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A Hero in Her Own Right: Rethinking the Hero's Journey through Art3mis of Cline's *Ready Player One*

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Abstract

This article reconsiders the narrative arc of Art3mis in Ernest Cline's Ready Player One, proposing that she embodies a parallel yet distinct heroic journey alongside the male protagonist, Wade Watts (Parzival). While much scholarship centers on Wade's adherence to the traditional "Hero's Journey" model as outlined by Joseph Campbell, Art3mis's own quest—motivated by political consciousness, personal autonomy, and ethical resistance—deserves scholarly attention in its own right. By mapping her character arc through a modified lens of the Hero's Journey, this article explores how Art3mis challenges gendered constraints in science fiction and gaming narratives. Her story complicates the trope of the supportive female character and repositions her as an autonomous hero navigating virtual and real-world stakes. This analysis contributes to the broader discourse on gender, narrative agency, and heroism in contemporary speculative fiction, particularly within the context of gamified digital spaces.

Keywords: Art3mis, hero's journey, gender, narrative, autonomy

Introduction

Since its publication in 2011, Ernest Cline's Ready Player One has generated considerable attention both as a nostalgic homage to 1980s pop culture and as a speculative narrative exploring the impact of virtual reality on identity, community, and power. Set in a dystopian 2040s America where most of the population escapes into the virtual world of the OASIS, the novel follows Wade Watts (Parzival) as he competes in a global Easter egg hunt left behind by OASIS creator James Halliday. The competition promises not only untold wealth but also complete control over the OASIS itself. While Ready Player One has received considerable attention for its gamified narrative structure and critique of corporate control over digital life, its treatment of identity—particularly queer and racialized identity—has been comparatively underexplored in literary scholarship.

Much of the existing criticism focuses on the novel's cultural politics and its reinforcement of a narrow demographic ideal. Aronstein and Thompson (2015), for example, examines Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* (2011) through the lens of Arthurian romance, arguing that the novel utilizes Arthurian tropes to structure its narrative and comment on gaming culture. This analysis inspires next research, such as Alexander's (2020) work on fan culture and authoritative praxis. He extends it by highlighting the specific ways in which Arthurian legend functions within the text. Then, Condis (2016) argues that the novel upholds a canon of white male geek culture, despite its superficial gestures toward inclusivity. Similarly, cultural commentators such as Opie (2018) and Harrington (2018) have critiqued both the novel and its film adaptation for their limited engagement with queer identity, particularly in the portrayal of Aech. Finally, Stark (2019) argues that *Ready Player One* functions as didactic fiction, teaching readers about 1980s video game culture through play, other scholars offer alternative perspectives. These critiques are valuable in highlighting the novel's ideological

contradictions, yet they often remain at the level of cultural commentary and do not fully engage with the literary and theoretical dimensions of the text. Comparatively little attention has been paid to Art3mis—Samantha Cook in the real world—a central character whose narrative arc arguably mirrors, and at times surpasses, that of the protagonist in complexity and ideological weight.

Art3mis emerges in the novel not merely as a supporting character or romantic interest, but as a formidable *gunter* (egg hunter) with her own motivations, strategies, and ethical stance. While Wade's narrative is rooted in individualism and personal wish fulfillment, Art3mis operates from a place of political consciousness and social responsibility. She expresses early on that her goal is not to win the contest for power, but to ensure the OASIS does not fall into the wrong hands—a motive grounded in systemic critique rather than personal ambition. Despite this, Art3mis is structurally positioned as a secondary character in Wade's hero narrative, with her own journey often sidelined in favor of the traditional monomyth centered on a male protagonist.

This article argues that Art3mis undergoes a heroic journey of her own—one that challenges the traditional structure of the Hero's Journey as popularized by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2004). Campbell's monomyth has long served as a blueprint for narrative analysis across cultures, particularly in epic and adventure genres. However, some scholars such as Murdock (2013)and Pearson (2015) have critiqued the monomyth for its gendered limitations, pointing out that it often centers masculine-coded experiences while marginalizing or distorting the development of female characters. Applying this critique to *Ready Player One*, we can see that Art3mis's journey resists the linear progression of Campbell's model and instead emphasizes emotional maturity, moral clarity, and ethical resistance—traits often omitted or undervalued in traditional hero narratives. This article then seeks to fill that gap by proposing that Art3mis's arc constitutes a parallel hero's journey, one that both reflects and critiques the dominant narrative pattern centered on Wade.

Furthermore, Art3mis's character represents a significant site of resistance within a hypermasculine, techno-utopian narrative. While Wade indulges in Halliday's nostalgia and ultimately inherits the digital throne, Art3mis continually questions the implications of such power. She challenges the commodification of nostalgia, critiques the idolization of Halliday, and resists being defined by her romantic role. Her real-world identity, marked by a facial birthmark and personal insecurities, also provides a grounded counterpoint to the disembodied freedom of the OASIS. In this sense, Art3mis embodies a dual journey—virtual and corporeal, internal and external—making her arc not only heroic but also deeply human.

By examining Art3mis's development through a feminist and narrative-theoretical framework, this article argues for a broader understanding of heroism in contemporary speculative fiction. Art3mis is not merely a companion to Parzival's journey; she is a hero in her own right, negotiating agency, identity, and resistance in both digital and physical realms. Through her, *Ready Player One* offers an alternative model of heroism—one rooted not in domination or conquest, but in ethical engagement and transformative resilience.

Theory and Method

Understanding Art3mis as a hero in *Ready Player One* requires a careful engagement with narrative theory, particularly the structure of the Hero's Journey, and the feminist critiques that have challenged its limitations. At the core of this analysis lies Joseph Campbell's monomyth, or the Hero's Journey, which outlines a universal pattern in mythic storytelling. First introduced in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), Campbell's model consists of a cyclical journey in which a hero receives a call to adventure, crosses a threshold into the unknown, undergoes trials, gains a reward or revelation, and returns home transformed. This framework has influenced countless narratives in literature, film, and video games, and it

underpins much of the structure of *Ready Player One*, particularly in the journey of the protagonist, Wade Watts (Parzival).

However, Campbell's model has faced significant criticism from feminist scholars for its gendered assumptions. The Hero's Journey, as originally conceived, prioritizes male-coded experiences of conquest, independence, and individuation, often relegating female characters to roles of helpers, mentors, temptresses, or prizes. As Murdock (2013) argues in *The Heroine's Journey* that the journey of the female protagonist often does not follow the pattern of separation and return; instead, it revolves around healing the split between mind and body, self and other, autonomy and connection. Murdock (2013) presents an alternative structure that emphasizes integration over conquest, connection over isolation, and ethical wholeness over external victory. These characteristics align more closely with Art3mis's narrative arc than with Wade's.

Pearson (2015), too, challenges the universality of the monomyth by outlining archetypes that transcend the warrior model of the hero. Her work suggests that heroism may take many forms—including those grounded in care, creativity, or resilience—rather than domination or power accumulation. Pearson's framework broadens our conception of heroism and allows for a reading of Art3mis as a protagonist in her own right, despite her relative narrative sidelining.

Against this backdrop, Art3mis's journey offers a subversive alternative. She does not seek glory or control over the OASIS; instead, she is motivated by collective responsibility and systemic awareness. Her character does not follow a linear path of conquest but instead weaves through complex moral decisions, emotional vulnerability, and embodied realism.

Moreover, Art3mis's heroism occurs in both the digital and real worlds, a duality that complicates Campbell's traditional boundaries between the ordinary world and the special world. In the OASIS, she is a powerful avatar who challenges Wade's assumptions and competes as his equal. In the real world, she navigates self-consciousness, trauma, and social inequality. Her journey thus reflects what Haraway (1991) termed the cyborg subject—a hybrid of physical and digital identities that destabilizes binary notions of selfhood. This positioning allows Art3mis to embody a heroism that is both digitally empowered and corporeally grounded, setting her apart from Wade, whose physical life is largely neglected in favor of his virtual exploits.

This theoretical framework, then, draws on feminist narrative theory, critiques of the monomyth, and posthuman identity theory to analyze Art3mis's journey as a legitimate and necessary expansion of heroic storytelling. By applying these frameworks, we uncover a richer reading of *Ready Player One*, one that reframes Art3mis not as a supporting character in Wade's adventure, but as a protagonist navigating a parallel, and arguably more ethically complex, heroic path.

Findings and Discussion

Art3mis in the OASIS: The Digital Threshold

In Joseph Campbell's traditional Hero's Journey, the stage known as "Crossing the Threshold" marks the moment when the hero leaves the familiar world and ventures into the unknown. This step is foundational because it signifies the beginning of transformation, the willingness to engage with danger, and the confrontation of trials. In *Ready Player One*, the OASIS functions as both a threshold and a battleground—an immersive virtual space where identities are fluid, knowledge is currency, and power is contested. Within this digital expanse, Art3mis emerges as a character who not only navigates the threshold but constructs it as her arena of autonomy and resistance.

Unlike Wade Watts, who initially enters the OASIS as a means of escape from the destitution and grief of his real-world circumstances, Art3mis's presence in the OASIS is more

complex and politically motivated. Her avatar does not reflect escapism, but rather an assertion of agency, skill, and ethical purpose. As can be seen from the following conversation:

"We stood there in silence, watching the clock and waiting. "What would you do if you won?" she [Art3mis] suddenly asked. "How would you spend all that money?"

…

"But you [Parzival] do realize that nearly half the people on this planet are starving, right?"

…

"If I [Art3mis] win that dough, I'm going to make sure everyone on this planet has enough to eat. Once we tackle world hunger, then we can figure out how to fix the environment and solve the energy crisis." (Cline, 2011, pp.97-98)

From her earliest appearance in the novel, Art3mis is depicted as a seasoned gunter with an extensive knowledge of Halliday's obsessions, an encyclopedic memory for 1980s culture, and a principled commitment to preventing IOI—a corporate entity seeking to monetize the OASIS—from gaining control of the digital world. In this way, her crossing of the digital threshold is not just a personal journey but an act of political engagement.

"It's not about the money. It's about what I could do with it."

"Right. Saving the world. You're so fucking noble."

(Cline, 2011, p. 187)

The Digital Self and Narrative Power

Art3mis's avatar in the OASIS represents a version of herself that is meticulously constructed and highly strategic. She is strong, intelligent, and confident—traits that align her with conventional heroic archetypes. However, her digital self is not a mere projection of wish fulfillment; it is a means of negotiating power in a male-dominated digital and narrative space. As Han and Ho (2024) argues, avatars in gaming environments often reflect a gender performance dictated by both personal agency and communal expectations. Art3mis resists these expectations by refusing to conform to the archetype of the "sexy gamer girl" or the romantic prize. She dresses functionally, fights with skill, and engages Wade on intellectual, not emotional, terms.

This portrayal is significant because it challenges the traditional use of female characters in speculative fiction as "threshold guardians" or "rewards." Campbell's model, and its many cultural derivatives, often casts women as signposts in the male hero's journey. Art3mis, however, is not a gatekeeper but a traveler—navigating her own path through the same terrain, often with more skill and purpose than Wade himself. Her mastery of Halliday's cultural canon and gaming environments makes her not only Wade's equal but, at times, his superior.

Refusing the Romantic Subplot

One of the most critical ways Art3mis resists being absorbed into Wade's monomyth is her refusal to be subsumed into a romantic subplot. While Wade falls in love with Art3mis and envisions their relationship as a fairytale complement to his heroic arc, Art3mis repeatedly rebuffs him. Her insistence that "you only know my avatar" (Cline, 2011, p.170 and 186) is a direct rejection of the superficial intimacy that Wade assumes exists between them. She prioritizes her mission over personal affection, challenging not only Wade's entitlement but also the narrative trope that positions romance as the hero's ultimate reward.

This rejection is particularly powerful within the structure of the Hero's Journey, where the "meeting with the goddess" often involves the hero encountering a feminine ideal who offers love, inspiration, or guidance. Art3mis, however, subverts this function. She refuses to be idealized, refuses to be a muse, and refuses to allow her identity to be flattened into a narrative device. Her autonomy, both narrative and personal, destabilizes the genre's gendered expectations. This move aligns with feminist reinterpretations of mythic structures, which

advocate for female characters who define their own arcs, goals, and limits as suggested by Murdock (2013) and Pearson (2015).

Competing Without Conquering

Art3mis's participation in the hunt for Halliday's Easter egg is not driven by personal gain. Early in the novel, she clarifies that she is competing not because she wants control over the OASIS, but because she wants to help solving the problem of the world: "If I [Art3mis] win that dough, I'm going to make sure everyone on this planet has enough to eat. Once we tackle world hunger, then we can figure out how to fix the environment and solve the energy crisis." (Cline, 2011, pp. 97 - 98). Her heroic motive is rooted in committing to something greater than his or her self—to make this world a better place—rather than the pursuit of individual power.

In this way, Art3mis reflects what Pearson (2015) calls the "altruist hero"—a character whose goal is not to conquer a system but to dismantle or heal it. Her journey is not marked by a lust for achievement but by a sense of responsibility. This ethical position distances her from both the monomythic arc and the competitive culture that defines the gunter community. It also places her in direct contrast to Wade, whose motivations, though noble on the surface, are deeply entangled with ego, escape, and nostalgic indulgence.

Feminist Ethics in Virtual Space

Art3mis's resistance to IOI is not only strategic but moral. She understands that the commercialization of the OASIS would have devastating consequences for millions of users who rely on it for education, employment, and connection. Her decision to compete, therefore, is not about proving her superiority but about protecting a vulnerable public.

Furthermore, Art3mis's critique of Halliday's legacy complicates the narrative's nostalgic core. While Wade idolizes Halliday, Art3mis points out the flaws in lionizing a man who isolated himself, failed to engage meaningfully with the real world, and ultimately sought to control it from beyond the grave. This skepticism mirrors real-world critiques of tech culture's tendency to glorify male visionaries while overlooking the social costs of their innovations. In challenging Halliday's idealization, Art3mis interrogates the very foundation of the hero's quest, asking whether the prize is worth winning at all.

Invisible Labors and Narrative Injustice

Despite her rich and complex character arc, Art3mis is often narratively overshadowed by Wade. Her achievements, insights, and moral growth receive less narrative attention, and her real-world struggles are explored only in brief. This discrepancy reflects a broader pattern in literature and media where female [characters] perform critical emotional and ethical labor without receiving proportional narrative reward Pearson (2015).

In *Ready Player One*, Art3mis does the work of resisting systemic power, modeling ethical heroism, and challenging romantic and narrative expectations. Yet, she remains a supporting character in Wade's story. As such, her hero's journey is rendered invisible, even as it unfolds alongside and often beyond the protagonist's arc. This narrative injustice underscores the necessity of re-reading and re-centering characters like Art3mis—not as accessories to the male journey, but as heroes with their own thresholds to cross, dragons to slay, and wisdom to bring home.

Rewriting the Threshold

Art3mis's journey within the OASIS exemplifies a different model of crossing the threshold—one that is recursive rather than linear, ethical rather than competitive, and collective rather than individualistic. Her presence destabilizes the OASIS as a neutral space

and reframes it as a contested site of ideology, identity, and resistance. She represents a kind of feminist cyber-heroism that not only challenges Campbell's monomyth but offers an expanded vision of what it means to be heroic in digital and narrative realms.

Her rejection of romantic subservience, her strategic use of the digital avatar, and her unwavering moral compass position her as a hero who crosses thresholds not to conquer but to question, not to ascend but to disrupt. As Haraway (1991) has argued, the cyborg—part human, part machine—can be a figure of resistance, capable of navigating hybrid realities without falling prey to essentialist traps. Art3mis's journey echoes this paradigm, offering a heroine who navigates both worlds without sacrificing her integrity or autonomy.

In conclusion, Art3mis's arc in the OASIS is more than a subplot; it is a hero's journey in its own right. Her traversal of the digital threshold signals not only personal growth but also a broader narrative critique. She invites readers to rethink what heroism means, who gets to claim it, and how it might look in a world where lines between real and virtual, male and female, ethical and escapist are increasingly blurred.

Trials and Allies: Resistance, Competition, and Integrity

In the classic Hero's Journey, trials and allies define the central arc of the protagonist's transformation. The hero must overcome external and internal challenges, aided by companions who offer guidance, insight, or companionship. While *Ready Player One* centers on Wade Watts as the ostensible protagonist, Art3mis experiences her own trials, navigates alliances on her own terms, and ultimately demonstrates a more ethically grounded approach to the trials of the digital world. This section explores how Art3mis's journey through trials and her navigation of alliances not only develop her character but further challenge the patriarchal and individualistic frameworks of the traditional heroic narrative.

Redefining Trials: Beyond Combat and Clues

In many interpretations of the Hero's Journey, trials are physical or mental tests the hero must pass to prove worthiness. In *Ready Player One*, these tests are encoded in the search for Halliday's Easter egg, with tasks grounded in pop culture trivia, arcade games, and obscure film references. While Wade's trials are heavily individualistic and revolve around showing off his encyclopedic knowledge, Art3mis's trials are more nuanced. They involve not only the external hunt but internal dilemmas, particularly the ethical implications of winning.

Art3mis proves herself early on by successfully navigating the Tomb of Horrors and acquiring the Copper Key. However, unlike Wade, who sees his success as a stepping stone toward fame and fortune, Art3mis reflects on the implications of her victory. She understands that every step closer to the Easter egg is also a step closer to handing over ultimate power to someone, and she remains suspicious of what such power might corrupt. Her trials, then, extend beyond Halliday's puzzles. She faces moral trials: how to maintain integrity while competing in a system designed by a solitary, flawed man, and how to resist becoming part of a corporate-fueled conquest.

Art3mis's trials are embedded in the architecture of Halliday's digital world, but she meets them with critical scrutiny rather than reverence. She engages with the OASIS not only as a gamer but as a reformer—someone aware of its injustices and possibilities. Her trials are thus doubled: the explicit trials of the game and the implicit trials of remaining true to her ethical stance.

Resisting IOI: The Real Villain

A central trial for all gunters in *Ready Player One* is resisting IOI, the powerful corporation seeking to dominate the OASIS. While Wade ultimately opposes IOI, Art3mis is the first to articulate a coherent resistance strategy. She operates independently, has embedded herself in an anti-IOI network, and treats her participation in the hunt as a political act. Unlike Wade, whose decision to oppose IOI comes after the corporation kills his aunt and destroys his home, Art3mis sees IOI as a threat from the beginning. Her foresight and political clarity elevate her trials above mere survival or puzzle-solving—they are rooted in collective struggle.

This resistance positions Art3mis within what Hooks (2015) calls the ethics of love and community. Hooks (2015) argues that resistance is most effective when it centers the well-being of others rather than individual heroism. Art3mis embodies this ethic. Her rejection of Wade's advances is also a rejection of personal distraction; she prioritizes the cause over romance. While Wade retreats to IOI to sabotage it from within, a decision painted as heroic, it is ultimately reactive. Art3mis's resistance is proactive, consistent, and ideological.

Reconfiguring Alliances: Partnership without Dependence

In the traditional monomyth, the hero receives help from allies who either serve him or aid in his development. Art3mis, however, does not follow this pattern. She neither depends on Wade nor allows herself to become a mere helper in his quest. Their alliance is contentious and dynamic—she challenges Wade, questions his assumptions, and refuses to be manipulated by affection. This makes their partnership one of the most interesting dynamics in the novel. Rather than a helper, she is a parallel protagonist, and their alliance is marked by negotiation rather than submission.

Art3mis is also a mentor figure in several respects. She introduces Wade to deeper political dimensions of the hunt, expands his understanding of IOI's threat, and helps him mature emotionally. While Campbell's monomyth reserves the mentor role for older, typically male characters (e.g., Obi-Wan Kenobi in Star Wars), Art3mis assumes this role without relinquishing her autonomy or narrative significance.

Moreover, Art3mis maintains a healthy boundary within her alliance. She disappears when she needs to focus, works alone when necessary, and draws a clear line between cooperation and co-dependence. As Pearson (2015) argues in her reworking of archetypes, true female heroism involves maintaining identity even within collective endeavors. Art3mis does this throughout the novel, forging alliances without sacrificing her principles or becoming narratively subsumed.

The Emotional Trial: Love versus Autonomy

One of the more emotionally charged trials for Art3mis is the tension between love and autonomy. Wade's relentless pursuit of her affections becomes a subplot that threatens to overshadow her achievements. Yet Art3mis repeatedly resists being pulled into this narrative orbit. She values her autonomy more than romantic validation, a decision that challenges not only Wade's assumptions but the structural expectations of many young adult and speculative fiction novels.

Wade's obsession with Art3mis is depicted in ways that echo toxic romantic tropes. He spies on her, hacks her location, and pressures her emotionally. While these actions are portrayed with a degree of narrative forgiveness, they are deeply problematic. Art3mis's refusal to reward these behaviors is a profound assertion of emotional sovereignty. She asserts that love cannot be built on projection, control, or obsession. Her emotional trial, then, is not about choosing between love and the mission, but about upholding her integrity in the face of coercive affection.

This element of Art3mis's journey resonates with feminist literary critiques of romance plots, which often reduce women to rewards for male development (Radway, 1991). Art3mis flips this script. Her journey is not to be loved by the hero, but to preserve the values that define her heroism. She redefines emotional maturity not as capitulation to love, but as the ability to say no without guilt.

The Integrity of the Female Hero

Above all, Art3mis's trials are defined by her integrity. She is one of the few characters who enters the hunt with a vision for the OASIS's future that extends beyond herself. She refuses to cheat, compromise, or trade principles for power. This stands in stark contrast to many other competitors who are either absorbed by IOI or willing to sell out for a slice of the OASIS.

In her final scenes, when she joins the High Five in confronting IOI and dismantling their control, Art3mis's role becomes not only tactical but symbolic. She embodies the ideal of ethical gaming, digital resistance, and communal heroism. While Wade presses the final button, it is Art3mis who represents the moral compass of the story. Without her, the victory would ring hollow.

In literary terms, Art3mis's integrity marks her a "counter-narrative heroine"—a character who subverts genre expectations not through rebellion but through quiet, consistent ethical action. She proves that true heroism lies not in dominance, but in discipline; not in victory, but in values.

The Return: Reimagining the Boon and the Ending

The final stage of Joseph Campbell's monomyth, "The Return," typically depicts the hero coming back to the ordinary world with a boon—a reward or insight gained from the journey—which is then shared for the benefit of society. In *Ready Player One*, this moment is ostensibly realized when Wade Watts wins the Easter egg, inherits control of the OASIS, and symbolically defeats the corporate villainy of IOI. However, this traditional ending is complicated when viewed through the lens of Art3mis's journey. Art3mis does not emerge as the "winner" of Halliday's contest, but she does complete her own version of the hero's journey—one that reimagines the boon as ethical accountability, community care, and vision for structural change.

A Different Boon: Vision over Victory

Wade's ultimate reward—Halliday's fortune and control over the OASIS—reinforces the conventional reward structure of monomythic narratives. The hero earns a treasure and becomes a ruler of some kind. However, this model reinforces hierarchical power structures. Wade's ascension does little to interrogate or restructure the systemic inequalities embedded in the OASIS. In contrast, Art3mis's journey offers a different conception of the boon.

Her reward is not wealth or fame but the preservation of her integrity and the realization of a collective vision. From the outset, Art3mis insists that the OASIS must remain accessible, fair, and free of corporate exploitation. Her primary concern is not personal gain but ethical stewardship. Even before the final confrontation with IOI, Art3mis has already proposed limits on monetization, discussed educational uses of the OASIS, and aligned herself with activist resistance. Thus, her boon is one of ideological clarity—an understanding that the real world needs systemic transformation and that virtual escapism cannot replace embodied justice.

This vision aligns with critical digital media scholarship, such as Jenkins, Ito, and Boyd (2016) who argue that digital worlds must be analyzed not just as entertainment platforms but as political and cultural battlegrounds. Art3mis understands the OASIS in these terms. Her return is not to power but to purpose—resisting IOI, supporting the High Five's new leadership, and advocating for more equitable policies within the OASIS.

