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Focus and Scope

J-Lalite: Journal of English Studies, published twice a year (in June and December), is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal that publishes original research and review articles, as well as innovative ideas in language, literature, and cultural studies. The journal covers all aspects relating to English Studies, including but not limited to the following:

1. English Linguistics
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17. Cultural Studies
18. Modern Culture
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Acronym-Based Communication in Cross-Cultural Meetings: A Narrative Study of Human Resources Professionals in Jakarta

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Abstract. This study explores the use of acronym-based communication strategies by HR (Human Resources) professionals during presentations to foreign clients. Delivering presentations in English within cross-cultural professional settings presents challenges for non-native speakers, including language proficiency, cultural nuances, and performance anxiety. Guided by Cross-Cultural Communication theory, this study examines how acronyms can bridge cultural gaps and enhance clarity. It also draws on the language and acronym theory, which views acronyms as cognitive-linguistic tools that simplify complex ideas, improve retention, and support fluent discourse. To investigate this phenomenon, a descriptive qualitative design employing narrative inquiry was used to explore the lived experience of an HR staff member at a multinational company in Jakarta. The participants shared reflective stories about preparing and delivering presentations using acronym-based methods. Findings reveal that acronyms help structure content, reduce stress, and engage international audiences more effectively. Furthermore, their use minimizes ambiguity and supports intercultural understanding. The study concludes that acronym-based strategies offer practical benefits for enhancing communication in global workplace settings, particularly for HR professionals who frequently engage in English-language and cross-cultural interactions.

Keywords: *Acronym-Based Strategy, Presentation Skills, Narrative Inquiry*

INTRODUCTION

Today, the importance and urgency of English proficiency, especially in the business sector, are evident (Roshid et al., 2021). As the global lingua franca, English is the primary medium of communication in international trade, negotiations, and corporate interactions (Yuksel et al., 2023). The previous explanation refers to employees who can communicate actively in English, thereby fostering partnerships, expanding market reach, and enhancing customer relations (Isadaud et al., 2022). Strong English skills provide individuals with better career opportunities and enable them to engage in cross-cultural communication.

In the workplace, one of the essential roles is that of Human Resources (HR) staff. HR professionals play a crucial role in conducting interviews, managing international teams, facilitating cross-cultural collaboration, handling negotiations, and ensuring clear and effective communication with overseas partners (Zhang & Giles, 2020). Their English proficiency is vital not only for daily correspondence but also for representing the organization in global interactions and fostering productive professional relationships (Nurzhanova & Issimova, 2022). HR departments frequently link with employees, stakeholders, and executives from diverse languages and backgrounds (Almashhadani & Almashhadani, 2023; Siemund et al., 2021) making English the facilitator as the language in it.

That aforementioned paragraph tells the urgency to use English toward the Human Resource staff as an extra self-qualification (Youngblood, 2021). Conversely, during conversations, meetings, or dialogues with foreign clients, misunderstandings may arise due to accents, unfamiliar terminology, or indirect communication styles. Several employees often struggle with confidence when using English, which leads to hesitation during negotiations or presentations with international business partners. This lack of confidence can hinder effective communication, reduce productivity, and negatively impact the company's global engagement. Therefore, improving language proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills is crucial for fostering better collaboration and achieving successful outcomes in international contexts.

The preceding argumentation of having a directed and well-arranged English presentation needs to be part of the working area, especially in the field of Human Resources (B et al., 2023). A particular company, particularly toward employees, should have language improvement training for smoother client interactions (Satienchayakorn & Sanpatchayapong, 2021). So that the meeting's purpose for the foreign client will run smoothly and effectively.

Besides the common emphasis on improving English skills—a goal that is widely recognized across various research fields—there is another crucial aspect in managing business meetings with foreign clients (Surveyandini, 2022). The other relevant thing being mentioned formerly talks about the use of a strategy to perform meetings neatly arranged (Bolotina & Vlavatskaya, 2022; Putra et al., 2024). Thus, one such strategy involves the use of acronyms, which play a central role in organizing meetings efficiently and effectively. This approach not only streamlines communication but also helps participants stay focused on key objectives. Thus, the acronym strategy can be defined as an essential tool for enhancing the overall quality and productivity of business meetings.

The acronym strategy, which focuses on functioning as a memory aid, helps participants organize discussions, streamline key points, and maintain a clear and prepared conversation flow (Al-zu'bi & Kayed, 2024; Shirotriya, 2022). So that the meeting agenda of a certain topic to be discussed would be served, presented, and delivered systematically. This approach ensures that discussions remain goal-oriented, facilitating smoother negotiations, faster decision-making, and overall improved meeting performance.

Regarding the acronym strategy, especially in professional office settings such as in business, emails, and corporate conversations, the use of familiar acronyms is highly prevalent. One widely recognized example is the acronym *A.S.A.P.*, which stands for '*As Soon As Possible*.' This term is often preferred to longer expressions of urgency because it conveys the need for immediate action concisely and in a universally understood way. By using *A.S.A.P.*, professionals emphasize the importance of promptness and efficiency without overexplaining the urgency (Navy et al., 2020) & (Faisal et al., 2023).

The acronym '*S.M.A.R.T.*' is widely used in career development and goal-setting frameworks. It provides a clear and structured method for defining objectives that are both realistic and attainable. Specifically, *S.M.A.R.T.* stands for *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound*. By applying this strategy, individuals can create focused goals that are easier to track and evaluate, ultimately increasing the likelihood of success. This approach also enhances motivation and accountability throughout the goal-achievement process (Desjardins & Christoph, 2021; Shafie et al., 2019). This acronym is intended to enhance productivity, focus, and efficiency in career planning and business strategies.

