outcomes has yet to be sufficiently studied for Indonesian higher education. Thus, previous research has focused either primarily on translanguaging or assessment-based strategies, and therefore no studies have yet explored the students' perspectives or opinions. Accordingly, since the current research study investigates this void, it may represent an innovative way of validating previous research findings.

METHOD

Undergraduate students from the English Department at Tidar University were surveyed about their perceptions of how Indonesian (L1) supports their learning of English vocabulary. The study used a descriptive qualitative design with a purposive sample of 30 students to gather data through a questionnaire (with 10 questions) to measure students' comprehension, confidence, motivation, frequency of L1 use for vocabulary acquisition, advantages and disadvantages of using L1 for vocabulary acquisition, and suggestions for instructors. In the study, all 30 participants were given a questionnaire to fill out and return. Thematic analysis of the participants' responses was conducted following the six-phase model described by Braun and Clarke (2006): 1) familiarization with data, 2) code generation, 3) theme identification, 4) theme review, 5) theme definition and naming, and 6) reporting results. Use of the steps as outlined above has resulted in findings that are consistent, systematic and duplicative; hence establishing trustworthiness and credibility of the used methods and findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, students from the English Department mostly viewed support from an Indonesian first language (L1) as a positive influence on vocabulary acquisition. 83% of the respondents indicated that L1 aided their comprehension of difficult vocabulary, with 93% of them agreeing that the best form of vocabulary acquisition is through a combination of L1 and L2 usage, using L1 to clarify concerns or to explain an event. Students frequently indicated that the use of abstract words (e.g., justice or sustainability) was easier for them when they were explained in terms of how the L1 expressed the concept. Therefore, this supports the hypothesis that L1 is an aid to bridging the gaps in comprehension of a second language through cognitive scaffolding. In addition, AlRamadhan (2020) found that lexical glossing with the L1 can significantly enhance incidental vocabulary acquisition (compared to using repetition alone), therefore reinforcing this idea of enhancing comprehension through L1 support, when applied effectively.

In terms of the frequency of student support for L1, 67% of the students indicated that their use of L1 should be “sometimes”, which appears to mean that they value the idea of using L1 for certain situations, but not necessarily for all vocabulary features. Thus, this response runs counter to the immersively or natural immersion-based theories (Krashen, 1985) that predict there will be more resistance, in this study and similar studies, to the continued use of an L1 in the acquisition of vocabulary. In the current study, students appear to want a more combination-based approach to vocabulary acquisition, which suggests that students are still attempting to achieve both comprehension as well as immersion. This finding also supports Papin & Kaplan-Rakowski (2020), who demonstrated that the use of L1 impacted the recall of vocabulary from an immersive virtual reality (VR) environment. Thus, it appears that students are still able to derive benefits from L1, even in more technologically advanced contexts; however, in order to achieve maximal immersion, students still require equilibrium.

The L1 was fully supported by 90% of the participants for easier understanding, while 80% indicated enhanced motivation and 73% had improved confidence. The advantages of using L1 go beyond helping with cognitive processing to also decreasing anxiety levels. The participants did express some disadvantages relating to the decreased exposure to English (33%), although this was less than anticipated. However, this small percentage indicates a continued need to maintain balance. This is supported by Boustani (2020), who demonstrated that adult EFL students, using L1 translation strategies, have superior performance to students using only L2 and are also warned of the potential for decreased fluency if L1 is over-utilized.

The strongest outcome of the study was significant agreement with the need for a balanced approach to the use of L1 by the students. Specifically, students preferred their instructors to use L1 only when teaching complex or abstract language and not for everyday language. This is in line with Cook's (2001) argument that a well-considered use of L1 will contribute to an increase in student learning while continuing to support an immersion environment. More recent research by Alshayban and Alghammas (2020) has indicated that students revert to their L1 for many reasons, including comprehension and emotional support, and that teachers need to have an awareness of these motivators when teaching students to improve student outcomes. Therefore, the findings of the current study suggest that the most effective use of L1 is through selective application.

There were significant positive impacts on students' sense of self-confidence and motivation to learn. About 73% of students felt they had gained increased self-confidence and 80% of students indicated L1 contributed to their motivation for learning. Ultimately these two areas of affective characteristics are vitally important in relation to student classroom participation and persistence. However, there was also a 20–27% proportion of students who did not experience these outcomes indicating potential individual differences in student's learning preference. This supports findings of Macaro (2009) who noted that several learners gained advantages through the use of L1 support, while many others preferred total immersion to challenge themselves and improve their fluency more quickly. Riyantika, Hanafi, & Aini (2024) have recently provided evidence confirming that Indonesian students continue to employ L1-based strategies to retain vocabulary, with a special focus on metacognitive and encoding processes.

Of equal importance to the issue of L1 usage in the classroom were the students' responses on whether teachers should limit the amount of L1 that was permitted in their classroom use; 60% of students responded they would prefer a limit be placed while 40% of students disagreed with that suggestion. This demonstrates the diversity of learners' expectations regarding the L1 and the need to incorporate flexible pedagogy. Generally speaking, it can be inferred that flexible, balanced teacher pedagogy should incorporate L1 when providing students the opportunity to learn new vocabulary (and particularly complex and abstract vocabulary) while still maintaining English as the primary language for the instructional environment. By utilizing this type of pedagogical approach,

the learning environment will promote heightened student comprehension and emotional support for learners, while still providing learners sufficient exposure to the target language. Recent research Clenton, Brooks & Laufer (2025) has also established that vocabulary awareness is a strong predictor of students' comprehension of reading, and furthermore, the use of multiple modes of input in vocabulary instruction (including L1 glosses) is greatly beneficial in enhancing students' retention of vocabulary.

Research question 1

How do students perceive the role of L1 in vocabulary learning?

Most of the students in this study believe that being able to use their native language (Indonesian) will help them improve their vocabulary development. The majority of respondents (83%) said that using L1 helps them understand challenging vocabulary. Additionally, when asked about the primary advantages they associate with using their native language in these instances, the vast majority indicated that it was easier to understand the new vocabulary. Many students noted that when abstract terms such as justice or sustainability were explained using their native language, those abstract terms became less ambiguous for students. These results are consistent with established theories regarding the use of L1 as a form of cognitive scaffolding (Cook, 2001) and more recent empirical studies, such as Szlapak (2024), who focused on translanguaging practices in which L1 is used as a scaffold to support overall comprehension while still resulting in English as the final form of output.

The results also demonstrate a preference for moderation; 67% of the students selected "sometimes" for the frequency with which they use L1. Based on these results, it may be that learners prefer a more balanced approach to support their vocabulary development than complete dependency on their L1. These findings are in agreement with those of Riyantika, Hanafi, & Aini (2024), which found that Indonesian students frequently utilize strategies based on L1 for vocabulary retention but still value the benefit of being exposed to more English. Overall, these findings suggest that students have a generally favorable view of the role of L1, but the best way to utilize L1 for maximum comprehension is to select when to use L1 in order to achieve maximum understanding while not diminishing student immersion.

Research question 2

What are the advantages and disadvantages of L1 use in vocabulary learning?

Students emphasized the benefits of L1 for vocabulary learning, with 80% reporting being more motivated to learn when L1 was included, along with 73% stating that using L1 to develop vocabulary made them feel more confident. The effective benefits of L1 show that it not only aids in cognitive processing but also helps to reduce anxiety, which encourages students to be active participants in their learning and motivates them to persist. Clenton, Brooks, & Laufer (2025) similarly found that the combination of multimodal input, including L1 glossing, helps to create stronger retention and increase the depth of processing of vocabulary.

However, 33% of student respondents identified disadvantages of using L1 for vocabulary learning, particularly having less exposure to English. Although 33% of students suggested that there should be more opportunities to use L1 in vocabulary learning than initially expected, the lower than anticipated number suggests a strong need for balance. Hendrawaty et al. (2025) echoed this sentiment with their finding that the use of bilingual scaffolding in formative assessments resulted in more positive vocabulary outcomes; however, students continue to struggle with phrasal verbs and word formations, indicating that the use of L1 cannot completely replace the need for direct engagement with English vocabulary.

Overall, these findings suggest that students understand both the advantages and disadvantages of using L1 to support their vocabulary learning. Therefore, teachers should adopt a balanced and/or flexible approach in terms of using L1 when teaching abstract or complex vocabulary, and continue to use English as the primary language of instruction. Using this method will help to maximize student comprehension and support effectively while also contributing to students' overall exposure to the target language.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study evince the vital role of Indonesian as a first language (L1) towards English vocabulary acquisition. The students' report provided evidence that L1 supports vocabulary acquisition by improving comprehension of vocabulary, reducing anxiety, and enhancing motivation and confidence. The support of L1 in

language learning provides benefits that are pivotal for sustaining students' classroom participation and persistence. Moreover, the findings suggest the first language (L1) can bridge comprehension gaps and facilitate deeper vocabulary processing in advanced contexts such as immersive virtual reality learning, and the suggestion can be made as it corresponds to the theories of cognitive scaffolding.

The study provides benefits; however, it also highlights limitations. A significant minority of students expressed concern towards fluency development as L1 reduces English exposure. Additionally, some students reported not experiencing enhancement in motivation or confidence, indicating individual differences that suggest the students prefer full immersion. The students' diverse responses in L1 use in vocabulary acquisition underscore the challenge of designing a universal approach to language learning.

The findings of this study have meaningful applications for pedagogy. Teachers should be adopting a flexible and balanced approach in which they could incorporate L1 when teaching complex or abstract vocabulary while maintaining English as the primary language for instruction. This balanced approach ensures comprehension without sacrificing immersion. Furthermore, L1 can be used strategically to maximize the learning experience without undermining immersion in technology-enhanced learning environments.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes effective L1 utilization, which lies in selective application by leveraging the benefits while preventing overusage. This balanced approach enhances vocabulary acquisition and supports learner confidence, motivation, and persistence. This study can be extended in the future toward investigating how L1 integration influences long-term fluency and comprehension across diverse contexts, therefore refining strategies for optimal bilingual pedagogy.

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A WORD FORMATION ANALYSIS OF RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER NAMES IN THE WEST AREA OF BSD CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the types of word formation processes and the meanings found in the residential cluster names in the western area of BSD city. The writer used Yule's theory (2020) to analyze the data. A descriptive-qualitative approach was used to explain the data textually. A total of 32 residential cluster names were identified and categorized into 7 out of 10 words formation processes: borrowing, which consists of 9 data; compounding, which consists of 7 data; derivation, which consists of 3 data; blending, which consists of 3 data; coinage, which consists of 7 data; multiple processes, which consists of 2 data; and clipping, which consists of 1 data. Meanwhile, three other word formation processes, backformation, conversion, and acronym, were not found in this study. All 32 cluster names analyzed indicate associative meanings. This study showcases the innovative use of the word formation process to illustrate the connection between language and the image of the cluster. This study can also serve as a reference for other developers and marketers in creating catchy names with strong meaning associations through word formation processes.

Keywords: BSD city, meaning, residential cluster, word formation

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many Indonesian brands and products use English in their names to attract consumers' attention and create a modern image (Sutisna & Rustandi, 2023). This trend is influenced by globalization and branding strategies in modern marketing communication (Gürhan-Canli et al., 2018). The use of English in naming is found across various sectors, such as food and beverages, beauty products, and property. For example, food and beverage brands use English names such as *Silver Queen* and *Greenfields*, while beauty brands use names such as *Make Over*. In the property sector, names such as *Pacific Place* and *Grand Indonesia* also reflect the use of English or foreign languages. The selection of a name in product aims not only to make it more attractive but also to create a specific meaning, identity, and image. To generate a name, companies often employ various linguistic processes, particularly word formation.

According to Plag (2018), generating new words or terms in language is a special process known as word formation. Yule (2020) also explains that new words may emerge through processes such as borrowing, compounding, backformation, blending, acronym, clipping, coinage, derivation, conversion, and multiple processes. The use of word formation is increasingly visible in the naming of residential clusters in Indonesia. One example of this phenomenon can be found in the residential clusters located in the western area of BSD City. The names of residential clusters in this area include *Greenwich*, *Terravia*, *Green Cove*, and *Vanya Park* (Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). These names are formed through various word formation processes to create distinctive identities. Therefore, word formation plays an important role in language development, especially in naming products in the property business, such as residential clusters

Several previous studies have investigated word formation in different contexts. Arumi & Setiyono (2021) analyzed word formation processes in messaging applications found in the Play Store and identified six types of

word formation. Yahya & Ardi (2023) examined slang words in the movie *Big Daddy* and identified five types of word formation processes. Meanwhile, Aulia et al. (2024) investigated word formation in *The Jakarta Post* articles and identified eight word formation categories. These studies demonstrate that word formation has been widely explored in digital applications, movies, and journalistic texts. However, this study focuses on word formation in residential cluster names in the western area of BSD city.

Furthermore, previous studies have primarily focused on identifying word formation types without examining how the resulting names convey meaning and brand image in the property sector. Therefore, analyzing the names of residential clusters is important because it expands the application of word formation analysis to new objects and provides insights into the relationship between language, meaning, and brand image. Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of word formation processes found in the residential cluster names in the western area of BSD City and to analyze the meanings represented by those names.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive method to examine word formation in residential cluster names in the west area of BSD City, utilizing the theory of word formation and meaning (Yule, 2020). A qualitative descriptive method is defined as a method for explaining complex phenomena, especially to understand a problem or issue (Hill, 2019). Therefore, this method was adopted to collect and explain detailed data regarding a particular problem. In this case, the writer used this method to analyze the word formation process in residential cluster names in the western area of BSD City. Yule (2020) divides word formation processes into ten types: borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, coinage, derivation, backformation, conversion, acronym, and multiple processes. This study focuses on residential cluster names. The writer chose the western area of BSD City as the primary object of this study. Furthermore, words or names serve as sources in this study.