Feminist Endings: Resisting the Romantic Resolution

A recurring pattern in traditional heroic narratives is the romantic reward—the woman as prize or the romantic union as a marker of narrative closure. *Ready Player One* flirts with this trope in its final chapter, with Wade and Art3mis finally meeting in person and sharing a romantic moment. However, a closer reading reveals that this resolution is not as triumphant or conclusive as it first appears.

First, Art3mis (Samantha) remains emotionally guarded and cautious, even in her final scene. She is not swept away by Wade's victory, nor does she lose herself in romance. Her affection is tempered by lived experience—loss, resistance, and ideological commitments that remain unchanged. Second, the real-world context of their reunion—amid a corporate collapse and structural uncertainty—prevents the romantic moment from fully subsuming the political stakes. Art3mis does not become a romantic object that resolves the story. Instead, she maintains narrative independence.

This move subtly resists the closure mechanisms critiqued by feminist theorists like Kaplan (2001), who warns that romance in male-centered narratives often functions to restore patriarchal norms. Art3mis's controlled embrace of intimacy—without relinquishing her ideals—offers a more feminist ending, one where love coexists with autonomy and justice. The story does not close her arc with marriage or subordination but with mutual recognition, signaling a narrative that values respect over possession.

The Problem of the Sole Heir: Decentralizing the Hero

Another way the return is traditionally structured is through a transfer of power. In Campbell's model, the hero often returns to lead or change society, sometimes with divine sanction. *Ready Player One* adopts this motif literally: Halliday, the creator-god of the OASIS, anoints Wade as his heir. Yet this transfer is deeply problematic. It suggests that the best successor to a flawed visionary is another lone figure, another obsessive fanboy who won a game designed by the previous one.

Art3mis implicitly challenges this transfer of power. Her consistent critique of Halliday, her refusal to fetishize his legacy, and her emphasis on community over individuality propose an alternative structure. Rather than a singular hero, she champions collective governance. She sees the flaws in concentrating power—even in the hands of a "good" person—and advocates for mechanisms that prevent future abuse.

In this way, Art3mis's ending gestures toward a decentralized heroism. As Jenkins (2006) notes in his work on participatory culture, power in digital spaces should be distributed, collaborative, and reciprocal. Art3mis envisions a future where no single user controls the OASIS. Her return is not to a throne but to the movement—a return to activism rather than dominion.

Real World Reckonings: Beyond the Virtual

Perhaps the most important aspect of Art3mis's return is that it points outward—from the virtual to the real. While Wade expresses little sustained interest in the offline world (until the very end, when he declares he will start spending more time in reality), Art3mis begins her journey with this awareness. Her real name, Samantha Evelyn Cook, is not just an alias—it is a tether to a real body, a real context, and real stakes. Her father's death at the hands of IOI anchors her resistance in grief and structural critique.

Samantha's experiences emphasize that virtual victories mean little without real-world justice. In her return, she does not retreat into escapism. Instead, she confronts the socio-economic structures that make people dependent on digital fantasies. This thematic return—bringing insights from the OASIS back to the real world—is what truly completes her arc. It

aligns with post-cyberpunk sensibilities that critique techno-utopias and instead focus on tangible inequalities, as discussed by Cavallaro (2000).

Art3mis's journey affirms that heroism is not in winning a contest but in using one's platform to advance justice. Her "boon" is an awakened community, not a personal legacy. Her "return" is to a broken world she intends to help repair.

Conclusion: Rewriting the Hero's Return

In classic hero narratives, the return signifies closure: the hero comes home, the kingdom is saved, balance is restored. But in *Ready Player One*, particularly through Art3mis's arc, we are given a more open-ended and ethically complex conclusion. Art3mis challenges the idea of heroic finality. For her, the journey is not a means to personal glory but to collective awakening.

She reimagines the boon not as power but as responsibility. She resists the romantic resolution that would reduce her to a narrative reward. She critiques the legitimacy of the sole heir and instead calls for shared governance. She returns not to glory, but to work—advocacy, policy, and the long haul of justice. In this way, Art3mis completes a hero's journey that is neither derivative nor derivative—it is transformative. She is, truly, a hero in her own right.

Conclusion

The monomyth, or Hero's Journey, has long served as a powerful narrative archetype in literature and film. Yet its classic structure—centered on a solitary (usually male) hero, individualistic quests, and often a patriarchal resolution—has increasingly come under scrutiny by feminist scholars and critics who seek more inclusive, nuanced models of storytelling. This article has argued that *Ready Player One* offers a unique opportunity to rethink this foundational narrative through the character of Art3mis, whose journey diverges significantly from traditional heroic scripts.

Art3mis exemplifies a feminist reframing of the Hero's Journey. Her narrative is marked not by conquest or domination, but by resistance, collaboration, and care. From her refusal to be a romantic prize to her insistence on addressing systemic injustices within and beyond the OASIS, Art3mis redefines what it means to be a hero. Her arc demonstrates that heroism does not lie in seizing power but in wielding influence ethically, forging community, and staying rooted in real-world consequences.

Unlike Wade Watts, whose arc largely conforms to Campbellian motifs, Art3mis resists narrative closure. She does not end her journey in triumph but in purpose. She does not consolidate control but advocates for decentralized, participatory governance. Her skepticism of Halliday's legacy, her insistence on political resistance, and her concern with the material realities of poverty and corporate violence reflect a feminist ethic that prioritizes justice over spectacle. In doing so, she complicates the trope of the chosen one and opens space for a collective vision of heroism.

This revisioning of the Hero's Journey has significant implications for the study of popular culture and speculative fiction. It invites scholars and creators alike to question the structures we take for granted: Who gets to be the hero? What kinds of labor and leadership are valorized? What is the true cost of "saving the world" when that world is built on digital escapism and socio-economic neglect? Art3mis challenges us to consider these questions not as secondary to narrative pleasure, but as central to storytelling ethics.

Moreover, her character encourages a shift in how female protagonists are written and received. Rather than being ancillary to a male journey, Art3mis is a fully realized subject whose journey unfolds with complexity and agency. Her arc refuses both victimization and idealization. Instead, it models feminist heroism as a mode of enduring struggle, principled action, and ongoing care. This kind of representation is vital for expanding the literary canon and reimagining the future of genre fiction.

In conclusion, Art3mis is not simply a "strong female character" in a male-driven narrative. She is a narrative disruptor, a moral compass, and a visionary figure whose journey invites us to rethink the terms of heroism itself. As popular media continues to influence how we conceptualize identity, power, and justice, characters like Art3mis offer a path forward. They remind us that the hero's journey is not a fixed formula but a living structure—one that can and must evolve to reflect the diverse, ethical, and collective futures we seek.

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Navigating Addressing Terms in Academic Environment: Social Context and Dynamics at Jakarta International University in Indonesia

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Abstract

In multilingual and multicultural academic environments, language use, particularly terms of address, plays important role in shaping social interactions. It is not only to maintain respect, but professionalism and also particular relationship among speakers. At Jakarta International University (JIU), where people come from diverse cultural backgrounds, phenomenon of language evolving are found in unique ways. This research aims to address the problem of how social and cultural factors influence the choice and use of address terms in an academic environment. The main objectives of this qualitative research are to explore the patterns of address terms commonly used and the social meanings behind address term usage at JIU. A mix-method approach was employed, combining participants observation, semi-structured interviews with ten individuals (students, faculty members, staff members), and a review of relevant literature. The findings reveal some important implication such as the use of specific greetings (Pak, Bu, Mas, *Ko-ko,* and *Seonsaengnim*) in academic environments and this highlights the shifts in language norms toward informality and inclusiveness to use such terms to show respect, familiarity, and professionalism. In addition to that, this finding underscores the cultural influences that result in the increase use of nicknames that were once inappropriate or not commonly used such as affectionate terms between peers (Beb(y) and Say(ang)). The results of this study offer valuable insights for language stakeholders to enhance intercultural understanding in academic settings. This research offers a foundation for subsequent studies to explore the phenomenon of address terms and their functions. A more extensive sample and context are necessary to further investigate this topic.

Keywords: Addressing Terms, Cultural Background, Multicultural Environment, Respect And Professionalism, Social Status

Introduction

The concept of linguistic politeness is crucial for maintaining social harmony and showing respect in interactions. Despite its long-standing importance, there is ongoing debate about how linguistic politeness is demonstrated and the specific indicators of politeness. The lack of a definitive framework for categorizing individuals who display linguistic politeness and those who do not, is largely due to the dynamic and evolving nature of society's language. The ongoing development of languages (Briscoe, 2002) also leads to changes in the politeness strategies used by individuals, as there are varying opinions about what is considered polite (Mills & Kádár, 2011). This highlights the complex interaction between linguistic norms and the changing social landscape.

The ever-changing nature of language and social norms drives the evolution of linguistic politeness strategies. As societies evolve, the norms and expectations surrounding polite communication shift accordingly. This evolution is evident in the constantly evolving linguistic landscape, where new linguistic forms, idioms, and communication platforms emerge(Briscoe,

2002). As a result, individuals adapt their politeness strategies to align with these evolving linguistic norms (Trudgill, 2001). This leads to a diversity in the strategies individuals employ to express politeness, reflecting the diversity of linguistic and social norms across cultures.

The linguistic markers of politeness vary across cultures and contexts (Mills & Kádár, 2011). Some common indicators include the use of honorifics, politeness markers (e.g., please, thank you), indirect speech acts, and mitigating language to soften requests or refusals (Lakoff, 2004). When communicating, we continuously deliberate over the desired content and form of our message, the optimal sentence structure, the selection of appropriate vocabulary, and the most suitable intonation and pronunciation. The phrase "excuse me," for instance, may be uttered in various ways depending on one's gender, social status, and the context of the interaction (Yulianto, 2025; Yulianto et al., 2023). To illustrate, consider the following scenario: a police officer approaches a driver and asks for his licence to be inspected. The utterance "Excuse me, Dear. Can I see your licence?" provides an illustrative example of an inappropriate use of language experienced by a driver who was stopped by a police officer on the street. The inappropriate use of terms, such as addressing a stranger as "Dear" instead of "Sir" by a police officer (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021), resulted in an awkward encounter and impeded the flow of the conversation. This example illustrates the significance of selecting suitable addressing terms in specific contexts.

As a social and cultural phenomenon (Trudgill, 2001), language is significantly influenced by cultural and contextual variations. Therefore, it is crucial to choose language, for example addressing terms, that aligns with the context and relationship of the speakers to facilitate effective communication and achieve successful outcomes. In Javanese society in Indonesia, the respectful use of terms like "Mas/Kakang/Kang" to address older male siblings is of significant cultural and social significance for the maintenance of harmonious relationships (Yulianto, 2016). Similarly, in academic settings, the use of titles such as "Sir," "Professor," or "Dr." for lecturers is a demonstration of respect and professionalism, which are crucial in maintaining the standards expected of academic discourse. It is thus evident that the selection of appropriate terminology is of significant importance in maintaining respect, cultivating positive interpersonal dynamics, and upholding professional standards.

In practice, there are numerous options for using terms of address (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). One option is to use a first name (FN), which is typically used to indicate equality, familiarity, intimacy, and power. Another option is to use a combination of a title with a first name or last name (TLN/TFN), such as "Doctorate," "Professor," or "Captain." This combination is generally used to indicate occupational status and social rank. Furthermore, the terms of address can be indicative of power, which is the least familiar. This phenomenon is exemplified by the use of last names (LN), which are employed to denote a degree of familiarity with individuals who typically have an intimate knowledge of each other. Special nicknames (SN) and pet names (PN) are also used to indicate greater familiarity and often serve as group codes (Meyerhoff, 2019). Finally, kinship terms (KT) are employed to denote familial relationships by generation and age, which are regarded as blood-related.

One of the many reasons why people use particular addressing terms is social influence in which this includes the occasion, the other's social standing or rank, gender, age, the family relationship, the occupational hierarchy, the transactional status (such as a service encounter, doctor-patient relationship, or priest-penitent relationship), race, and the degree of intimacy (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). In practice, they frequently select a particular term to capture the attention of their audience or to refer to the addressee (Romaine, 2023). Furthermore, various social contexts and social dimensions can influence how language works in different societies (Holmes & Wilson, 2022).

1. Social Context

Language usage in multiple different contexts forms people's understanding of how language functions in various societies. Holmes, J & Wilson N. emphasize the importance of considering who we are speaking to, where we are speaking, and how we are feeling. Based on previous consideration, the same message can be conveyed in a variety of ways to different people. In different social contexts, they claim that terms used will be different depending on the Participants (whom they are speaking to?); Settings (the place and situation where participants hold a conversation); Topics (the topic being discussed); and Functions (the reason why people speak) which become the factors that distinguish language usage. Therefore, social context governs what is appropriate and required (Hovy & Yang, 2021).

2. Social Dimensions

In addition to the social context, the social dimensions function to show how social distance, status scale, formality and functionality influence communication (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Social distance talks about the relationship of the participants in terms of intimacy. It exists due to the (low) solidarity of the participants. People who are intimate must have a high level of solidarity, and once they have a high level of solidarity, they tend to use different terms to refer to intimate people. The second social dimension that influences communication is status scale. Using some linguistics options, this scale represents the relevant status. Using "Mrs" to address a woman in school (e.g Mrs. Margaret Walker-Billington) indicates a higher status reflected using respected terms. When Margaret Walker-Billington addresses her secretary and driver using their first names, they are occupationally involved in the low social level. However, their choice of terms reflects their social status. In addition, the Formality scale refers to the formality or informality of the social setting that determines the choice of linguistic markers (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). In a formal conversation, people tend to speak in a formal language. To demonstrate, when talking with a bank manager in a meeting, co-workers will use formal language such as ‘Mr’ or ‘Mrs’, whereas friendly chatting with friends uses informal language such as ‘dear’ or ‘honey’. The more formal language is used, the more formal the social setting. As a result, formality influences language usage in society. The last social dimension is function scale which includes referential and affective function scales. Languages can be both referential and affective depending on the context. The amount of information delivered in a conversation, such as facts, directions, and data, is measured by referential. In contrast, it effectively connects with the emotional topic and reveals how someone feels. The higher the information content is prioritized, the less feelings are involved, and vice versa. For example, gossip and discussion in court, gossip relative only talks about someone and it does not contain important information sometimes, whereas discussion inside court relatively talking about something serious such as criminal cases, robbery, murderer, etc. When someone delivers a lot of information in a conversation, the effective content tends to be less. If the more effective content is delivered, the information becomes less important.

The Background Jakarta International University

Jakarta International University (JIU), situated in Cikarang, Kabupaten Bekasi, Indonesia is a multicultural campus hosting students from Indonesia and various foreign countries. By the end of 2022, the campus has a total of 110 students and 54 staff members. The campus's multicultural environment makes it an attractive place to study the phenomenon of using addressing terms, along with exploring the reasons and supporting factors behind this trend. Therefore, this study aimed to scrutinize the social context and social dimensions that influence the use of terms, packaged in two research objectives: analyzing how social status, cultural background, and context influence the choice of addressing terms, and exploring the functional

role of addressing terms in promoting respect, professionalism, and intimacy in university settings.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative research is to examine social phenomena, specifically, the social activities associated with addressing terms and the attitudes and beliefs of their users (Kumar, 2018). To achieve this objective, a multi-method qualitative approach was employed, combining participant observation, and semi-structured interviews and literature review to ensure triangulation and depth analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Participant observation at an early stage was conducted over a four-week period in various campus settings, including classrooms, faculty offices, students lounge, cafetaria, and administrative areas. These observations helped identify addressing terms commonly used and their contextual patterns in the interactions among students, staff, and faculty. Observational field notes were systematically recorded and coded to formulate preliminary categories and hypotheses regarding the contextual variables influencing address terms (e.g., setting, topic, and relational status between speakers).

Based on these findings, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with 10 purposively selected participants, representing a range of roles, nationalities, genders, and age groups. These interviews include 4 Indonesian students (2 male, 2 female) 2 Indonesian faculty members (1 male, 1 female), 2 staff members, and 2 Korean faculty members. These participants were selected for their active use or receipt of address terms during the observed interactions. This method, especially interview, aimed to explore participants' perceptions, cultural influences, and experiences with address terms, particularly within the context of cross-cultural communication.

During the interviews, the conversations were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic coding. These findings were developed inductively and cross-checked against the initial observational data for consistency. To ensure and strengthen the credibility and reliability of the findings, this research integrated triangulation and member-checking (Creswell, 2014).

Finally, the analysis highlighted four key terms commonly used at Jakarta International University. These findings were deepened through comparison with previous studies in some areas such as sociolinguistics and intercultural communication. This way is to contextualize the findings and strengthen the analytical framework.

Results and Discussions

In the context of interpersonal communication, addressing terms play a significant role in shaping social interactions. The term "address" functions as a convenient and acceptable symbol (Romaine, 2023), enabling one to refer to another person in a manner that is both clear and appropriate. An analysis of speeches and addressing terms at Jakarta International University can offer valuable insights into how language is employed within the academic setting and how these terms are interpreted and utilized across different languages and social contexts. The following data and discussion synthesize findings derived from direct observations and interviews with multiple participants, complemented by an examination of relevant perspectives and studies from various sources on topics pertinent to the current research.

The below chart captures the strategies applied by individuals including students, staff, and lecturers to interact with others in the academic environment at Jakarta International University. The use of kinship terms is more prevalent than that of nicknames or pet names, with 19 terms versus 18, respectively. Some combination of a title and a first name or a title

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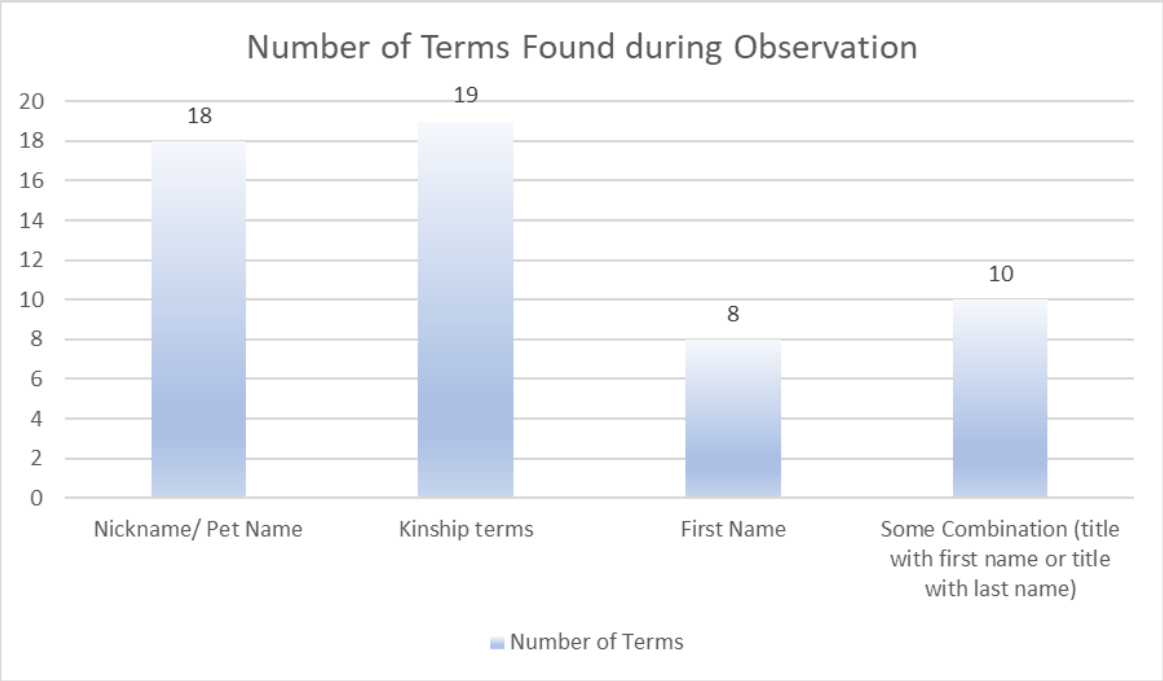
and a last name is the third most common form of address, with 10 terms, while first names are used in 8 terms.



Kinship Terms

A total of 19 terms were identified during the observation period. The most frequently occurring strategy was that of the kinship term. It is of interest to examine the social context and social dimensions that influence the use of these terms in the academic environment. The term "kinship" is initially employed in reference to those who share a blood relationship (Nanda & Warms, 2024).

In a previous study “The Prominent Characteristics of Javanese Culture and Their Reflections in Language Use” (Nadar, 2007), the author discussed the prominent characteristics of Javanese culture and their reflections in language use. The study addressed the dynamics of language change and its use, for example kinship terms, which is influenced by a long-established system in Javanese society. The use of the term "Bapak" for father, “Ibu” for mother, “adik/dik” for younger brother and sister, “Mas” for older brother, “Mbak” for older sister, “Mbah” for grandfather or grandmother, reflects an adaptation of language to social change, while underscoring the dynamic nature of language in its application to conditions of changing social hierarchy. The dynamic nature of language is exemplified in Javanese culture through the naming and greeting system, which reflects social hierarchy. Java recognizes three levels of speech: The Javanese language employs a system of three levels of speech, namely krama (high or refined language), madya (middle level), and ngoko (low level or informal), each of which correlates with different social status. One notable aspect of this system is the use of the first-person pronouns "I" and "you" in Javanese. These two terms are exclusively utilised at the low or informal level (ngoko). In the middle level (madya), the first person is referred to as "kula," while the second person is addressed as "sampeyan" or "penjenengan." This differs from the highest or refined level (krama), where the terms "dalem" are used for the first person and "panjenengan" for the second person. The use of different languages is contingent upon the dynamics of the community. One such dynamic is the provision of a linguistic means of referring to someone in a higher position.

As the system evolved in society, variations in names emerged depending on regional and social class differences. For example, in rural areas, older brothers are called "Kang" or "Kakang", and older sisters are called "Yu" or "Mbakyu". Upper-class Javanese may use "Eyang" for grandparents instead of "Mbah". Even more modernly, Nadar claims that today kinship terms are also used outside the family context as terms of respect. For instance, the terms "Pak" (short for Bapak) and "Bu" (short for Ibu) are employed to address older individuals, whereas "Mas" and "Mbak" are typically used for younger men and women. This usage has developed to facilitate the conveyance of respect and the maintenance of social harmony. In her research, Nadar highlights that the Javanese naming and addressing system, in its entirety, reflects societal values, with a particular emphasis on respect, social hierarchy, and harmony in interaction.

This current research contributes to the growing body of literature on the adaptation of language to social change. In particular, it provides an example of the use of kinship terms for individuals outside the family. The following terms were observed during the course of the study: "Bapak/Pak (Father) "; "bang (older Brother)"; "Kakak/Kak (older Brother and Sister)"; "Mas (older Brother)"; "Bu (Mother)"; "Pace (older Brother)"; "Mbak (older Sister)"; "Cece/Cici (older Sister)"; "Ko/Koko (older Brother)"; "Mami (Mother)"; "Onee (san) (older Sister)"; "Uncle"; "Pakdhe (Father's older Brother)"; "Lae (older Brother)"; "Bro"; "Bunda (Mother"; "Sist(er)"; "Ayah (Father)"; "Tante (Mother and father's sister)". These terms used by some members of JIU including students, staff, and lecturer to refer to friends and colleagues may be indicative of the manner in which language adapts to societal changes and cultural shifts. Terms that were previously limited to specific familial relationships can, in certain contexts, acquire broader meanings based on social conventions and norms. The Indonesian term "Bapak," which translates to "Dad/father" in English (Anderson & Shifrin, 2017), has been employed to address elderly men, authority figures, and individuals in formal settings to demonstrate respect and gratitude (Mulyanah & Krisnawati, 2022; Nadar, 2007). In some contexts, it is used to convey the same respect as "Sir" or "Mister" (Hasjim et al., 2021). In line with that, the term "Bu (similar to Miss/ Mrs)", "Mami", "Bunda", in this context were used to indicate someone older (outside the family). In the course of the interviews, the term "Mami" was mentioned by the students as a desired designation for the recipient of the name. Meanwhile, the term "Bunda" is employed by students, predominantly female students, to signify an older individual in a context of friendship. The term "Bunda" serves a comparable function to "Bang," "Kakak/Kak," "Mas," "Pace," "Mbak," "Cece/Cici," "Ko/Koko," "Onee (san)," "Uncle," "Pakdhe," "Lae," "Bro," "Sist(er)," "Ayah," and "Tante." It is evident that these terms are utilised by students, particularly female students, to indicate profound relationships among them. However, there are a few exceptions, such as "Bro" and "Lae," which are used primarily by male students. Additionally, male students utilise a number of terms to indicate a range of emotions and relationships.