Another widely used acronym in career and business strategy is *S.W.O.T.*, which stands for *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats*. This framework helps individuals and organizations assess internal and external factors that influence success (Mater et al., 2022). By identifying these elements, *SWOT* analysis supports better decision-making, strategic planning, and personal growth, especially when navigating career paths or building effective business strategies.

The core issue concerns organizing effective meetings with foreign clients, especially in professional settings where English proficiency is crucial. This was observed by the researcher in the HR department of *ReIndo Syariah*, a Jakarta-based reinsurance company operating under *Sharia* principles.

In the initial phase of the study on English-speaking proficiency, four HR staff members involved in client communication were identified as research participants. They will participate in interviews and assessments, with data analyzed to inform them about their experiences and competencies. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the study aims to gain deeper insights into the communicative challenges these professionals face and the strategies they employ in international business settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer employs a descriptive qualitative design with a narrative inquiry approach (Njie & Asimiran, 2021) which explores participants' experiences through a three-dimensional inquiry space: interaction (personal and social contexts), continuity (past, present, and future dimensions of experience), and

situation (specific places or contexts). This framework guided the collection, analysis, and re-presentation of participants' stories (Layza et al., 2020). Narrative inquiry was applied to analyze events, meanings, and patterns within real-life contexts, thereby providing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. By situating the narratives within these dimensions, the study captured how Human Resources professionals at *ReIndo Syariah* constructed their experiences of using acronym-based communication in international meetings.

In analyzing the participants' working professionalism, this study adopted the framework of (Sadeghi & Richards, 2021) which categorizes professionalism into three dimensions: attitudes, behaviors, and intellectual capacity. These dimensions guided both the coding process and the interpretation of participants' narratives, ensuring that their experiences with acronym-based communication were examined through a theoretically grounded lens.

Furthermore, the study employed Gudykunst's Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (A.U.M) theory as being taken from (Rajan et al., 2025) as its primary cross-cultural communication framework. A.U.M emphasizes that effective intercultural communication occurs when individuals manage anxiety and reduces uncertainty, allowing messages to be delivered more clearly and predictably. Within this framework, acronym-based communication served as a practical tool to enhance clarity, structure, and efficiency, enabling HR professionals at *ReIndo Syariah* to minimize misunderstandings and foster shared meaning across cultures.

From a linguistic perspective, the analysis was informed by cognitive linguistics, which views acronyms as cognitive shortcuts for organizing and retrieving complex concepts, and sociolinguistics, which considers acronyms as markers of professional identity and group belonging (Liu & Qin, 2024). Together, these perspectives demonstrate how acronyms not only streamlined communication but also reinforced clarity, mutual understanding, and solidarity in intercultural professional settings.

A. Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed by using the narrative inquiry, which emphasizes interpreting participants' experiences as storied accounts (Şahan & Sahan, 2023). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher organized the narratives into well-structured storylines that reflected participants' experiences with acronym-based strategies in international meetings. Each account was examined for its context, sequence, and meaning, allowing the researcher to highlight how the participants constructed their understanding of communication practices. The narratives were then re-presented and interpreted to reveal insights into how acronym-based communication facilitated fluency, structure, and effectiveness during cross-cultural interactions.

B. Participants

This study involved four employees of *ReIndo Syariah*, who were purposively selected as the participants. They were selected for their active participation in international meetings, where cross-cultural communication frequently occurs. Each participant had direct experience applying acronym-based strategies during

presentations, which enabled them to deliver their ideas more fluently and in a well-structured manner. Their professional background and firsthand engagement in cross-cultural settings made them suitable informants for providing in-depth narratives on how acronym-based communication supports clarity and effectiveness in international meetings.

C. Theoretical Framework Application

This study was informed by integrating a cross-cultural communication theory (Sabirova et al., 2021) and the framework of narrative inquiry (Sonday et al., 2020). These theories were not only discussed in the literature review but were also operationalized in the research process. Cross-cultural communication theory informed the development of interview questions, particularly those addressing clarity, message structuring, and meaning negotiation in international meetings. Narrative inquiry provided the lens through which the participants' stories were interpreted, ensuring that their experiences with acronym-based strategies were analyzed as storied accounts rather than isolated responses. In this way, the theories directly shaped both the data collection and the analytical procedures.

Within this study, mnemonic theories of acronyms were applied, which view them as powerful memory aids for organizing and retrieving information (Navy et al., 2020). Complementary insights from cognitive load theory (Lyons, 2020) further emphasize how acronyms reduce cognitive load by condensing complex ideas into concise forms, thereby enabling HR professionals at *ReIndo Syariah* to deliver presentations more fluently, cohesively, and persuasively.

To conclude, the study combined cross-cultural communication with a narrative inquiry approach by using the A.U.M (Anxiety/Uncertainty Management) theory (Rajan et al., 2025) as the analytical lens through which the narratives are examined. While narrative inquiry captured participants' lived experiences of using acronyms in intercultural meetings, A.U.M. (Anxiety/Uncertainty Management) theory framed these experiences as reflecting the management of anxiety and uncertainty. This integration ensured that the narratives were not only descriptive but also theoretically grounded in cross-cultural communication.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examines two scenarios: before and after the implementation of the acronym strategy in meetings with foreign clients, and after the strategy has been in place for more than one month. The researcher's dual role as teacher and manager was recognized as a potential source of bias. To address this, reflexivity, member checking, and peer debriefing were employed to ensure that participants' responses were authentically represented and not overly shaped by the researcher's position.