To collect data, the writer collected data through observation and documentation. Direct observation was conducted to identify and record the names of residential clusters found in the western area of BSD City. To support the data, documentation was also obtained from official sources, including the *Sinar Mas Land* website <https://www.sinarmasland.com/>, the official website of *BSD City*, <https://www.bsdcity.com/>, and the official website of the *Sinar Mas Land Micro Site*, <https://microsite.sinarmasland.com/>. The collected data were then categorized into the types of word formation processes and meanings, whether conceptual or associative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the significance of the findings related to the word formation processes found in the names of residential clusters in the western area of BSD City. The analysis reveals a total of 32 data covering seven types of word formation. Seven different word formation processes were identified, including borrowing (9 data), compounding and coinage (7 data each), derivation, blending (3 data each), multiple processes (2 data), and clipping, which appeared only in one data. The data are classified into several categories of word formation based on Yule (2020). The table contains the types, data, and meanings of word formation. It can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Types of Word Formation and Meanings

Types of word formation	Data findings	Meaning	
		Conceptual	Associative
Borrowing	9	9	9
Compounding	7	0	7
Blending	3	0	3
Back Formation	0	0	0
Conversion	0	0	0
Clipping	1	0	1
Coinage	7	0	7
Acronym	0	0	0
Derivation	3	0	3
Multiple Process	2	0	2
Total	32	0	32

As shown in Table 1, seven out of ten types of word formation processes were identified, namely borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, coinage, derivation, and multiple processes. Based on the data, borrowing emerges as the most frequently occurring type of word formation process, with 9 instances. This is followed by compounding and coinage, each with 7 data. Blending and derivation are identified in 3 datasets. Then, multiple processes are found in 2 data, while clipping appears as the least frequent process, with only 1 datum. Additionally, all the data found carries associative meaning. However, no data were found in the back formation, conversion, and acronym. These findings indicate that in naming residential clusters in the west BSD area, developers tend to use word formation processes that result in associative meanings. The use of these names not only functions as an identity but also shapes the image and appeal of the area, which can influence public perceptions of the region.

Types of Word Formation

Word formation typically starts from a base or root word, which is then modified through various processes to create a new term. To give a clear knowledge of how these new words are generated and interpreted, Yule's (2020) theoretical framework will be used in this study to identify and explain the newly discovered terms that the writer found in the residential cluster names in the west area of BSD city.

Borrowing

Borrowing is the process of taking words from another language (Yule, 2020). As far as word adoption is concerned, borrowing is nothing new. As cultures communicate and share ideas, word adoption has been an element of linguistic evolution for ages.



Figure 1. *Enchanté*

The term *enchanté* is an instance of the process of word formation through borrowing. The word *enchanté* is a borrowed word from French *enchanté*. The word *enchanté* is a term from French, meaning “nice to meet you or delighted” (Syrov, 2021). This word is usually said during a first introduction to express the pleasure of meeting someone. Thus, the word *enchanté* can be classified as a free lexical morpheme, as it can stand independently and carries full meaning. In addition, this word does not undergo any morphological process, which supports its classification as a basic or root word. On the other hand, the word *enchanté* is also used as the name of a residential cluster in the west of the BSD city. In the context of residential cluster names in the west area of BSD city, the term *enchanté* has shifted in meaning, namely, becoming a luxury residence with premium facilities (Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). This reflects an associative meaning, where the name is designed to convey an image of a classy and luxurious lifestyle rather than referring to the literal function of the original French word.



Figure 2. *Trésor*

The term *trésor* is an instance of word formation by borrowing. The term *trésor* is a borrowed word from the Modern French word *trésor*, which conveys wealth or valuable items that are stored or hoarded (*Etymonline*, n.d.). Then, English adopted the word as treasure. Thus, the word *trésor* can be classified as a free lexical morpheme, as it can stand independently and carries full lexical meaning. In addition, this word does not undergo any morphological process, which supports its classification as a basic or root word. In French, the word *trésor* serves as a noun. In the context of residential cluster names in the city of BSD, the term *trésor* has shifted in meaning, namely becoming an exclusive residence that gives a magnificent and luxurious impression (Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). This change reflects an associative meaning, where the name is designed to convey an impression of exclusivity and luxury rather than referring to the literal function of the original French word.

Compounding

Compounding is the combination of two separate words to produce a new form (Yule, 2020). As far as word adoption is concerned, borrowing is nothing new. As cultures communicate and share ideas, word adoption has been an element of linguistic evolution for ages.



Figure 3. Vanya Park

The term *Vanya Park* is classified as a compounding process. This process involves combining two basic words: *Vanya* and *Park*. Both words can stand independently. This term is considered a free morpheme. The word *park* is a basic word often used in English that refers to an open space or green space area (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Meanwhile, the word *Vanya* is derived from Sanskrit, which means green (Microsite Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). The combination of the two base words, *Vanya* and *park*, produces a new term, *Vanya Park*, which represents a new lexical term. In the context of residential cluster names in the west area of BSD City, *Vanya Park* means a comfortable and adventurous urban-style residence (Microsite Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). Instead of describing the literal language's meaning, *Vanya Park* creates an associated meaning by describing the image of the comfortable and adventurous urban design.



Figure 4. Green Cove

The term *Green Cove* is an example of word formation through compounding. It combines the basic word *green* (adjective) with the basic word *cove* (noun) to create a new lexical unit. Both words can stand independently. This term is considered a free morpheme. The word *green* refers to a color commonly associated with leaves, plants, or nature, while *cove* means a small bay (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this compounding process, neither word undergoes any form change or affixation, yet together they form a new term with an extended meaning. In the context of the residential cluster name in the west area of BSD city, *Green Cove* undergoes a semantic shift, referring to a modern-style residence set in a lush and tranquil environment (Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). The term *Green Cove* generates an associated meaning since it describes the image of the modern residential, fertile, and calm concept rather than the original language's meaning.

Derivation

This process forms new words by adding affixes to a root or base word (Yule, 2020). In derivation, the affix added to a word can change either the meaning or the category of the word.

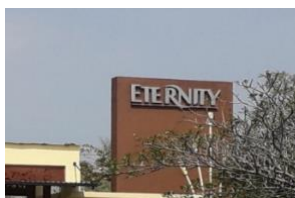


Figure 5. Eternity

The term *Eternity* is categorized in the derivation process of the word formation process. This process allows a word to produce semantic changes in meaning. The term *Eternity* stems from the Latin word *aeternitas*, which is derived from the adjective *aeternus*, which means eternal or permanent, and the Old French word *eternité*, which means eternity or perpetuity (Etymonline, n.d.). The Latin suffix *-itas*, which is equivalent to the English *-ity*, is added in this creation. This derivational suffix is frequently employed to create nouns from adjectives. It is made up of the root *etern-* from "eternal" and the suffix *-ity*. This modification exemplifies a common derivation scenario in which a suffix is added, changing the word class from adjective to noun. On the other hand, the word *eternity*

is used as the name of a residential cluster in West BSD city. The term *eternity* has a different meaning when it comes to residential cluster names in BSD city, specifically referring to a cluster that provides all of the city's accessibility conveniences (*Sinar Mas Land*, n.d.).



Figure 6. Simplicity

The term *Simplicity* is categorized as the derivation process in word formation. *Simplicity* is a clear example of this process, formed by adding the suffix *-ity* to the base word *simple* (adjective), thereby converting it into *simplicity* (noun). The word originates from the Latin *simplicitas*, meaning the state of being simple, uncomplicated, or unadorned. This Latin noun is based on the adjective *simplex*, meaning simple or single (*Etymonline*, n.d.). The derivation of *simplicity* illustrates how this word formation process can expand both the grammatical role and the semantics of a word within a language. On the other hand, the word *simplicity* is used as the name of a residential cluster in West BSD city. In the context of the cluster name in the west area of BSD City, *simplicity* experiences a shift in meaning. It no longer merely denotes something plain or easy to understand. Instead, it refers to a residential cluster that embodies a simple yet sophisticated living concept (*Sinar Mas Land*, n.d.).

Blending

Blending is a linguistic process of taking parts of syllables or phonemes from each original word and combining them into a new term (Yule, 2020). In addition, blending also makes words shorter, easier to pronounce, and more practical for everyday use.



Figure 7. Armont

In terms of word formation, *Armont* is classified as a blend. This term is a blend word, formed through the combination of *arya* and *mont*. The word *Armont* is formed through a blending process by combining the beginning part of the word *arya* with the word *mont*. The word *Armont* comes from the word *arya*, which means noble, and the word *mont*, which means a place (The Armont Residences BSD City, 2025). These two elements are blended to produce a new term, *Armont*. As a result, *Armont* is created as the name of a residential cluster in west area of BSD city. In the context of cluster names in West BSD City, *Armont*, with its Royal Garden Living concept, is a timeless home to live in and a heritage (*Sinar Mas Land*, n.d.).

Coinage

Coinage is the process of generating entirely new words or terms that were not previously used in a language (Yule, 2020). The term coinage describes concepts or items that were not previously known. Typically, coinage is used to develop new ideas, goods, or brand names.



Figure 8. Zora

The term *Zora* is classified as a coinage process. Coinage refers to the creation of a new term that has never existed before in its original form or in any derived form. The term *Zora* is not found in the English dictionary as a word with a literal meaning, which indicates that it is a coined term. *Zora* is created by the developer company, Sinar

Mas Land, to name a residential cluster located in West BSD. Sinar Mas Land first published and built this cluster in 2018 (The Zora BSD, 2025). In this context, *Zora* functions not only as the name of a residential cluster in West BSD but also as a representation of an exclusive, comfortable, and elegant residence featuring a modern concept with a touch of Japanese design (Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). In the context of naming residential clusters in the west area of BSD City, the name *Zora* does not have a literal or referential meaning but rather has an associative meaning with the aim of creating exclusive, comfortable, and elegant housing.

Multiple Processes

Multiple processes are a type of word formation in which a word is created by combining several gradual processes (Yule, 2022). This indicates that the word was formed through a series of gradual processes, including compounding, derivation, borrowing, and others.

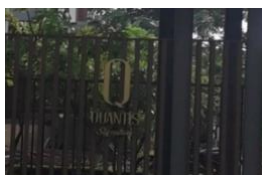


Figure 9. Quantis Signature

The term *Quantis Signature* is classified as a multiple process in word formation. This process refers to the creation of a word or phrase through the application of more than one morphological process in sequence. In this case, the term *Quantis Signature* involves two distinct stages of word formation. First, the word *Quantis* is created through coinage, as it does not exist in the English lexicon or in other commonly used languages. Second, the word *signature* is a borrowed word, originating from the Latin *signare*, meaning to mark or to sign (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). These two words are then combined to form the compound term *Quantis Signature*. This new term, *Quantis Signature*, is used as the name of the cluster in West BSD city. In the context of the residential cluster name in West BSD, the term *Quantis Signature* refers to a posh neighborhood with modern tropical architecture (Sinar Mas Land, n.d.).

Clipping

Clipping is a word formation process by which a word consisting of more than one syllable is reduced to a shorter form (Yule, 2020).



Figure 10. Cosmo

The word *Cosmo* is classified as a clipping process in word formation. The word *Cosmo* is a shortened form of the word cosmopolitan. This process involves the reduction or removal of the ending *-politan* from the word cosmopolitan. The term *Cosmo* comes from the word cosmopolitan, which refers to something sophisticated, global, or related to the whole world (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). But, in the context of residential cluster names in West BSD, the name *Cosmo* is formed to name a cluster. This name is chosen to describe a residence that has direct access to the city center (Sinar Mas Land, n.d.). The use of this clipped form makes the brand name sound more modern and memorable for potential homeowners. Furthermore, it strategically links the property's identity to a prestigious urban lifestyle through a single, catchy term.

Meaning

Associative Meaning

Yule (2020) argues that associative meaning is a meaning that refers to a context that is different from literal meaning or is influenced by people's experience. From the data described above, all 32 residential cluster names were categorized as associative meaning, while none represented purely conceptual meaning. It can be concluded that the name of the residential cluster in the western area of BSD City contains an associative meaning. Residential cluster names such as *Enchante*, *Tresor*, *Eternity*, *Simplicity*, *Zora*, *Quantis Signature*, and *Cosmo* no longer

describe the literal meaning. Instead, it is associated with luxury, elegance, comfort, and premium quality. This can be seen in how the company describes the name of the residential cluster by associating it with the image the company wants to project to its customers. Through associative meanings, residential cluster names become more than just creating a new term or name, but they function as persuasive tools that shape public perceptions of the product or property.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the analysis identifies seven out of ten word formation categories, as defined by the theoretical framework used. Based on the findings and discussions, 32 data points were discovered for residential cluster names in the west BSD City and examined according to their word formation processes. These seven processes include borrowing, which has 9 data; compounding, which has 7 data; derivation, which has 3 data; blending, which has 3 data; coinage, which has 7 data; multiple processes, which has 2 data; and coinage, which has 1 data. Meanwhile, three-word formation processes were not found in this study, such as back formation, conversion, and acronyms. Furthermore, each residential cluster name analyzed in this study undergoes a different word formation process. As a result, each datum is examined according to its formation structure, including the identification of the word formation type and its meaning. The word formation process in the study is produced through lexical borrowing from other languages, combining two basic words, adding affixations, mixing word elements, and shortening or abbreviating. Thus, the word formation process can be considered a way of crafting new words that express meanings different from their original or literal definitions, allowing the residential names in the west area of BSD City to carry associative meanings.

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BEAUTY MYTH IN THE SCHOOL FOR GOOD AND EVIL BY PAUL FEIG (2022)

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Abstract

This article discusses the portrayal of beauty standards experienced by the main character in the film *The School for Good and Evil* (2022). The story shows how beauty is socially constructed through appearance, behavior, and moral expectations imposed on the characters, especially Agatha, who is considered unsuitable for the School for Good because of her physical appearance. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study analyzes selected scenes and dialogues through narrative elements to reveal how the beauty myth operates in the film. This research applies Sandra Bartky's feminist theory of beauty oppression (1990) as the main theoretical framework to explain how beauty standards discipline women's bodies and identities. The findings show that the beauty myth in the film is portrayed through stereotyping, social exclusion, and moral labelling. At the same time, the main character deals with these pressures by rejecting norms of physical beauty, prioritising empathy and loyalty, and redefining beauty in terms of inner values.

Keywords: Beauty myth, feminist theory, film analysis, main character, qualitative study

INTRODUCTION

Beauty is commonly understood as a concept related to physical appearance that is perceived as attractive or desirable. However, beauty is not universal, as it is shaped by cultural values, historical contexts, and social norms that vary across societies (Bordo, 1993). As these perceptions become widely accepted, they develop into socially constructed beauty standards that influence how individuals, particularly women, are perceived, treated, and valued in everyday life.

Beauty standards often function as a form of social pressure that shapes women's identities, behaviors, and self-perception. From an early age, women are encouraged to regulate their appearance and compare themselves to socially constructed ideals, which may lead to feelings of inadequacy and exclusion (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). From a feminist perspective, Bartky (1990) explains that femininity is produced through disciplinary practices that regulate women's bodies, movements, and behaviors. In this sense, beauty standards operate as a form of social control that limits women's autonomy and reinforces gender inequality.