In Indonesia, the practice of addressing individuals solely by their first or last names, particularly elders or those of higher social standing, is relatively uncommon. In interactions between individuals of differing social statuses, instances of higher social status can be observed, particularly between a superior and their subordinates, or a lecturer and their students. With respect to JIU faculty members, the utilization of "Pak" or "Bu," which is typically reserved for elders, does not take the age differential into account. Even individuals with older ages continue to address their younger colleagues using these terms. This outcome illustrates the manner in which social norms influence the utilization of addressing as a manifestation of politeness and appreciation among colleagues and office mates, irrespective of the age discrepancy.

The above situation is characterized by two key aspects: the dynamic of languages and the cultural shift of social norms and structures. This is evidenced by the fact that these terms have undergone changes in meaning and usage over time (Aitchison, 2005; Norton, 2013). According to interviews with several Indonesian participants, the use of these terms is indicative of an attitude of respect that fosters a sense of community. These terms facilitate the formation and strengthening of social bonds, which in turn fosters more personal and inclusive interactions. Moreover, it engenders a sense of belonging and solidarity within a community or group.

Some terms may be perceived as inappropriate in certain contexts, such as "Mami, Tante, Bunda, Ayah," when used in the context of friendship in an academic environment. However, the respect and deference factor play a role in making the language transition more familiar. Kinship terms frequently convey connotations of respect and reverence, particularly towards elders or authority figures. In societies where hierarchy is prevalent, addressing someone with a kinship term can acknowledge their status or role as well as age. In this context, the use of these terms is intended to honor one's maturity. It is an identity that honors those who contribute to their environment.

Nickname/ Pet Name

Given that names possess considerable significance as both identity markers and cultural signifiers, they cannot be regarded as mere arbitrary labels. The chart above also indicates that the use of nicknames or pet names is the second most prevalent form of address observed. The bestowal of names, nicknames, or other designations upon individuals must take into account the prevailing cultural traditions and social norms that shape the social landscape.

In "Power, Politeness, and the Pragmatics of Nicknames," the writer examined the concept of nicknames and their philosophical implications (Adams, 2009). He posits that nicknames serve as a means of distributing power within social groups. In this context, he asserts that the practice of nicknames is a political act involving social negotiation and consent to produce a nickname. The process of consent involves a number of factors, including pragmatics and social politeness. Adams refers to this as the "naming contract," which is the agreement between the namer and the named. Moreover, the formation of nicknames is indicative of social hierarchy, power dynamics, and domination, reflecting solidarity and authority in social interactions. In hierarchical contexts, nickname might be used to assert control over others by those in positions of authority. In contrast, in consensual contexts, nicknames can positively contribute to the balance of power, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

As society evolves and its language develops, it reflects the shifting values and beliefs of those who use language. One noteworthy aspect of this linguistic evolution is the redefinition and reinterpretation of words and phrases used to address someone. For instance, the appropriation of animal names as derogatory terms for humans exemplifies a semantic and societal norms and values shift that reflects the distinctive language dynamics of this generation. This shift in language use also underscores the fluidity and adaptability of language in response to cultural change influenced by certain power (Adams, 2009). In the current research, several nicknames were identified, which are “Asu Celeng/Leng Anjing/Anying/Njir, Yut, Ucup, Bob, Boni, Kibo, Ben(Cong), Sat (Bangsat), Coy, Bangkek, Beb (y), Manis, Sayang, Lord, and Yang Mulia”. In many cultures and contexts, several words found here are considered socially unacceptable. The terms “Asu, Celeng, Anjing, Sat (Bangsat), Bangkek, and Bencong/ Cong” are considered taboo in certain contexts. Specifically in Indonesia, the terms “Asu, Celeng, Anjing, Sat (Bangsat)” literally mean dogs and pigs which are very rude, especially with the strong intonation uttered. In English, they have the same meaning, not literally, as “Fuck, Shit,

Crap, etc." Nevertheless, the perception of taboo words is not merely a matter of individual or societal perception; rather, it is a dynamic process of negotiation and interpretation that gives rise to a multiplicity of acceptances. It is notable that certain terms that were previously considered highly offensive may now be casually used in everyday conversation by some individuals, contingent upon the social factors, including the relationship between the speaker and the listener and the formality of the social setting. As evidenced by the interview, several students acknowledged the limited use of such terms, which are employed with close friends who are younger than them when expressing anger, making a joke, and in a neutral context. This spontaneous use of these terms reveals a particular aspect of social hierarchy. A similar aspect is presented through the existence of terms such as "Lord," "Yang Mulia" (your majesty), and "Sepuh" (elders). These terms are typically employed in a respectful, elevated, or reverent manner to honour, elevate, or glorify individuals who possess a specific level of authority or influence. However, in contemporary usage by some students, as evidenced by the interview with Indonesian participants, these titles appear to be employed in an ironic or satirical manner, suggesting a hint of mockery or jest. They are bestowed upon individuals believed to have significant power over others, exercising significant sway within their respective domains. Over time, the connotations of these terms have shifted from purely reverential to commonplace, and in some contexts, even to convey a sense of humour. Furthermore, it was observed that these terms were predominantly uttered by male students and outside the classroom.

This trend has been particularly prevalent among the younger generation in the present era. Language evolves systems that reflect the changing values and attitudes of society. Affectionate terms such as "Beb(y)," "Manis," and "Say(ang)" are commonly used to address individuals of the opposite sex in a special relationship. However, these terms are now also used for same-sex individuals, primarily by women. In the past, the use of these terms to describe individuals with same-sex orientations was considered taboo, due in part to the social stigma associated with being labelled as "lesbian" or gay. The utilisation of these terms, as reported by interviewees, particularly women, was shaped by the intimate bond between the speakers. They utilise these terms to offer compliments and initiate discourse. This practice facilitates the establishment of a convivial and amicable ambience, which in turn facilitates the ease and comfort of the conversation. The traditional stereotypical portrayal of women as using superficial terminology, such as "Beb(y)," "Sweet," and "Say(ang)," is undergoing a significant transformation, where these terms are now commonly utilized as a means of expressing admiration (Yulianto et al., 2023).

The changes of a word rely on the needs and preferences of its users. Unlike other expressions in an utterance, such addresses are not grammatically related (McConnell as cited in Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2008)**.** For instance, words such as Yut, Ucup, and Bob, extracted from Ruth, Yusuf, and Bobby, which were previously absent, have now become commonplace at JIU, reflecting societal shifts. Individuals frequently alter or abbreviate names for ease of pronunciation, opting for more convenient shortcuts.

Therefore, the conclusions of dynamic nature of nickname practices are influenced by the evolution of relationships and power dynamics (Adams, 2009) which is in line with this study. The acceptance and use of nicknames may undergo changes over time, and individuals may renegotiate the terms of their naming contracts as they gain more social or personal power.

Some Combination (title with first name (TFN) or title with last name (TLN)

During observation, some students, faculty, and even lecturers were observed utilising certain combination patterns in their interactions both in and outside of the classroom. These patterns included TFN, TLN, and the use of the individual's title followed by their first name.

Titles observed included "Prof," "Dr.," "Mr.," "Ms.," “Pak,” and "Bu,". A total of 10 instances were documented in the interaction established within the JIU context.

The selection of an address plays a crucial role in demonstrating the relationship and status between speakers. Since address terms hold symbolic meanings and play as markers of group identity, they convey a significant amount of social information about the person being addressed (Meyerhoff, 2018). In the academic setting, in the study, "Address Practices in Academic Interactions in a Pluricentric Language (Formentelli & Hajek, 2016)," the writers examined the manner in which individuals address each other in English-speaking academic settings. The objective is to profile address patterns in Australian English and to compare them with those observed in American and British English. The data on Australian English was derived from 235 questionnaires completed by students at an Australian university. These questionnaires reported on how students and teaching staff address each other in classroom interactions. The objective of this research was to describe English address practices in the domain of academia, with a primary focus on Australian tertiary education.

In Australian academic contexts, a notable level of informality and familiarity is observed. It is claimed that students and faculty often address each other by their first names, reflecting a cultural value of equality and minimal hierarchical distinctions. While most students utilise a consistent form of address for all faculty members, approximately one-third acknowledge varying approaches in light of social factors such as age, professional status, and familiarity.

Based on their survey, the respondents indicated that age is a factor influencing address practices, with 35 individuals stating that it has an impact. It may be observed that older lecturers tend to prompt the use of more formal terms, such as "Sir," "Mr.," or "Ms." plus the last name. In regard to professional status, it can be observed that: An individual's professional status can influence the forms of address used in communication. Students tend to use appropriate titles for lecturers with higher status (e.g., Professor, Doctor), while tutors, especially postgraduate students, are approached more casually. The degree of familiarity between interlocutors also affects the choice of address forms. As students become more familiar with their lecturers, they tend to move from formal titles to first names. This process is often initiated by the lecturer, who may suggest that the students use their first names.

For students, the result shows that addressing lecturers varies less and is mainly influenced by the age of the lecturer rather than the student. Older lecturers may use formal address forms like "Miss" plus the last name, while others use first names but avoid overly casual language. The familiarity level also affects how teachers address students, often limited by the lack of access to students' identities in large classes. Meanwhile, in American academia, there is a clear hierarchy with distinct roles and titles emphasized through the use of honorifics and first names. On the other hand, British universities initially maintain a formal use of titles between lecturers and students, transitioning to a more informal use of first names over time, especially after prolonged interaction and collaboration.

Nevertheless, the use of address words is inextricably linked to local customs, politeness norms, and conversational context. A study conducted in Indonesian society, entitled “Using addressing terms to promote world-Englishes in Indonesia" (Wijayanti et al., 2023) has emphasized the fact that the use of title such as “Sir/Miss/Ma’am/Mrs” to refer to lecturers or when speaking to them are significant to show respect and politeness. This research has identified the interaction between students and lecturer and found that “Sir/Miss/Ma’am/Mrs” is mostly followed by the first names; followed by the last names has the second place; addressing terms in the Indonesian version, “Pak (Sir)/ Mbak, Kak, Nona, Ayuk (Miss)/ Bu (Mam)/ Ibu/bu (Mrs), and Ibu/bu (Mom)”, followed by the first at the ending, are in the third place. In their research, they observed that a number of English terms exhibited characteristics similar to those observed in Indonesian, for instance the terms “Sir” and “Ma’am” directly

followed by first name. This phenomenon is defined as a sociocultural influence on the way of thinking, as introduced by the Sapir-Whorf concept. Furthermore, the argument is made that students may not entirely avoid the influence of their mother tongue, with the result that habit, tradition, and culture are assimilated into the use of the language. This is particularly evident in the case of addressing terms such as "Miss," "Ma'am," "Sir," and "Mister."

In the present study, a number of terms have been identified that make use of TFN and TLN, in particular. The terms used in this context are Dr. Suh, Prof. Yoo, Mr. Jee Hoon, Ms. Lerissa, Sir. Andrias, Pak Abdul, Prof. I-Soo-Joe, Ibu. Eunji, Jack Seonsaengnim, and Wang Seonsaengnim. In the Indonesian context, it is common to use addressing terms to refer to somebody (Wijayanti et al., 2023). As in the previous discussion, the terms such as "Bapak/Pak" and "Ibu" are employed to address individuals who are older or in a more senior position to show respect and politeness. In the Indonesian language, the honorific "Mr." is equivalent to the term "Bapak," whereas the term "Ms." is analogous to "Ibu." Additionally, the term "Sir" is analogous to "Pak." These terms are often accompanied by a first name, such as "Andrias," "Abdul," "Jee Hoon," "Eunji," "Lerissa" in a similar fashion. The other practices of addressing include a person's job title or profession, such as Dr. Hwang, Prof. Yoo, Prof. I-Soo-Joe. The use of these titles serves to convey respect and to acknowledge the social hierarchy or professional status of the person being addressed.

In addressing someone, it is typical in Indonesian contexts to use the title followed by the first name. However, a distinct pattern emerged when researching Korean contexts, as evidenced by examples such as Dr. (Suh) Hwang, Prof. (yoo) Keo son, Mr. (Lee) Jee Hoon, Ibu. (Lee) Eunji, and Prof. I-Soo-Joe. Notwithstanding the fact that the research was conducted in Indonesia, the population were drawn from a global pool of individuals hailing from various countries, including Korea. Some participants indicated that they would prefer to be addressed in accordance with their cultural norms. In the context of Dr. Suh and Prof. Yoo, Indonesian students and lecturers address them with their family name, whereas Mr. Jee Hoon and Ms. Eunji utilise a different format. The family name occupies an initial position in these instances. This is different from the Indonesian context where the family name is usually in the last position. Another noteworthy aspect of the interviews with a native Korean participant is the preference for not being addressed by family names. This is typically due to the family name being too broad, which can lead to confusion about the specific person being addressed. In contrast, during the interviews with Indonesian participants, the naming patterns differed. They based their choices on convenience and ease of pronunciation, as indicated in Prof. I-Soo-Joe. In practice, Koreans also refer to somebody with their full name, particularly in contexts where politeness is paramount and the addressee is of a senior age and position (Korean Participants). In light of this, it can be seen that Michael Adams' assertion that naming is an act of agreement, which he terms the "naming contract," is indeed accurate.

In addition to the aforementioned facts, it is also noteworthy to observe the use of terms that commence with a name and subsequently include a person's title or profession, such as "Jack Seonsaengnim" and "Wang Seonsaengnim." The honorific "선생님" (seonsaengnim), which translates to "teacher," is utilised to convey respect for their respective positions. Jack and Wang, both Korean nationals who have resided abroad for an extended period, serve as illustrative examples of this practice observed within this context. A pattern of titles like this being placed after the name has been established by Koreans. However, there is another aspect that should be highlighted. It should be noted that Jack, known as You Jehong in Korean, uses an English name. According to a Korean participant, South Koreans often adopt English names for non-official use because non-Koreans often have difficulty pronouncing their Korean names.

First Name

In addition to demonstrating respect and politeness, the use of certain terms in addressing others can convey equality, familiarity, and intimacy (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). The practice of addressing others by their first name is a common occurrence, yet certain cultures have established rules regarding this pattern.

A study of the University of Reading (UK), as detailed in "Addressing Strategies in a British Academic setting" (Formentelli, 2009), reveals the practice of the vertical dimension of non-reciprocal address. The strategy of using formal vocative addresses that indicate reciprocal distance, however, is not reflected in the video recordings. However, other data indicated that the reciprocal use of informal strategies, which indicate familiarity, was not commonly used. In fact, respondents considered this practice to be an indication of deviation from the norm and not a common occurrence. Although considered uncommon, some students' use of reciprocal informal addressing strategies creates special conditions for learning and collaborating with their lecturers in a relaxed atmosphere. This is consistent with the perspective of some lecturers who consider this strategy creates a more informal and approachable environment.

Additionally, Formentelli identified a contrasting perspective that formal addressing is a practice to convey respect and deference. This may be a cultural phenomenon that has been embedded in the previous environment. It is noteworthy that this finding highlights formal addressing strategies among new students who are still in transition from previous environmental norms. However, there are also lecturers who support the use of first names by students, but with restrictions that signify different roles in the classroom. This discrepancy among lecturers indicates that, despite the inclination towards informality, the majority of academic staff continue to uphold traditional hierarchical distinctions.

Further findings also confirm that the use of first names, especially to those with whom one is not acquainted, is often uncomfortable and even inappropriate in British society. This discomfort extends to academia, where the practice of this strategy is generally frowned upon. Therefore, the author concluded that formality and the maintenance of hierarchical address practices are still deeply embedded in British academic culture.

In considering the dimensions that influence address practices, Formentelli notes the consistency of the findings with those of Brown and Gilman. The power dimension is a significant factor that influences the selection and distribution of address terms at the University of Reading. In this context, the party that holds the power is the lecturer, and this formal strategy is typically employed by students when addressing them. Conversely, informal strategies are utilized by lecturers to address less powerful parties. This pattern serves to reinforce the hierarchical structure that emphasizes the influence of power dynamics within the academic environment.

In Indonesian society, the power dimension is also embedded. This is evidenced by the unfamiliarity of using the first name when addressing older people and those who occupy a specific position of authority, for instance, lecturers at the JIU. Students may be forbidden from addressing such individuals by their first name or even by words deemed to be inappropriate or impolite. In addition, the practice is deemed unacceptable in the Indonesian context, where it is customary to address others using terms such as "Mas/Bang/Mbak/Pak/Bu," rather than their name, unless one is particularly close. However, the context in which one interacts and the degree of familiarity with the other individual can influence this custom to a certain extent. Once a level of intimacy has been reached, most Indonesians will opt to use the first name or a nickname to address one another.

The present research, however, also observed the practice of addressing using a first name and interestingly this practice is mostly demonstrated between students. The names of Grace and Artha, as exemplified by the cases of Grace Gevani Aritonang and Artha Uly

Simarmata, respectively, are particularly noteworthy. It seems reasonable to conclude that a significant number of students at the JIU address one another by first name, despite this not being recorded in any way. This practice is said to demonstrate a sense of egalitarianism and closeness among them. Their shared experience at this institution has fostered a sense of equality and intimacy among them. In contrast with the use of a nickname or pet name, which are more informal and personal terms, the first name is a more neutral term that can be employed in public settings and within academic situations. In this context, the term "neutral" signifies that it is regarded as more acceptable by the general population than a nickname or pet name, which are more personal and private.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the dynamic nature of language through address terms used at Jakarta International University (JIU) with the purpose is to better understand how linguistic choices reflect social, cultural, and contextual influences. Furthermore, this study also aimed to capture the functional role of addressing terms in promoting respect, professionalism, and intimacy within a multicultural academic environment.

Key findings reveal that language use at Jakarta International University (JIU) is dynamic and context-sensitive. Terms such as *Pak, Bu, Abang, Mas, and Ko-ko* exemplify linguistic evolution and have developed beyond their original familial or regional functions. These terms are today employed for older individuals in general-particularly lecturers and staffs- as a signal of respect and recognition of hierarchy. This study also underlines the importance of cultural background in shaping these practices. For example, Indonesian and Korean conventions differ in how titles are used, yet both visible and influential at JIU. In addition to that, some informal terms, such as “Beb(y)” and “Say(ang),” illustrate the shifting boundaries of what is considered appropriate, especially in peer conversations. These affectionate terms exemplify the fluid and evolving nature of address terms in response to cultural exchange and institutional setting.

The implication of these findings underscores the importance of linguistic sensitivity in multicultural institutions, where addressing practices can impact perceptions of respect, professionalism, and intimacy. Furthermore, they offer insights into how language use reflects cultural transitions, such as the use of conventional addresses that were once considered inappropriate and are now becoming commonplace.

However, this research has some limitations. The participants involved in interviews and the single-institution focus limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition to that, the research exclusively centered on verbal interactions and did not account for written or digital address practices, which are pertinent in contemporary academic communication. In light of these limitations, further research endeavors should consider to broaden the scope by including more diverse institutions across Indonesia. Along with that, this is important to also incorporate a wider range of participants. The more comparison can be made between universities could yield deeper insights into the connection of language, power, and identity. An investigation into the influence of digital communication platforms on address terms would contribute to an enhanced understanding of linguistic adaptation in the digital age.

In conclusion, address terms at JIU highlight the importance of language for navigating social norms, promoting respect, professionalism, and intimacy. As language continues to evolve alongside culture and context, understanding the language shifts become essential- not only for linguists but also for educators, students, and stakeholders who seek to build respectful and inclusive academic communities.

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Students' Voices on English Public Speaking Training Program at an Indonesian Vocational High School

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Abstract

English public speaking skills are crucial for career and professional success for vocational high school students. However, the existing literature indicates a lack of English language training at vocational high schools. Therefore, students have limited English public speaking skills, making competing in the global job market difficult. This study investigates students' voices on English public speaking training programs at their vocational school, focusing on their feelings and experiences after attending the program. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study collected data through questionnaires administered to 15 students who participated in the training program. The results show the students' excitement and interest in developing their English public speaking skills. The results also indicate a positive impact in showing confidence through the communication skills of the majority of the students. It can be concluded that developing English public speaking skills among vocational high school students can better prepare them to face the future and be better individuals academically and professionally.

Keywords: *English, public speaking training program, vocational high school*

Introduction

The objective of this study is to investigate the voices of vocational high school students on English public speaking training programs at their school. Public Speaking is a skill that must be mastered and acquired by everybody, including students (Saoqillah et al., 2023). Public speaking has been considered an important soft skill among academics and the work field. There are many companies today that require their future employees to have good public speaking skills. As it has become the most crucial aspect to look at in hiring a future employee (Andriani & Srisadono, 2017). Moreover, according to Chollet et al. (2015), good public speaking skills will benefit learners in their academics, careers, and everyday life. In addition, English has become a primary foreign language to learn and master by students and workers in Indonesia (Sari, 2019). Furthermore, English is a language that is used globally (Alatis, 2005). Hence, acquiring English public speaking skills is a valuable soft skill to possess by high school students.

However, despite its significance, the importance of public speaking training for students is often neglected by either the teacher or the students, with only a small number of schools offering such programs (Andriani & Srisadono, 2017). Moreover, according to Grieve et al. (2021), many students have developed various fears regarding public speaking. Such as a lack of confidence, which led them to experience a panic attack. Furthermore, according to

Bartholomay & Houlihan (2016), fear of public speaking or public speaking anxiety affects one in every five people. Thus, public speaking should be a soft skill that becomes the main focus in training among high school students.

Studies on public speaking skills in the vocational high school context have been conducted, and the results generally show that good public speaking skills can help students gain great success in the classroom. Through these skills, students can express their ideas, collaborate with their friends, and help them lead a team. Additionally, this leads to having concise and clear communication skills, which are important soft skills in learning that can help their future career (Mutohhari et al., 2021). Therefore, students will make themselves better individuals academically and professionally (Krisbiantoro et al., 2023). In addition, mastering the art of public speaking can be done in many ways. One of them is through practicing a speech, a process of delivering ideas, thoughts, and information to others (Puspita, 2017), and is often done in front of a crowd.

Bunyamin et al. (2022) stated that English public speaking skills can be learned and improved through various experiences, both in formal education settings and in everyday life. Therefore, a training session can be an effective way to conduct a learning session about public speaking. It could help develop an interest and awareness about English public speaking, especially in speech towards students of a vocational high school (Rido et al., 2023; Zulia et al., 2023). However, studies on English public speaking training programs at vocational schools, especially in the Indonesian context, are still limited. Therefore, this study is important to be conducted to fill the gap in the existing literature.