The study involved four experienced HR staff—three men and one woman, all aged 30–40—with over five years of experience in international communication and coordination. Their backgrounds reflect strong familiarity with managing meetings and tasks involving international clients, making them well-suited to assessing the impact of acronym-based strategies in global business contexts.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of HR Staff at ReIndo Syariah

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Working Duration
1.	NFR	35 years old	Female	7 years
2.	PAK	38 years old	Male	10 years
3.	SHY	40 years old	Male	8 years
4.	JMM	34 years old	Male	9 years

Based on the interview with HR staff, they have known English as the language since high school and university. However, they sometimes appear unconfident and uncertain at the outset, particularly when initiating a meeting with the native client. This prompts the researcher to examine how to conduct meetings with foreign clients.

A. HR Staff's opinion about managing a meeting before using the acronym strategy

The first person, she used to listen, interact, and talk in English; occasionally, she finds herself blank, forgetful, and challenged to produce words, sentences, or specific arguments in English. She is also familiar with accessing English content through social media, the internet, and online tutorials, and with using references for independent learning or improvement.

"You know what, I know English, of course. When I was in school and college, I learnt it. But there is one problem—when I have a presentation delivery in a meeting with an oversea client, I don't know why, but suddenly and sometimes I freeze up! I feel like I have no idea what I am going to say or continue in the middle of presentation. Actually, there are a lot of words in my mind, but it seems like I need to find a strategic way to express them smoothly. Hopefully, I won't forget them once I know the right strategy to improve my speaking and presentation skills. (NFR, 2025)

From the statement above, it is evident that the accounting graduate reported difficulties communicating effectively with clients in English, particularly during meetings with foreign guests. She admitted feeling hesitant and blunt when expressing her ideas, indicating a lack of fluency and confidence in using English professionally. To overcome this barrier, she relied on a digital translation tool—Google Translate—to aid his understanding and articulation. This reliance highlights not only the importance of language proficiency in professional settings but also the growing role of digital tools in bridging communication gaps. The main takeaway is that the individual requires external assistance to enhance comprehension and prevent potential miscommunication or misinterpretation during cross-cultural interactions.

The second participant also realizes that English is omnipresent in daily life—it appears everywhere and at all times. According to him, English can be observed in various forms across media platforms, advertisements, job vacancy requirements (e.g., TOEFL scores), food and beverage packaging, and information and communication technologies. He acknowledges that exposure to English is no longer limited to formal settings but has become integral to modern interaction. Furthermore, he is aware of the linguistic transitions resulting from the widespread use of English. This includes phenomena such as code-mixing, translanguaging, bilingualism, and polyglotism. He perceives these changes not only as a reflection of globalization but also as a necessary adaptation to keep up with current trends in communication, especially in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

"I understand English well. Unfortunately, sometimes I feel my presentation, my words are unstructured, disorganized, and lack coherence. This becomes even more challenging when I am assigned to communicate with foreign clients. In such situations, I often struggle to direct my thoughts clearly, and my sentences don't always flow clearly. I find myself pausing too often, searching for the right words. Then, I need an effective and enjoyable strategy for improving my English-presentation skills. I want to develop a method that helps me speak confidently, structure my ideas logically, and respond naturally in conversations. By doing so, I hope to communicate more fluently, maintain clarity in my speech, and build better connections with my clients."
(PAK, 2025)

Based on the statement, the next person possesses fundamental English language skills. However, the manner of speaking remains unstructured and disorganized, which may hinder effective communication. This issue needs to be addressed by applying a specific, well-planned, and brain-friendly learning strategy. By adopting such an approach, the person can gradually enhance their communicative competence. Over time, it is expected that their ability to communicate in English will improve significantly—especially in high-stakes situations, such as presenting ideas or engaging in discussions with international clients. Strengthening this skill is essential not only for personal development but also for building professional confidence and success in global interactions.

"I understand English quite well, but sadly, there are times when my vocabulary feels limited. This becomes even more challenging when I am entrusted with the responsibility of having conversations with foreign clients. In those moments, I often struggle to find the right words to express my thoughts clearly and naturally. I know that I have the knowledge, but sometimes, when I need to speak fluently, my mind goes blank, and I hesitate. Here, I truly need is a well-structured strategy to improve my speaking skills—something that allows me to communicate in English with confidence and ease. I don't just want to speak; I want to enjoy the process and engage in conversations flawlessly, without feeling nervous or stuck."
(SHY, 2025)

From a third-person perspective, the statement clearly emphasizes the importance of vocabulary or word selection. Having a sufficient vocabulary is essential for speaking English effectively, as vocabulary underpins communication. It allows individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions clearly and precisely. Without an adequate range of words, accurately conveying messages can be challenging, often leading to misunderstandings or difficulty expressing oneself fully. Moreover, a rich vocabulary enhances not only spoken communication but also listening comprehension and reading skills. It enables learners to engage more confidently in conversations and to interpret nuances in meaning. Therefore, expanding one's vocabulary is a critical step in mastering the English language and improving overall communication competence.

"Since I took an English course at a prestigious institution for three years during my college years, I understand English well at that time. You know what, I have a solid grasp of grammar, vocabulary, and writing, and I understand spoken English quite well. However, despite my knowledge, I once faced a challenging situation. There was a time when I was entrusted with the responsibility of having a dialogue with a foreign client. To my surprise, I found myself struggling to speak fluently. My mind went blank, and I started stuttering, unable to articulate my thoughts clearly. So, I really need is an effective strategy to help me speak English effortlessly and confidently. I want to develop the ability to communicate naturally, without unnecessary pauses or hesitation."

(JMM, 2025)

The fourth participant had taken an English course in college, which significantly improved her language skills at the time. However, in a professional environment where English is not regularly used, fluency tends to decline gradually. She explained that her confidence in speaking had diminished due to limited exposure. Without consistent practice or opportunities to engage in English conversations, even previously strong communication abilities may weaken. This underscores the importance of sustained language use and ongoing development, particularly in international or cross-cultural workplaces where English proficiency is essential for effective collaboration and professional growth.