These issues are reflected in popular culture, including film. In *The School for Good and Evil* (2022), beauty is closely linked to moral judgment and social acceptance. The character of Sophie represents conventional beauty ideals, while Agatha, who does not conform to these standards, experiences rejection despite her strong moral character. This contrast highlights how physical appearance influences how individuals are valued and treated.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how beauty standards function as a form of oppression toward the female protagonist in *The School for Good and Evil* by applying Bartky's theory of bodily discipline. This study focuses on how beauty standards are constructed, imposed, and challenged through the experiences of Agatha.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to analyze beauty oppression in the film *The School for Good and Evil* (2022). The data consisted of selected scenes and dialogues that reflected beauty standards, moral judgment, and the experiences of the female protagonist. The data were collected by repeatedly watching the film and identifying relevant scenes and dialogues related to the research focus.

The data were analyzed using an interpretative method. The researcher categorized the selected data into themes such as beauty standards and forms of oppression. The analysis was then conducted by applying Bartky's theory of bodily discipline as the main framework to explain how beauty standards were constructed and how they functioned as a form of oppression toward the female protagonist.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Beauty-Based Judgement and Social Rejection

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses how beauty standards are portrayed and function as a form of oppression in the film *The School for Good and Evil* (2022). The findings are based on selected scenes and dialogues that illustrate how the female protagonist, Agatha, is perceived, treated, and judged based on her physical appearance.

The data are presented descriptively and are directly followed by analysis and interpretation. The discussion connects the findings to Bartky's concept of bodily discipline to explain how beauty standards operate as a form of social control. Through this approach, the study highlights not only how beauty oppression is constructed within the narrative, but also how it is challenged through the development of the main character.

Agatha confronted by students at the School for Good, showing contrast with conventional beauty standards.

(Minute 00:20:15)



Agatha's first arrival at the School for Good reveals how beauty standards function as a basis for social judgment. As shown in Figure 1, her appearance contrasts sharply with that of other students, who embody conventional ideals of beauty through their elegant clothing, neat hairstyles, and refined demeanor. In contrast, Agatha's dark attire, unkempt hair, and reserved presence position her as an outsider within the environment.

This difference in appearance leads to immediate negative reactions from other students, who mock and exclude her. Rather than being evaluated based on her character or intentions, Agatha is judged primarily through her physical appearance.

This reflects how beauty standards operate as a form of social control, where individuals who do not conform to dominant ideals are marginalized. This phenomenon aligns with Sandra Lee Bartky's concept of bodily discipline, which explains that women's bodies are constantly monitored and evaluated according to socially constructed standards. Agatha's experience demonstrates how these standards shape not only how others perceive her but also how she is positioned within the social hierarchy. As a result, beauty becomes a mechanism that determines inclusion and exclusion within the narrative.

Agatha's appearance contrasted with other female students in the School for Good (minute 00:20:13)



Agatha's arrival at the School for Good highlights how beauty standards function as a basis for immediate social judgment. As shown in Figure 1, she is directly confronted and evaluated by other students who embody conventional ideals of beauty. Her appearance, which differs significantly from the dominant aesthetic, positions her as an outsider within the social environment.

This contrast becomes more visually emphasized in Figure 2, where Agatha stands facing other female students whose appearances reflect the school's expectations of elegance, neatness, and femininity. While the other students present polished hairstyles, soft expressions, and refined clothing, Agatha's dishevelled hair, dark attire, and rigid posture further mark her as different. This visual opposition reinforces the idea that beauty operates as a visible standard used to classify individuals into socially acceptable and unacceptable categories. Agatha is not only judged but also socially differentiated based on her appearance. She is perceived as "out of place" and implicitly associated with negative traits simply because she does not conform to the expected image of goodness.

This condition reflects how beauty standards function beyond aesthetic preference, serving instead as a mechanism that organizes social hierarchy and determines belonging. This finding aligns with Bartky's concept of bodily discipline, which explains that women's bodies are constantly regulated and evaluated according to socially constructed norms. Through this lens, Agatha's experience illustrates how non-conformity leads to marginalization, as her body becomes the basis through which she is judged, categorized, and excluded.

Beatrix grabs Agatha's rose that Tedros threw (minute 00:33:03)



Agatha's experience at the School for Good shows how beauty standards shape social acceptance and exclusion. Tedros, who had previously admired Beatrix, begins to show interest in Agatha, which intensifies Beatrix's dislike toward her. Beatrix displays subtle hostility toward Agatha, reflecting both personal jealousy and Agatha's failure to conform to expected standards of femininity.

Agatha's rejection is further reinforced by other students, who question her suitability and mock her appearance by associating her with the School for Evil. Their reactions indicate that beauty standards are collectively enforced, positioning Agatha as someone who does not belong. This sense of alienation is strengthened through Sophie's initial belief that they were placed in the wrong school, as well as the institution's reliance on its own system to define who is considered "good." This condition reflects Bartky's concept of bodily discipline, where women are evaluated based on socially constructed expectations of appearance. As a result, Agatha's non-conformity leads to repeated experiences of rejection and marginalization.

***Resistance to Beauty* Prioritising Others**

Agatha confronting her inner desire in the river (minute 01:11:06)



Agatha's response to the river scene demonstrates her resistance to the beauty myth by prioritising moral values over socially constructed desires. While the river reflects the students' deepest wishes—often shaped by ideals of romance, attractiveness, and acceptance—Agatha instead expresses a desire to return home to Gavaldon and to help Sophie. This contrasts with other students whose desires align with heteronormative and beauty-driven expectations.

Her decision reflects a rejection of the dominant narrative that equates happiness with beauty and romantic fulfilment. Rather than seeking validation through appearance or relationships, Agatha prioritises safety, belonging, and moral responsibility. This is further emphasized when she chooses to free a trapped former student, symbolising her concern for others rather than herself. This action challenges the disciplinary nature of beauty standards, as explained by Bartky, which encourage women to compete and conform to restrictive ideals. Instead

of engaging in competition, Agatha demonstrates solidarity and empathy, disrupting the system that defines worth based on appearance. Thus, this scene represents Agatha's resistance to the beauty myth by redefining desire itself, not as a pursuit of beauty or acceptance, but as an expression of ethical agency and care for others.



Agatha and Sophie are arguing in the forest (minute 01:37:21)

Agatha's action in this scene further demonstrates her resistance to beauty standards. When Tedros is attacked, Sophie refuses to help, believing that a princess should remain passive. This reflects the beauty myth logic, in which femininity is associated with appearance and idealized roles rather than moral action.

In contrast, Agatha chooses to help Tedros despite being labelled as "ugly" and "evil." Her response is driven by empathy and responsibility rather than social expectations. This challenges the idea that goodness is defined by beauty or performance, and instead presents it as an ethical action. In this sense, Agatha disrupts the restrictive roles imposed on women, as explained by Bartky, where femininity limits women's agency. This moment also exposes a contradiction within the School for Good, which prioritizes beauty and narrative ideals over genuine moral behavior. Sophie's reaction, rejecting Agatha and reinforcing the idea that "good" and "evil" are based on appearance, reflects internalized beauty standards. However, Agatha refuses to engage in this system of competition and continues to prioritize compassion over recognition. Thus, this scene highlights Agatha's resistance to the beauty myth by redefining goodness as action rather than appearance, emphasizing that moral value cannot be determined by physical attractiveness.

Embracing Authenticity

Everyone reacts to Agatha's different appearance (minute 01:41:39)



Agatha's experience reflects her resistance to beauty standards through the acceptance of her authentic self. From the beginning, she is mocked and marginalised due to her appearance. However, instead of attempting to conform, she remains composed and prioritises her inner qualities such as bravery, loyalty, and kindness. This reflects what Bartky describes as a refusal to engage in the disciplinary practices that regulate feminine appearance.

Her resistance becomes more explicit in her interaction with Sophie, particularly when she states, "*You don't have to be beautiful to be good.*" This directly challenges the belief that moral value is tied to physical attractiveness. While Sophie begins to internalise beauty standards as a source of validation, Agatha rejects this logic and refuses to measure worth based on outward appearance. This contrast highlights how femininity is maintained through internalisation, as individuals adopt these norms to gain social acceptance. Agatha's non-conformity, however, exposes how such standards shape social perception, where her positive qualities are often overlooked simply because she does not meet expected forms of femininity.



Professor Dovey acknowledges Agatha's beauty (minute 01:42:14)

Agatha's development throughout the film represents a shift from marginalisation to self-acceptance. Rather than transforming her appearance to fit societal expectations, she maintains her identity and demonstrates her value through actions. This reinforces Bartky's argument that beauty standards function as a form of control, and that rejecting them can become a form of empowerment. Thus, Agatha's journey illustrates that authenticity can challenge the

beauty myth. By refusing to conform, she redefines femininity as rooted in character rather than appearance, showing that moral worth is not determined by physical beauty.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of *The School for Good and Evil* (2022) shows that beauty standards function as a form of social control that shapes judgment, social acceptance, and identity. The female protagonist, Agatha, experiences marginalization and exclusion due to her non-conformity to dominant ideals of femininity, demonstrating how physical appearance is closely linked to perceived moral value. The findings also indicate that resistance to the beauty myth is represented through Agatha's actions and values. Rather than conforming to socially constructed expectations, she prioritizes empathy, moral responsibility, and authenticity. This challenges the assumption that beauty determines worth and redefines goodness as ethical action rather than physical appearance, in line with Bartky's concept of bodily discipline.

However, the analysis is limited to a single film and primarily focuses on one character. Further research may examine broader representations of beauty standards across different media or cultural contexts to deepen understanding of beauty oppression. The discussion highlights that beauty standards are not merely aesthetic ideals, but mechanisms that regulate women's bodies and behaviors. The portrayal of Agatha suggests that resisting these norms through authenticity and moral integrity can challenge dominant definitions of femininity.

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ANXIETY IN THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE FILM BOYKA: UNDISPUTED IV

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Abstract

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological issues represented in literary works because it influences human thoughts, emotions, and behavior. This study aimed to analyze how anxiety was depicted and how defense mechanisms were portrayed in the main character of Boyka: Undisputed IV. The study employed a qualitative research design using film analysis. The data consisted of dialogues, scenes, and character actions that reflected psychological conflict and were analyzed using Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms. The results showed that the main character experienced three types of anxiety: realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety, with moral anxiety emerging as the dominant form due to feelings of guilt and moral responsibility. The analysis also revealed five defense mechanisms employed by the main character, namely regression, reaction formation, undoing, introjection, and turning against the self, as unconscious strategies to cope with emotional conflict. It was concluded that anxiety and defense mechanisms were closely interconnected, as the psychological pressure experienced by the main character unconsciously triggered various defense mechanisms throughout the film. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the representation of psychological conflict in film through a psychoanalytic perspective.

Keywords: Anxiety, defence mechanisms, psychoanalysis

INTRODUCTION

Human life is often accompanied by various challenges and unexpected events that can affect an individual's emotional condition. In modern society, people frequently experience problems such as failure in work or study, loss of loved ones, feelings of guilt after making mistakes, and traumatic incidents that leave deep psychological impacts. These experiences often create emotions such as fear, worry, sadness, disappointment, and emotional pressure. Emotions are feelings that occur when individuals respond to events and experiences in their lives (Smith et al., 2017). These emotional responses are commonly associated with anxiety, which can influence the way individuals think, behave, and respond to situations around them.

According to Freud (1927), anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry, and tension that arises when an individual faces a threatening or difficult situation. Anxiety affects not only a person's thoughts but also their behavior and emotional responses. When individuals experience traumatic events, they may develop stronger feelings of fear or worry when facing similar situations in the future. If anxiety is not managed properly, it can interfere with daily activities, social relationships, and psychological well-being. Therefore, understanding how anxiety is depicted in literary works is important because literature often reflects psychological experiences found in real life.

To cope with anxiety, individuals unconsciously employ defense mechanisms to protect themselves from emotional pain. Freud (1936) explains that defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies that reduce anxiety and help individuals maintain emotional balance. These mechanisms operate automatically without conscious awareness and enable individuals to adapt to difficult situations. The relationship between

anxiety and defence mechanisms demonstrates how people respond psychologically to emotional conflicts and stressful experiences.

Psychological issues such as anxiety and defense mechanisms are frequently represented in literary works, including films. As a literary medium, film portrays human experiences through narrative elements, such as characters, plot, and setting, as well as cinematographic elements that strengthen the representation of emotions and conflicts. One film that reflects these psychological issues is *Boyka: Undisputed IV*, directed by Todor Chapkanov and released in 2016. Throughout the film, the main character, Boyka, experiences guilt, fear of failure, and emotional pressure after causing another person's death. These experiences indicate different forms of anxiety and various defense mechanisms that influence his thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

Several previous studies have discussed anxiety and defence mechanisms in literary works. Cahyati (2022) analyzed anxiety and defence mechanisms in *Finding Nemo* and found that the main character experienced realistic and neurotic anxiety accompanied by several defence mechanisms. Farokhah (2015) examined anxiety and defence mechanisms in *Splendour* and reported that the main character experienced realistic, neurotic, and moral anxiety while employing various defence mechanisms to cope with emotional conflict. Likewise, Masykuroh (2017) investigated anxiety and defence mechanisms in *Good Will Hunting* and identified three types of anxiety and several defence mechanisms used by the main character. These studies demonstrate that anxiety and defence mechanisms have become important topics in psychological literary criticism.

Although those previous studies discuss similar psychological issues, they analyze different literary works and primarily apply Sigmund Freud's theory of defence mechanisms. In contrast, the present study applies Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety together with Anna Freud's theory of defence mechanisms to analyze the main character in *Boyka: Undisputed IV*. By combining these two theoretical perspectives, this study provides a more comprehensive analysis of how anxiety is depicted and how defence mechanisms are portrayed in the film.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to analyze how anxiety is depicted and how defense mechanisms are portrayed in the main character of *Boyka: Undisputed IV*. The findings are expected to contribute to psychological literary studies by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between anxiety and defence mechanisms as represented in film.

Literature Review

Anxiety

Anxiety is a psychological condition that may be experienced by anyone and is considered part of mental health. According to Craske et al. (as cited in Barlow, 2002), anxiety is a future-oriented mood state associated with preparation for possible negative events. Similarly, Freud (1927) defines anxiety as an emotional response that arises when individuals perceive threats or conflicts. Freud classifies anxiety into three types: realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety.