Theory and Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach and involved vocational high school students. The respondents of this study were students who participated in an English public speaking training program conducted at their school. These students were selected based on some criteria. They must be members of the school English club and recommended by the English language teacher as well as the school principal. Of the 40 students who took part in the program, 15 of them filled out the questionnaires. Meanwhile, the data were collected through a set of questionnaires about students' feelings towards English public speaking training programs conducted at their school. The questionnaires consist of ten questions and a 5-point Likert scale, which (5) indicates strongly agree, (4) indicates agree, (3) indicates neutral, (2) indicates disagree, and (1) indicates strongly disagree. While they were filling out the questionnaire online via Google Drive and their smartphone, they were allowed to ask if they did not understand some parts of the questionnaire. The data from the questionnaires were checked and verified to see the consistency and accuracy of questionnaire items. The results of the questionnaire were then analyzed descriptively by using frequency counts and percentages.

Findings and Discussion

This study investigates the voices of vocational high school students on English public speaking training programs at their school. The English public speaking training program was an additional activity at the school that served as a way to understand more about the knowledge the students have regarding public speaking and speech performances. In general, the majority of the respondents positively perceived the speaking training program. The details of the findings can be seen below.

Question 1

The results of the survey, which asked respondents to score the intelligibility of the materials at a public speaking training they attended, are displayed in a bar chart. The majority of respondents, 80%, strongly agree that the materials presented were very clear, as shown by the chart. 13.3% of the remaining respondents believe that the materials were clear, while 6.7% disagree, saying that the contents were not sufficiently clear. This outcome shows that 90% of respondents agreed that the provided materials were well-structured and understandable. Overall, the survey results indicate that the public speaking session was successful in delivering clear and understandable materials to the majority of attendees. The high percentage of respondents who strongly agree that the materials were clear shows that the presenter effectively communicated their message. The feedback from the small percentage of respondents who disagreed provides valuable insight for improving future presentations to ensure clarity for all attendees.

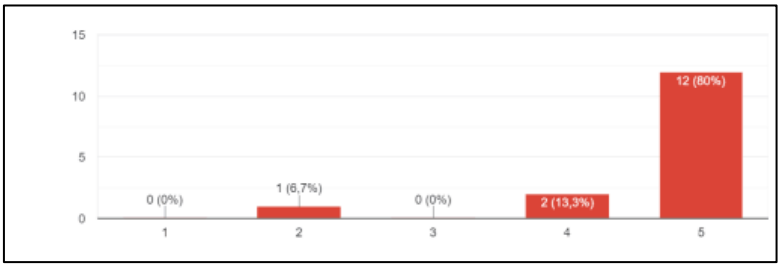

Fig 1. Clarity of the presented materials

Question 2

The next chart shows that 53.3% of respondents strongly agree that the session helped enlighten them on understanding speech. Furthermore, 40% of respondents agree, indicating that the materials provided to aid in their understanding of speech have been effective. However, 6.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed, indicating that the session's influence on speech comprehension may yet be improved. Overall, the data reflects 90% positive responses to the session's content and delivery, but some areas can be further developed to enhance participant comprehension. This feedback will be valuable in refining future sessions to better meet the needs of those seeking to improve their understanding of speech.

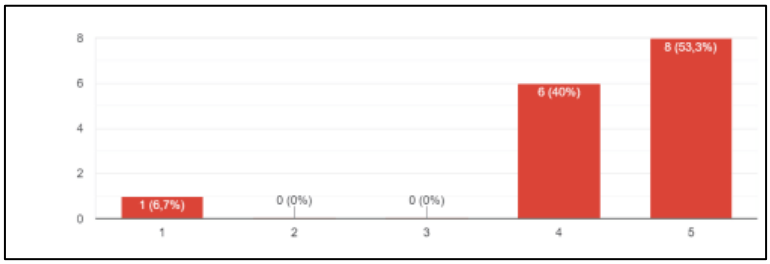

Fig 2. Effectiveness of materials given to understand speech

Question 3

According to the following chart, 73.3% of respondents strongly agree that the provided resources encouraged them to learn speech. Additionally, 20% of students agreed that the resources were helpful in their speech learning journey. The remaining 6.7% strongly disagreed

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with the statement, indicating that the majority of students found the resources to be beneficial. This data suggests that the provided resources play a significant role in motivating students to improve their speech skills. Overall, the majority of students found the resources to be effective in helping them learn speech. The high percentage of students who strongly agreed with the statement shows that the resources were not only helpful but also essential in their learning process. With such positive feedback, it is clear that providing resources for speech learning is a valuable investment in students' education.

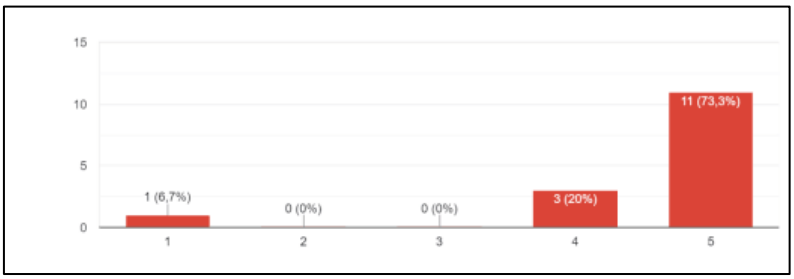

Fig 3. Effectiveness of materials to motivate learning speech

Question 4

The following chart shows that 60% of the respondents strongly agreed that the use of examples and practices helped them understand speech better, with 33.3% supporting it by agreeing to the statement. The 6.7% remaining disagree that examples and practices are effective in improving their understanding of speech, which can be helped by providing additional resources and support tailored to individual learning styles. By offering a variety of teaching methods and materials, educators can better cater to the needs of all students, including those who may not benefit as much from examples and practices alone. It is clear from these results that the majority, more than 90% of respondents, find that using examples and practices is beneficial in enhancing their comprehension of spoken language. This suggests that incorporating more examples and opportunities for practice in language learning materials could be a valuable strategy for educators looking to support their students in improving their listening skills.

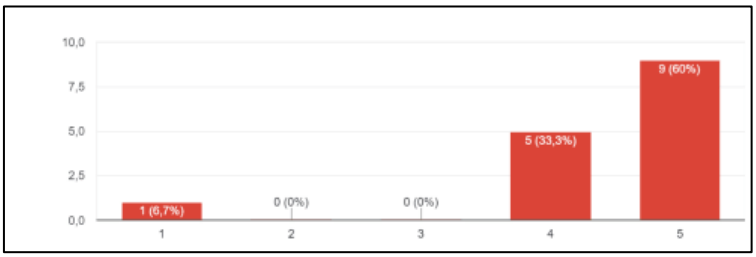

Fig 4. Effectiveness of the use of examples and practices to learn speech

Question 5

The results also indicate that the greatest portion of the chart indicates that 66.7% of the students strongly agreed that the resources provided helped them learn new information that they were not previously aware of. The second largest segment shows that 26.7% of students agree with this statement, while only 6.6% disagree, which indicates that they have known parts of the materials discussed. The majority of students strongly agreed with the effectiveness of the resources, which highlights the importance of providing accessible and engaging

materials to enhance learning outcomes. It is clear that the resources utilized in this training program had a significant impact on expanding students' knowledge and understanding, which is in line with the purpose of this activity, that is to spread awareness about the importance of public speaking.

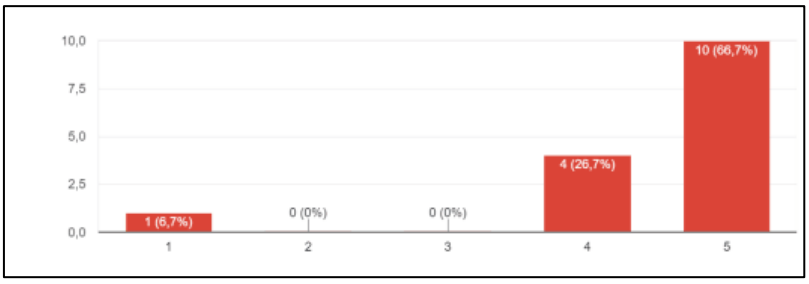

Fig 5. Materials presented as new information for students

Question 6

The response to a survey question asking students to rank how much the provided materials motivated them to improve their speech and public speaking abilities is shown in the bar chart. The results show that 66.7% of respondents strongly agree that they found the materials extremely motivating, while 20% somewhat agree. The rest of the respondents are divided into 6.7% staying neutral on the matter and another 6.7% disagreeing. This could be solved by providing a wider range of materials to cater to different learning styles and interests. Ultimately, the goal should be to create materials that are not only informative but also inspiring and engaging for all students. Overall, the majority of students seem to have been positively impacted by the provided materials in terms of improving their speech and public speaking skills.

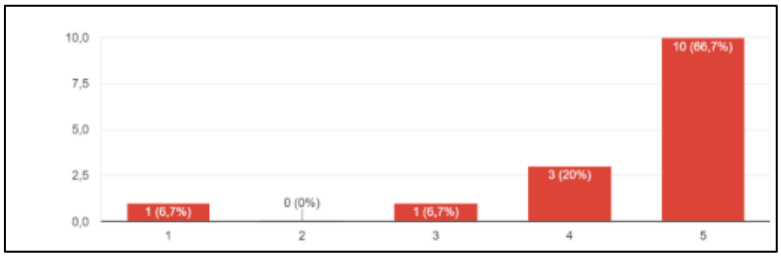

Fig 6. Influence of materials given to improve the students' skill

Question 7

The chart indicates the results of a survey question that asked students about whether or not the materials and presentation about speech helped boost their confidence in public speaking. The chart shows that 73.3% of the students expressed their strong agreement with the effectiveness of the materials and presentation in boosting their confidence in public speaking. This high percentage suggests that the majority of students found the resources to be very helpful in improving their public speaking skills. The other 20% are also agreeing, while the rest, 6.7%, are staying neutral. The neutral responses may suggest that there is room for improvement in tailoring the materials and presentation to better meet the needs of all students. The results of the survey indicate that the materials and presentation were successful in achieving their goal of increasing students' confidence in speaking in front of an audience.

Overall, the survey results demonstrate the value of providing resources to support students in developing their public speaking skills.

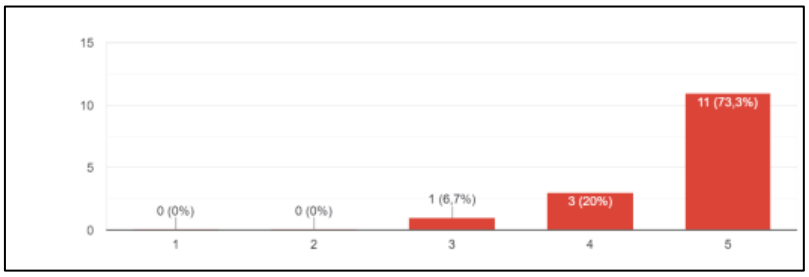

Fig 7. Influence of materials given in boosting students' confidence

Question 8

The bar chart indicates that 80% of the respondents strongly agree that the delivery of the presentation intrigued them enough to pay attention throughout the session. While the other 13.3% agree and the rest, 6.7%, somewhat disagree with the statement, which proves there is still room for improvement. The high percentage of agreement suggests that the presenter was able to effectively engage the audience and capture their interest. It also implies that the content of the presentation was compelling and well-organized, leading to a positive reception from the audience. This level of agreement from the respondents indicates that the delivery of the presentation was successful in achieving its goal of holding the audience's attention.

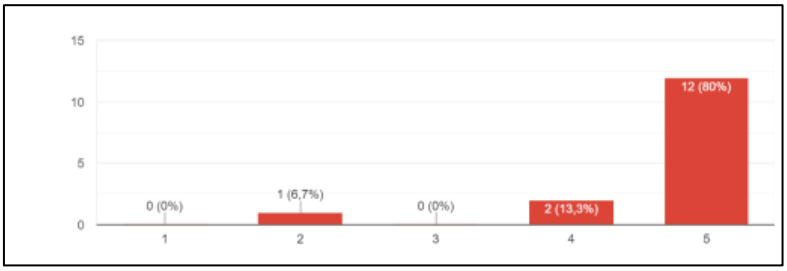

Fig 8. Students' attention toward the delivery of materials by presenters

Question 9

The following chart shows that 80% are in strong agreement about how the materials presented are in line with their interests, while the other 20% also agree with the statement. This high level of agreement indicates that the materials are effectively catering to the interests of the majority of the audience. Presenters need to continue creating content that resonates with their target audience to maintain engagement and interest. This proves that the training program to promote public speaking through speech was very much needed for the students. This fulfilled the goal of the activity to the extent that students were actively engaged and interested in the content being presented.

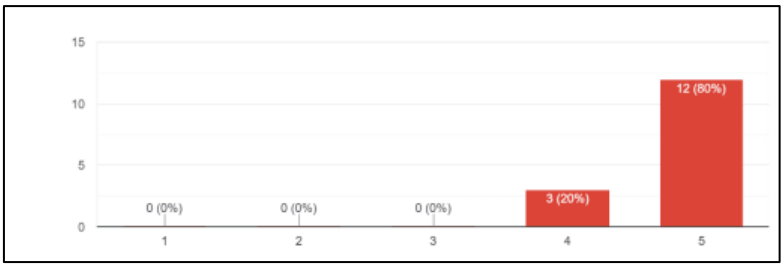

Fig 9. Relevance of students' interest and the materials given

Question 10

The bar chart represents the agreement of the respondents that the materials of the presentation by the presenters are well structured. The biggest percentage was 86.7% strongly agreeing, while the rest, 13.3%, were somewhat agreeing. Overall, the data shows a high level of satisfaction with the structure of the presentation materials. The majority of respondents felt that the presenters had organized their materials effectively. This positive feedback indicates that the presenters were successful in delivering their content clearly and coherently, achieving the goal of the activity, which is to promote the importance of public speaking understandably and compellingly.

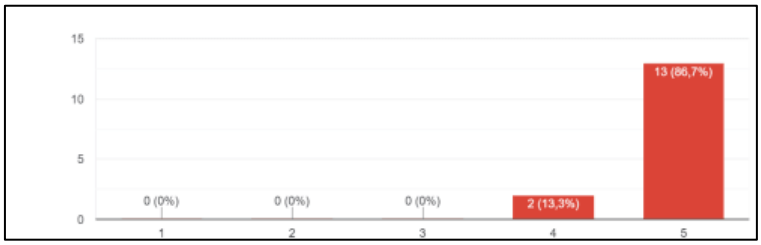

Fig 10. Delivery of the presentation

The results of the study indicate that the majority of them reported that the training session was helpful, efficient in helping them speak more fluently in English, and simple to understand. Although the charts demonstrated that the students understood the materials well, some students felt that the practices did not prepare them for public speaking, suggesting that they would benefit more from a different approach to learning, such as theoretical understanding.

The feedback given implies that the public speaking training program's goal of helping students learn public speaking by increasing their confidence and communication abilities was accomplished. Through dedicated practice and discipline, one can enhance their public speaking skills even further (Amrullah et al, 2024). Public speaking abilities are considered one of the essential soft skills for children to acquire (Turistiati, 2019b). Additionally, public speaking skills are very essential in various situations, including academic, work, and everyday life (Rido et al, 2023).

The ability to effectively communicate ideas and thoughts is vital for success in both personal and professional endeavors, which will be helpful to have for high school students. Ultimately, clear communication skills can aid students in enhancing both their creativity and critical thinking during the learning process (Budi at al, 2020). In fact, in this day and age, there have been many companies that require their future employees to have good public speaking skills and make it an important aspect to look at in hiring a future employee (Andriani &

Srisadono, 2017). Overall, the positive outcomes of the speech session showcase how beneficial and important, as well as exciting, this particular training is, and truly underscore the importance of providing students with opportunities to develop their public speaking skills to thrive in a competitive and ever-evolving world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, acknowledging public speaking as a pivotal soft skill in academic, professional, and daily contexts, especially among vocational high school students, this English public speaking training program aimed to mitigate the prevalent fear of public speaking among students. The comprehensive program, encompassing training sessions and informative materials, yielded positive outcomes. The findings illustrated a high degree of satisfaction among students, emphasizing the clarity, effectiveness, and motivation provided by the materials. The session not only increased students' confidence in public speaking but also highlighted the relevance and structure of the materials, contributing to their overall skill development.

The findings also underscore the significance of integrating public speaking training into the high school curriculum. Mastering this skill equips students to express ideas with clarity and confidence, fostering personal and professional growth. The success of this training emphasizes the continued importance of promoting public speaking skills, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to enhance communication abilities among high school students.

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Politeness in Directive and Expressive Speech Acts in the Javanese Short Film *Seutas Kenangan* by Kaistimewan

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This study explores the realization of politeness strategies in directive and expressive speech acts within the Javanese short film Seutas Kenangan by Kaistimewan. Grounded in speech act theory (Searle, 1979 and Leech's (1983) politeness principle, the research is further contextualized by *unggah-ungguhing basa*, a culturally embedded framework of speech level usage in Javanese language. Through a descriptive qualitative method, the study analyzes selected utterances from the film to identify how characters employ various levels of politeness in relation to social context, power relations, and emotional tone. The analysis reveals that directive and expressive speech acts are frequently realized through speech levels such as *ngoko lugu, ngoko alus, krama lugu,* and *krama alus*, each reflecting specific interpersonal dynamics. The findings indicate that politeness in Javanese is not merely a linguistic formality but is deeply rooted in cultural norms of deference, humility, and relational sensitivity. Notably, the film exemplifies how pragmatic choices are shaped by the cultural imperative to maintain harmony (rukun) and avoid social discomfort (ewuh pakewuh). This study highlights the importance of incorporating localized pragmatic systems into the broader discourse on politeness, challenging universalist models and expanding cross-cultural understandings of speech behavior.

Keywords: Politeness strategies, speech acts, Javanese, directive, expressive, unggah-ungguh

Introduction

Language is an integral part of human life. As the primary means of communication, it serves not only to convey information but also to express emotions, build social relationships, and direct actions. In spoken communication, particularly in everyday interactions, language serves to express intentions such as feelings, attitudes, and requests. In the field of pragmatics, these functions of language are analyzed through speech act theory, developed by Austin (1962) and refined by Searle (1979). This theory emphasizes that speech is not only informative but also functions as an action that can directly influence or involve the listener (Tarigan et al., 2022).

According to Searle (1979), illocutionary speech acts can be divided into five distinct types: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Of these categories, expressive and directive speech acts appear most commonly in daily interpersonal communication. Expressive speech acts function to express the speaker's mental state or feelings about a particular circumstance, including emotions like appreciation, remorse, commendation, irritation, or expectation. On the other hand, directive speech acts are designed to influence the listener's actions and can take the form of commands, invitations, suggestions, or other forms of behavioral guidance (Arshanti & Swarniti, 2023). Both categories hold particular importance due to their strong connection to the emotional and interpersonal aspects of human communication.

To analyze directive and expressive speech acts in this study more holistically, Searle's (1979) speech act theory is complemented by two additional approaches, Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle and the concept of *unggah-ungguhing basa* in Javanese culture. Leech's

Politeness Principle serves to explain how speakers convey emotional expressions and directives in a polite manner that aligns with social norms. Leech proposes six maxims of politeness: (1) the Tact Maxim, which advises speakers to minimize cost and maximize benefit to the hearer; (2) the Generosity Maxim, which encourages minimizing self-benefit while maximizing the benefit to others; (3) the Approbation Maxim, which emphasizes minimizing criticism and maximizing praise; (4) the Modesty Maxim, which discourages self-praise and promotes humility; (5) the Agreement Maxim, which promotes harmony by minimizing disagreement and maximizing agreement; and (6) the Sympathy Maxim, which encourages the expression of empathy, sympathy, and support. These maxims are crucial in identifying the verbal strategies used by characters in the film to foster interpersonal harmony through polite and empathetic communication.

In Javanese culture, the concept of politeness is closely tied to the use of speech levels or undha-usuk basa, as discussed by Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015) as well as in the concept of nggah-ungguh. Javanese speech levels refer to the hierarchical variations of linguistic forms (such as ngoko lugu, ngoko alus, krama lugu, krama alus) that are employed based on age, social status, and relational proximity (Utami, 2022). Meanwhile, unggah-ungguh basa represents the appropriate application of these speech levels in accordance with specific situations, conditions, and the people being addressed. These speech levels do not merely regulate linguistic forms, but also impart moral values and social ethics such as andhap asor (humility), empan papan (knowing one's place), and ajining dhiri (maintaining the dignity of oneself and others) (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018). The use of Javanese language with appropriate word choice and level of speech will shape a polite personality, mutual respect, love for the younger ones, respect for the older ones, and consideration for other people's feelings, as the Javanese proverb says “karyenak tyasing sesama” (make others feel comfortable). According to Utami (2022), for Javanese society, unggah-ungguh is considered a fundamental pillar of social life. Someone who fails to apply unggah-ungguh will be regarded as “ora njawani,” meaning uncultured, impolite, and abandoning proper etiquette. Within this culture, there is also the term “ewuh pakewuh,” which describes the feeling of discomfort when communicating impolitely or when using inappropriate speech levels, such as employing ngoko (informal register) when addressing someone older, of higher status, or newly acquainted.

In line with Nuryantiningsuh & Pandanwarngi (2018), research on speech levels in the Javanese language has been carried out by several scholars, including Poedjosoedarmo (1979), Uhlenbeck (1982), Sudaryanto (1989), Purwo (1995), Sasangka (2004), Wibawa (2005), and Wedhawati et al. (2006). Based on their discussions, it is concluded that Javanese speech acts are categorized into four primary levels *ngoko lugu, ngoko alus, krama lugu,* and *krama alus*.

As referenced in Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi (2018) *Ngoko Lugu* represents a form of Javanese language employed in casual settings. This speech level is characterized by its straightforward, direct nature and typically avoids honorific expressions. It is commonly used by speakers when addressing individuals with whom they share close relationships, such as peers, siblings, or other intimate family members. The use of *ngoko lugu* indicates that the social relationship between the speaker and interlocutor is either equal or marked by strong emotional bonds, eliminating the need for social distance in communication. For instance, a friend speaking to another friend during a relaxed afternoon conversation might use ngoko lugu with a phrase like, *“Kowe wis mangan durung?”* (Have you eaten yet?). This utterance reflects the intimacy of their relationship and the informal atmosphere of their interaction. *Ngoko alus* is a more refined variant of *ngoko lugu,* though it still belongs to the ngoko speech level. This variant is employed by younger speakers when addressing their elders, or by individuals seeking to demonstrate respect despite being in equal social relationships. The distinction between *ngoko lugu* and *ngoko alus* lies in the selection of more polite vocabulary, such as

using *"panjenengan"* instead of *"kowe."* For instance, *"Mbak, wingi panjenengan mulih jam pira?"* This utterance demonstrates the speaker's courteous attitude while maintaining an element of familiarity and closeness.

Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi (2018) also stated that *Krama Lugu* is employed in circumstances that require politeness, though not in highly formal settings. This register is commonly used when addressing acquaintances or peers in moderately formal conversational contexts. In its application, *krama lugu* still demonstrates good intentions and respect, although it doesn't achieve the complete refinement found in krama alus. For instance, someone might say, *"Panjenengan sampun nedha dereng?"* when asking a colleague they've recently met whether they have eaten yet. This sentence reflects an appropriate level of respect in social situations that are not overly rigid or ceremonial. *Krama Alus* represents the highest speech register in Javanese and demonstrates the utmost level of courtesy. This form is employed in formal communications or when addressing community leaders, distinguished guests, revered elders, or individuals of superior social standing. *Krama alus* is characterized by the selection of extremely refined vocabulary and the implementation of sophisticated grammatical structures. For instance, *"Menapa panjenengan sampun dhahar?"* serves as an exceptionally polite inquiry, used to ask whether a respected person has eaten. The application of krama alus reflects reverence, self-restraint, and profound social awareness of Javanese cultural norms.