From those 4 (four) staff in the position of HR, they have declared brief reasons or arguments about their failure to arrange or manage a meeting with the foreign client. The crux is that they need a strategy to effectively manage multinational meetings, especially when collaborating with international business partners. The strategy the writer examines is the acronym-based international meeting strategy. In this opportunity, the writer proposes a user-friendly acronym-based meeting strategy for conducting business meetings.

B. The Implementation of Acronym Strategy in Improving Conversation

To overcome the meeting's arrangement to run smoothly and effectively, the writer has a novel approach in creating the brain-friendly acronym strategy. The writer then outlines four simple ways to organize a meeting to ensure it runs smoothly.

Data 1. The Use of **B.R.I.D.G.E.**

To implement an effective meeting strategy for HR staff, the acronym B.R.I.D.G.E. provides a valuable framework.

Table 2. The B.R.I.D.G.E Acronym

The Acronym	The Meaning
B	Begin with greetings
R	Review of the agenda
I	Investigating client needs
D	Discuss solutions & negotiate.
G	Gather final thoughts
E	End with next steps

As is seen from the table, each word of B.R.I.D.G.E. has its own explanation. Then, the definition of them is as follows:

- A. The first is **“Begin with Greeting”**. It sets the tone for productive and respectful interaction. For example, whether in a formal business meeting, a team discussion, or a client presentation, a proper greeting establishes a positive ambience, builds rapport, and encourages engagement among participants. It is stated that it is to welcome, salute, or embrace the native client before entering the core of the discussion.
- B. The second, it shows **“Review the Agenda”**. It aims to be the crucial step in any professional meeting, as it sets the stage for a structured, focused, and productive discussion. The agenda serves as a roadmap that outlines key topics, objectives, and time allocations, ensuring that all participants are aligned and prepared. A well-developed agenda sets the tone for a successful meeting, enabling teams to make informed decisions and take meaningful action.
- C. The third, **“Investigate Client Needs”**. This is a fundamental step in any business interaction: investigating client needs to ensure successful collaboration and the delivery of tailored solutions. This process involves actively understanding the client's requirements, challenges, and expectations to provide services or products that align with their goals.
- D. The fourth, it sees **“Discuss solutions & negotiate”**. This moment is the main activity of the meeting. In any professional context, discussing solutions and negotiating play crucial roles in problem-solving, decision-making, and achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. Whether in business meetings, project discussions, or client negotiations, these two processes ensure that challenges are addressed strategically and agreements are reached effectively.
- E. The fifth, it is **“Gather final thoughts”**. Gathering final thoughts entails summarizing key points, addressing any remaining concerns, and ensuring that all participants are aligned before the meeting concludes. As this part is in, this step plays a vital role in various events, such as reinforcing understanding, promoting engagement, and securing commitment to action items.

- F. The sixth, it is read “**End with next steps**”. Reaching the end of a meeting with the following steps is not only the end. This kind of closing will also ensure clarity, accountability, and progress. Without clearly defined following actions, topic discussion may become unproductive, leading to confusion or lack of follow-through. A structured closing helps align all participants with their responsibilities and the timeline for future tasks.

To conclude, by understanding and elaborating on the acronym **B.R.I.D.G.E.**, employees can more easily remember the essential steps involved in organizing and conducting a meeting. This mnemonic serves as a practical guide to help ensure that meetings with overseas clients are well-structured and purposeful. Ultimately, it aims to enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of communication during such interactions. When followed correctly, the **B.R.I.D.G.E** framework not only facilitates smoother business discussions but also fosters stronger relationships with international partners. This approach contributes to the efficient achievement of meeting objectives while minimizing misunderstandings and wasting time.

Data 2. The Use of **C.A.R.E.**

To implement the optimal meeting opportunity strategy for HR staff, the word C.A.R.E. serves as an acronym.

Table 3. The Care Acronym

The Acronym	The Meaning
C	Casual greeting
A	Ask about business updates
R	Respond and share insights
E	End with the next planning

Given the explanation of the word ‘CARE’ in arranging a meeting directly, then the following definition will be broken down, which are:

- A. The first, the context of “**Casual greeting**” means to have an opening before starting the meeting. Although the meeting or official annual meeting is a formal situation, the use of Casual greetings tends to be more relaxed, friendly, and spontaneous, making them ideal for daily workplace communication.
- B. The second, it states, “**Ask about business updates**”. This definition aims to provide insights into ongoing projects, company performance, and key developments. This also serves to monitor workflow, ensure deadlines are met, and provide necessary support.
- C. The third, it states “**Respond and share insights**”. The purpose of this section is to provide the key to meaningful communication with others. Ideally, the bottom line of this meeting business is responding appropriately, demonstrating actively, and sharing insights.
- D. The fourth, it reads “**End with next planning**”. In a well-structured meeting or other related official setting, it should not only address current progress but also set a clear direction for future actions to ensure continuity. It is

understood that concluding the next plan is a crucial step that helps ensure discussions lead to concrete outcomes, thereby maintaining momentum and accountability within the team.

In summary, the *CARE* framework guides effective meeting communication by starting with a friendly, casual greeting, followed by discussing business updates, engaging through meaningful responses and insights, and concluding with precise future planning. This structured approach ensures productive interactions, supports team accountability, and drives ongoing progress in a professional yet approachable manner.

Data 3. The Use of **W.O.R.K**

To implement an optimal meeting opportunity strategy for HR staff, the word W.O.R.K. can be interpreted as an acronym.