Realistic anxiety refers to anxiety caused by actual threats in the external environment. According to Boeree (2006), this type of anxiety is similar to fear because it is triggered by real physical danger and functions as a protective response that helps individuals remain alert and avoid harmful situations. In contrast, neurotic anxiety arises from internal conflict between instinctual desires and the fear of their possible consequences. Freud (2021) explains that this type of anxiety is strengthened by an individual's fear of perceived threats, even when those threats are not objectively certain. Consequently, neurotic anxiety may affect decision-making and daily behavior. Meanwhile, moral anxiety occurs when the ego conflicts with the superego after an individual violates personal or social moral standards. According to Rezeki et al. (2023), this anxiety produces feelings of guilt, shame, and fear of violating moral values. As a result, individuals may experience emotional discomfort when their behavior contradicts their moral principles.

Defense Mechanisms

Defence mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies used by the ego to reduce anxiety and protect individuals from emotional conflict (Freud, 1936). Anna Freud (1936) classifies defence mechanisms into several types. However, this study focuses only on five defence mechanisms that are relevant to the analysis, namely regression, reaction formation, undoing, introjection, and turning against the self.

Regression is a defence mechanism in which individuals return to more immature patterns of behavior when facing anxiety or conflict (Freud, 1936). According to Prastya et al. (2023), regression provides temporary

psychological comfort, although it does not resolve the underlying problem. Another defense mechanism is reaction formation, in which individuals express attitudes or behaviors that are opposite to their actual feelings to cope with unacceptable emotions (Freud, 1936). Freud (1949, p. 144) explains that this mechanism strengthens attitudes opposite to repressed impulses, allowing the ego to reduce anxiety by hiding unacceptable feelings. Similarly, undoing is a defense mechanism in which individuals attempt to cancel or compensate for unacceptable thoughts or actions through opposite behaviors (Freud, 1936). Although this mechanism may temporarily reduce feelings of guilt or anxiety, it does not eliminate the underlying emotional conflict. In addition, introjection refers to the unconscious process of adopting the values, attitudes, or beliefs of significant others as one's own (Freud, 1936). This mechanism may help individuals gain acceptance or security, but excessive introjection can also create internal conflict and emotional pressure. Finally, turning against the self is a defense mechanism in which individuals redirect anger or frustration toward themselves rather than toward the actual source of conflict (Freud, 1936). This mechanism may lead individuals to develop negative evaluations of themselves instead of expressing their emotions toward others. Henriques (2016) further explains that repeated use of this mechanism may result in excessive self-blame, low self-esteem, and prolonged emotional distress.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to analyze the depiction of anxiety and defense mechanisms in the film *Boyka: Undisputed IV*. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth interpretation of psychological phenomena represented through the characters, dialogues, and events in the film. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups assign to social or human problems. Therefore, this approach is appropriate for examining the psychological condition of the main character. The primary data source of this study was the film *Boyka: Undisputed IV*, written by Boaz Davidson and directed by Todor Chapkanov. The data consisted of dialogues, monologues, and scenes that reflected the main character's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors related to anxiety and defence mechanisms. The selected data were limited to scenes that were relevant to the research objectives.

The data were collected using the documentation technique. First, the writer watched the film repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline. Next, the writer identified and documented dialogues and scenes that indicated anxiety and defense mechanisms. The collected data were then classified based on the categories of anxiety proposed by Sigmund Freud and the defense mechanisms proposed by Anna Freud. After the data had been collected, they were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis procedures proposed by Ary et al. (2010), which consist of familiarizing and organizing, coding and reducing, and interpreting and representing. In the first stage, the writer reviewed and organized the collected data by repeatedly observing the film. In the second stage, the writer coded and selected the dialogues and scenes that represented the types of anxiety and defense mechanisms. Finally, the selected data were interpreted using Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms to answer the research questions, and the findings were presented descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Anxiety Depicted in the Film

The analysis shows that anxiety is depicted throughout the film in various forms experienced by the main character. Boyka initially experiences moral anxiety, which gradually develops into realistic anxiety and neurotic anxiety as the story progresses. The turning point occurs when he discovers that his opponent dies after their match. This event creates intense feelings of guilt, fear, and emotional conflict, leading Boyka to question his actions, beliefs, and personal responsibility. These findings demonstrate that the main character's psychological condition develops alongside the progression of the narrative.



Figure 1. Boyka is worried about her Fellings. From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [01:01:35], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016.

The scene shows a meeting between Alma, Viktor's wife, and Boyka in the temporary room where Boyka is staying. Alma asks Boyka to explain the incident that caused her husband's death, but Boyka refuses, saying, "I just don't want to hurt you" (Chapkanov, 2016, 01:01:35–01:01:38). Boyka realizes that telling Alma the truth would cause her intense emotional pain because she has not fully understood how her husband died. His hesitation is not caused by an imagined fear but by the awareness of a real and unavoidable consequence. As a result, Boyka chooses to remain silent to protect Alma from further suffering. Therefore, this scene reflects realistic anxiety because his fear is based on an actual external situation and its possible consequences.

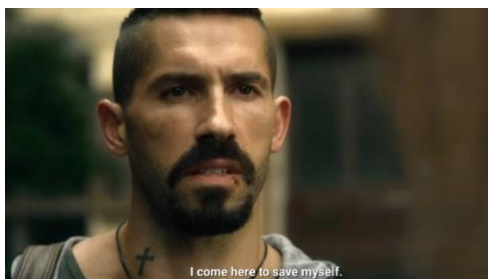


Figure 2. He tells the victim's wife about his purpose. From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [00:41:52], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016

This scene shows Boyka meeting Alma and the promoter's bodyguard. When Alma asks him to stop following her, Boyka replies, "I come here to save myself" (Chapkanov, 2016, 00:41:50–00:41:53). His statement indicates that he is struggling with an internal conflict caused by guilt over Viktor's death. On the one hand, Boyka feels a strong desire to help Alma as a way of seeking redemption, while on the other hand he fears rejection and the consequences of involving himself further in her life. This psychological conflict creates emotional tension that influences his actions. Therefore, the scene illustrates neurotic anxiety because Boyka's fear originates primarily from his internal conflict rather than from an immediate external threat.



Figure 3. He asks himself about the purpose of life. From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [00:01:15], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016.

At the beginning of the film, Boyka reflects on his life before entering the ring. He says, "I still don't know what this life is for... the man that done what I've done does not deserve to dream but I still do" (Chapkanov, 2016, 00:01:15–00:01:31). Through this monologue, Boyka openly expresses regret for the violence he committed during his fighting career. He believes that his past actions make him unworthy of pursuing a better future, even though he still hopes for redemption. His feelings of guilt and self-condemnation demonstrate a conflict between his conscience and his previous behavior. Therefore, this scene represents moral anxiety because Boyka judges himself according to his own moral standards.

Defence Mechanism Depicted in the Film

The findings also reveal that the main character employs five defence mechanisms in response to the anxiety he experiences, namely regression, reaction formation, undoing, introjection, and turning against the self. These defence mechanisms emerge unconsciously as psychological strategies to reduce emotional distress and maintain psychological balance.

Through these mechanisms, Boyka attempts to cope with feelings of guilt, fear, and inner conflict resulting from his past actions. The analysis indicates that the defence mechanisms portrayed in the film reflect Anna Freud's concept of unconscious psychological protection against anxiety, as each mechanism serves to reduce psychological tension without directly resolving the underlying source of the conflict.

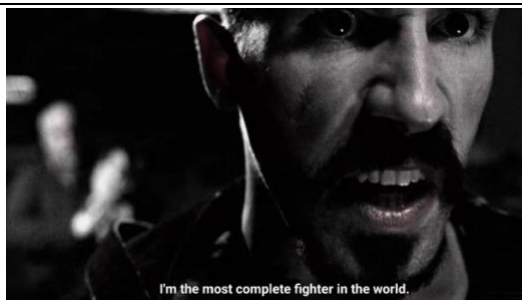


Figure 4. He ignores his feelings. From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [00:33:01], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016.

After meeting the promoter, Boyka dreams about his previous victories in the ring. In the dream, he says, "I'm the most complete fighter in the world" (Chapkanov, 2016, 00:33:00–00:33:03). The dream reflects his desire to return psychologically to a period when he felt confident, respected, and free from guilt. Instead of confronting the emotional burden caused by Viktor's death, his mind unconsciously recalls memories associated with success and personal achievement. This temporary psychological escape provides emotional comfort, although it does not solve the underlying conflict. Therefore, the scene illustrates regression because Boyka unconsciously retreats to a more secure psychological state to reduce his anxiety.



Figure 5. He tells the manager that this is a life he never wants to be. From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [00:17:29], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016.

In the manager's office, Boyka asks for a fake passport to travel to Ukraine. When his manager refuses, Boyka responds, "It's not this life I'm worried about" (Chapkanov, 2016, 00:17:28–00:17:32). Through this statement, Boyka appears calm, fearless, and determined despite the dangerous situation he is facing. However, beneath this confident attitude, he is experiencing deep guilt and anxiety over Viktor's death and its consequences. Rather than expressing his emotional vulnerability, Boyka presents the opposite attitude by acting as though he has no fear. Therefore, this scene demonstrates reaction formation because his outward behavior conceals feelings that are unacceptable to him.



Figure 6. He tries to ignore his feelings by praying and smashing the table. From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [00:07:32], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016.

Before the match begins, Boyka sits alone in the locker room reflecting on his life and his role as a fighter. He then prays and strikes the table (Chapkanov, 2016, 00:07:31–00:07:41). His prayer reflects a desire to seek forgiveness and spiritual guidance before entering the ring, while his physical gesture suggests the emotional tension he is trying to control. These symbolic actions indicate that Boyka is attempting to ease the guilt he continues to feel over Viktor's death. Although his actions provide temporary emotional relief, they do not change the reality of what has happened or eliminate his inner conflict. Therefore, this scene illustrates undoing because Boyka symbolically attempts to compensate for his wrongdoing rather than directly resolving the source of his guilt.



Figure 7. The priest advised him to leave the job . From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [00:06:29], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016.

This scene shows Boyka donating Bibles to a church and talking with a priest. When the priest advises him to stop fighting, Boyka replies, “I think this is God's gift for me, it would be a sin to waste it” (Chapkanov, 2016, 00:06:25–00:06:31). His response demonstrates that he has internalized the religious values and advice he has received, but he interprets them in a way that supports his identity as a fighter. Rather than abandoning his profession, Boyka believes that his fighting ability is a gift entrusted to him by God. By adopting this belief, he can reduce the moral conflict between his faith and his career. Therefore, this scene illustrates introjection because Boyka unconsciously incorporates religious beliefs into his own value system to cope with his anxiety.



Figure 8. He made an unfair deal with a boxing promoter. From *Boyka Undisputed IV* [00:38:15], by Todor Chapkanov (director), 2016.

After Alma rejects his apology, Boyka visits Zourab to arrange a fight in exchange for paying Alma's debts. Despite the dangerous conditions, he accepts the agreement and states, “Well, I'm making it my fucking business” (Chapkanov, 2016, 00:38:14–00:38:17). His willingness to risk his own life reflects a strong sense of responsibility and guilt for Viktor's death. Instead of directing his frustration toward others or denying his mistakes, Boyka chooses to endure physical suffering as a form of personal sacrifice. His decision suggests an unconscious desire to punish himself to atone for his past actions. Therefore, this scene demonstrates turning against the self because Boyka redirects his emotional pain toward himself as a way of coping with his guilt.

The findings show that Boyka experiences the three types of anxiety proposed by Freud (1927): realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety. Among these, moral anxiety is the most dominant because feelings of guilt following Viktor's death consistently influence Boyka's thoughts, emotions, and decisions throughout the film. His awareness of having violated his own moral values creates continuous psychological pressure, which becomes the central source of his emotional conflict. As the story progresses, this unresolved guilt shapes many of his actions and motivates his efforts to seek redemption.

To cope with these psychological pressures, Boyka unconsciously employs five defense mechanisms proposed by Freud (1936): regression, reaction formation, undoing, introjection, and turning against the self. Each mechanism serves a different psychological function in reducing anxiety. Regression allows Boyka to return mentally to memories of past success, reaction formation enables him to conceal fear behind confidence, undoing reflects his attempts to reduce guilt through symbolic actions, introjection helps him adopt beliefs that justify his decisions, and turning against the self leads him to accept physical suffering as a form of self-punishment. Although these defense mechanisms temporarily reduce emotional tension, they do not eliminate the underlying source of his anxiety.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that anxiety and defense mechanisms are closely interconnected throughout the film. The psychological conflicts experienced by Boyka trigger the unconscious use of various defense mechanisms as a way of protecting the ego from overwhelming emotional distress. These findings support

Freud's view that anxiety functions as a signal of internal conflict, while defense mechanisms operate as unconscious strategies to manage that conflict. Thus, *Boyka: Undisputed IV* portrays not only the physical struggles of its main character but also his complex psychological journey toward confronting guilt and seeking redemption.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the main character Boyka experiences three types of anxiety proposed by Sigmund Freud, namely realistic anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety, with moral anxiety emerging as the dominant form. The analysis also shows that Boyka unconsciously employs five defense mechanisms proposed by Anna Freud—regression, reaction formation, undoing, introjection, and turning against the self to cope with guilt, fear, and inner conflict. These findings demonstrate that anxiety and defense mechanisms are closely interconnected in shaping the psychological development of the main character throughout the film.

This study contributes to psychological literary criticism by applying Sigmund Freud's theory of anxiety and Anna Freud's theory of defense mechanisms to analyze *Boyka: Undisputed IV*, thereby providing a broader understanding of the relationship between anxiety and unconscious psychological responses in film characters. However, this study is limited to the analysis of a single main character and focuses only on selected types of defense mechanisms. Therefore, future studies may analyze other characters, apply different psychological theories, or compare similar psychological issues across different films to enrich the understanding of psychological representation in literary works.

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REPRESENTATION OF DEPRESSION IN *ELEANOR OLIPHANT IS COMPLETELY FINE* BY GAIL HONEYMAN

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Abstract

This study examines how depression is portrayed through the main character, Eleanor Oliphant, in Gail Honeyman's novel, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. The focus of this study is to examine the forms of depression experienced by Eleanor and how she gradually attempts to cope with and recover from this condition. This study uses a literary psychology approach, with Beck and Alford's (2009) theory of depression as the basis for analysis. The method used is descriptive qualitative, analyzing narratives and dialogues related to the main character's psychological state. The results show that Eleanor's depression is manifested through prolonged feelings of loneliness, difficulty establishing social relationships, and behaviors influenced by past traumatic experiences. The novel also demonstrates that recovery from depression does not occur instantly, but rather through a gradual process involving emotional awareness, therapeutic support, and the presence of meaningful social relationships.