Despite the richness of Javanese linguistic and cultural systems, most existing research on speech acts and politeness strategies tends to concentrate on Western languages and cultural contexts. Prior studies have primarily explored expressive and directive speech acts within English-speaking environments, often emphasizing universal politeness frameworks as theorized by Brown and Levinson (1987); Kadar & Haugh (2013); Watts (2003) or Leech (1983). While these models are foundational, they may not fully capture the cultural and linguistic nuances embedded in regional languages such as Javanese. A number of studies, including Luthfa et al. (2023), who examined expressive speech acts in the film *"Kukira Kau Rumah"*, and Selsibilla et al. (2022), who analyzed emotional expressions in *The Joker*, have mainly focused on how feelings and psychological states are conveyed through utterances in cinematic dialogues. Similarly, Aritonang & Ambalegin (2023) investigated expressive acts in *Avatar: The Way of Water*, while Nityasa & Masykuroh (2024) explored gendered speech patterns in *Little Women*. In the area of directive speech acts, studies such as Wea & Bram (2022), which analyzed directives and expressives used by the character Travis Parker in *The Choice*, and Shelviana & Mulatsih (2022), which investigated speech acts in *Spider-Man 3*, have discussed how characters use language to instruct, advise, or demand. However, these studies are framed within predominantly Western perspectives and often adopt universalist theories, such as Searle's Speech Act theory, without accounting for the impact of localized cultural norms or speech level distinctions. Consequently, there remains a significant gap in understanding how politeness is constructed, interpreted, and maintained in non-Western sociocultural contexts particularly in languages like Javanese, where speech levels such as *ngoko lugu, ngoko alus, krama lugu, and krama alus* play a vital role in shaping communication.

Furthermore, even within Indonesian academic contexts, the exploration of speech acts in regional languages often focuses on formal interactions (such as in ceremonies, classroom discourse, or public speaking) rather than naturally occurring, emotionally rich, and pragmatically diverse conversations found in popular media. Short films, in particular, remain underutilized as data sources despite their potential to present authentic, contextually embedded uses of language. The interactional depth and cultural specificity portrayed in short films, especially those produced in local languages, offer valuable insight into how speakers navigate politeness in emotionally charged or socially sensitive situations.

This study focuses on two main research questions: what politeness strategies accompany imperative and expressive language acts in Javanese short films, and how do these strategies reflect Javanese cultural values and communication norms? These questions are explored through an analysis of the short film *Seutas Kenangan*, which features dialogue in Javanese and centers on family relationships and emotional exchanges. The film provides a meaningful context for exploring how speakers use language not only to convey intentions but also to manage face, express empathy, and maintain social harmony. By analyzing authentic interactions, this study reveals the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and politeness in the regional context of Indonesia. The uniqueness of this study lies in its cultural specificity. Unlike previous works that apply general politeness theories across cultures, this study highlights the importance of local norms and the levels of *ngoko lugu, ngoko alus, krama lugu,* and *krama alus* as essential elements in understanding politeness strategies in Javanese society.

The development of regional language digital media shows that local languages remain a tool for cultural communication. This study addresses the need to explore how politeness is realized in media discourse that reflects local values. Academic documentation of forms of politeness in regional languages strengthens linguistic diversity while supporting the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Through this, the study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of cross-linguistic politeness strategies and expands the methodological scope of culturally rich pragmatic research.

Method of Research

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze directive and expressive speech acts in the Javanese-language short film Seutas Kenangan. The analysis focuses on interpreting utterances within their social and cultural contexts. It classifies the speech acts using Searle's (1979) taxonomy and Hymes' (1974) ethnographic framework and examines politeness strategies based on Leech's politeness principles (1983) and the Javanese concept of *unggah-ungguhing basa*, as reflected in speech level choices; *undha-usuk basa*, as discussed in Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015), including *ngoko lugu, ngoko alus, krama lugu, and krama alus.*

The data source is the short film *Seutas Kenangan*, selected for its rich verbal interactions that illustrate close social relationships, family dynamics, and varied speech levels used in culturally and emotionally significant situations. The data consist of verbal utterances containing directive and expressive speech acts, along with their corresponding politeness strategies.

Data were collected through non-participant observation by repeatedly viewing the film to capture the storyline and character interactions. Relevant utterances were transcribed and classified according to Searle's (1979) speech act categories. Each utterance was then analyzed using qualitative content analysis, focusing on the form and function of politeness strategies based on Leech's (1983) maxims of Tact, Modesty, Sympathy, and Approbation. The analysis also considered social variables such as age, social status, interpersonal relationships, and the level of formality to determine how politeness is conveyed through speech level selection. The results are presented narratively to show how directive and expressive speech acts are realized in accordance with Javanese socio-cultural norms.

Findings and Discussion

This research analyzes directive and expressive speech acts in the Javanese short film *Seutas Kenangan* using John Searle's speech act theory. The analysis considers the speech context, communicative purpose, and the relationship between speakers and interlocutors in

each scene. Speech acts function not only as tools for conveying information but also reflect social relationships, cultural values, and the psychological attitudes of the characters.

Directive speech acts appear in the form of invitations, requests, suggestions, and commands aimed at influencing the listener's actions. These utterances reveal the dynamics of interpersonal relations, including friendship, kinship, respect, and care. Expressive speech acts take the form of apologies and compliments, expressing the speaker's emotional or psychological stance toward particular situations.

Table 1. Findings of the directive and expressive speech acts in the Film

No.	Directive	Data Found	Expressive	Data Found
1.	Suggesting	1	Apologizing	1
2.	Commanding	2	Praise	1
3.	Invitation	1	Thanking	1
4.	Request	1		
	Total	**5**	**Total**	**3**

1. Directive

Directive speech acts aim to make the interlocutor perform an action in accordance with the speaker's intention. These include acts such as commanding, requesting, suggesting, advising, pleading, and inviting.

a. Suggesting

Data 1 (01:30)

Context: The conversation takes place in an informal office setting before work hours. Adam prepares to leave, while Satriyo stays behind. In a casual tone, Adam brings up the topic of returning home. Satriyo expresses reluctance due to family pressure about marriage. Adam responds by offering personal advice.

Adam : "*Anyway lo jadi mudik minggu depan?"*
Satriyo :*"Ngga tau aku, bingung. Kamu tau sendiri toh, Dam. Kalo aku pulang ke Yogya itu yang ditanyain cuman 'kapan nikah?' bingung mau jawab gimana."*
Adam : "*Hmm, baperan lu, Yo. Santai aja kali.* ***Yo, menurut gua ya, lu mending pulang aja deh****. Ya seenggaknya lu bisa ketemu keluarga lu di sana. Udah tiga tahun masa belum ketemu, emang lu ngga kangen?"*

In the dialogue excerpt at minute 01:30, Adam suggests that Satriyo return home by saying, *"**Yo, menurut gua ya, lu mending pulang aja deh.** Ya seenggaknya lu bisa ketemu keluarga lu di sana. Udah tiga tahun masa belum ketemu, emang lu nggak kangen?"* This utterance constitutes a directive speech act in the form of a suggestion, as it aims to influence the interlocutor's decision in a persuasive manner. It falls under the category of directive speech acts because it intends to guide the hearer's actions, though not through an explicit command (Searle's, 1979). Adam uses informal and emotionally nuanced language to convey supportive rather than authoritative advice. This reflects empathy and personal involvement within the context of a close peer relationship.

From the perspective politeness principle, Adam's verbal strategy reflects several politeness maxims. First, the Tact Maxim, by avoiding direct commands and instead framing the utterance as a suggestion, thereby reducing imposition on the hearer. Second, the Sympathy Maxim, is evident in Adam's concern for Satriyo's emotional discomfort due to familial pressure. Adam's suggestion not only provides a possible solution but also communicates

emotional support, representing an instance of politeness as solidarity (Leech's, 1983). The utterance may also be understood as a face-saving act, as it avoids making Satriyo feel blamed or pressured in his making decision.

In the context of Javanese culture, this conversation employs the speech level *ngoko lugu*, which is commonly used among peers in informal situations (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018). The use of *ngoko lugu* reflects a horizontal and egalitarian relationship, in which speakers do not need to express social hierarchy in their interaction. Although the utterance is directive in nature, it is still considered polite, as it aligns with the norms of *nggah-ungguhing basa* that emphasize the values of *andhap asor* (humility) and *karyenak tyasing sesama* (the effort to comfort others). If the social situation were different, for instance, if Adam were speaking to someone older or of higher status, the speech level would shift to *krama alus*, and the politeness strategies used would become more deferential and indirect. This illustrates that politeness in Javanese culture is not solely determined by the content of the utterance, but is strongly shaped by social context and the appropriate choice of speech level. Thus, the speech act can be understood as a combination of illocutionary function, pragmatic politeness strategy, and adherence to Javanese socio-cultural norms.

b. Commanding

Data 2 (06:22)

Context: The conversation takes place in the living room. Satriyo is sitting and resting after what appears to be a tiring activity or journey. His mother comes to him with his favorite food, *telo godog* (boiled cassava), and a glass of tea. Her words express care, comfort, and affection.

Ibu : *"Telo godog kesenenganmu,* ***wis, diminum sek****. Kesel kan awakmu?"*

In the dialogue at minute 06:22, the mother addresses Satriyo with the utterance, *"Telo godog kesenenganmu,* ***wis, diminum sek****"* ("Your favorite boiled cassava. Here, drink this first"). This utterance represents a directive speech act in the form of a command, as it aims to prompt Satriyo to perform an action, drinking the tea. In Searle's (1979) classification, this speech act falls under the directive category, as the speaker seeks to influence the behavior of the hearer. However, the command is delivered in a softened and affectionate manner, without imperative force. This reflects a nuanced use of directive language that emphasizes care rather than control. From the lens of politeness principles, this utterance exemplifies the Tact Maxim, as it minimizes imposition while promoting the listener's well-being (Leech's, 1983).

In terms of *unggah-ungguhing basa*, the mother's speech reflects *ngoko alus*, a polite but informal speech level commonly used in emotionally intimate relationships, such as between parent and child (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018). Although the mother occupies a higher hierarchical status due to age, she avoids asserting dominance. Instead, her language use aligns with *andhap asor* (humility) and *empan papan* (knowing one's place), two central values in Javanese cultural interaction. The choice of ngoko alus in this context expresses warmth and attentiveness, and it demonstrates that Javanese politeness is not solely dependent on formal vocabulary or status, but is deeply shaped by relational intent and emotional tone. The command is thus embedded in affection, making it a culturally appropriate and polite directive within the familial setting.

Data 3 (09:04)

Context: The interaction occurs in the living room. Sekar has just returned from school and greets her brother, Satriyo, who is sitting and eating boiled cassava. After replying to

Sekar's question about when he arrived, Satriyo jokingly tells her to change clothes, implying that she smells sweaty from school.

Sekar : *"Mas Tiyo kapan e sampe rumah?"*
Satriyo : *"Tadi pagi.* ***Wes, kamu ndang ganti baju****, baunya ini lho."*
Sekar : *"Heh, ngawur. Wangi e mas."*

In the dialogue at 09:04, Satriyo responds to his sister Sekar's question with a humorous directive, *"Wes,* ***kamu ndang ganti baju****, baunya ini lho"* ("Alright, go change your clothes now, you smell"). This utterance serves as a directive speech act in the form of a casual command. It fits the directive category, as the speaker intends to influence the listener's behavior and in this case, prompting Sekar to change clothes (Searle's, 1979). Although the utterance contains a directive intention, the communicative style is softened by a teasing and playful tone, signaling that the interaction is grounded in emotional closeness rather than authority.

From the perspective of politeness theory, the utterance reflects elements of the Tact Maxim, as the command is embedded in humor rather than direct imposition. Though it contains a critique (implying body odor), it avoids threatening the hearer's face due to the playful framing, which aligns with Leech's (1983) Approbation Maxim, minimizing the force of negative evaluation by delivering it with humor and affection.

In *unggah-ungguhing basa Jawa*, Satriyo uses *ngoko lugu*, the most basic speech level, which is appropriate for close and equal relationships such as between siblings. The absence of refined vocabulary or formal structure reflects a relaxed and egalitarian tone. In Javanese culture, this is not considered impolite; rather, it is an appropriate way to strengthen bonds through honest, everyday expressions, aligned with the values of *karyenak tyasing sesama* (maintaining emotional comfort) and *tepa slira* (mutual understanding). This data, along with previous examples, reveals a consistent pattern: politeness in Javanese directive speech acts is strongly influenced by speech level and social context. In *ngoko lugu*, politeness is maintained through relational closeness, direct language, and emotional openness, allowing commands or suggestions to be delivered openly, even humorously, because social distance is minimal (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018). In contrast, if Satriyo were speaking to someone older or of higher status, such direct and joking expressions would be inappropriate and would need to shift to *krama* either *krama lugu* or *krama alus* to convey politeness and respect. For instance, *"Menawi kersa, panjenengan saged ganti busana rumiyin"* ("If you are willing, perhaps you could change your clothes first") illustrates this shift with conditional phrasing, refined vocabulary (*panjenengan, saged*), and longer sentence structure to reduce the imposition of the request. This shift demonstrates how politeness in Javanese is both relational and contextual, moving from solidarity-based strategies in *ngoko* to respect-based strategies in *krama*, where the choice of speech level encodes not only linguistic politeness but also cultural respect and social hierarchy.

c. Invitation

Data 4 (16:46)

Context: Satriyo visits Endah's house, and their conversation flows comfortably. However, when a small child unexpectedly appears from inside the house, Satriyo looks surprised and abruptly says goodbye. Endah responds by questioning his sudden departure.

Satriyo : *"Aku pamit dulu ya, Ndah."*
Endah : *"Lho?* ***Ngga masuk dulu to, Mas?****"*
Satriyo : *"Aku mau ke rumah temenku."*

In the dialogue at 16:46, Endah responds to Satriyo's farewell with the utterance *"Lho? Ngga masuk dulu to, Mas?"* ("Oh? You're not coming in first?"). Although phrased as a question, this utterance functions as a directive speech act in the form of an indirect invitation. Such utterances are classified as directives because they aim to influence the hearer's behavior (Searle, 1979) —in this case, encouraging Satriyo to enter the house. However, the use of an interrogative rather than an imperative reflects an important strategy in Javanese communication: politeness through indirectness.

From Leech's (1983) politeness principle, this utterance illustrates the Tact Maxim, as it minimizes imposition by giving the listener the freedom to accept or decline the invitation. The speaker prioritizes face-saving, both for herself and for Satriyo, by using a non-threatening form of suggestion that allows space for autonomy and social comfort.

Endah uses *krama lugu*, a polite yet moderately formal speech level, incorporating the honorific term *"Mas"*, which signals respect toward Satriyo as someone slightly older or socially equal but still deserving of courteous address. Within the framework of *unggah-ungguhing basa Jawa*, this usage aligns with the principles of *tepa slira* (consideration for others' feelings) and *rukun* (social harmony) as highlighted by Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi (2018) . The indirect form of the invitation allows the speaker to maintain emotional closeness while also adhering to social decorum, reflecting the delicate balance that is central to Javanese politeness. This invitation also demonstrates a shift in politeness strategies across different Javanese speech levels; compared to *ngoko lugu*, which tends to be more direct, relaxed, and solidarity-based—for instance, *"Masuk dulu, yuk"*, *krama alus* employs a more indirect and formal approach, such as *"Menawi kersa, panjenengan saget mlebet rumiyin"*, maximizing politeness through refined language, conditional structures, and deference to the hearer's autonomy. Thus, while *ngoko* manages politeness through tone and relational closeness, *krama* emphasizes linguistic distance and formality as expressions of respect.

d. Request

Data 5 (17:55)

Context: The conversation occurs in the courtyard of Satriyo's house as he prepares to return to Jakarta. Endah brings food prepared by her mother for Satriyo. Endah's message conveys both the gift and the emotional sentiment from her mother. Satriyo responds with gratitude and a request to deliver his greetings.

Endah : *"Ini ada titipan dari ibu. Ibu masak sendiri loh, Mas. Katanya ibu kangen Mas Tiyo."*
Satriyo : *"Walah, malah repot-repot.* ***Salamkan untuk ibu yo, Ndah.*** *Matur nuwun."*

In the dialogue at 17:55, Satriyo responds to Endah's gesture of bringing food from her mother with the utterance *"**Salamkan untuk ibu yo, Ndah**"* ("Please send my regards to your mother, Ndah"). This is a directive speech act in the form of a polite request. While the utterance lacks explicit imperative force, it clearly conveys the speaker's intention for the hearer to perform an action. Such utterances qualify as directives, particularly of the request subtype, which seek to influence behavior while minimizing imposition (Searle's, 1979). The use of the softening particle *yo* adds friendliness and informality, ensuring that the request is perceived as thoughtful rather than demanding.

From the perspective of politeness theory, the utterance reflects the Sympathy Maxim, as it expresses warmth, gratitude, and emotional consideration. Rather than commanding, Satriyo acknowledges Endah's helpfulness and respectfully extends a request that also honors her mother. The utterance not only maintains the listener's positive face but also reinforces relational harmony, an essential element of politeness as solidarity (Leech's, 1983).

This utterance employs *ngoko alus*, an informal yet polite speech level, reflecting Satriyo's respect toward Endah's mother, who is older, in accordance with the Javanese principle of *ajining dhiri* (maintaining dignity and respect) as delineated by (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018). Although he is speaking with a peer, deference toward elders is still implied through emotional tone, indirectness, and social awareness. Politeness in *ngoko alus* is conveyed through softening particles and warmth. However, when addressing someone of higher status, the language shifts to *krama alus,* using more refined and indirect expressions such as *"Menawi kersa, panjenengan saged nyangking pangestunipun kulo"* ("If you are willing, perhaps you could convey my respects"). This distinction underscores that Javanese politeness is deeply context-dependent ranging from emotional closeness in ngoko to expressions of respect and social distance in krama.

2. Expressive

Expressive speech acts express the speaker's psychological state or attitude toward a particular situation. Examples include thanking, apologizing, praising, complaining, and criticizing.

a. Apologizing

Data 6 (04:57)

Context: The conversation takes place in the courtyard as Satriyo arrives home and reunites with his mother. The moment is emotional, reflecting the long-awaited return. His mother gently scolds him for not informing her in advance. Satriyo initially gives an excuse, then offers an apology.

Ibu : *"Kowe kok balik ora ngabari loh?"*
Satriyo : *"Ngabari pripun toh, Bu? Ibu ra ndue HP kok.*
Ibu : *"Kan iso ngomong adimu toh, yoo."*
Satriyo : *"Nggeh ...* ***pangapunten, Bu*** *..."*

In the dialogue at 04:57, Satriyo responds to his mother's gentle reproach with the utterance *"nggeh ...* ***pangapunten, Bu ...****"* ("yes … forgive me, Mom …"). This is an expressive speech act, as defined by Searle (1979), used to convey the speaker's internal psychological state and in this case, remorse. The act of apologizing reflects Satriyo's recognition of a social transgression (not informing his mother of his return) and his intention to restore emotional harmony. While his initial response is defensive, the transition to a soft apology signals a shift toward face-saving and relational repair.

In terms of Leech's (1983) politeness framework, this utterance aligns with the Tact Maxim emerges in the way he minimizes the social damage of his oversight, and the Sympathy Maxim reflects emotional consideration for his mother's feelings. The apology is not only linguistically polite but also emotionally sincere, showing awareness of interpersonal and cultural expectations.

Satriyo uses *krama alus*, the most refined and polite level of Javanese speech, with expressions such as *"nggeh"* (respectfully) and *"pangapunten"* (forgive me), which signify politeness and humility, especially when speaking to a parent. In the framework of *unggah-ungguhing basa Jawa*, this usage reflects deep respect (*andhap asor*) and emotional sensitivity, in accordance with the norm of *ajining dhiri* (upholding personal and social dignity) through appropriate language (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018). An apology delivered in *krama alus* is not merely a formality; it is rich in cultural meaning, expressing affection, sincerity, and reverence within a single brief utterance. If Satriyo were speaking to a peer, he would instead use *ngoko*, such as *"Maaf yo, aku lupa ngabarin"* ("Sorry, I forgot to inform you"), which is more casual and emphasizes familiarity. The shift from *ngoko* to *krama* is not just a matter of

vocabulary; it reflects respect, emotional restraint, and social awareness. The higher the speech level, the more polite, indirect, and measured the apology becomes—underscoring that politeness in Javanese culture is deeply shaped by relational context and social hierarchy.

b. Praise

Data 7 (14:46)

Context: The conversation takes place in the living room as Satriyo is preparing to go out. He has applied perfume, and the scent catches Sekar's attention while she is reading. Sekar responds spontaneously with a positive comment about the fragrance, using an enthusiastic and informal tone.

Sekar : *"Wihh,* ***wangine Mas****. Mau kemana kamu, Mas?"*
Satriyo : *"Kepo wae senengane."*

In the dialogue at 14:46, Sekar responds to Satriyo's appearance by saying, *"Wihh, wangine Mas"* ("Wow, you smell good, Mas"). This utterance functions as an expressive speech act, specifically a compliment or praise (Searle's, 1979). Expressive speech acts convey the speaker's psychological state and in this case, Sekar's positive emotional response to her brother's perfume. The utterance is spontaneous, lighthearted, and intended not only to express appreciation but also to maintain warmth and connection in their sibling relationship.

From the lesn of politeness theory, this utterance exemplifies the Approbation Maxim, which emphasizes maximizing praise and minimizing criticism toward others (Leech's, 1983). Sekar's praise is both a social strategy and a sincere emotional expression. It reinforces solidarity politeness by strengthening familial closeness.

Sekar uses *ngoko lugu*, the most informal speech level, which is appropriate for the context of sibling familiarity. Although casual, the use of the respectful term *"Mas"* maintains politeness in accordance with the Javanese principle of *empan papan* (situational appropriateness), indicating that language choice is based on the relationship, not rigid formality. The praise, delivered in simple yet sincere language, reflects the value of *karyenak tyasing sesama*, making others feel emotionally at ease. In ngoko lugu, politeness is expressed through warmth and sincerity, which is well-suited to close relationships such as between siblings (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018). In contrast, in more formal or hierarchical situations, praise shifts to krama lugu or krama alus, using more refined vocabulary and structure. For example, *"Wangi panjenengan menika sae sanget,"* which emphasizes deferential politeness and reduces familiarity. In conclusion, Sekar's compliment demonstrates how politeness in Javanese is shaped by social and emotional context, where speech level functions as a dynamic marker of social positioning and interpersonal relationships.

c. Thanking

Data 8 (17:55)

Context: The conversation takes place in the courtyard of Satriyo's house as he prepares to leave for Jakarta. Endah brings a package of food cooked by her mother for Satriyo, along with a heartfelt message. Satriyo receives it with appreciation, expressing thanks and sending his regards.

Endah : *"Ini ada titipan dari ibu. Ibu masak sendiri loh, Mas. Katanya ibu kangen Mas Tiyo."*
Satriyo : *"Walah, malah repot-repot. Salamkan untuk ibu yo, Ndah.* ***Matur nuwun****."*

In the dialogue at 17:55, Satriyo responds to Endah with the utterance *"Matur nuwun"* ("Thank you"), after she delivers a food package and a heartfelt message from her mother. This

utterance represents an expressive speech act in the form of gratitude, as defined by Searle (1979), who notes that expressive acts convey a speaker's internal psychological state. Here, Satriyo's expression of thanks communicates not only appreciation for the tangible gift but also recognition of the care and emotional warmth embedded in the gesture.

In Leech's (1983) politeness, this utterance reflects Tact Maxim, as his response avoids imposition and instead affirms the goodwill of others. The gratitude serves as a face-enhancing act, showing emotional sensitivity and reinforcing social harmony. In this way, *matur nuwun* functions both linguistically and socially, reaffirming the mutual respect and affection between characters.