Table 4. The Work Acronym

The Acronym	The Meaning
<i>W</i>	Working together
<i>O</i>	Optimizing the Communication
<i>R</i>	Respect culture
<i>K</i>	Keep goals

Given the explanation of the word **WORK** in arranging a meeting straight, then the following definition will be broken down, which are:

- A. The first, the context of “**Working together**” means, it is more than just completing tasks as a group and is done; moreover, it also refers to a dynamic process of collaboration that fosters innovation, efficiency, and mutual support.
- B. The second, it states “**Optimizing the Communication**”. To define this, effective communication is the backbone of successful collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving in both professional and personal settings. Optimizing communication involves refining how messages are conveyed to ensure clarity, engagement, and mutual understanding among individuals or teams.
- C. The third, it states “**Respect culture**”. In a globalized world, respect for culture is essential to building strong relationships with the native client. Subsequently, cultural respect extends beyond merely acknowledging differences.
- D. The fourth, it reads “**Keep goals**”. To effectively keep a goal, individuals or teams must first establish a clear vision of what they want to accomplish. This involves defining specific milestones, tracking progress, and adjusting approaches.

Briefly stated, successful collaboration relies on dynamic teamwork, clear communication, respect for cultural differences, and shared goals. By integrating these key elements, individuals and teams can foster innovation, build strong

relationships, and achieve their objectives efficiently in diverse and global environments.

Data 4. The Use of **S.M.A.R.T**

To perform an optimal meeting opportunity strategy toward the HR staff, the word of **S.M.A.R.T** has a meaning from the side of an acronym.

Table 5. The Smart Acronym

The Acronym	The Meaning
S	Say hello
M	Mention the main topic
A	Ask for details or offer help
R	Respond with a solution
T	Thank you, and close to the conversation

As is seen from the table, each word of S.M.A.R.T. has its own explanation. Then, the definition of them is as follows:

- A. The first is "**Say hello**". The "Saying Hello" is used for both personal and professional settings. Next, that kind of greeting is more than just a formality; moreover, it sets the tone for a conversation, creates a welcoming atmosphere, and constructs a connection between individuals
- B. The second, it shows "**Mention the main topic**". It aims to state the main topic of discussion at the beginning clearly. This part is the purposeful step that sets the direction and purpose of the discussion. It ensures that all participants understand the meeting's focus and remain aligned throughout the discussion.
- C. The third, "**Ask for details or offer help**". This ability to request details or help is a fundamental communication skill that enhances collaboration. Shortly, asking the right questions will prevent errors, while extending support to colleagues will build a cooperative team to be dynamic and consistent
- D. The fourth, it sees "**Respond with a solution**". In a meeting, rather than merely acknowledging a problem, offering a well-thought-out solution demonstrates initiative and professionalism. Employees who consistently respond with solutions will become valuable assets to their teams, as they contribute to a proactive and results-driven work environment in the office.
- E. The fifth, it is "**Thank and close the conversation**". Closing a conversation effectively is just as important as starting one, especially in a business meeting. Proper closure will ensure clarity. In addition, it leaves a positive impression and reinforces mutual understanding. On the other hand, whether in person, over the phone, or via Gmail, a well-structured closing reinforces positive engagement and leaves a professional impression.

In summary, the **S.M.A.R.T.** framework provides a clear and practical approach to communication in both personal and professional meetings. By following its five steps—greeting, stating the main topic, asking for details or

offering help, responding with solutions, and closing with gratitude—participants can foster clarity, collaboration, and professionalism, ultimately ensuring productive and positive interactions in any business context.

C. HR Staff's opinion about managing a meeting after using the acronym strategy

After implementing the acronym strategy for an international business meeting, the first person adopts an impressive, structured approach to delivering it to the client in Hollywood, Los Angeles, USA. This is the statement from the first person:

*I feel like, I'm ready to start the meeting by delivering the presentation. In my mind, by simply remembering **B.R.I.D.G.E** as the representative of what I am going to do then I know what to do. By starting with a warm greeting, we establish a positive atmosphere. Reviewing the agenda keeps everyone aligned, while investigating client needs ensures a tailored discussion. The discussion phase flows smoothly, and gathering final thoughts helps summarize key points. Ending with the next steps provides clear direction moving forward. This structured approach has increased our efficiency, improved communication, and built stronger client relationships. Thanks to **B.R.I.D.G.E.**, our meetings are now more professional, productive, and results-oriented.*

From the statement, it appears to be a kind of hack in conducting a meeting step. As a result, the meeting proceeded smoothly from beginning to end. It is implied that a person depends on the brain, rather than on other things, as is usually the case; for example, on a device (cellphone, tablet, laptop, or other devices). Then, that one word serves as a guideline for coordinating the meeting.

The second person also shows a slight difference in the use of the acronym when managing a particular business meeting. On a specific occasion, it has a native client from Beirut, Lebanon. Then the use of English as the language and using an acronym is shown as follows:

*Implementing the **C.A.R.E.** strategy in our international meetings has really made a difference. Starting with a casual greeting helps break the ice and set a positive tone. Then, when we ask about business updates, it ensures everyone is aligned on progress. The respond and share insights step foster meaningful discussions, allowing us to exchange ideas efficiently. Finally, ending with next planning keeps the meeting structured and goal-oriented. This approach has significantly improved our communication with foreign clients, making meetings more engaging, productive, and well-organized. **C.A.R.E.** is a simple yet powerful framework that structurally works!*

The second person has managed the meeting well because of the **C.A.R.E.** acronym strategy. According to that person, the meeting has run on time, has been effective, and has been arranged systematically. The event from the opening point or main topic to the closing is conveyed effectively.