Keywords: Beck and Alford, depression, Eleanor Oliphant, representation

INTRODUCTION

Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders worldwide. This condition is characterized by persistent low mood and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities. According to the Global Burden of Disease Study (2021), the prevalence of depression in adults reaches approximately 5.8%, or more than 300 million people worldwide, making it a leading cause of disability and reduced productivity globally.

Despite continuous progress in pharmacological and psychotherapeutic therapies, the global prevalence of depression has not shown a significant decline. This indicates that depression remains a serious mental health problem and requires more comprehensive attention from various parties.

According to Flehr et al. (2025), depression often goes undetected and undertreated, necessitating a more collaborative and multidisciplinary approach, particularly through primary health care services, to support early detection and integrated treatment. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2025) stated that depression has become a global health crisis, with a growing number of sufferers and a significant contribution to disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), with variations based on region, age, and sociodemographic conditions.

According to Malhi and Mann (2018), major depressive disorder is a common and serious mental disorder that significantly limits psychosocial functioning and reduces an individual's quality of life. This condition is characterized by changes in emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that can impact various aspects of daily life, both social and professional. In clinical practice, depression has complex characteristics due to the variety of symptoms, unpredictable course of the disease, and differences in response to treatment.

According to Dobson and Dozois (2008), depression is a complex disorder involving various interrelated factors, including genetic, psychological, and environmental factors. The course of depression includes several stages,

such as onset, maintenance, remission, relapse, and recurrence. This indicates that depression is a dynamic condition and requires a comprehensive understanding of its analysis and treatment.

In everyday life, depression is closely related to complex human experiences, such as feelings of loneliness, loss, and inability to adapt to social environments. This condition can affect how individuals view themselves and others, thus impacting their social and emotional lives.

In a literary context, depression is often represented as part of the human psychological experience. Literary works serve as a medium for depicting a character's mental state through conflict, plot, and character development. Through this representation, readers can understand how depression affects an individual's life emotionally and cognitively.

One novel that depicts this condition is Gail Honeyman's *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. This novel tells the story of Eleanor Oliphant, who lives in solitude and experiences various emotional difficulties due to past trauma and an inability to build social relationships. Eleanor's life reflects the psychological conditions associated with depression.

The novel also illustrates how individuals with depression can become trapped in negative thought patterns, feelings of guilt, and a tendency to withdraw from social circles. Eleanor's monotonous and meaningless life exhibits various symptoms of depression, such as loss of interest, pessimism, and social isolation. However, as the story progresses, cognitive and emotional changes occur as Eleanor begins to recognize her negative thought patterns and attempts to build relationships with others.

Literature Review

This research was conducted to analyze Gail Honeyman's novel *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. This novel was chosen because it depicts the various psychological conflicts experienced by the main character. The researcher was interested in identifying the symptoms of depression experienced by Eleanor and analyzing their representation using the Symptomatology of Depression theory proposed by Beck and Alford (2009).

The first previous study, titled *Betrayal Trauma of Eleanor in Honeyman's Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*, was written by Pratiwi (2023). This study examined the trauma of betrayal experienced by the character Eleanor using a literary psychology approach. The results showed that Eleanor's trauma was represented through emotional wounds resulting from an unhealthy relationship with her mother, supported by character development and the storyline.

The second previous study, titled *The Centrality of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms in Major Depressive Disorder Determined Using a Network Analysis*, was written by Park and Kim (2020). This study examined the relationship between depressive and anxiety symptoms. The results showed that symptoms such as sad mood, loss of interest, fatigue, and feelings of worthlessness were central to depression.

The third previous study, titled *Response Pattern of Depressive Symptoms Among College Students: What Lies Behind Items of the Beck Depression Inventory-II?* was written by Reis de Sá Junior et al. (2018). This study analyzed depressive symptom patterns using the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II). The research results show that depressive symptoms manifest in interconnected emotional, cognitive, motivational, and physical aspects.

The fourth previous study, entitled *The Depression Experienced by Matt Haig Described in His Reasons to Stay Alive*, was written by Fitriah. This study examines the experience of depression in autobiographical works. The results show that depression is represented through despair, anxiety, and a loss of meaning in life, accompanied by a process of acceptance and recovery.

Based on these four previous studies, it can be concluded that all studies share similarities in discussing depression and psychological conditions. However, there are differences in the research objects, theories used, and the focus of analysis.

Therefore, the main differences between these studies and this study lie in the object of study and the theoretical approach used. This study focuses on the representation of depressive symptoms in fictional literary works through the character of Eleanor Oliphant, using Beck and Alford's Symptomatology of Depression theory (2009).

Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the study of literary psychology, particularly in understanding the representation of depressive symptoms and the process of psychological recovery in contemporary literary works.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine how depressive symptoms are represented through the main character in Gail Honeyman's novel, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. According to Jacelon and O'Dell (2005), the data analysis process in qualitative research is a creative endeavor in which researchers explore and reflect on the meanings contained in the data. In the qualitative research tradition, the data analysis process generally occurs concurrently with the data collection process, allowing researchers to iteratively analyze and collect data to develop and explain research findings. This approach was used because it allowed the author to conduct an in-depth analysis of the literary text, specifically in understanding the representation of depression reflected through the main character. The analysis focused on the emotional, cognitive, motivational, physical, and perceptual aspects that shape the depiction of depression in the novel.

The data source for this study was Gail Honeyman's novel, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. The research data consisted of narrative excerpts and dialogue depicting the main character's depressive symptoms. This data was collected through a thorough reading of the novel to identify sections relevant to the research focus. Next, the author identified and recorded narrative excerpts and dialogue that demonstrated indicators of depressive symptoms based on predetermined aspects. The collected data was then classified according to the category of depression symptoms to facilitate the analysis process and concluding.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the representation of depressive symptoms experienced by the main character in Gail Honeyman's novel, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. The analysis uses Aaron T. Beck and A. Alford's Symptomatology of Depression theory to identify depressive symptoms across emotional, cognitive, motivational, and physical manifestation. This study also explains Eleanor's recovery process through changes in her mindset, social relationships, and her ability to cope with past trauma. The research data were obtained from the narrative and dialogue in the novel.

The Representation of Depression Symptoms in Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine

Depression can be identified through emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioral manifestations (Beck & Alford, 2009). These categories encompass various changes in an individual's feelings, thought patterns, bodily responses, and actions. In *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*, depressive symptoms are evident through Eleanor's narrative and behavior, which demonstrate prolonged sadness, negative self-concept, low motivation, and unhealthy lifestyle habits. These findings align with Beck and Alford's framework and form the basis of this study's analysis, which identified four depressive symptoms in Eleanor Oliphant.

Emotional Manifestations

Emotional manifestations are symptoms of depression that are manifested through changes in feelings and behavior as a result of an individual's emotional state. According to Beck and Alford (2009), these manifestations appear in the form of a dejected mood, negative feelings toward self, reduced gratification, loss of emotional attachment, crying spells, and loss of mirth response. Based on the analysis, five emotional manifestations of depression were identified in the character Eleanor Oliphant in Gail Honeyman's novel, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*.

Dejected Mood

Data 1

"All right," I said "I concede that I was feeling very unhappy. But doesn't everyone feel sad from time to time?"

This excerpt shows that Eleanor is beginning to acknowledge her true emotional state. She states that she feels very unhappy, even though she continues to try to normalize her feelings. Attempting to dismiss sadness as normal demonstrates a tendency to downplay her own emotional state. This also indicates the presence of a fairly strong negative mood within her. According to Beck and Alford (2009), a dejected mood is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness or gloom that dominate an individual's emotional state.

Negative Feelings Toward Self

Data 2

Despicable. I had made a fool of myself. I was an embarrassment, like Mummy had always told me. A sound escaped into the pillow, an animal whine. I couldn't open my eyes. I did not want to see even a centimetre of my own skin.

This excerpt shows that Eleanor has a very negative assessment of herself. She feels she has embarrassed herself and considers herself unworthy. This statement also reflects a strong sense of shame that makes her unable to look at herself. This indicates emotional self-loathing and rejection. According to Beck and Alford (2009), negative feelings toward self are characterized by feelings of worthlessness, self-disgust, and a tendency to blame herself excessively.

Reduction In Gratification

Data 3

I knew that people weren't supposed to exist as I did, work, vodka, and sleep in a constant, static cycle in which I spun around on myself, into myself, silent and alone.

This excerpt shows that Eleanor's life followed a repetitive, routine pattern that lacked meaningful variation. She spent her days simply working, drinking vodka, and sleeping, with no other activities that provided satisfaction. This reflected a loss of pleasure or emotional engagement in daily activities. She also realized that her lifestyle felt empty and unnatural. According to Beck and Alford (2009), reduction in gratification is characterized by a decline in an individual's ability to experience satisfaction from activities that may have previously been meaningful.

Loss of Emotional Attachments

Data 4

"I have always taken great pride in managing my life alone. I'm a sole survivor—I'm Eleanor Oliphant. I don't need anyone else—there's no big hole in my life, no missing piece of my own particular puzzle. I am a self-contained entity. That's what I've always told myself, at any rate."

This excerpt shows that Eleanor views living alone as something normal and even something to be proud of. She asserts that she doesn't need anyone else in her daily life. This attitude reflects a strong emotional distance from interpersonal relationships. It also indicates a tendency to reject closeness or attachment to others. According to Beck and Alford (2009), loss of emotional attachments is characterized by a reduction in emotional closeness, attention, and involvement in relationships with others.

Crying Spells

Data 5

I feel tears on my cheeks as I relate to this, but I don't feel particularly sad. It's as though I'm describing a film.

The excerpt shows Eleanor crying while recounting a traumatic childhood experience during a therapy session. The tears came spontaneously, even though she admitted she didn't feel particularly sad at the time. This indicates a mismatch between her emotional response and her physical expression. She described the experience as being like a movie, indicating an emotional distance from the event. According to Beck and Alford (2009), crying spells are characterized by the emergence of tears related to emotional experiences or traumatic memories, even when the individual is not fully aware of the intensity of their feelings.

Cognitive Manifestations

Cognitive manifestations are symptoms of depression related to thought patterns, beliefs, and how individuals view themselves, their environment, and their future. According to Beck and Alford (2009), cognitive manifestations reflect the emergence of various negative thoughts that make individuals feel worthless, incapable, and pessimistic about life. These manifestations include low self-evaluation, negative expectations, self-blame and self-criticism, indecisiveness, and distorted body image. This study found four forms of cognitive manifestations of depression experienced by Eleanor Oliphant in Gail Honeyman's novel *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*.

Low Self-Evaluation

Data 6

A nose that's too small and eyes that are too big. Ears: unexceptional. Around average height, approximately average weight. I aspire to average... I've been the focus of far too much attention in my time. Pass me over, move along please, nothing to see here.

This excerpt indicates that Eleanor views herself very negatively and demeaningly. He described himself as someone who lacked special qualities and even wished to be "average" to avoid attracting attention. This desire to be ignored indicated that he felt unimportant. This also reflected a lack of self-esteem in various aspects. According to Beck and Alford (2009), low self-evaluation is characterized by an individual's tendency to view themselves as worthless or inferior to others.

Self-Blame and Self-Criticism

Data 7

"It's the guilt, though," I said, whispering. It was very hard to speak, physically hard, trying to force out a sound. "I was her big sister; I should have been looking out for her. She was so small. I did try, I really did, but it just... wasn't enough. I failed her, Maria; I'm still here, and that's all wrong. It should have been her who survived. I don't deserve to be happy, I don't deserve to have a nice life when Marianne..."

This excerpt shows that Eleanor carries immense guilt over Marianne's death. She considers herself a failure as an older sister for being unable to protect her sister. Even though the event was beyond her control, she continues to blame herself excessively. This makes her feel unworthy of happiness or of living a normal life. According to Beck and Alford (2009), self-blame and self-criticism are characterized by an individual's tendency to excessively blame themselves for negative events.

Indecisiveness

Data 8

My head was buzzing. Two major decisions to make... I sat staring at the screen for some time, not actually reading the words... I felt slightly sick at the thought of all the dilemmas I faced.

This excerpt indicates that Eleanor had difficulty processing the various choices she had to make. She felt overwhelmed when faced with more than one important decision at a time. This condition made it difficult to concentrate and understand information clearly. The resulting stress even caused physical reactions such as nausea. According to Beck and Alford (2009), indecisiveness is characterized by difficulty making decisions, indecision, and a tendency to delay action for fear of making the wrong choice.

Distortion of Body Image

Data 9

Mummy has always told me that I am ugly, freakish, vile... My face is a scarred palimpsest of fire. A nose that's too small and eyes that are too big... I don't often look in the mirror... I see far too much of Mummy's face there.

This excerpt indicates that Eleanor has a very negative perception of her own physical appearance. She portrayed herself exaggeratedly and negatively, judging her facial features. This suggests that she didn't view herself objectively, but rather through the lens of painful emotional experiences. The influence of her mother's words also reinforced her self-image, making her increasingly uncomfortable in front of mirrors. According to Beck and Alford (2009), body image distortion is characterized by distorted perceptions and overestimations of one's physical flaws.

Motivational Manifestations

This quote indicates that Eleanor has a very negative perception of her own physical appearance. She portrayed herself exaggeratedly and negatively, judging her facial features. This suggests that she didn't view herself objectively, but rather through the lens of painful emotional experiences. The influence of her mother's words also reinforced her self-image, making her increasingly uncomfortable in front of mirrors. According to Beck and Alford (2009), body image distortion is characterized by distorted perceptions and overestimations of one's physical flaws.

Paralysis of the Will

Data 10

"I don't recall how I ended up on the kitchen floor... I reach for the bottle beside me... When this bottle is done, I have two choices: get off this floor... or kill myself." "When I wake up again, I am in the same

place. Ten minutes have passed, or ten hours—I have no idea... I move into a fetal position... I haven't eaten for some time."

This quote indicates that Eleanor is in a very passive state and has lost the urge to act. She is aware of the options available, but shows no initiative to immediately make changes. This situation depicts a mental state of stasis where she is unable to direct herself to move. It also indicates a strong internal conflict between the desire to persist and to give up. According to Beck and Alford (2009), paralysis of will is characterized by decreased motivation, making it difficult for an individual to initiate or carry out daily activities.