The use of the expression *matur nuwun* aligns with *krama alus*, the highest level of Javanese speech, symbolizing respect, politeness, and cultural appropriateness. Although spoken to Endah, the gratitude is directed toward her mother, who is older, thus requiring a refined and respectful form of expression. In the framework of *unggah-ungguhing basa Jawa*, this reflects the values of *ajining liyan* (honoring others) and *andhap asor* (humility). The use of formal language in a moment filled with emotional warmth shows that Javanese politeness is not merely about word choice, but also about a deep awareness of social roles and emotional context. In contrast to krama alus, in more casual or peer relationships, Satriyo might have simply said *"Makasih yo"* (in *ngoko*), which, though still sincere, emphasizes solidarity-based politeness rather than deference. The shift from *ngoko* to *krama* in expressions of gratitude reflects a cultural structure in which thankfulness is not merely a statement, but a relational expression shaped by social hierarchy, emotional tone, and contextual appropriateness (Nuryantiningsih & Pandanwangi, 2018).

Conclusion

This research examined directive and expressive speech acts in the Javanese short film Seutas Kenangan by applying Searle's speech act theory, Leech's politeness principles, and the sociolinguistic concept of unggah-ungguhing basa Jawa. The findings show that speech acts in Javanese are closely tied to cultural values, social roles, and emotional tone. Language choice is not limited to conveying meaning but also serves to maintain relationships, show respect, and preserve social harmony.

Directive speech acts, such as suggesting, commanding, inviting, and requesting, are shaped by the speaker's intent and the social distance between interlocutors. The use of *ngoko lugu* highlights familiarity and emotional closeness, while krama forms are used to express deference and maintain politeness in more formal or hierarchical contexts.

Expressive speech acts which are apologizing, praising, and thanking, reveal psychological states and fulfill interpersonal functions. Expressions like *pangapunten* and *matur nuwun* illustrate how gratitude and remorse are encoded in refined language when directed toward elders or respected figures. These forms are not only linguistically polite but also socially appropriate, reflecting Javanese values such as *andhap asor* and *ajining liyan*. The analysis demonstrates that politeness in Javanese is not determined solely by the utterance type, but by the alignment between speech level, relationship, and context. The findings emphasize that Javanese speakers strategically select language forms to express solidarity, maintain face, or convey respect, depending on the social setting. Understanding these patterns contributes to a deeper appreciation of how politeness operates within languages that include speech level hierarchies and culturally embedded norms.

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Bangkan Malayan Swearing Words

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Abstract

Swearing words are commonly perceived as taboo, impolite, and socially inappropriate expressions. However, their persistence in everyday communication across languages and cultures indicates their deep-rooted function in human interaction. This study aims to explore the origin and function of swearing words in Bangkan Malayan, a regional dialect spoken on Bangka Island by a multicultural society. This research was conducted qualitatively through observation and semi-structured interviews with native speakers. The investigation revealed that swearing expressions in the dialect originate from five distinct sources: mental attributes, animal references, religious beliefs, part of body, and symbolic elements related to impurity. These origins are strongly influenced by the cultural and religious context of the community, particularly Islamic values. Functionally, the swearing words serve not only to insult but also to express strong emotions, generate humor, establish solidarity, and affirm social or individual identity. Interestingly, some expressions have undergone semantic shifts, allowing for humorous or non-hostile use depending on the context. The findings highlight that swearing in Bangkan Malayan is not merely an act of verbal aggression, but a complex socio-linguistic phenomenon deeply embedded in local norms, emotions, and interpersonal dynamics. Therefore, it reflects a structured communicative strategy with both expressive and social functions. This study contributes to the broader understanding of linguistic taboos and swearing in minority languages, and encourages further exploration in under-researched regional varieties.

Keywords: *Swearing Words, Bangka Island, Bangkan-Malayan*

Introduction

Expressing swearing words, as a dynamic linguistic phenomenon, reflects the complexity of human communication, serving a wide range of functions that go beyond mere vulgarity (Reranta, 2023; Reranta et al., 2024). While often regarded as socially inappropriate or impolite, swearing plays a critical role in expressing intense emotions, reinforcing group identity, establishing social boundaries, and asserting power dynamics. Scholars have argued that swearing is not simply a linguistic anomaly, but rather a psychologically and socially embedded tool used to navigate emotionally charged or socially sensitive situations. At its core, swearing involves the use of taboo or forbidden language that tends to provoke immediate emotional and physiological responses in both the speaker and the listener (Ljung, 2011; Reranta, 2023; Reranta et al., 2024).

The classification of swearing as taboo reflects long-standing societal and cultural norms that associate such language with moral and behavioral deviance. As Adam (2016) explains, these prohibitions are deeply rooted in collective values, where the use of offensive language is seen as a threat to social harmony and cultural propriety. Consequently, swearing often carries negative implications, especially when used in formal or sensitive contexts. Its association with rudeness, aggression, and disrespect can lead to social tension or misunderstanding. Jay and Janschewitz (2021) highlight that swearing in conversation, particularly when not contextually appropriate, frequently results in interpersonal conflict and

strained communication. Therefore, despite its expressive potential, the use of swearing in public or professional discourse is generally discouraged, as it risks violating social norms and disrupting relational dynamics. Understanding the dual nature of swearing—as both a powerful expressive resource and a socially risky act—offers deeper insight into how language functions not only as a means of conveying meaning but also as a reflection of cultural boundaries and emotional regulation.

Although swearing is frequently regarded as impolite, offensive, or socially inappropriate, it remains a persistent and multifaceted feature of human language, deeply rooted in emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of communication. Hughes (1991) emphasizes that societies have never been able to fully eliminate swearing from everyday discourse, as such expressions are intrinsically tied to how individuals react to emotionally charged or unexpected situations—where the intensity of emotion often triggers spontaneous verbal responses. This suggests that swearing is not merely an act of vulgarity but a natural linguistic mechanism for coping with sudden emotional arousal. Building upon this idea, Reranta et al. (2023) argue that the prevalence of swearing in spoken interactions is not only due to its association with strong emotions such as anger or frustration, but also because it performs various pragmatic and social functions. Swearing often transcends its literal meaning, serving instead as a communicative tool for emotional regulation, stress relief, interpersonal bonding, and even humor. Bergen (2020), Jay and Janschewitz (2021), and Reranta et al. (2023), support this broader interpretation by suggesting that swearing can convey a range of sentiments—including surprise, amusement, or solidarity—depending on the social context and the relationship between speakers. Thus, rather than being dismissed as merely disruptive or vulgar, swearing should be understood as a linguistically and psychologically significant phenomenon that reflects the expressive richness of language and its ability to navigate the complexities of human interaction.

The multifaceted functions of swearing words, as outlined in the previous discussion, are further explored within a contemporary sociolinguistic context in the research conducted by Reranta (2023), which focuses on the use of swear words among Lampungese speakers. In this study, Reranta identifies and categorizes three principal communicative functions of swearing that reflect both linguistic creativity and social dynamics. Firstly, swearing words are employed as instruments of insult or verbal aggression, typically aimed at demeaning or belittling others, often in moments of interpersonal conflict or emotional disappointment. This usage aligns with the traditional view of swearing as inherently offensive or derogatory. Secondly, swear words also function in a humorous or jocular manner, where their usage is not intended to cause harm but instead to provoke laughter, establish solidarity, or reduce social tension through playful banter. This pragmatic shift in intent illustrates how context and speaker relationships shape the perceived severity of swearing. Thirdly, swear words are used as spontaneous expressions of strong emotions such as anger, frustration, irritation, or even surprise. In these instances, swearing serves as an emotional outlet or coping mechanism, allowing speakers to release tension or highlight the intensity of their feelings. Collectively, these three functions underscore the nuanced and context-dependent nature of swearing in Lampungese communication, demonstrating that such linguistic expressions are not merely vulgar or impolite, but rather embedded in complex socio-cultural and emotional frameworks.

Beers Fägersten (2017) asserts that swearing words have a negative meaning and come from certain origins. Moreover, Wibowo (2020) categorized profanity according to its origin. The following table, which has been modified to broaden the context, has the classifications as below:

Table 1. Origin of Swearing Words (Adapted from Wibowo, 2020)

No.	Source	Example of Swearing Words
1	Part of body	Penis, Vagina, and Head
2	Personality	Stingy
3	Mental	Crazy
4	Activity	Fuck
5	Animal	Monkey
6	Occupation	Criminal
7	Figure/Person	*Bolot*, an Indonesian actor who always acts as a deaf
8	Food	Egg Crust
9	Ghost	Zombie
10	Family Relation	Mother
11	Ethnicity	Negroid
12	Origin	Asia

The data presented above illustrates that swear words may originate from various lexical sources, with their offensive nature largely determined by negative associations. As Reranta (2024) explains, such associations are socially constructed and context-dependent; therefore, a term considered profane in one cultural or linguistic setting may not carry the same connotation in another.

The notion is further supported by Allan and Burridge (2006), who highlight the example of the word *bloody* in British and American English. In British English, *bloody* has historically functioned as a mild expletive or intensifier—commonly used in expressions like *bloody hell* or *bloody idiot*. While once deemed highly inappropriate in formal settings, it has since become relatively mild and widely accepted in colloquial usage. Conversely, in American English, *bloody* is not typically perceived as a swear word. Instead, it is often interpreted as humorous, quaint, or simply characteristic of British vernacular. Its lack of perceived offensiveness in the U.S. context stems from the absence of the cultural and emotional weight it holds in the UK. These findings underscore the idea that swearing is a rich linguistic phenomenon shaped by cultural norms and communicative intent.

However, the analyses of swearing word currently are still limited; not all language has been studied to discover their swearing words. Whereas, the typical word plays vital role in communication (Ljung, 2011; Reranta, 2023). Therefore, the typical analysis should be conducted more, especially to a lingua franca which is spoken by multicultural society. One of qualified language is Bangkan Malayan. Bangkan Malayan, a dialect shaped by historical contact between Malay, Chinese, and other linguistic influences. The dialect of Malayan is majorly spoken in Bangka Island by some ethnicities; Malayan, Chinese, and other ethnicities which are considered minor (Badan Pusat Statistika, 2024). Unfortunately, the analysis of swearing word there has not been done yet.

This paper was intended to fulfil the space of research. The intention of conducting research on linguistic swearing words of Bangkan Malayan is to explore the origin and function of swearing words in the regional variety. By investigating both structure and function of swearing expressions within the community, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how language reflects and shapes social behavior in a localized cultural setting, while also enriching the broader field of swearing word studies in minority or regional languages.

Theory and Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. As Leavy (2014) explains, qualitative research—particularly within the fields of social and behavioral inquiry—is intended to examine, interpret, and clarify phenomena; to reveal the meanings individuals assign to actions, events, and artifacts; and to deepen the understanding of social reality. In a similar vein, Zaluchu (2020) emphasizes that qualitative research is grounded in a phenomenological perspective, which underpins its methodological orientation. Consistent with this view, Silverman (2021) notes that qualitative research is employed to formulate theses based on lived experiences and contextual understanding. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the phenomenon of swearing in Bangkan Malayan, focusing on its origins and functions. In line with the theoretical perspectives outlined above, a qualitative approach was applied to conduct the analysis and generate the research findings.

In the data collection phase, the researcher employed an observational method using two primary techniques: unobtrusive listening and non-participant observation. These approaches allowed for the gathering of authentic primary data from naturally occurring conversations among Bangkan Malayan speakers, with minimal interference from the researcher. To enrich the observational findings, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 20 native speakers, selected through random sampling based on two credibility criteria: (1) self-identifying Bangkan Malayan as their mother tongue and (2) having used the dialect consistently in daily conversation for more than 20 years. These interviews aimed to elicit deeper insights into the meanings, usage, and social functions of swearing expressions within the Bangkan Malayan speech community.

During the analysis phase, all oral data were transcribed verbatim to preserve linguistic accuracy. The transcriptions were analyzed using two complementary linguistic approaches: the distributional method, which examined the internal structure of the swearing terms, and the contextual identity method, which explored their meanings, origins, and sociocultural functions. The latter enabled interpretation of each expression in relation to emotional states, interpersonal dynamics, and social norms. The results will be presented in the following chapter as a thematic essay discussing each datum in terms of meaning, etymology, and function. Each swearing term will be transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) 2022 scheme and accompanied by an English translation, including grammatical glosses for phrasal forms.

Findings and Discussion

This paper presents some insights into the origin and function of swearing words in Bangkan Malayan. The investigation revealed five origins of swearing words in Bangkan Malayan. The first one is mentality. Concerning the first form, there are two data discovered. Both will be explored below:

/*gile buda?/*
crazy kid
'Crazy kid'

/*budu baga?/*
Stupid extreme
'Extremely Stupid'

The data presented above clearly illustrate the significant role of mentality in shaping the origin of swearing expressions in Bangkan Malayan. Specifically, the terms 'stupid' and 'crazy', which generally carry negative connotations in many languages across the world, also possess similar derogatory implications within the Bangkan Malayan linguistic context.

However, what distinguishes these terms in Bangkan Malayan is the fact that they are not typically employed in single words as swearing words. Instead, they require the presence of a collocating lexical item to form a fixed expression or idiomatic insult, as displayed in the data. These composite forms are considered frozen expressions, meaning they are culturally and linguistically entrenched and not subject to structural variation. For instance, the phrase */gile buda?/* is a commonly used expression that carries a strong pejorative tone, and it can be directed toward individuals regardless of their social status or age, including adults who are no longer considered children. Interestingly, the informants involved in the study reported that the swearing words could be used reciprocally between children and their parents, which defies conventional expectations regarding respect and politeness in familial relationships. Nevertheless, the informants were unable to provide a clear sociolinguistic or cultural rationale behind the acceptability of such usage of kid status. This observation suggests the need for further ethnolinguistic investigation to uncover the underlying sociocultural norms that permit such language practices in Bangkan Malayan discourse. Related to both swearing, they are applicable for any functions, such as to insult, express anger, generate humour, show social solidarity and individual identity.

The second discovered origin of swearing words in Bangkan Malayan is derived from references to animals, a phenomenon that aligns with patterns observed in various other regional languages across Indonesia. In the case of Bangkan Malayan, four animals have been identified as sources of swearing vocabulary, with particular emphasis on the terms associated with 'dog' and 'pig'. This is consistent with linguistic findings by Triadi (2017), Mahayana (2022), and Reranta (2023), who observed that animal-based profanity, particularly involving dogs and pigs, is widespread in many Indonesian local languages. In the Bangkan Malayan dialect, these animals are linguistically represented through the terms */ase?/* or */asu?/* for 'dog' and */babi?/* for 'pig'. These lexical choices are not arbitrary but deeply rooted in cultural and religious beliefs. As discussed by Subroto (2011), the use of such terms as swearing word is closely related to the Islamic worldview that predominates in Bangkan society. Within Islamic teachings, both dogs and pigs are considered impure animals, often associated with filth and moral degradation. Therefore, their symbolic use as insults reflects an intentional projection of negative social judgment, intended to offend or degrade the target. The semantic shift from literal animal reference to derogatory human insult illustrates how cultural values and religious ideologies shape the evolution of swearing practices within the Bangkan Malayan linguistic community.

Another category of swearing words in Bangkan Malayan originates from animal references, specifically the terms */kəra?/* 'ape' and */buroŋ kuək/* 'owl'. These animals are employed as swearing words due to their strong negative connotations within the cultural framework of the Bangkan community. The term */kəra?/* is associated with an ape, which is culturally perceived as both physically unattractive and behaviorally undesirable, particularly for its greediness and erratic actions. Consequently, calling someone an 'ape' in this context serves to insult their appearance and moral character, reinforcing the derogatory function of the swearing word. Similarly, the phrase */buroŋ kuək/* refers to an owl, which is considered one of the most offensive animal-based swearing words in Bangkan Malayan. The owl is regarded as a frightening and ominous creature due to its nocturnal habits and its association with the supernatural or mystical realms. For the Bangkan people, the owl's physical traits—such as its piercing eyes and silent flight—are perceived as eerie and unsettling. Its nocturnality symbolically links it to the 'night world', a concept often associated with misfortune, secrecy, and even malevolent spiritual forces. Therefore, using 'owl' as a swearing word goes beyond mere insult. This demonstrates how deeply embedded cultural beliefs and symbolic associations shape the use and interpretation of swearing words in a local linguistic context.

In relation to animal-based swearing expressions in Bangkan Malayan, the terms /ase?/ and /babi?/ are more functionally versatile than the other animal-related terms. Based on the findings, these two expressions are not only used to insult or express anger but also to generate humor, show social solidarity, and affirm personal or group identity. In contrast, the terms /kəra?/ and /buroŋ kuək/ are more narrowly used, mainly to insult or express anger. These words are typically directed at individuals who are viewed as public enemies or who engage in socially condemned behavior, such as acts of abuse or sexual violence. Among them, /buroŋ kuək/ tends to carry stronger negative associations and is more closely linked to severely inappropriate conduct.

Next origin of swearing words in Bangkan Malayan is animal faces. From the effort of collecting data, there are two typical origins has been found. They are as below:

/taI? ase? bəgere?/
Waste dog dry up by times
'Dried dog feces'

/taI ase? aŋos/
Waste dog burnt
'Burnt dog feces'

Both phrases discussed above refer to the same object—dog feces—but are distinguished by different semantic modifiers that intensify their offensive meaning within the Bangkan Malayan cultural context. As a form of profanity, these expressions derive their strength from deeply rooted cultural associations with impurity and misfortune. Dog feces are considered inherently disgusting due to their nature as waste and the fact that they come from a dog, an animal viewed by Bangkans as unclean. The phrase */taI ase? bəgere?/* or 'dried dog feces' metaphorically extends this disgust by referring to the deceptive appearance of the dried waste, which often blends in with soil or rocks, leading people to step on it accidentally—an act symbolizing unexpected misfortune. The second modifier, *aŋos* ('burnt'), adds an even stronger negative connotation. In Bangkan belief, dog waste that has been burned is seen as the worst possible substance, symbolizing intensified impurity and bad luck. Thus, both phrases function as powerful swearing expressions not only because of their literal meanings but also due to the cultural and symbolic weight they carry, linking physical revulsion with social misfortune.

Both swearing expressions, */taI ase? bəgere?/* 'dried dog feces' and */taI ase? aŋos/* 'burnt dog feces', are used in Bangkan Malayan for several different purposes. First, they are commonly used to express strong emotions like anger or frustration, allowing speakers to release tension in a powerful way. Second, these phrases can also be used to create humor. When said among close friends, the shocking or absurd nature of the words can be funny and entertaining. Third, they can show closeness and group identity. Among people who share the same background or social group, using such phrases can build a sense of belonging and familiarity. Lastly, and most often, these expressions are used to insult someone with unpleasant or disgusting behavior. By comparing a person to something considered extremely filthy and unlucky, the speaker strongly criticizes the person's character. In short, these swearing words serve emotional, social, humorous, and insulting functions in Bangkan Malayan communication.

The fourth discovery of swearing words in Bangkan Malayan is rooted in religious belief. Within this category, the research yielded a single term: /kaper/. Etymologically derived from the Arabic word *kafir*, meaning 'infidel' or 'non-believer', the term in the Bangkan Malayan context specifically refers to a 'non-Muslim'. However, its usage reveals a unique sociolinguistic nuance. The data show that the term is exclusively employed within Muslim communities and, rather paradoxically, is often directed at fellow Muslims rather than actual

non-believers. This indicates a shift in meaning and function from its original religious connotation to a more socially constructed usage. In practice, the term /kaper/ functions primarily as a humorous expression among speakers, although it can also carry insulting undertones depending on the context of the utterance. This finding highlights the complex interplay between belief, identity, and pragmatic intent in the use of swearing words.

In line with many cross-linguistic findings on the origin of swearing expressions, the Bangkan Malayan language also incorporates references to human anatomy, particularly intimate body parts, as a source of profanity. This category includes four prominent examples: /luloŋ/, referring to the buttocks; /pəle?/, denoting the penis; /ate?/, meaning vagina; and /pukima?/, which specifically refers to the mother's vagina. These anatomical terms function as swearing words primarily due to their strong cultural taboo and their associations with indecency and moral boundaries. The linguistic use of such terms reflects a broader sociolinguistic phenomenon, where bodily references—especially those tied to sexuality and reproduction—are leveraged for their emotive and transgressive power. Within the Bangkan Malayan context, these expressions are often employed to express contempt, insult, or emotional intensity, serving both as markers of verbal aggression and as tools of social regulation. Besides, those all can be used to insult, express anger, generate humour and show social solidarity and individual identity

Conclusion

The linguistic study of swearing words in the Bangkan Malayan dialect reveals a complex system that transcends mere vulgarity, highlighting their deep entrenchment in cultural, social, and emotional contexts. The research identifies five primary origins of these expressions: mental states, such as 'crazy' and 'stupid', animal references (including 'dog', 'pig', 'ape', and 'owl'), animal feces, such as, 'dried dog feces' and 'burnt dog faces', religious beliefs, notably the term *kaper*, and parts of the human body, such as the buttocks, penis, and vagina. Each source reflects particular social perceptions and taboos, with mental and animal-related terms often symbolizing irrationality or undesirable traits, while religious and anatomical references carry heavier socio-religious and moral implications. Functionally, these swearing words serve multiple communicative purposes: expressing intense emotions such as anger and frustration, generating humour, asserting identity, reinforcing group solidarity, and most frequently, insulting or demeaning others. Their usage demonstrates that Bangkan Malayan swearing is not random or purely swearing, but rather a structured form of expression that reflects the community's norms, values, and interpersonal dynamics.

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The Impact of War as Seen through *Hayao Miyazaki's* Ghibli Movies

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Abstract

This research uses Sociohistorical analysis and Stuart Hall's Representation Theory to examine how war is portrayed in Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli movies. By examining important movies like Grave of the Fireflies, Spirited Away, Boy and The Heron and My Neighbor Totoro the study shows how Miyazaki creates potent, symbolic stories as a social critique on war and its physical and psychological impact to the society especially children where most of these movies characters portraying children as the main character. Hall's theory provides insight into the collective memory and identity of a nation impacted by conflict by enabling a deeper understanding of how these meanings are culturally encoded and understood. It's potential to expand English literature students' interpretive frameworks, to go beyond Western texts, and help them understand how important media and literature are for processing historical trauma and forming cultural consciousness makes this analysis urgent.

Keywords: Ghibli, Impact of War, Representation Theory, Sociohistorical

Introduction

The audiences across the world have been enthralled by the imaginative, frequently stunning animated worlds created by *Hayao Miyazaki* and Studio Ghibli, which transport viewers to worlds of magic, nature, and nuanced human emotion for decades. However, underneath the surface of charming individuals, flying castles, and woodland spirits, there is a deep and ongoing interaction with one of humanity's most devastating forces: war. The desolate landscapes of *Nausicaa* of the Valley of the Wind to the moving reflections on loss in The Wind Rises, *Miyazaki's* cinematic masterpieces offer a unique and frequently heartbreaking lens through which to examine the multifaceted impact of armed conflict—not just on soldiers and nations, but also on the environment, innocent lives, and the very spirit of humanity. He does not shy away from its harsh realities.

The United States decided to use the recently created atomic bomb against Japan in the summer of 1945, which was a catastrophic turning point in World War II. The "Little Boy" bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, while the "Fat Man" bomb was dropped on Nagasaki three days later (DiMeo, 2025). Large metropolitan areas were immediately destroyed by these unprecedented acts of war, and by the end of that year, an estimated 150,000 to 246,000 people had died, the great majority of them civilians. Hibakusha, or survivors, describe images of unspeakable agony, including severely burnt bodies, skin-pealing victims, and a corpse-strewn landscape. Beyond the immediate devastation, radiation sickness started to appear, resulting in acute diseases, years or even decades of chronic pain, and long-term health problems including leukemia and other malignancies. The bombs permanently changed the Japanese people's understanding of war and peace and left them with a deep fear of the devastating potential of nuclear weapons (DiMeo, 2025). The U.S. occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952 profoundly reshaped

Japanese cinema and popular culture (Young, 2025). Under General Douglas MacArthur's administration, the Allied powers aimed to democratize and demilitarize Japan, which included censoring media that promoted feudalism, nationalism, or militarism. As a result, Japanese filmmakers shifted toward themes that aligned with democratic values, social realism, and individualism.