The third person also experiences a similar moment of being with the international guest during a business meeting. That is from Manila, the Philippines. Besides having the English skills to communicate or deliver the oral presentation, it is not enough; it also needs an excellent management strategy in having a meeting; one of them is the exact acronym strategy, as follows:

*"Implementing the **W.O.R.K** strategy (Working together, Optimizing communication, Respecting culture, and Keeping goals) has truly transformed our international meetings. Before, discussions often lacked structure, and misunderstandings were common. Now, with a clear approach, our meetings are more organized, productive, and efficient. By working together, we build stronger collaboration. Optimizing communication ensures clarity, while respecting cultural differences fosters a positive environment. Keeping goals in mind keeps us focused and results-driven. Since adopting this strategy, interactions with foreign clients have become smoother, leading to better relationships and successful outcomes. **W.O.R.K** has made a real difference in our professional engagements!"*

That third person has already ruled out and conducted the meeting in a structured and systematic manner. The steps from the opening to the closing have been made optimally. Both the client and the staff have a mutual symbolism. The client has participated well in the meeting and understands the idea and next steps for the upcoming event.

The last person also has a meeting with a client in Serangoon, Singapore. After having full preparation, briefing, and all the necessary things beforehand, the meeting is about to begin. The language to be used is instructed to be in the client's native language.

*Using the **S.M.A.R.T** strategy (Say hello, Mention the main topic, Ask for details or offer help, Respond with a solution, and Thank and close the conversation) has truly transformed our international meetings. It provides a clear structure, ensuring that discussions remain focused and efficient. With this approach, we start meetings with a warm greeting, address key points quickly, and engage in meaningful discussions without unnecessary detours. Our clients appreciate the well-organized flow, making collaboration smoother and more productive. Thanks to **S.M.A.R.T.**, our team communicates with confidence, delivers solutions effectively, and maintains strong professional relationships globally.*

That fourth person sometimes tends to the point of the meeting directly. As the meeting starts, it is better to welcome or to say hi to the client. Also, it will make you relax first and keep being steady. Although it is formal situation, adding an opening-closing has an important role.

To conclude, organizations can ensure that acronym-based communication strategies remain culturally appropriate by emphasizing clarity, inclusivity, and mutual understanding. Before applying the acronyms, employees should briefly explain their meaning and function to international clients, helping to avoid confusion or cultural misinterpretation. The aforesaid explanation points out; the

acronyms must use globally understandable English terms that exclude idioms or culturally bound expressions.

Furthermore, organizations should solicit client feedback to assess whether their strategy fosters intercultural understanding. This ongoing reflective process ensures that acronyms serve not only as linguistic frameworks but also as practical bridges for respectful and adaptive cross-cultural communication, ultimately facilitating a welcoming environment for international clients

CONCLUSION

By using acronym-based strategies, the HR staff at *ReIndo Syariah* in Jakarta effectively delivered well-structured presentations during international meetings. These methods improved communication, promoted mutual understanding, and ensured efficient agenda execution while respecting cultural differences. As a result, the meetings became more productive, professional, and collaborative. This study explores how Human Resources professionals in Jakarta use acronym-based communication strategies in cross-cultural meetings. Through narrative inquiry, it reveals how such strategies enhance clarity, bridge cultural differences, and facilitate mutual understanding in diverse professional environments, offering insights for effective intercultural workplace communication.

For the upcoming research, researchers will adopt a mixed-method approach by combining narrative inquiry with quantitative surveys and discourse analysis. This integration will allow for a more holistic understanding of how acronym-based strategies influence intercultural communication. Surveys can capture clients' perceptions of clarity, politeness, and professionalism, while discourse analysis will reveal how acronyms function in authentic business interactions. Including international clients' perspectives will enhance the study's validity and provide comprehensive insights into the practical effectiveness of acronym-based communication frameworks across diverse cultural contexts.

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Cultural Representation and User Perceptions in Indonesian English Textbooks: A Mixed-Method Analysis

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Abstract. This study is urgent because English textbooks in Indonesia play a central role in shaping readers' linguistic development and intercultural awareness, yet existing materials are still insufficiently evaluated in terms of how culture is represented and perceived. A qualitative approach with a mixed-method analysis was employed. First method was conducted for analysing cultural content on three English educational textbooks: *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VII and VIII, and *Think Globally, Act Locally* for Grade IX based on the frameworks of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Silvia (2014), Moran (2001), and Yuen (2011)'s cultural model. Second method applied thematic analysis on result of a semi-structure interview involving 18 respondents who are actively engaged in an academic setting from 6 different educational institutions in Indonesia to gain their cultural views on English textbooks. The findings of cultural types (the origin of culture) showed 156 appearances in total, comprising 60 (38.5%) appearances of source culture, 6 (3.8%) of target culture, 7 (4.5%) of international target culture, and 83 (53.2%) of culture-free content. Moreover, cultural elements (the forms of culture) showed 156 appearances. Of these, 107 (68.5%) were categorized as product, 43 (27.5%) as practice, 2 (1.3%) as perspective, and 4 (2.5%) as person. Thematic analysis on the data of semi-structured interview shows cultural contents were inseparably integrated in English educational textbooks for users' better understanding of English mastery and inclusive culture. Ultimately, this study recommends English educational textbooks should emphasize the integration of culturally inclusive materials to enhance readers' English skill and promote the English non-native speakers' engagement through culturally relevant instruction.