Avoidance, Escapism, and Withdrawal Wishes

Data 11

"I allowed my mind to wander. I've found this to be a very effective way of passing the time; you take a situation or a person and start to imagine nice things... You can make anything happen inside a daydream."

This excerpt indicates that Eleanor uses daydreaming as a way to avoid the reality she is facing. This activity serves as a form of escape from life situations that feel heavy and uncomfortable. Through daydreaming, she can create an imaginative world that is more pleasant and controlled. This allows her to temporarily escape the emotional stress she experiences in real life. According to Beck and Alford (2009), individuals with depression often exhibit a tendency to escape reality through passive activities such as fantasizing or daydreaming.

Suicidal Wishes

Data 12

"I have been waiting for death all my life... I don't really want to be alive."

This excerpt indicates that Eleanor has a profound sense of hopelessness about her life. She views death as something to look forward to, not something to fear. This reflects a loss of motivation to live life and carry out normal activities. Her statement also indicates a deeply depressed emotional state and a lack of hope for the future. According to Beck and Alford (2009), suicidal wishes are a symptom of depression characterized by a passive or active desire to end one's life.

Increased Dependency

Data 13

"I'd tried to cope alone for far too long... Sometimes you simply needed someone kind to sit with you while you dealt with things."

This quote indicates that Eleanor is beginning to realize her limitations in dealing with problems alone. She feels that the burden is too heavy to bear without the help of others. This fosters a need for the presence of someone who can provide emotional support. It also demonstrates a shift in attitude from striving for independence to being more open to help. According to Beck and Alford (2009), increased dependency is characterized by an individual's increasing need for the support and presence of others when facing difficulties.

Vegetative and Physical Manifestations

Vegetative and physical manifestations are symptoms of depression that affect not only the psychological state but also the individual's physical functioning. According to Beck and Alford (2009), these symptoms can be seen through various physical changes, namely loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, loss of libido, and fatigability. In this study, two vegetative and physical symptoms were found in Eleanor Oliphant: sleep disturbance and fatigability.

Sleep Disturbance

Data 14

"Sometimes, when night comes, I lie there in the darkness and I can't prevent myself from remembering... On those nights I need the vodka, or else I'd break apart too."

This excerpt indicates that Eleanor has difficulty sleeping due to traumatic memories that resurface at night. These thoughts keep her awake even though her body needs rest. This condition disrupts the quality of her sleep and does not provide adequate recovery. To cope with the anxiety that arises, she relies on vodka as a means of calming herself. According to Beck and Alford (2009), sleep disturbances in depression are characterized by difficulty falling asleep, restless sleep, or not achieving adequate rest.

Fatigability

Data 15

"I started to cry... Eventually, from sheer physical exhaustion, I was quiet."

This excerpt indicates that Eleanor cried for a long time, causing her emotional state to become very intense. The prolonged crying significantly drained her physical energy. As a result, she experienced exhaustion that left her unable to continue any activity. She eventually fell silent because she no longer had the energy to react. According to Beck and Alford (2009), fatigue is a physical symptom of depression characterized by decreased energy and excessive tiredness after emotional or physical activity.

Eleanor Oliphant's Process of Overcoming Depression in Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine

Eleanor Oliphant's process of overcoming depression is depicted through her therapeutic interactions with Dr. Maria Temple, which emphasized supportive psychotherapy (Beck & Alford, 2009). Eleanor's recovery did not occur through structured cognitive or behavioral techniques, but rather through emotional support, a sense of security within the therapeutic relationship, and active engagement in therapy. The analysis includes five aspects of supportive psychotherapy: reassurance, ventilation and catharsis, guidance and environmental change, maintaining a therapeutic relationship, and collaborative context. These five aspects demonstrate how the therapy process helped Eleanor confront guilt, past trauma, and negative self-evaluations she experienced.

Reassurance

Data 16

"You were the child, and she was the adult. It was her responsibility to look after you and your sister. Instead, there was neglect, violence, and emotional abuse, and there were terrible, terrible consequences for everyone involved. And none of that is your fault, Eleanor, absolutely none of it."

The excerpt shows the therapist directly affirming Eleanor that she was not responsible for the tragedy and violence that occurred in her family. This explanation helped shift the burden of guilt that Eleanor had been carrying excessively. By placing responsibility on an adult, the therapist corrected Eleanor's self-blaming mindset. This also provided crucial emotional validation for Eleanor as she opened up about her trauma. According to Beck and Alford (2009), reassurance in supportive psychotherapy serves to reduce excessive guilt and improve negative self-evaluations in individuals with depression.

Ventilation and catharsis

Data 17

As I paused, in tears, I saw that Dr. Temple was completely sympathetic, that she understood what I was saying and was listening without judgment.

This excerpt demonstrates that Eleanor was in a safe therapeutic setting to express her emotions openly. She cried as she recounted her traumatic experience, but still felt heard and understood by the therapist. Dr. Temple's empathetic attitude allowed Eleanor to more freely express her suppressed feelings. This helped reduce the emotional burden she had been feeling. According to Beck and Alford (2009), ventilation and catharsis in supportive psychotherapy allow individuals to release pent-up emotions in a safe, non-judgmental environment.

Guidance and Environmental Change

Data 18

"It's not my role to tell you what to do, Eleanor. I will say this, though—I think that's a very good idea. But, ultimately, it's your decision."

This excerpt shows that Dr. Temple supported Eleanor's decision without imposing her will. The therapist respected Eleanor's right to make the choices she considered best for herself. This attitude helped Eleanor feel more confident in making important decisions about her life. This support also encouraged Eleanor to begin distancing herself from relationships that were sources of emotional distress. According to Beck and Alford (2009), guidance and environmental change in supportive psychotherapy can be provided through support for environmental changes that help reduce sources of stress and improve the patient's well-being.

Maintaining a Therapeutic Relationship

Data 19

Maria Temple was very calm. "Don't worry, Eleanor. We'll take this one step at a time. Acknowledging that Marianne is your sister is a huge thought. We'll get to the rest in time."

This excerpt shows that Dr. Temple responded calmly and patiently when Eleanor was not ready to discuss her trauma in depth. The therapist did not pressure her to immediately reveal all of her painful experiences. Instead, she assured Eleanor that the therapy process could be progressed gradually according to her readiness. This attitude helped create a sense of safety and trust in the therapeutic relationship. According to Beck and Alford (2009), an effective therapeutic relationship is characterized by empathy, patience, and the therapist's ability to provide support without putting pressure on the patient.

A Collaborative Context

Data 20

On the charge of being a catastrophic disaster, a failed human being, I was starting to find myself, with Maria's help, not guilty.

This excerpt shows that Eleanor began to review the negative beliefs she had held about herself. This change in perspective did not occur suddenly, but rather through a therapeutic process involving Eleanor's active role and Maria's support. Eleanor remained the one facing and reflecting on her experiences, while Maria helped her see the situation from a more realistic perspective. This demonstrates the collaboration between patient and therapist in achieving psychological change. According to Beck and Alford (2009), the collaborative context in supportive psychotherapy is characterized by the active involvement of the patient and therapist working together in the recovery process.

This study aims to identify the symptoms of depression experienced by Eleanor Oliphant and her recovery process in Gail Honeyman's novel, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*, using the Symptomatology of Depression and Supportive Psychotherapy theories proposed by Beck and Alford (2009). Based on the study's results, it was found that Eleanor's depression is represented through four symptom categories: emotional, cognitive, motivational, and vegetative and physical manifestations. Furthermore, Eleanor's recovery process is represented through five forms of supportive psychotherapy: reassurance, ventilation and catharsis, guidance and environmental change, maintaining the therapeutic relationship, and collaborative context.

Based on the study's findings, emotional manifestations are the most dominant symptom experienced by Eleanor. These symptoms are evident through a dejected mood, negative feelings toward self, a reduction in gratification, loss of emotional attachments, and crying spells. These findings indicate that Eleanor's depression is characterized not only by prolonged feelings of sadness but also by a loss of the ability to experience pleasure, negative self-evaluations, and reduced emotional attachments to others. These findings align with Beck and Alford (2009), who explain that individuals with depression tend to experience persistent negative moods and difficulty maintaining healthy emotional relationships.

In addition to emotional manifestations, this study also found various cognitive manifestations, including low self-evaluation, self-blame and self-criticism, indecisiveness, and a distorted body image. These findings indicate that Eleanor has a strong negative mindset about herself. She tends to blame herself for events beyond her control, doubts her decision-making abilities, and views her physical condition exaggeratedly and unrealistically. These results support Beck and Alford's (2009) theory, which states that depression is often characterized by cognitive distortions that cause individuals to view themselves, their life experiences, and their future negatively.

This study also found motivational and vegetative-physical manifestations that reinforce the depiction of depression in the novel. Motivational manifestations are seen through paralysis of the will, avoidance and escapism, suicidal wishes, and increased dependency, while vegetative and physical manifestations are seen through sleep disturbance and fatigue. These findings indicate that depression not only affected Eleanor's feelings and thoughts, but also her motivation, behavior, and physical condition. This condition made it difficult for Eleanor to carry out daily activities, withdrawing from reality, experiencing sleep disturbances, and lose energy due to prolonged emotional stress.

In addition to depicting the symptoms of depression, the novel also depicts Eleanor's recovery process through supportive psychotherapy. The most prominent form of psychotherapy is reassurance, which helps Eleanor reduce guilt and correct negative self-evaluations. Meanwhile, ventilation and catharsis provide Eleanor with opportunities to express repressed trauma and emotions. The recovery process is also supported by guidance and environmental change, a safe therapeutic relationship through maintaining the therapeutic relationship, and Eleanor's active involvement in therapy through a collaborative context. These findings align with Beck and Alford (2009), who emphasize that emotional support, empathy, and collaboration between therapist and patient are crucial aspects in helping individuals overcome depression.

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine comprehensively depicts depression through various emotional, cognitive, motivational, as well as vegetative and physical symptoms. This novel also shows that the process of recovery from depression does not occur instantly, but rather through continuous therapeutic support, the courage to face past trauma, and the individual's active involvement in the healing process. Thus, this novel not only depicts the experience of depression but also provides an understanding of the importance of psychological support in the recovery process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Gail Honeyman's novel, *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*, depicts depression through the various symptoms experienced by the main character, Eleanor Oliphant. Based on the Symptomatology of Depression theory by Aaron T. Beck and A. Alford, this study identified four categories of depressive symptoms: emotional, cognitive, motivational, and vegetative and physical manifestations. These findings indicate that Eleanor experiences prolonged sadness, low self-esteem, a tendency to blame herself, social withdrawal, loss of motivation, a desire to die, sleep disturbances, and physical exhaustion related to past traumatic experiences.

This study also found that Eleanor's recovery process is depicted through the application of supportive psychotherapy, which includes reassurance, ventilation and catharsis, guidance and environmental change, maintaining the therapeutic relationship, and a collaborative context. Through emotional support, a safe therapeutic relationship, and active involvement in the therapy process, Eleanor is gradually able to confront her past trauma, reduce negative self-beliefs, and rebuild healthier social relationships.

This study contributes to the study of literature and psychology by demonstrating how depressive symptoms and the recovery process are represented in literary works through a psychological approach. However, this study has limitations because it focuses on only one novel and uses a single psychological theory as the basis for analysis. Therefore, future research could examine this novel using different psychological approaches or theories, or compare the representation of depression in other literary works. The findings of this study also suggest that literary works can be a medium for increasing understanding of mental health and the importance of emotional and social support in the recovery process for individuals experiencing depression.

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AN ANALYSIS OF DIVINE AND EARTHLY LOVE IN SELECTED OTTOMAN POEMS

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Abstract

Ottoman poetry is celebrated for its deep symbolism, mystical themes, and extensive investigation of love, especially in relation to the Sufi tradition. Among the poets of the Ottoman era, Yunus Emre holds a pivotal role due to his focus on spiritual experiences, dedication to the divine, and humanistic principles conveyed through his verses. The purpose of this study is to examine both divine and earthly love in specific poems by Yunus Emre. This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in literary analysis. The data comprises ten carefully chosen poems by Yunus Emre, which are scrutinized through detailed reading and textual evaluation. The results indicate that divine love manifests through spiritual commitment, awareness of oneself, a yearning for communion with God, and transcendent experiences. In contrast, earthly love is depicted as human warmth, empathy, camaraderie, and societal harmony. Moreover, the research illustrates that the themes of divine and earthly love in Yunus Emre's work are intricately linked, with human affection often acting as a route to achieving divine love. Consequently, Yunus Emre's poetry embodies not only individual feelings but also profound spiritual and philosophical ideals that are anchored in the Ottoman Sufi heritage.

Keywords: Divine love, earthly love, Ottoman poetry, Yunus Emre, literary analysis.

INTRODUCTION

With its great imagery, spiritual idioms, and intellectual musings on human life, Ottoman poetry is among the richest creative genres in Islamic culture. Persian and Islamic literary norms, in which love themes took centre stage, much affected the Ottoman literary legacy, especially lyric poetry. Love is shown in Ottoman lyric poetry as a complicated spiritual and emotional experience that mirrors social, cultural, and religious values, not only as a romantic relationship between the lover and the loved. The interaction between the lover and the loved usually expresses many facets of love, including longing, suffering, devotion, and spiritual transcendence. (*Studien Zur Sprache , Geschichte Und Kultur Der Turkvölker Volume 36*, n.d.)

Sufi poetry holds a prominent place in the Ottoman literary canon as it stresses mystical experiences and the relationship between people and God. Sufi books often feature divine love as the ultimate spiritual aim and exhort people to go past earthly aspirations and pursue spiritual union with the Divine. Divine love in Sufi poetry is seen as a transforming power that cleans the spirit, suppresses the ego, and directs people toward spiritual awakening (Juraev & Ahn, 2023). Furthermore, Sufi poetry explores universal themes including self-reflection, self-transcendence, and the search of inner truth, therefore transcending epochs and civilizations. (Juraev & Ahn, 2023)

Among the well-known authors of Turkish Sufi literature, Yunus Emre is generally considered among the best and most impactful poets. Yunus Emre's use of colloquial Turkish and stress on mystical experience helped to define Turkish literary and spiritual traditions by his living during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. His poems reveal deep spiritual realizations on topics including truth, love, humility, self-knowledge, and the significance of the heart in religious life. Emphasizing inner spirituality, love, and honest devotion as key

components in the human connection with God, Yunus Emre stresses their relevance instead of just formal religious rituals.(Adrahtas, 2021)

Earlier research has thoroughly examined Yunus Emre's spiritual beliefs and mystical encounters. For example, Adrahtas (2021) looks at the importance of the heart, love, and humility in Yunus Emre's poems as well as the presence of mystical experience. The study shows how strongly Yunus Emre's poetic utterances are anchored in Sufi spirituality and how much they underline the need of inner metamorphosis. Meanwhile, Juraev and Ahn (2023) look at the idea of divine love in Sufi literature and say that divine love acts as a transforming power that drives people toward spiritual fulfilment and unselfish devotion. Furthermore, studies on Ottoman lyric poetry show that the ideas of lover and beloved are basic components in expressing emotional and spiritual experiences inside Ottoman literary traditions. (*Studien Zur Sprache , Geschichte Und Kultur Der Turkvölker Volume 36*, n.d.)