American movies inundated Japanese cinemas, influencing genre development, storytelling, and visual styles, especially in melodramas, musicals, and film noir (Sonni, Et Al, 2025). Akira Kurosawa, Yasujiro Ozu, and Kenji Mizoguchi became well-known worldwide as a result of the cultural interchange that spurred a renaissance in Japanese film in the 1950s (Le Fanu, 2019). Furthermore, American pop culture which included consumer goods, fashion, and jazz music—became widely accepted, setting the stage for Japan's post-war industrialization and hybridized pop culture (Chua & Cho, 2012).

In films like *Spirited Away, The Boy and the Heron, Grave of the Fireflies*, and *My Neighbor Totoro*, Studio Ghibli, under the creative direction of *Hayao Miyazaki* and his collaborators, uses emotional storytelling and layered symbolism to subtly depict Japan's experiences during World War II, its defeat, and the American occupation. The most straightforward representation is found in *Grave of the Fireflies*, which tells the tale of orphaned brothers fighting to survive Kobe's firebombing while illustrating the terrible human cost of war. With its bizarre plot and personal components, *The Boy and the Heron* captures the anarchy and agony of wartime Japan as well as the quest for purpose in the face of loss. Many people see *Spirited Away* as a metaphor for Japan's change and loss of innocence during and after the occupation because it employs imagination to examine topics of identity, memory, and cultural relocation. In contrast, *My Neighbor Totoro*, which is set in rural Japan after World War II, quietly acknowledges the wounds caused by war without specifically mentioning them while capturing a sense of nostalgia and the emotional healing of a country through the naive prism of youth. Stuart Hall's Representation Theory is applied to a sociohistorical analysis of *Hayao Miyazaki's* Studio Ghibli films, a significant reflection on the impacts of war and its aftereffects on society and personal identity is revealed. According to Hall's theory, representation creates meaning (Hall,2020), and Miyazaki frequently uses symbolic imagery, character archetypes, and narrative structures that mirror historical pain and societal fears in his works. Movies like *Spirited Away*, *Boy and the Heron*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, and *Grave of the Fireflies* show how war alters not just the material environment but also the moral and emotional landscapes of people who live through it. Miyazaki creates a discourse on war that subverts prevailing narratives, humanizes its victims, and criticizes the romanticization of militarism via intricately layered images and allegorical storytelling. Placing these depictions within the framework of Japan's post-World War II pacifist identity and collective memory, the sociohistorical lens enables Miyazaki's anti-war themes to strike a powerful chord with viewers both at home and abroad. His movies thus serve as cultural texts that reinterpret ideology and history, allowing for critical analysis of the effects of war.

Theory and Method

The emphasis on a close textual and visual research of a few chosen works, including Spirited *Away, My Neighbour Totoro, Boy and the Heron* and *Grave of the Fireflies*, this study uses a qualitative method to investigate the effects of war as they are portrayed in *Hayao Miyazaki's* Studio Ghibli films. The study takes an interpretative stance, employing theme analysis to investigate war and conflict-related narrative structure, character development, dialogue, symbolism, and visual aesthetics. Information is obtained from the movies themselves, with

the addition of director comments, interviews, and academic reviews to add context. In order to comprehend how Miyazaki's depictions reflect and react to Japan's historical experiences with war, notably World War II and its aftermath, the research is also set within Stuart Hall's Representation Theory. Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, which emphasizes how meaning is created and conveyed through language, images, and cultural conventions (Rini & Kasih, 2024), provides a critical framework for examining the effects of war as they are shown in Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli films. According to Hall, representation is an active process that molds our perception of the world rather than just reflecting reality (Fithratullah, 2021). According to Hall, representation is "the production of meaning through language"; it is not merely a reflection of reality but rather its construction through the use of signals arranged according to cultural standards and systems. Meanings are formed, filtered, and understood by our cultural practices; reality is not just replicated (Hall, 2020). Instead of using literal historical reenactments, Miyazaki uses symbolic storylines, fantasy settings, and emotionally charged characters to represent the psychological and societal effects of war. A better understanding of Miyazaki's work is therefore made possible by Representation Theory, which demonstrates how his films serve as cultural texts that interact with and influence public conversation on war and peace.

A greater comprehension of how historical context and social memory influence the storylines and themes of Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli films may be gained by using a sociohistorical approach. It is analytical framework known to focus on human behavior, philosophy, culture, or evolution from the perspective of social structures and historical context. It highlights how people and their behavior are essentially influenced by the historical and societal context of their era (Hall, 2007). This method places movies like *Spirited Away, My Neighbour Totoro, Boy and the Heron* and *Grave of the Fireflies* in the context of Japan's post-World War II pacifist identity, societal trauma, and changing views on technology and militarism coherence to the concept of Sociohistorical by Vygotsly in Ahmed (2024) stated that; Human cognitive development is inherently a social and historical process. Interactions with more experienced people in historically and culturally particular circumstances give rise to psychological functions. The sociohistorical perspective shows how Miyazaki criticizes war as a reflection of society values, moral quandaries, and historical ramifications in addition to being a destructive force by analyzing the films in light of Japan's wartime experiences and postwar rebuilding.

Findings and Discussion

This research explores how the impact of war is represented in selected Studio Ghibli films *Spirited Away*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *The Boy and the Heron*, and *Grave of the Fireflies* through the lens of Stuart Hall's Representation Theory and a sociohistorical approach. The findings reveal that while these films differ in narrative style and tone, they collectively portray the deep psychological, emotional, and cultural effects of war on individuals and society. Rather than depicting war through direct combat or historical reenactment, these films use metaphor, symbolism, and emotional storytelling to construct alternative meanings of conflict and its aftermath**.** These movies become potent texts that convey difficult societal realities regarding memory and conflict when seen via Hall's perspective, which highlights that meaning is created rather than just reflected (Fithratullah, Et Al, 2024). Using fantasy and realism to reflect and critique national trauma, societal development, and the lingering scars of warfare, the films are demonstrated to be profoundly rooted in Japan's wartime and post-war experiences when seen through the sociohistorical perspective.

***Grave of the Fireflies*: War as Realist Trauma and Social Critique**

One of the most heartbreaking depictions of war in animation history is found in Isao *Takahata's* 1988 film Grave of the Fireflies, which was produced by Studio Ghibli strongly echoes *Miyazaki's* thematic world and anti-war stance. The movie offers the most realistic and graphic depiction of the effects of war. Grave of the Fireflies focuses on the civilian experience, especially that of children, during World War II in Japan, in contrast to conventional war movies that emphasize battlefields and political narratives. It creates meaning around the invisible suffering of civilians during times of conflict from a representational standpoint.

The sociohistorical approach further deepens the analysis of Grave of the Fireflies by situating the film within Japan's historical and cultural memory of World War II. Wertsch stated that It is impossible to comprehend human behavior, including speech and thought, without taking into account the sociohistorical environment in which it takes place (Pereira, 2022). Japan's defeat in 1945 led to a complex national identity reconstruction, including the adoption of a pacifist constitution and an ambivalent relationship with its wartime past. The sociohistorical approach and Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, this article examines the movie to reveal how it creates meaning around trauma, war, and the shortcomings of the state and society. The film offers a potent social critique that questions prevailing narratives and encourages contemplation of the human cost of militarism and national ideology through realistic storytelling and intensely personal viewpoints. *Seita and Setsuko*, the main characters, are youngsters who have been abandoned by the government and society; they represent the defenseless victims who are frequently left out of military stories. This movie offers a counter-narrative that emphasizes vulnerability, neglect, and mortality in contrast to the prevalent historical depictions of battle as heroic or strategic. From a sociohistorical perspective, the movie depicts the actual circumstances of wartime Japan, especially the starving of citizens and the firebombing of cities. Grave of the Fireflies is positioned as a cultural relic that confronts spectators with the cost of war and national pride because of its emotional reality, which transforms personal suffering into community memory.

Stuart Hall contends that representation is an active process in which meaning is created by language, symbols, and cultural practices rather than a passive reflection of reality (Pratama & Pitaloka,2025). In Grave of the Fireflies, the agony, famine, and final demise of *Seita* and his younger sister *Setsuko* serve as the representation of war rather than acts of valor or patriotism. In stark contrast to conventional manly and patriotic depictions of wartime honor, these characters serve as symbols of innocence and fragility. Through depictions of deterioration, desertion, and emotional breakdown, the movie creates meaning. The recurring visual motif of fireflies, which are both lovely and transient, represents the innocence lost due to conflict and the frailty of life. Their radiance highlights the contrast between the beauty of nature and the devastation caused by humans, as do the firebombs that deluge Kobe. Hall's theory that meaning is influenced by cultural context and story framing rather than being intrinsic is supported by this symbolic language (Titaeva & Mamontova,2024). The movie challenges prevailing discourses that either whitewash or exalt wartime experiences by focusing on two kids who are let down by every structure that is supposed to protect them family, the government, and society. Emphasizing the systemic flaws that resulted in the deaths of innumerable civilians, Grave of the Fireflies directly addresses this memory gap. In addition to being personal tragedies, *Seita's* unwillingness to go back to his aunt's house, his social exclusion, and his final death also symbolize the failure of a country that put military aspirations ahead of human life. The film adds to a larger conversation on responsibility, memory, and reconciliation by emphasizing the effects of war rather than its political origins (Angelina & Suprajitno, 2025).

***Spirited Away*: PostWar Anxiety and Identity in a Fantastical World**

Spirited Away (2001) by *Hayao Miyazaki* is hailed as a complex, multi-layered animated film that delves deeply into psychological and cultural aspects in addition to its magical plot. It is heavily influenced by the societal issues that surfaced in post-war Japan, despite the fact that it may not explicitly represent war. The movie, which is set in a magical world where spirits live, follows *Chihiro*, a little child who has to make her way through this weird world in order to save her parents and rediscover who she is. Through Hall representation it could be seen that the movie seen as a symbolic depiction of the confusion and identity crisis that followed the post-war era's fast industrialization and westernization. Beyond its charming exterior, Spirited Away serves as a symbolic representation of Japan's post-war concerns, specifically those related to social change, environmental deterioration, and cultural identity (Quirk, 2021).

Through the use of sociohistorical analysis and Stuart Hall's representation theory, this study clarifies how the movie creates meaning around these concerns and post-war Japan's changing identity. The transformation of Japan from a devastated, invaded country to an economic superpower, where conventional values and societal institutions were destabilized, is paralleled by Chihiro's voyage through a mystical spirit world. The fragmentation of cultural and personal identity following modernization a process profoundly influenced by the effects of war is reflected in the loss of her name and identity (Zarichanskyi, et al, 2024). The spirit bathhouse reflects Japan's high-pressure capitalist culture, which emerged from the ashes of wartime devastation, with its strict work system and exploitation (Papastavros, 2023). From a sociohistorical standpoint, the movie addresses the generations that grew up under the shadow of war those who are carrying on its legacy through societal change as opposed to firsthand experience. Stuart Hall's theory of representation, language, signs, and cultural codes actively create meaning rather than just reflecting it in the media. How identities and realities are viewed and comprehended is influenced by representation (Sari & Pranoto, 2021). The fantasy setting of Spirited Away serves as both a setting for adventure and a symbolic location for the visualization and negotiation of Japan's sociocultural conflicts.

The movie's surroundings and characters function as symbols with deep cultural significance. Yubaba, for instance, is a symbol of material avarice and consumer capitalism, as is the bathhouse where a large portion of the novel is set (Egger, 2024). More than just a witch, this figure represents the predatory powers of contemporary capitalism, striking a chord with Japan's post-war economic boom and the social upheavals brought forth by fast industrialization (Battison,2024). A powerful condemnation of the ecological costs of Japan's modernity, the hideous spirits—such as the river deity covered in sludge—represent environmental contamination. Instead of just reflecting reality, these depictions actively create a conversation on the threats and difficulties that modern Japanese society faces.

Spirited Away is situated within the particular historical and social setting of post-war Japan using a sociohistorical approach. Japan saw tremendous urbanization and economic growth after World War II, which brought with it both affluence and environmental degradation as well as social isolation (Tsutsumi, 2021). The story and visuals of the movie are infused with these sociohistorical facts. The highly commercialized, hierarchical, and capitalist bathhouse itself might be interpreted as a embodiment of post-war Japanese society. *Chihiro's* parents' transformation into pigs is a powerful metaphor for how commercialization and greed are displacing traditional cultural and familial values. This change reflects post-war Japan's anxieties about losing one's identity and cultural heritage in the face of excessive consumerism (Westra, 2021). It is revealed as a nuanced metaphor of post-war Japan through the integration of Hall's representation theory and the sociohistorical method. *Chihiro's*

personal journey serves as a metaphor for the reconstruction of communal identity a story of resiliency, adaptation, and rejuvenation in a world shattered by war. Hayao Miyazaki creates a complex story in Spirited Away that captures Japan's post-war fears as well as the changing nature of identity in the face of globalization and industrialization. The movie uses Stuart Hall's Representation Theory to show how meaning is created and disputed, especially through the symbolic representation of characters like Yubaba, No-Face, and Chihiro, who all represent elements of consumerism, traditionalism loss, and self-discovery.

The Boy and the Heron: War Memory, Grief, and Intergenerational Trauma

The Boy and the Heron (Kimitachi wa Dō Ikiru ka), directed by *Hayao Miyazaki* in 2023, is a profound meditation on loss, conflict, and the generational repercussions of trauma. Inspired by *Genzaburo Yoshino's 1937 novel How Do You Live?*, *Miyazaki's* film reflects on Japan's wartime past and the intricacies of emotional heritage while fusing fantasy with historical and autobiographical themes. This research examines how *The Boy and the Heron* creates meaning around post war memory, Mourning, and intergenerational trauma by using Stuart Hall's representation theory and a sociohistorical lens. *Mahito*, the main character of the movie, is forced to live in the countryside after losing his mother in a wartime fire. This is a clear parallel to the actual evacuation of children during World War II (Broom & Kitsuse, 2022). The movie's magical elements such as parallel universes, symbolic birds, and disintegrating realities represent cultural and emotional reactions to trauma, according to Hall's idea (Hall, 2020). According to Stuart Hall's representation theory, media create reality through symbolic processes rather than merely reflecting it (Xie, et al,2022). In this context, representation refers to the process of encoding meaning through cultural signs, language, and visuals (Sari & Pranoto, 2021). *Miyazaki* employs imagination and surrealism as symbolic devices in The Boy and the Heron to depict both individual and societal traumas.

Hall's encoding/decoding views expose that there are several ways to interpret these representations (Hall, 2020). Viewers may interpret the images of fire, ruins, and absence more broadly as metaphors for loss and mourning, while Japanese viewers who are familiar with the country's wartime past may interpret them as allusions to WWII tragedy. In any case, the movie encourages a decoding process that links the historical and the personal. *Mahito's* voyage through an enigmatic, dilapidated parallel universe turns into a symbolic investigation of repressed trauma and unresolved sadness. *Miyazaki* is able to "represent" emotional and psychological states that are challenging to express directly thanks to this symbolic environment. As a result, the movie turns into a place where people rebuild and negotiate their cultural history and personal memories. These components serve as metaphors, creating meaning around the inner world of a youngster traumatized by conflict. The film's integration of actual wartime events, such bombings and forced relocation, into a dreamlike narrative framework that portrays the enduring emotional effects of these experiences makes the sociohistorical dimension evident. The Boy and the Heron supports *Miyazaki's* overarching goal of portraying war as a persistent presence in postwar generations' cultural and psychological memories rather than merely as a historical occurrence.

The movie can be interpreted as a place where meanings are created and disputed using Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, especially in light of the heron's dual roles as a trickster and a guide, symbolizing the conflicted feelings associated with memory and loss. Hall's idea of encoding and decoding emphasizes how audiences may understand these symbols in many ways based on their historical and cultural context (Xie, Et al, 2022). The psychological effects of World War II are examined in the movie, both for those who experienced it and for subsequent generations. The devastating effects of Japan's war, such as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the firebombing of Tokyo, have had a

long-lasting cultural impact (Shimasaki, 2021). Born in 1941, *Miyazaki* was a youngster during this period, and themes of war, militarism, and pacifism are prevalent in much of his writing, notably The Wind Rises (2013). This investigation is carried on in The Boy and the Heron, which explores the generational transmission of pain and memory.

***My Neighbor Totoro*: Healing and Innocence in a Post-War Landscape**

It is evident from both representation theory and sociohistorical analysis that My Neighbor Totoro has the scars of war's aftermath, despite its seeming gentleness and lack of politics. The absence of the father figure, who is frequently absent, and the mother's precarious health discreetly mirror the upheaval and stress that many post-war families went through (Broom & Kitsuse, 2022). The story is set in rural 1950s Japan, a period of recovery and reconstruction. Using Hall's theory we could uncover its lighthearted tone (Gultom & Probadi, 2021), the movie captures a civilization recovering from destruction and seeking for security, purity, and a relationship with nature. In contrast to the loss and estrangement of war. *Totoro*, the forest spirit, might be seen as a representation of emotional solace and spiritual rebirth. The rural landscape itself functions as a nostalgic depiction of pre-war Japan from a sociohistorical perspective, providing a picture of peace and healing in contrast to the chaotic urban devastation brought on by conflict (Gartland, 2024).

Totoro is a work of *Hayao Miyazaki* in 1988 is considered evocative animation, soft pacing, and whimsical charm. Although it seems like a straightforward children's tale at first, it is actually a potent depiction of post-war Japan's collective memory and cultural mentality (Griffiths, 2021). Totoro becomes more than just amusement when viewed through the prism of Stuart Hall's Representation Theory and a sociohistorical perspective; it becomes a symbolic reaction to urban alienation, national pain, and the desire for innocence and healing in a society that is quickly modernizing (Mandel, 2022). According to Stuart Hall's Representation Theory, meaning is created through language, signs, and cultural rules rather than being innate in things or texts (Kuswoyo,2014). Hall believe that the process of creating meaning through sign and symbol systems that are ingrained in history, ideology, and power is known as representation (Hall, Et Al, 2024). By choosing, framing, and encoding particular meanings, media works like Totoro actively contribute to the creation of meaning rather than just reflecting reality. Totoro is a recently created being that combines aspects of woodland creatures, *Shinto* animism, and the consoling presence of an imagined protector. Through Totoro, *Miyazaki* embodies a maternal, protective energy that serves as a metaphorical counterbalance to the anxiety and unpredictability of both individual and societal disasters.

Stuart Hall's Representation Theory and a sociohistorical perspective can be used to examine My Neighbor Totoro as a representation of innocence and healing in post-war Japan. It reveal that Emotional Authenticity and Childhood: *Mei and Satsuki* are the representations of emotional lucidity and fortitude. In contrast to the adults' pragmatic detachment, they have the ability to perceive and communicate with ghosts. *Miyazaki* conveys a sense of purity, honesty, and kinship with the past through the portrayal of children that adults have lost due to their preoccupation with contemporary obligations. Hall's theory exposes that meaning is created by cultural codes, and Totoro, as a mythical creature, counteracts the trauma of modernization and war by symbolizing a return to nature, safety, and childish wonder. The film, which is set in rural Japan in the 1950s, nostalgically recreates a pre-industrial scene, capturing the sociohistorical yearning for spiritual reconnection and simplicity. Using fantasy as a tool to process communal memory and identity, Miyazaki provides a coded cultural reaction to a nation recuperating from loss through the girls' naive interaction with Totoro.

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Conclusion

Through intricately symbolic storytelling, Hayao Miyazaki's Ghibli films frequently depict the lasting effects and profound scars of war. Utilizing Hall's Representation Theory, these movies use people and visuals that resonate with Japan's sociohistorical trauma to create meaning rather than overtly showing combat. For example, Grave of Fire flies depicts war as destructive and pointless rather than heroic, reflecting the disillusionment of a generation formed by the destruction of World War II and the firebombing of cities like Tokyo. From a sociohistorical standpoint, *Miyazaki's* films are cultural texts that use allegory and imagination to reinterpret Japan's history during the war. Children are at the center of Studio Ghibli's, Grave of the Fireflies, Spirited Away, Boy and The Heron and My Neighbor Totoro which offers a humanized, emotionally charged counter-narrative to official state histories by focusing on civilian suffering during conflict. By highlighting the daily human cost of conflict, especially from the viewpoint of the helpless, Hall's theory enables us to comprehend how these movies challenge prevailing narratives and reflect marginalized perspectives. In addition to providing entertainment, these stories also serve as cultural reminders and cautions. According to Hall, Miyazaki's art becomes a place where interpretations of identity, peace, and war are continually contested, giving viewers an opportunity to consider Japan's past while envisioning more compassionate, hopeful futures.

It is vital and crucial, particularly for English literature students, to examine the effects of war in Hayao Miyazaki's Ghibli films using Stuart Hall's Representation Theory and a sociohistorical perspective. Despite being fantasy and animated, these movies are rich cultural texts that capture Japan's past, especially its postwar pain and changing identity. Students can critically analyze how media creates narratives about conflict, memory, and morality by applying Hall's theory, which shows how meaning is not fixed but rather modified by cultural environment. By connecting textual study with historical awareness and cultural philosophy, this method enhances the interpretive abilities of English literature students. It inspires individuals to see beyond Western literary traditions and acknowledge the universal aspects of narrative, where animated movies serve as platforms for healing, resistance, and remembering.

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From Sastra Hijau to Sastra Bahari: Place, Resistance, and Indigeneity in *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak*

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Abstract

This paper examines contemporary Indonesian literature's engagement with the nation's ecological crises through a comparative analysis of Abroorza A. Yusra's *Danum* and Tison Sahabuddin Bungin's *Dari Rahim Ombak*. While existing studies of *Sastra Hijau* (Green Literature) have focused on terrestrial narratives, and emerging scholarship on *Sastra Bahari* (Maritime Literature) explores maritime spaces, few analyses have integrated terrestrial and maritime domains within a single framework. This study argues that examining forest and sea environments together shows how Indonesian fiction reconceptualizes place as a site of Indigenous knowledge systems that resist extractive capitalism and state complicity in environmental destruction. Using postcolonial ecocriticism and Blue Humanities methods, this analysis examines how *Danum* represents bioregional attachments threatened by palm oil expansion, while *Dari Rahim Ombak* depicts maritime cosmologies disrupted by blast fishing and structural poverty. The analysis reveals that both novels portray resistance as both vulnerable and adaptive, expressed through everyday cultural practices. Through its integration of terrestrial and maritime perspectives, this study demonstrates literature's critical role in showing the inseparable relationship between ecological survival and cultural sovereignty in contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Blue Humanities, Indonesian Literature, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Sastra Bahari, Sastra Hijau

Introduction

Indonesia's accelerating ecological crisis demands not only scientific and policy-based solutions but also critical engagement through cultural and literary analysis. As Li and Semedi (2021) argue, extractive industries such as palm oil continue to reshape rural and Indigenous territories, driving large-scale deforestation and social displacement. At the same time, severe marine degradation — including widespread coral reef loss — illustrates how coastal ecologies face intensifying threats from destructive fishing and climate change (Razak et al., 2022). As the world's largest archipelagic nation—stretching across more than 17,000 islands and home to vast tropical forests—Indonesia stands at a fragile intersection of economic expansion and environmental decline. Massive palm oil plantations, deforestation, and coral reef bleaching have become intertwined threats to ecological and cultural survival. Against this backdrop, Indonesian writers have turned literature into a space of critique and resistance, giving rise to two vital trends: *Sastra Hijau* (Green Literature) and *Sastra Bahari* (Maritime Literature).