Keywords: *perception, cultural content, English textbooks*

<http://jos.unsoed.ac.id/index.php/jes>

INTRODUCTION

Culture represents the identity of one or more communities, characterized by aspects such as language, cuisine, beliefs, clothing, lifestyle, beverages, and ways of thinking. It encompasses the ideas, customs, skills, and arts, along with material objects that influence daily life (Kuprikov, 2022), as well as intellectual, spiritual, and social norms, and individual behaviors (Boruah, 2020), and reflecting human creativity and social organization (Makhmudova, 2022). Thus, culture is a collective property shared among members of a community and expressed through various forms like rituals, artifacts, and institutions. Cultural content is categorized into two main components: cultural types (the origin of culture) and cultural elements (form of culture). The cultural types include (1) source culture, (2) target culture, (3) international target culture (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), and (4) culture-free (Silvia, 2014), while the cultural elements consist of (1) person, (2) practice, (3) product, and (4) perspectives (Moran, 2001; Yuen, 2011). Simply, culture is a shared system reflecting the identity of a community through its beliefs, practices, artifacts, and ways of thinking, encompassing both cultural types (source, target, international, and culture-free) and cultural elements (persons, practices, products, and perspectives).

Source culture refers to the culture that represents learners' own background, in this case, the culture of Indonesian learners, such as *Gordang Sambilan*, *Sampuraga*, *mudik*, *Borobudur*, and *gudeg*. Target culture refers to the culture of countries where the target language (English) is spoken as a first language, such as *Hollywood*, *Thanksgiving Day*, or *Big Ben*. International target culture encompasses cultures that originate from countries other than the source (Indonesian) or target (English-speaking) ones, for instance, *kimono*, *anime*, and the *Sapporo Snow Festival* from Japan; *kebab* from Turkey; and *sari* and *Bollywood* from India (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Meanwhile, culture-free refers to cultural aspects that are not tied to any specific nation or community (Silvia, 2014), such as *shoes*, *television*, or *the internet*. However, once an item or concept is associated with a particular country or community, it becomes part of that culture, for example, the *kimono* cannot be considered culture-free *dress* because it is distinctly identified with Japanese culture. This study examines the ways in which cultural contents are presented in English educational textbooks and investigates how respondents perceive these cultural contents within the context of English textbooks they use.

Previous studies had revealed cultural content in English language learning. A study conducted by Seftika, Janah, and Syaputri (2017) emphasized the study on local culture for Teaching English, especially inserting culture of Lampungnese, Javanese, Sundanese, Padangnese, and Palembangnese. Another study by Rizal (2012) emphasized potential of culture to enhance writing skill, especially creative writing. Moreover, incorporating local culture, such as Sentani culture, can strengthen students' knowledge on English and Papua's cultural heritage (Yektiningtyas & Modouw, 2017). Furthermore, Anggraini and Rohmah (2024)

examined cultural representation within two points namely source culture (Indonesian culture) and target culture (English culture).

These previous research are different from the current study in terms of theories as the main focus. This study employs theory of origin of culture (cultural types), and theory of the form of culture (cultural elements). However, there are similarities in the focus of source culture and target culture. The selection of the English textbooks *When English Rings a Bell* (for Grades VII and VIII) and *Think Globally, Act Locally* (for Grade IX) is considered based on key pedagogical and contextual points. These textbooks exhibit a strong integration of cultural content, with a particular emphasis on Indonesian source culture complemented by elements of target and international cultures, thereby fostering users' intercultural competence and contextualized language use. The textbooks are systematically structured, learner-centered, and aligned with national curriculum standards, enhancing their pedagogical relevance and support for autonomous learning. The materials are also presented in a clear and accessible format, facilitating users' comprehension and engagement with both linguistic and cultural content embedded in texts, visuals, and activities. Moreover, as government-endorsed publications, these textbooks are extensively utilized across Indonesian schools, ensuring their representativeness, relevance, and wide applicability within the national educational landscape. Therefore, this study focused on two points: (1) the cultural contents represented in three English educational textbooks, (2) the perceptions of respondents about the cultural content in the English educational textbooks.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research approach with a mixed-method analysis. Qualitative approach employs words to describe a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Similarly, Emzir (2015) explains that descriptive qualitative research provide a comprehensive and narrative representation of the object being studied. This approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth exploration and description of cultural representations found within written texts and images in the English textbooks.

For this study, the descriptive qualitative method was applied to analyze the cultural content in the English textbooks consisting of cultural types (the origin of culture) and cultural elements (the forms of culture) present in three English educational textbooks used in Indonesian educational institutions: first, *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VII (Wachidah, Gunawan, & Khatimah, 2014), second, *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VIII (Wachidah & Gunawan, 2014), and third, *Think Globally, Act Locally* for Grade IX (Wachidah & Gunawan, 2015). The analysis was guided by two theoretical frameworks: (1) cultural types (the origin of culture) based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Silvia (2014), which include source culture, target culture, international target culture, and culture-free; and (2) cultural elements (the form of culture) based on Yuen (2011), encompassing product, practice, perspective, and person.

Furthermore, this study sought to investigate the perceptions of respondents who are actively involved in academic environments regarding the role of cultural content in English textbooks. To collect qualitative data, the

researcher conducted semi-structured interviews focusing on how culture influences English language learning. Prior to their use, the interview questions were carefully reviewed, validated, and revised with the help of experts to ensure clarity and relevance, which included making several adjustments such as adding, modifying, or removing certain items.

The respondent selection was conducted by applying *quota sampling*. From 6 academic settings, there were 3 respondents selected for representing each academic site, and they are considered as users of English educational textbooks. Total 18 respondents involved in this study. Respondent were selected after having met characteristics as follows: 1) having engaged with a minimum of 2 years in English academic setting, 2) possessed experience of using and reading the English textbook of *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VII, *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VIII, and *Think Globally, Act Locally* for Grade IX.