Though earlier research on spiritual experiences, divine love, and the dynamics of love in Ottoman poetry has been done, little focus has been paid to looking at both divine and worldly love simultaneously in chosen Yunus Emre poems. Most earlier research concentrated on either spiritual aspects or broad ideas of love without precisely differentiating between divine and earthly kinds of love. Therefore, this study aims to close this vacuum by examining how chosen Ottoman poems by Yunus Emre depict divine and worldly love.

Given the background above, this study seeks to investigate the forms of heavenly and terrestrial love shown in chosen poems of Yunus Emre and to investigate the meanings presented via these representations. By means of a qualitative literary inquiry, this work aims to help to deepen knowledge of Ottoman Sufi poetry and to enliven conversations on love, spirituality, and human values in literary studies.

METHOD

This study investigates the portrayal of heavenly and terrestrial love in selected Ottoman poems by Yunus Emre using a qualitative descriptive approach with a literary perspective. Since this study aims at interpreting meanings, symbols, and themes presented in literary works rather than analyzing numerical data, qualitative research is considered appropriate(Teola, 2023).

The primary data of this study consists of ten selected poems written by Yunus Emre. The poems were selected purposively based on their relevance to the themes of divine and earthly love. Five poems representing divine love are *İlim İlim Bilmektir*, *Bana Seni Gerek Seni*, *Ben Yürürüm Yana Yana*, *Hak Cihana Doludur*, and *Aşk Bir Güneşe Benzer*. Meanwhile, five poems representing earthly love are *Sevelim Sevilelim*, *Bir Kez Gönül Yıktın İse*, *Gelin Tanış Olalım*, *Bu Dünyadan Gider Olduk*, and *Ben Bir Acep İle Geldim*(Adrahtas, 2021).

The secondary data were obtained from scholarly articles, books, and previous studies related to Ottoman poetry, Sufism, Yunus Emre, divine love, and earthly love. These sources were used to support the analysis and provide theoretical perspectives relevant to the study(Juraev & Ahn, 2023)(*Studien Zur Sprache , Geschichte Und Kultur Der Turkvölker Volume 36*, n.d.).

The data were collected through documentation techniques in which the researcher gathered the selected poems and relevant references from academic sources(Aynur et al., 2026). The collected data were then analyzed through close reading and textual analysis(Teola, 2023).

In the analysis process, the researcher first read the poems repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of their meanings. Subsequently, significant words, phrases, and expressions related to divine and earthly love were identified and categorized.

Finally, the findings were interpreted by relating them to the concepts of divine love, earthly love, and Ottoman Sufi literary traditions discussed in previous studies(Adrahtas, 2021)(Juraev & Ahn, 2023). Through this approach, the study seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of how divine and earthly love are represented in Yunus Emre's selected poems as well as the spiritual and humanistic values embedded in the poems.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the examination of ten chosen poems by Yunus Emre are given in this part together with their discussion. The study seeks to recognize and then analyze the many manifestations of divine and human love shown in the poetry. Close reading and textual analysis show that Yunus Emre's poetic expression revolves on love. His poems not only show spiritual devotion and mystical experiences but also stress human values including compassion, empathy, and brotherhood (Adrahtas, 2021). In order to offer a thorough grasp of how these kinds of love show themselves in Yunus Emre's work and how they mirror the features of Ottoman Sufi literary legacy, the results are divided into two main themes: divine love and earthly love.

Divine Love in Yunus Emre's Poems

The poem *Bana Seni Gerek Seni* by Yunus Emre provides one of the most powerful expressions of divine love. Opening in this poem, Yunus Emre plainly declares his entire dedication to God by giving the Divine above all earthly delights and rewards top priority. The poem often underlines how nothing on earth even heaven itself, can replace God's presence. The following sentences capture this notion:

"Paradise, as they say,
A number of residences and some huris
Give the one who wants the memorial.
I need you."

These lines unequivocally show how the speaker opposes heavenly and material riches. Commonly seen as the ultimate objective of believers, paradise is shown as rather minor in relation to the encounter of being near to God. The recurrent phrase "*Bana Seni gerek Seni*" ("I need just You") suggests that the speaker's innermost wish is God Himself rather than paradise, money, or any other earthly advantage. From the researcher's point of view, this repetition represents entire spiritual surrender and ultimate dedication.

This poem also shows us how to say no to material things. Yunus Emre shows earthly joys as transient and unable to fulfil the human spirit all across the poem. The speaker understands that real fulfilment can only be reached through proximity to God; therefore, worldly wants cannot give actual pleasure. Thus, the poem argues that people should distance themselves from too many earthly wants and turn their hearts toward spiritual ideals.

The poem also shows divine love as a kind of altruistic love. The love shown in this poem is unreserved, unlike typical human relationships that are sometimes shaped by personal interests and expectations. The speaker does not serve God for rewards or fear of punishment. Rather, he genuinely and completely loves God. In Yunus Emre's poems, this sincerity is among the most unique qualities of divine love.

Moreover, the poem shows the great desire the speaker is going through. The recurring assertion of only God's need points to a profound spiritual hunger. Such yearning implies the speaker feels incomplete without the Divine company. This emotional strength shows how deeply personal experience of divine love is, not just a theological idea that influences the inner life of the person. The continuous need to be close to God shows the spiritual path the lover takes in search of ultimate truth and ultimate tranquillity.

The poem's emotional punch is further enhanced by the simplicity of Yunus Emre's language. Though the poem has deep spiritual meanings, the language is basic and understandable. This style lets readers from many backgrounds grasp and relate to the spiritual message shown in the poem. Using straightforward language, Yunus Emre skillfully presents sophisticated mystical concepts in a way that is personally significant and emotionally strong.

Based on the analysis above, *Bana Seni Gerek Seni* represents divine love through complete devotion, spiritual longing, selflessness, and detachment from worldly attachments. The poem ultimately suggests that true happiness and spiritual fulfilment can only be achieved through sincere love for God. For Yunus Emre, divine love becomes the highest form of love because it leads individuals toward inner peace, spiritual enlightenment, and closeness to the Divine

Earthly Love in Yunus Emre's Poems

In the poem İlim İlim Bilmektir, Yunus Emre's work also significantly portrays divine love. This poem underlines the value of self-knowledge as the basis of spiritual life, in contrast to Bana Seni Gerek Seni, which stresses spiritual longing and devotion. According to Yunus Emre, actual knowledge involves knowing oneself and finding one's connection with God, not only gathering facts. The next lines show this concept:

Science is knowing
Science is about knowing yourself.
You don't know yourself
Reading is wonderful, alright.

The statements above show that knowledge is useless if people don't know who they are. The speaker argues that if self-understanding is missing, reading a lot of books and getting a lot of knowledge cannot be regarded as real intelligence. From the researcher's point of view, these remarks attack superficial education that neglects spiritual awareness and emphasizes just intellectual success. Yunus Emre stresses that real knowledge starts with self-awareness.

The poem also says that knowing oneself helps one to reach divine love. Knowing one's own shortcomings, limitations, and inner state helps one to be more aware of one's reliance on God. Knowing oneself in this sense also helps one to see the Divine within human life. Self-reflection thus becomes a necessary step on the spiritual path.

Another major theme shown in this poem is the focus on inner cleansing. Yunus Emre suggests that spiritual growth cannot come only from outside religious rituals. Rather, people have to probe their inner selves and cleanse their hearts. The poem asks readers to think about their morals and look inside themselves as part of their spiritual development. Through this procedure, people can get past too much connection to earthly things as well as conceit and selfishness.

Furthermore, the poem portrays divine love as a transforming power altering human awareness. Understanding oneself helps people to be more humble as they see their flaws and limits. Such knowledge motivates them to ask God for direction and grow closer to God. Thus, divine love turns into a process of personal transformation as well as an emotional event.

Simple and direct language in this poem enhances its moral and spiritual message. To help readers from many backgrounds grasp the need for self-awareness, Yunus Emre purposely uses easy language. Though the language seems basic, the concepts presented are profound since they explore basic issues in human life, identity, and spirituality.

The poem also shows that knowledge and spirituality cannot be separated. According to Yunus Emre, intellectual success by itself is not enough if moral behavior and spiritual awareness are not present. True knowledge should motivate people to live more kindly, modestly, and consciously of their relationship with God. Thus, the poem shows heavenly love as intimately connected with wisdom, self-awareness, and moral development.

From the above study, İlim İlim Bilmektir captures divine love via self-knowledge, meditation, inner purification, and spiritual transformation. In the end, the poem implies that first one must know oneself to know God. Divine love cannot be separated from the process of knowing oneself for Yunus Emre, since self-awareness creates the path to spiritual awakening and closeness with the Divine.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate in chosen Ottoman poems by Yunus Emre the representations of divine and terrestrial love. Using a qualitative descriptive methodology including close reading and textual analysis, the study shows that love is front and centre in Yunus Emre's poetic speech. The results show that Yunus Emre presents love as a complex idea with spiritual, moral, and humanistic components rather than only as an

emotional experience. Thus, in Yunus Emre's poems, love is a social ideal guiding human relationships as well as a personal spiritual path.

The chosen poems' study shows that divine love is among the most often used themes in Yunus Emre's work. The poems *İlim İlim Bilmektir*, *Bana Seni Gerek Seni*, *Ben Yürürüm Yana Yana*, *Hak Cihana Doludur*, and *Aşk Bir Güneşe Benzer* explore many facets of divine love, including self-knowledge, spiritual devotion, mystical yearning, inner purification, and the quest for union with God. Yunus Emre always depicts divine love in these poems as a transformational spiritual power that leads people toward enlightenment and spiritual perfection. The poet stresses that only honest devotion and closeness to God, not material belongings or earthly riches, can bring real happiness.

Moreover, the results suggest that Yunus Emre regularly links self-awareness and spiritual transformation with divine love. For instance, the poem *İlim İlim Bilmektir* emphasizes how important self-knowledge is since it is the basis of spiritual understanding. Similarly, *Bana Seni Gerek Seni* shows the poet's total submission to God by foregoing even the benefits of paradise as well as worldly pleasures. Such depictions point to the fact that, in Yunus Emre's conception, divine love goes beyond worldly concerns and shows extreme sincerity, humility, and spiritual commitment. Therefore, Yunus Emre's poetry's divine love is a realistic spiritual journey guiding people toward inner peace and self-realization rather than just a theoretical theological idea.

The study also shows that Yunus Emre's poetic works feature a lot of terrestrial love in addition to divine love. The poems *Sevelim Sevillelim*, *Bir Kez Gönül Yıktın İse*, *Gelin Tanış Olalım*, *Bu Dünyadan Gider Olduk*, and *Ben Bir Acep İle Geldim* show different kinds of human love, like compassion, empathy, brotherhood, tolerance, solidarity, and social harmony. Unlike traditional interpretations that equate earthly love only with romantic relationships, Yunus Emre stretches the idea by underlining universal human values and moral obligations. Through these poems, the poet motivates people to be kind in daily life, keep harmonic connections, and treat one another with respect.

The results also show that in Yunus Emre's poems, social ideal as well as a necessary part of spiritual life is earthly love. Love of God is shown as inseparable from love of people. In essence, honest love toward other people comes to mirror divine love. This viewpoint is consistent with the whole worldview found in Ottoman Sufi works, in which spiritual and social aspects are tightly linked. Thus, by fusing spirituality with moral and social obligations, Yunus Emre's works provide a nuanced view of human life.

Another major result of this study is the link between divine and human love. Rather of showing them as distinct or antagonistic ideas, Yunus Emre shows both kinds of love as complementary features of human experience. While worldly love offers chances for developing empathy, compassion, and tolerance, divine love drives people to get morally better. Through this close relationship, Yunus Emre says that honest care for other people is necessary for spiritual perfection. Love thus becomes a whole moral tenet including the horizontal connection among people as well as the vertical one between people and God.

This study finds, in general, that Yunus Emre's chosen poetry shows the main features of Ottoman Sufi literary legacy whereby love is the main instrument for reaching spiritual enlightenment and social harmony. The poet deftly combines great spiritual teachings with universal humanistic ideas to create works pertinent outside of their historical background and in modern culture. The continuing importance of Yunus Emre's poems comes from their capacity to tackle ageless problems about spirituality, morality, compassion, and human coexistence. Therefore, Yunus Emre's poetic legacy still provides significant insights for contemporary readers looking for spiritual knowledge and moral direction in an ever more complicated world.

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THE AESTHETICS OF IRONY: POST-STRUCTURALIST READING OF AL-FARAZDAQ'S POLITICAL PERSONA

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Abstract

This study explored the intersection of medieval Arabic political discourse and modern critical theory by analyzing the programmatic poetry (*Naqa'idh*) of Al-Farazdaq during the Umayyad Caliphate. While classical literary criticism primarily evaluated his work through rigid socio-historical or purely grammatical frameworks, this research applied a post-structuralist lens to deconstruct the semantic stability of his verses. The objective of this study was to investigate how Al-Farazdaq utilized complex diction and metaphor not merely as stable instruments for political panegyric or ideological propaganda, but as dynamic sites of linguistic irony that implicitly disrupted the absolute authority of the ruling elite. Employing a qualitative-descriptive research design rooted in textual deconstruction, the study scrutinized selected poetic fragments to identify underlying systemic contradictions, *aporias*, and shifts in signification. The major findings revealed that Al-Farazdaq's metaphors of political legitimacy frequently subverted their own surface-level assertions, creating a deep textual tension where overt praise and structural subversion operated simultaneously. The study concluded that the intense pressures of operating under imperial patronage catalyzed advanced aesthetic ironies within the text, demonstrating that classical Arabic political poetry possessed a fluid, multi-layered plurality of meaning that resisted dogmatic categorization.