Green Literature has roots in early nationalist works like Muhammad Yamin's *Bukit Barisan* and *Tanah Air*, which "celebrate nature and the homeland" (Dewi, 2017, p. 26). Over time, this ecological thread deepened through prose by authors such as Ahmad Tohari, whose Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak "illustrates deforestation... caused by human actions" (Wiyatmi, 2021, p. 9). This movement centers on forests, farmland, and rivers, exploring how local communities

resist land grabs and environmental degradation. Meanwhile, *Sastra Bahari* reflects a newer shift that responds to the relative neglect of Indonesia's oceanic identity. As Bungin's *Dari Rahim Ombak* shows, contemporary writers "re-center the ocean as a sacred space and site of resistance" (2015, pp. xi–xii).

This study places two key texts in conversation: Abroorza A. Yusra's *Danum* and Tison Sahabuddin Bungin's *Dari Rahim Ombak*. *Danum* portrays the Uud Danum people of Borneo, whose forests and rivers are bound to Kaharingan beliefs—a worldview that upholds "a balanced relationship between humans, nature, and God" (2021, p. 161). The novel exposes how palm oil expansion fractures these bonds and fuels what Nixon (2011) describes as "slow violence." In contrast, *Dari Rahim Ombak* shifts to coastal Sumbawa, where the Bajo people treat the sea as a living relative. Bungin's narrative blends maritime cosmology, Islamic ritual, and Indigenous law to show how reef destruction and blast fishing erode ancestral ties. Here, the ocean becomes, in Cilano and DeLoughrey's terms, "a site of cultural memory and ecological resistance" (2007, p. 84).

Both novels confront the hidden costs of modern development. *Danum* critiques what Escobar (1995) calls a "top-down, ethnocentric" model of growth that disguises "development aggression" (Doyle & Gilbert, 2011). It shows how "capitalist-driven development" disrupts Indigenous relationships to land and belief. Meanwhile, *Dari Rahim Ombak* reveals how poverty, corruption, and state neglect sustain marine destruction. Bungin's depiction of blast fishing networks illustrates "systemic complicity among state actors" (Pellow, 2018, p. 6) rather than isolated crimes.

This study asks: how do land and sea shape different ethical ties between communities and nature? In what ways do Kaharingan and Bajo maritime cosmology sustain resistance? And how do both works portray fractured communities—Santo's divided family in *Danum* and the three siblings in *Dari Rahim Ombak*—to dramatize moral and economic dilemmas? These questions connect to the idea of "environmentalism of the poor," where survival, not luxury, motivates care for place (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997). By bridging *Sastra Hijau* and *Sastra Bahari*, this paper argues that Indonesian literature must be read as both land- and sea-centered. Both texts insist that ecological justice and cultural survival are inseparable. Together, *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* reveal how forests and oceans are more than resources: they are living archives of memory, struggle, and hope.

Recent scholarship on Indonesian environmental literature has concentrated mainly on terrestrial ecologies and rural degradation under the framework of *Sastra Hijau*. For instance, Dewi and Indriyanto (2023) and Wiyatmi et al (2022) examine how novels and poetry foreground deforestation, land dispossession, and local resistance, situating these themes within postcolonial ecocriticism. A more recent contribution by Saragih and Prasetyo (2023)(2023) explores the representation of coastal identities in short stories but notes that marine ecocriticism remains marginal compared to land-focused studies. Oppermann (2023) and Dobrin (2021) extend the *Blue Humanities* discourse to highlight how oceans are increasingly framed as active cultural agents in global ecocriticism, yet Southeast Asian scholarship still seldom combines terrestrial and maritime perspectives in a single comparative framework. While a few studies acknowledge the symbolic role of the sea in Indonesian prose (Ryan, 2018; Wybranowska, 2021) detailed comparative work that bridges forest-based bioregionalism with Indigenous maritime epistemologies remains rare. This study addresses this gap by reading *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* together, demonstrating how contemporary Indonesian literature articulates linked ecological struggles and forms of resistance across both inland and coastal spaces.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive design to examine how Indonesian Green Literature (*Sastra Hijau*) and Blue Literature (*Sastra Bahari*) articulate ecological critique and Indigenous resistance. Creswell emphasizes that qualitative research is best suited to exploring the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems, using rich description rather than numerical analysis (2014, p. 7). Following Creswell's framework, this study treats literary texts as cultural documents that encode ecological worldviews, Indigenous knowledge, and postcolonial tensions. As Kothari adds, qualitative research "makes use of available facts or information to analyze and to make a critical evaluation," (2004, p. 110) aligning with the interpretive method employed here, where close reading and thematic coding uncover the deeper relations between place, power, and identity.

Operational Concepts

The key operational concepts guiding this study are place*,* resistance*, and* indigeneity. Place is understood both as a physical environment (Buell, 2005)—forests in *Danum* and the ocean in *Dari Rahim Ombak*—and as a cultural landscape imbued with Indigenous cosmology and ritual meaning. Resistance refers to how characters and communities confront or subvert extractive capitalist systems, whether through direct opposition to oil palm expansion in *Danum* or grassroots coral reef protection in *Dari Rahim Ombak*. Indigeneity is explored through oral traditions, customary law, and ritual practices, including the Uud Danum's Kaharingan worldview and agrarian customs in *Danum*, as well as the Bajo's sea-bound taboos and ceremonies such as Tiba Raki and Nampoh Tawar in *Dari Rahim Ombak*.

Research Design and Data

The study uses a textual analysis approach. *Danum* (Abroorza A., 2021) and *Dari Rahim Ombak* (Bungin, 2015) serve as primary data. Supporting references include scholarly articles on Indonesian ecocriticism (Dewi, Wiyatmi) and key theoretical sources (Nixon, Escobar, Cilano & DeLoughrey). Relevant passages are identified, coded by theme (e.g., place, resistance, development), and critically compared. Purposive sampling is applied to select excerpts that best represent the core themes: (1) forest and land conflicts; (2) oceanic cosmology and marine degradation; and (3) community narratives of cultural continuity and fracture. This allows for a focused yet comparative reading that reflects each text's distinctive ecological and cultural terrain.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in postcolonial ecocriticism and the emergent Blue Humanities. Drawing on Nixon's (2011) idea of slow violence, the research examines how *Danum* narrates the gradual destruction of forests and the erosion of the Uud Danum's cultural landscape under expanding palm oil plantations. In this view, place is never neutral: it is both physical territory and symbolic ground where local cosmologies and ecological ethics resist commodification. For *Dari Rahim Ombak*, place shifts from forest to ocean, with the sea reframed through Blue Humanities perspectives (Mentz, 2009; Oppermann, 2023) as an animate domain, not merely a resource. Bungin's narrative aligns with this by presenting the ocean as "a sacred space and site of resistance" (Bungin, 2015) embedded in Bajo oral tradition and everyday ritual practice.

The study treats indigeneity as a core concept, drawing on Indigenous studies and postcolonial theory to read how both novels foreground customary knowledge, belief systems, and local law. In *Danum*, Kaharingan cosmology and agrarian customs shape the community's spiritual bond with the land—echoing what Bladow and Ladino (2018) describe as land-based ontologies rooted in everyday practice. Kaharingan, the indigenous religion of the Dayak

people in Kalimantan, predates the arrival of other religions to the region. This term derives from the Old Dayak word "haring," meaning "life" or "alive," reflecting its emphasis on the vitality of existence. A core aspect is Batang Haring or Garing, the tree of life. This includes rituals, taboos, and oral narratives such as Kolimoi and Tahtum that locate identity firmly in place. Similarly, *Dari Rahim Ombak* emphasizes Bajo maritime indigeneity through sea taboos, ancestral rituals like Tiba Raki and Nampoh Tawar, and the syncretic weaving of Islamic ethics with ancestral cosmology (Haerulloh et al., 2021). The sea is positioned as a sentient presence embedded in a relational ontology, challenging extractive and anthropocentric views of nature. Tiba Raki enacts an Indigenous epistemology that sustains ecological balance and spiritual continuity in this context. By foregrounding Indigenous frameworks, both works challenge colonial and modern logics that reduce land or sea to extractive assets.

Finally, the framework positions *resistance* as an ongoing dialectic that shapes the texts' ecological critique. Following Escobar's (1995) argument that modern development remains a "top-down, ethnocentric process," the study reads *Danum* through Doyle and Gilbert's (2011) notion of "development aggression" to trace how palm oil expansion is legitimized through state power but contested through community agency. Bungin's novel extends this by showing how resistance operates at the threshold of structural violence and local survival: its depiction of blast fishing networks highlights what Pellow (2018) terms "systemic complicity among state actors," while the persistence of Bajo maritime ethics embodies Guha and Martínez-Alier's (1997) environmentalism of the poor. Together, these perspectives illuminate how contemporary Indonesian literature imagines forests and oceans as interlinked sites of struggle, where ecological survival and cultural sovereignty are inseparable.

Findings and Discussion

While Indonesian environmental literature has developed distinct traditions of *Sastra Hijau* (Green Literature) and *Sastra Bahari* (Maritime Literature), few studies have examined how these domains intersect in contemporary fiction. This study addresses this gap by comparing Abroorza A. Yusra's *Danum* and Tison Sahabuddin Bungin's *Dari Rahim Ombak* to analyze how Indonesian novels articulate place, indigeneity, and resistance across terrestrial and maritime environments. Using postcolonial ecocriticism and Blue Humanities frameworks, this research examines how these texts represent land and sea not as passive ecological settings but as active sites of cultural knowledge and resistance to extractive development. In *Danum*, the forest functions as a bioregional space integral to Uud Danum Kaharingan cosmology and traditional agricultural practices, while *Dari Rahim Ombak* portrays the ocean as a sacred domain grounded in Bajo maritime knowledge and Islamic ritual traditions. The study demonstrates that reading forest and sea narratives together exposes the interconnected nature of ecological and cultural resistance in Indonesia's extractive economy.

To develop this comparative reading, the study employed thematic coding of narrative scenes, characters, and ritual episodes that illustrate how each novel stages environmental conflict and community agency. Close textual analysis focused on key passages—such as the depiction of berladang in *Danum* or the Tiba Raki ritual in *Dari Rahim Ombak*—to trace how land-based and maritime cosmologies inform characters' relationships with place and shape their strategies of resistance. The findings highlight points of convergence and divergence: both works reveal how capitalist expansion fractures Indigenous lifeways, yet they do so through distinct ecological terrains and cultural systems—agrarian bioregionalism in the forest and oceanic kinship along the coast. This synthesis provides the basis for the more detailed thematic discussions that follow.

In *Danum*, place is not merely a geographical setting but a sacred landscape intertwined with the Uud Danum community's cultural survival. Yusra's narrative frames the forest as a

"small paradise" (2021, p. 30) governed by the Kaharingan cosmology, which positions humans, nature, and ancestral spirits in a balanced, reciprocal relationship. This relationship is sustained through agrarian practices such as *berladang padi Gunung* (upland rice farming), which involves taboos and rituals like *Monilik* to ensure harmony with nature's guardians (Kardi & Reza, 2023). The forest is thus imagined as both an ecological system and a repository of cultural memory, symbolized by relics like the *Patung Katak-Kadal* and *Patung Singa Berbadan Lembu*, which connect the Uud Danum to their precolonial heritage (2021, p. 30) When Santo warns his community that the "sacred forest, their cultural heritage, and way of life" are threatened by palm oil expansion (2021, p. 23), Yusra makes clear that place is not a passive commodity but an active site of resistance.

By contrast, *Dari Rahim Ombak* shifts the representation of place from inland forest to coastal sea, reframing the ocean as a living agent embedded in Bajo maritime cosmology. Bungin's narrative insists that the ocean is "not merely a resource but a living relative", animated by ancestral guardians known as *umbo ma'dilao* (Raudloh et al., 2023). Rituals such as *Tiba Raki*—where villagers release offerings to the sea—and *Nampoh Tawar*—performed before voyages—reflect what Whyte (2018) calls "systems of responsibilities" rooted in kinship and care. Bungin shows how this relational sense of place governs ethical interactions with marine life, as when an elder reminds Katir's generation that "nature too is a living being, as the ancestors taught us" (2015, p. 17). The sea's sacredness is further reinforced by Islamic practice woven into daily seafaring: voyages begin with blessings and the *Basmalah*, marking the ocean as a moral space where spiritual continuity and ecological balance converge.

Taken together, these narratives reveal how place is reimagined as more than an extractable resource: it is a storied space that anchors identity, ritual, and resistance. While *Danum* locates this bond in the forest's bioregional integrity and the Kaharingan's rootedness in the land, *Dari Rahim Ombak* locates it in oceanic kinship and the Bajo's seaborne cosmology. Both highlight how Indigenous perspectives recode territory as an ethical landscape—one that modern capitalist development threatens to uproot or reduce to profit. By staging these conflicts in the forest and at sea, the novels invite readers to see place not as backdrop but as an active protagonist in the struggle for ecological and cultural survival.

In Danum, indigeneity is entwined with place through the Uud Danum's Kaharingan belief system, which informs every aspect of the community's relationship with their forested homeland. The novel foregrounds how oral traditions such as Kolimoi and Tahtum preserve cosmological knowledge that situates humans within a living, interdependent environment (2021, p. 147). These oral narratives recount the origins of life and the sacred connection between the earthly realm and the danum Kaharingan, the source of life itself. Santo's efforts to protect sacred forests and rivers reflect an understanding that cultural survival depends on the transmission of this knowledge. As he laments the neglect of these traditions—"Who will perform the Pohpas? Who can chant Kolimoi and Tahtum?" (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 144), the text underscores the fragility of Indigenous epistemology when faced with capitalist encroachment and generational disconnect.

Beyond oral storytelling, Yusra shows how Kaharingan knowledge is enacted through agrarian customs like *berladang*, where farming is not simply labor but a ritualized practice of inhabitation. As Nadi's experience reveals, tending rice fields connects the human soul to the land: "A field is more than just soil, a spread of rice, sparrows, hill panoramas, or surrounding forests. It is part of the human soul" (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 81). Such passages echo Bladow and Ladino's (2018) notion of land-based ontologies, where daily practices embody ecological ethics rooted in ancestral wisdom. However, Danum also shows how modernity disrupts this continuity: when the oil palm plantations expand, the younger generation begins to see farming as mere subsistence rather than spiritual stewardship, eroding Kaharingan values from within.

Dari Rahim Ombak approaches indigeneity through the lens of maritime knowledge systems unique to the Bajo people. Bungin's narrative demonstrates how ancestral sea taboos, oral legends like the Legenda Si Kareo, and rituals such as Tiba Raki and Nampoh Tawar sustain what Ingersoll (2023) calls "seascape epistemology." These practices bind the community to the ocean not just materially but spiritually, affirming the sea as a living ancestor rather than an exploitable frontier. The novel also highlights a remarkable adaptive layer: the integration of Islam as a reinforcing rather than erasing force. Ritual specialists (sandro) now blend Quranic verses and concepts like barakka (blessing) with older beliefs, ensuring continuity of marine ethics even under shifting religious and social conditions (Haerulloh et al., 2021). By dramatizing how Indigenous knowledge persists, adapts, and is reasserted through ritual, Bungin offers a portrait of resilience that is both cultural and ecological.

Having explored how *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* construct place and sustain Indigenous knowledge, this section now turns to how both novels dramatize resistance as a complex and often contradictory process. Each text reveals that defending forests or seas is not simply a matter of opposing external threats; it is entangled with economic pressures, government complicity, and tensions within the community itself. By showing how resistance can be weakened, co-opted, or reborn through new forms of grassroots action, these works challenge simplistic ideas of environmental struggle. Instead, they argue that true ecological resistance is fragile, uneven, and rooted in everyday negotiations over survival, belonging, and cultural continuity. This layered depiction of resistance forms a crucial link between Indonesian Green and Blue Literature's critique of modern development and their visions for an alternative ecological future.

While *Danum* represents the continued existence of local cultural and natural elements, it also notes how these are threatened by external forces—corporate interests, capitalism, and the nation. The novel critiques central and local governments as collaborators in corporate expansion under the guise of development. Their actions, including the granting of over eleven thousand hectares for oil palm plantations, perpetuate patterns of land dispossession and resource exploitation reminiscent of colonialism (Abroorza A, 2021, pp. 4–5). Government officials are depicted not as protectors of their communities but as collaborators in corporate exploitation, engaging in what the novel describes as a symbiotic relationship with capitalism. Permits are issued in abundance, and financial incentives flow back to those in power. To legitimize land transfers, companies fabricate the identities of community representatives who "agree" to the deals. Santo, who resists these efforts to protect Indigenous land, is labeled as obstructing development, especially in Indonesia's outer islands. As a company official points out,

> 'Trust us, sir. You support regional progress if you don't obstruct the company's activities. Areas like Kalimantan need significant investments to develop more quickly. Without it, they'll fall further behind other islands.'
> Santo had grown weary of the sweet promises tied to the word "development". To him, its synonyms were now "oppression" and "theft of rights (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 215).

Yusra's critique in *Danum* resonates with Escobar's analysis of development as a technocratic project that elevates capitalist interests while sidelining local agency (1995). In the novel, the rhetoric of "progress" becomes a tool to legitimize land appropriation and suppress Indigenous dissent, recasting resistance as backwardness or obstruction to national growth.

Yusra's novel highlights the tragic dialectic of such resistance: while the community initially mobilizes to protect their ancestral lands, the lure of short-term economic gain, backed by government collusion with corporations, steadily undermines collective resolve. Official maps deliberately erase homes and sacred forests, transforming the land into blank "space" for exploitation (Abroorza A, 2021, p. 152). Santo's hand-drawn counter-maps, village meetings,

and spiritual appeals cannot fully halt the tide of dispossession when the narrative of "progress" has already taken root among his people. This tension reflects Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence—harm that seeps through everyday life so insidiously that resistance becomes both necessary and tragically precarious.

Dari Rahim Ombak presents a more complex view of environmental resistance by examining how structural forces can corrupt even well-intentioned conservation efforts. The novel follows Katir, a young advocate who initially opposes destructive blast fishing practices but eventually becomes absorbed into the very networks he once fought against. Bungin uses Katir's trajectory to illustrate how ecological ethics can collapse under the weight of survival pressures, poverty, and local corruption. Katir's transformation is not presented as a simple moral failure but as the inevitable result of intersecting structural constraints. Economic desperation, patriarchal social norms, and organized illegal fishing operations converge to narrow his choices. His marriage to Ulan—daughter of Wa Makaruhun, a prominent bombing syndicate leader—comes with an explicit condition: he must "control and pass on the bombing skills" (Bungin, 2015, p. 168). This reveals what MacGregor (2006, p. 68) calls hegemonic where male social status becomes tied to environmental domination and exploitation. Through this narrative, Bungin reveals how destructive fishing practices persist not through individual greed but through community networks that legitimize ecological harm. These networks transform environmental destruction into a form of cultural inheritance, creating a system where masculinity, economic survival, and violence become inseparably linked. The novel thus demonstrates why environmental reform efforts often fail when they ignore these deeper structural entanglements.

> Katir relentlessly expanded his bombing territory, cutting short the rest periods for his vessels. He breached the security services provided by corrupt law enforcement officials, reaching even the highest ranks. Previously, these rogue officers merely protected the explosive distributors, but under Katir, they received additional payments. Their new task was straightforward: to brandish their weapons without hesitation at any fishers who dared to interfere. If you wanted a bullet in your head, you could challenge his bombing operations (Bungin, 2015, p. 198).

Yet Bungin's narrative does not conclude with resignation. Instead, it pivots toward figures such as Anjul and Jurmini, whose actions represent what Guha and Martínez-Alier (1997) describe as the environmentalism of the poor—a form of resistance grounded in subsistence needs and everyday survival rather than abstract environmental ideals. Following Katir's betrayal of conservation ethics, Anjul remains committed to defending the reef, confronting fish bombers at great personal risk: "willing to defend the coral at any cost" (Bungin, 2015, p. 124). Jurmini's return to Bungin Island, having reclaimed her identity as Dampa, signals a revitalization of communal agency. She mobilizes local fishers, establishes the Selayar Marine Park, and integrates traditional Bajo legends like the *Legenda Si Kareo* to rebuild a shared ethic of care for the coral reefs (Bungin, 2015, p. 331). This grassroots effort situates marine restoration as inseparable from cultural sovereignty and local livelihoods, affirming the novel's claim that "many rice plates await the coral's return" (Bungin, 2015, p. 333). (Bungin, 2015, p. 331). In contrast to *Danum*—where internal divisions fracture collective resistance—*Dari Rahim Ombak* shows how Indigenous stewardship can persist and adapt, even under the weight of systemic neglect and state-sanctioned ecological violence.

Read side by side, *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* illustrate that resistance within Indonesian environmental literature is deeply conflicted and shaped by internal tensions. Both works show how Indigenous communities are pressured not only by external corporate and state interests but also by economic necessity and narratives that rebrand exploitation as modern progress. In *Danum*, the conflict between Santo and Benediktus reveals how capitalist

expansion operates through material dispossession and the erosion of communal values from within. Similarly, *Dari Rahim Ombak* depicts how structural poverty and weak enforcement allow destructive fishing to persist. Katir's shift from conservation advocate to leader of blast fishing operations demonstrates how survival imperatives and social expectations can override inherited ecological ethics.

What sets *Dari Rahim Ombak* apart is its emphasis on gendered agency as a source of renewed resistance. Bungin foregrounds Jurmini's leadership in reviving communal reef stewardship, contrasting with *Danum*'s focus on male-centered internal conflict. Her work to establish a marine park shows how women's roles and ancestral maritime knowledge can reshape degraded coastal spaces into sites of collective recovery. Together, both texts argue that resistance is fragile and uneven yet remains possible when rooted in everyday cultural practice and community-driven adaptation.

The findings of this comparative study highlight how contemporary Indonesian environmental literature pushes beyond descriptive nature writing to intervene in debates about ecological justice and cultural survival. By situating forests and oceans as contested spaces bound to Indigenous cosmologies, *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* expose the persistent tension between economic growth and the erosion of local knowledge systems. These texts show that environmental crises in Indonesia are inseparable from broader questions of power, state complicity, and the legacy of colonial resource extraction reframed through modern development. In doing so, they align with postcolonial ecocriticism's call to connect material exploitation with cultural dispossession, revealing how literature can act as both witness and critique.

Importantly, both novels suggest that any meaningful response to ecological degradation must foreground local agency and Indigenous stewardship. *Danum* warns of how internalized capitalist values can fracture resistance when communities lose connection to place-based traditions, while *Dari Rahim Ombak* demonstrates how grassroots leadership, especially by women, can sustain fragile conservation efforts even under systemic neglect. Together, they argue for a rethinking of development models that treat forests and seas as commodities, advocating instead for approaches rooted in bioregional knowledge and community resilience. This shared message extends Indonesian ecocriticism into land–sea dialogue, reinforcing the idea that cultural survival and ecological survival are not parallel concerns but deeply intertwined.

Conclusion

This comparative study of *Danum* and *Dari Rahim Ombak* demonstrates how recent Indonesian literature frames environmental crisis through place, indigeneity, and resistance. By reading the forest as bioregion and the ocean as sacred space, this paper shows how contemporary narratives position land and sea as active sites of cultural memory and ecological struggle. The study contributes to Indonesian literary scholarship by combining postcolonial ecocriticism and Blue Humanities, moving beyond a purely land-focused lens. These texts reveal how literature exposes the ties between extractive capitalism, state support, and the loss of Indigenous ecological knowledge, underscoring literature's role as both critique and witness.

This study's scope is limited by its focus on only two localised narratives and does not address wider regional or urban contexts in Indonesian literature. Future research could build on this comparative approach by including additional works, other ecological settings, and cross-genre perspectives. Further study might also examine how these literary insights connect with conservation policy or support community-led sustainability. Despite these limits, the findings affirm that literature remains a crucial space for reimagining fairer ecological futures. By centring Indigenous knowledge and everyday resistance, these works remind us that cultural

survival and environmental care are inseparable — an insight relevant for broader sustainability debates across Indonesia and other regions facing similar pressures.

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