Keywords: Al-Farazdaq, deconstruction, political persona, post-structuralism, Umayyad poetry

INTRODUCTION

The socio-political landscape of the Umayyad Caliphate significantly transformed the function of classical Arabic poetry, turning it into a prominent weapon for ideological warfare and partisan propaganda (Aslan, 2019). In this highly polarized climate, poets were tasked with constructing rigid political personas to legitimize or challenge ruling factions. Among the most prominent figures of this era was Al-Farazdaq, whose polemical court poetry (*Naqa'idh*), alongside his contemporaries, Jarir and Al-Akhtal, came to define the aesthetic and political consciousness of the Umayyad era. Classical and contemporary scholarship has extensively documented how these poets operated within the framework of patronage, using panegyric (*madah*) and lampoon (*hija'*) to solidify political allegiances (Sells, 1996: 45). "Traditional critics viewed these texts through a prescriptive lens, assuming a stable correspondence between the poet's intent, the text's linguistic structure, and the political reality it claimed to represent, thereby establishing a consensus of absolute textual clarity."

"However, this assumption of absolute clarity often overlooked the latent semantic fissures operating beneath the surface of these highly rhetorical texts". While earlier studies focused on the historical, grammatical, and biographical aspects of Al-Farazdaq's rivalry, they tended to treat his poetic diction as a direct, unmediated expression of political loyalty or tribal bias. This creates a significant gap in the current literature: there is a lack of critical engagement with the internal linguistic contradictions that characterized Umayyad political rhetoric. By treating the text as a stable vessel of propaganda, previous scholarship has failed to account for how the intense pressures of political survival might have forced language to fold in on itself, generating complex forms of structural irony. This research addressed this gap by arguing that Al-Farazdaq's political persona was not a fixed ideological stance, but an unstable textual construct filled with aesthetic ambiguities.

To operationalize this radical reading, this study integrated post-structuralist literary theory, specifically drawing upon the concept of deconstruction. Post-structuralism posits that language is inherently unstable, and that meaning is never absolute but constantly deferred through an endless chain of signifiers (Derrida, 1976: 120). When applied to political discourse, this perspective allows researchers to look past the overt ideological claims of a text and instead locate its internal contradictions or aporias. In a similar vein, critical evaluations of political discourse in literature have shown that textual personas often contain destabilizing elements that subvert their own superficial authority (Foucault, 1972: 89). By blending this theoretical lens with classical Arabic textuality, the study repositioned Al-Farazdaq's diction and metaphor not as passive tools of imperial representation, but as fluctuating linguistic sites where power structures were simultaneously praised and disassembled.

To operationalize this radical reading, this study integrates post-structuralist literary theory, specifically drawing upon the concept of deconstruction popularized by Jacques Derrida. Post-structuralism posits that language is inherently unstable, and that meaning is never absolute but constantly deferred through an endless chain of signifiers. In the context of medieval textuality, traditional philology has long operated under the assumption that words possess a fixed, transcendental signified. However, a deconstructive approach problematizes this relationship by demonstrating that the text always escapes the conscious control of its author. When applied to political discourse, this perspective allows researchers to look past the overt ideological claims of a text and instead locate its internal contradictions, or aporias—the precise moments where a text's rhetorical architecture begins to dismantle itself. Critical evaluations of political discourse in literature have repeatedly shown that textual personas often contain these destabilizing elements, which actively subvert their own superficial authority. By blending this Western theoretical lens with classical Arabic poetics, this study repositions Al-Farazdaq's diction and metaphor not as passive tools of imperial representation, but as fluctuating linguistic sites where power structures were simultaneously praised and disassembled.

Furthermore, understanding the mechanics of deconstruction requires a departure from the binary oppositions that have traditionally governed the reading of Islamic court poetry. Classical praise poetry (*madih*) has routinely been conceptualized within binary structural frameworks: loyalty versus betrayal, sacred versus profane, and alignment versus subversion. Deconstruction functions by demonstrating that these hierarchies are artificial and internally unstable. The privileged term within the binary—in this case, the overt political alignment and loyalty of the panegyrist—is structurally dependent on the repressed term, which is the inherent capacity for subversion. Al-Farazdaq's position as a court poet under the volatile Umayyad Caliphate provides a fertile ground for this linguistic phenomenon. Operating under a system of strict imperial patronage meant that the poet's survival depended entirely on the rhetorical inflation of the ruler's authority. Yet, the sharper the rhetorical inflation, the more strained the linguistic infrastructure becomes. This research argues that this extreme rhetorical strain inevitably forces the language of praise to fracture, giving rise to an unconscious aesthetic irony that challenges the very autocracy it aims to serve. Therefore, the primary objective of this research is to conduct an extensive, multi-layered post-structuralist reading of the selected diction and metaphors in Al-Farazdaq's political poetry. By utilizing conceptual frameworks from Western critical theory, this study aims to deconstruct the semantic stability of his verses. It seeks to answer how the structural interplay of metaphor and diction in his *Naqa'idh* created a destabilizing irony that dismantled the very political authority the text initially sought to reinforce. By doing so, this study offers a fresh, interdisciplinary perspective to the field of Arabic literary studies, demonstrating that classical Islamic texts possessed a degree of textual fluidity that aligns with modern post-structuralist sensibilities, thereby bridging the analytical gap between Eastern classical literature and Western contemporary philosophy.

METHOD

The study was designed as a qualitative, text-based literary analysis operating within a post-structuralist critical framework. Instead of seeking a singular, definitive historical truth or reconstructing the author's psychological intent, this design focused strictly on the internal mechanics of the text. It treated the poetic discourse of medieval Arabic propaganda as an autonomous web of signs where meaning was continually deferred and destabilized. By implementing a qualitative-descriptive model, the study carefully tracked how formal elements of language, such as diction and metaphor, undermined their own explicit ideological objectives.

The primary data sources for this study consisted of textual fragments, specifically selected verses of panegyrics (*madah*) and satire (*hija'*) extracted from the *Diwan Al-Farazdaq* that explicitly addressed Umayyad caliphs and political figures. The secondary data sources included classical commentaries on the *Naqa'idh* and modern historical accounts of Umayyad political discourse. These secondary sources were utilized exclusively to establish the socio-political matrix of imperial patronage, providing the necessary contextual baseline against which the textual deconstruction was measured.

Data collection was carried out through systematic close-reading and purposeful textual sampling. The researcher identified and extracted specific stanzas where Al-Farazdaq employed highly charged political metaphors and authoritative diction to construct his public persona. These extracted textual units were then catalogued based on their thematic functions, such as divine right, martial power, and lineage, before being transcribed and translated into English for closer theoretical scrutiny. No statistical sampling was used, as the selection was determined entirely by the density of rhetorical elements within the verses.

The data were analyzed using the deconstructive method popularized by post-structuralist theory. The analysis proceeded in three systematic phases. First, the text was analyzed at its literal, surface level to identify the dominant hierarchies and explicit political alignments. Second, the researcher located the textual "blind spots" (*aporias*)—instances where metaphors became contradictory or where the diction undermined its own intended praise. Finally, these internal contradictions were interpreted to demonstrate how structural irony operated within the text, thereby showing how the poem's political persona actively subverted its own apparent ideological stability.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Deconstruction of authoritative diction

The empirical textual findings of this research focused on the linguistic slips and inherent contradictions found within Al-Farazdaq's court poetry dedicated to the Umayyad caliphs. Traditionally, critics argued that Al-Farazdaq utilized a robust, archaic vocabulary to solidify the absolute and divine right of the Umayyad rulers. However, a close, post-structuralist reading of his specific diction revealed a significant textual instability. For instance, when Al-Farazdaq applied the word *Al-Imam* (the absolute leader), or *Al-Khilafah* (the divine successor) to Umayyad figures like Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik, the textual infrastructure did not produce a unified meaning of loyalty. Instead, the surrounding semantic features frequently introduced alternative paths of interpretation that actively disrupted the overt political persona he claimed to portray.

At the literal surface, the text establishes a rigid political hierarchy, presenting the ruler as a sacred, divine entity. However, a deconstructive reading immediately uncovers an unresolvable contradiction, or an *aporia*, through the sudden introduction of the word blood coupled with the subversion of justice. This juxtaposition creates a radical textual tension. If the caliph is truly the divine shadow tasked with maintaining cosmic and earthly justice, the linguistic presence of a sword that actively slashes those who seek justice completely dismantles the definition of that divine authority. The diction of violence does not reinforce his power; rather, it folds back onto the text, exposing the caliph's political entity not as a stable, righteous sanctuary, but as an arbitrary force driven by structural terror. The text's semantic structure effectively betrays its own ideological goal. To further expand this linguistic deconstruction of authoritative diction, we must examine Al-Farazdaq's secondary verses where he attempts to anchor the caliph's political legitimacy in irrevocable divine predestination. In another significant panegyric compiled within his *Diwan*, the poet proclaims: The decree of heaven has sealed your rule over mankind, a destiny carved in stone, though the hearts of the believers tremble beneath your iron decree.

On a primary semantic level, this passage operates as an absolute affirmation of political legitimacy, relying on theological determinism to silence any potential dissent. The signifier decree of heaven functions as an ideological anchor designed to place the Umayyad sovereign above earthly criticism. However, when subjected to a post-structuralist critique, the textual infrastructure begins to split along its internal semantic axes. The introduction of the signifier tremble (*tarjafu*) introduces a profound psychological and structural instability into the verse. If the sovereign's authority is truly a harmonious extension of divine will, then the emotional reality of the believers should be one of tranquillity, peace, and spiritual alignment. By stating that the hearts of the faithful tremble beneath your iron decree, the text implicitly betrays its own ideological project. The word tremble re-contextualizes the divine decree not as a source of cosmic justice, but as an external, coercive force of psychological terror. The language of praise accidentally exposes the absolute rule not as a divinely mandated sanctuary, but as an oppressive tyranny that alienates the very community it claims to shepherd, thereby producing an irreconcilable textual *aporia*.

Subversion of political metaphors. The second phase of the textual findings scrutinized the master metaphors deployed by Al-Farazdaq to conceptualize imperial sovereignty. In classical Arabic poetics, the ruler is routinely objectified through grand cosmological and natural metaphors, such as the life-giving rain or the unyielding mountain. Al-Farazdaq heavily relied on these metaphors to construct his public political persona as the ultimate defender of the state. Nevertheless, under a post-structuralist lens, these metaphors exhibit what Jacques Derrida

terms the instability of the signifier, where the metaphorical vehicle overshoots its target and ends up subverting the very message it was designed to deliver.

This linguistic collapse is highly visible when Al-Farazdaq compared the Umayyad ruler's wrath to a "cleansing flood that purifies the land by swallowing both the rebel and the soil." While the primary intent of this metaphor is to celebrate the absolute, terrifying magnitude of imperial power, the metaphor itself introduces an uncontrollable element of destruction. Rain is supposed to represent life and fertility within the classical desert matrix; transforming it into a self-devouring flood that destroys the very soil it is meant to govern creates an intense structural irony. A ruler who obliterates the foundation of his own kingdom can no longer function as a protector. Consequently, the political persona of Al-Farazdaq changes from a loyal panegyrist into an unconscious critic. His metaphors expose a deep-seated anxiety regarding the volatile nature of the Umayyad court, showing that the language of imperial praise contains the exact linguistic seeds of its own deconstruction.

This subversion of natural metaphors is further illustrated when Al-Farazdaq attempts to capture the unyielding stability of the Umayyad house by utilizing the classical metaphor of the mountain. In his panegyric dedicated to Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, he states: You are the mountain of iron that anchors the earth from shaking, yet your base rests upon shifting sands that wash away with the morning tide.

The overt ideological motivation of this metaphor is to project an image of absolute permanence, immobility, and structural endurance. The caliph is cast as the literal axis mundi, a physical anchor that prevents cosmic and political chaos. Yet, the text immediately betrays its own metaphor through the involuntary introduction of the counter-image: shifting sands that wash away. A post-structuralist reading focuses intensely on this specific structural blind spot. The metaphorical construct collapses under its own linguistic weight because a mountain that rests upon shifting sands cannot fulfill its defining function of anchoring anything. Instead, it becomes a monumental liability, an impending catastrophe waiting to fall. The juxtaposition of iron and shifting sands creates an unresolvable textual tension that mirrors the actual historical anxiety of the late Umayyad period. Rather than reinforcing the narrative of eternal dynastic stability, Al-Farazdaq's metaphor unconsciously exposes the profound fragility of the imperial apparatus. The text reveals that the spectacular display of autocratic power is merely a hollow facade built upon an unstable, rapidly eroding foundation, effectively transforming an act of courtly praise into a radical warning of imminent systemic collapse.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that a rigorous post-structuralist reading of Al-Farazdaq's Umayyad panegyrics effectively dismantles the long-standing traditional assumption of textual, semantic, and ideological stability in medieval political propaganda. Through the critical lens of Derridean deconstruction, the seemingly rigid, monolithic political persona of the court poet is revealed to be a highly fluid, volatile, and unstable linguistic construct. The close textual examination of authoritative dictions and grand cosmological metaphors exposed persistent, unresolvable aporias where the internal mechanics of the text actively work to subvert its own overt expressions of imperial praise. By systematically juxtaposing images of divine justice and eternal dynastic legitimacy with empirical signifiers of structural violence, psychological terror, and foundational erosion, such as the transition from life-giving rain to a self-devouring flood, or a mountain of iron resting upon shifting sands, the textual infrastructure consistently uncovers a deep-seated structural irony. Consequently, the language of imperial eulogy betrays its own ideological matrix, turning what was intended as a loyal panegyric into an involuntary, unconscious critique of tyrannical power and systemic fragility.

The broader theoretical implication of this research challenges the conventional paradigms of classical Arabic literary criticism by proving that medieval adab possesses a complex, multi-layered plurality of meaning that aligns with contemporary post-structuralist sensibilities. However, the limitation of this study lies in its exclusive focus on a select corpus of political verses from Al-Farazdaq's Diwan, thereby leaving significant room for wider comparative applications within early Islamic poetry. Therefore, future research is highly encouraged to extend this post-structuralist and deconstructive framework to the wider, interconnected corpus of the Naqa'idh. Testing whether similar linguistic subversions, semantic slips, and political ironies operate within the highly competitive works of contemporary rival poets like Jarir and Al-Akhtal under the same imperial patronage would provide a more exhaustive, comprehensive understanding of the volatile relationship between sovereign power and poetic textuality in the medieval Islamic world.

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