After conducting the interviews, the obtained data were systematically analyzed by using Braun and Clarke thematic analysis consisting of six-phase procedure: data familiarization, generating initial code, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Trustworthiness in thematic analysis was applied through four key criteria based on Lincoln and Guba's framework: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The analysis process followed the stages outlined in the research design, with the data categorized into specific themes that aligned with the study's objectives. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how respondents perceived the cultural aspects presented in English textbooks and their significance in the learning process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion of the data analysis were organized around the two points of research. First section focuses on cultural contents consisting of cultural types and cultural elements, and the second section deliberates respondents' perspectives on cultural contents in the English educational textbooks they used.

1. Cultural Contents in English Educational Textbooks Cultural Types (The Origin of Culture)

One of the findings identified as source culture in the textbooks was an image of restaurant Padang or *Rumah Makan Padang*. It is a well-known restaurant in Indonesia since it published in an advertisement in newspaper *Pemandangan*, Batavia in 1937. B. Ismail Naim, an immigrant from Minang, West Sumatera province who founded the restaurant offers Padangnese menu in Cirebon, West Java. He named his restaurant in Cirebon: *Padangsch-Restaurant "Gontjang-Lidah"*. Recently, *Rumah Makan Padang* has successfully taken over a large share of market of traditional restaurant and has branches in various regions in Indonesia. This introduced sample will be beneficial to raise community's respect to their own culture and stimulate nationalism. Moreover, culture free was mentioned in

the textbooks such as daily foods: rice, salty fish, and dishes that are regularly served for meal. The menu is not only referring to Indonesian's food, but it is also served as staple food in Malaysia, India, Brunei, China and other countries in Asia. These foods reflect culture of which do not belong to a specific country, but some Asian countries consume them as main foods. This kind of culture will enrich information about the familiarity of main food in their country with other countries.

Target culture in the textbooks was found in several times, one of them is displayed by a song entitled '*I have a dream*' in *When English Rings A Bell Grade VII*, a popular song by Westlife, an all-boy Irish band formed in July 1998 and disbanded in June 2012. The song was created by Benny Andersson/Björn Ulvaeus entitled: '*I Have a Dream*' (displayed in picture in the textbook) which was recorded by PWL Studios, London January 1999 and released on 25 December 1999. Westlife is very popular not only in Ireland and in the UK, but worldwide. The writer includes it into target culture (UK and English speaking countries). That song is appropriate with Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s theory related to target culture which means culture of the countries where the English is spoken as a first language. The English textbooks also contain international target culture where one of which is a folktale entitled *The Golden Star Fruit Tree* which represented story from Vietnam. This story is not commonly found outside of Vietnamese society. Vietnamese assume that story as a myth, while others assume it as a legend. This culture is useful to be introduced to help an individual who struggles in English acquisition to know other culture outside their country and automatically will raise their respect to people from different culture.

Overall distribution of the findings on cultural types in three English textbooks: *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VII and VIII and *Think Globally, Act Locally* for Grade IX, identified 156 cultural representations. Culture-free (CF) content predominated with 83 occurrences (53.2%), followed by source culture (SC) with 60 appearances (38.5%), while target culture (TC) and international target culture (ITC) appeared minimally, accounting for 6 (3.8%) and 7 occurrences (4.5%), respectively.

Table 1. Findings of Cultural Types in English textbooks

Grade	<i>When English Rings a Bell and Think Globally, Act Locally</i>				total
	Cultural Types				
	SC	TC	ITC	CF	
VII	14	1	1	44	60
VIII	9	1	2	17	29
IX	37	4	4	22	67
total	60	6	7	83	156
%	38,5%	3,8%	4,5%	53,2%	100%

The results of this study regarding cultural types (the origin of culture) show noticeable differences from previous research conducted by Yekhtiningtyas and Modouw (2017), Seftika, Janah, and Syaputri (2017), and Rizal (2012). The

main distinction lies in this study's focus on a wider range of cultural representations, particularly the target culture referring to English native speakers (from the UK and US), the international target culture representing cultures beyond Indonesia, the UK, and the US, as well as culture-free content. This broader categorization allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how diverse cultural dimensions are portrayed in English educational textbooks.

Despite these differences, there is also a point of similarity with earlier studies, especially in the attention given to local or source culture originating from Indonesia. However, while this study examined all aspects of Indonesian cultural representation found in the textbooks, previous research concentrated more on specific regional cultures, such as cultural aspect of Lampungnese, Javanese, Sundanese, Padangnese, Palembangnese (Seftika, Janah, & Syaputri (2017), and Sentani communities from Papua (Yektingtyas & Modouw, 2017). Although earlier research addressed the source culture (Anggraini & Rohmah, 2024), its representation was considerably smaller compared to the target culture, creating a challenge for readers to develop a broader understanding of global cultural awareness in learning English.

Moreover, previous studies have also similarities in terms of cultural imbalance representation in textbooks which emphasize textbooks function as cultural artifacts carrying ideological values and therefore play an important role in shaping learners' intercultural communicative competence (Cheng & Sun, 2026) unequal cultural representation in both locally developed and internationally distributed textbooks (Mahbub, Basthomi, Suryati, & ElKhoiri, 2024). In contrast, the findings differ from Promwatcharanon (2025), whose study revealed stronger representation of non-native English-speaking contexts and greater exposure to global cultures in ELT materials. This finding is also in alignment with previous studies by Tajeddin, Saeedi, and Khanlarzadeh (2024), who emphasized that English teachers' intercultural instructional practices require collaborative reflection to enhance learners' intercultural competence.

The implication of the dominance of culture-free and source culture content in the analyzed textbooks may stem from pedagogical, sociocultural, and institutional considerations within English language education in Indonesia. First, textbook developers may prioritize culturally neutral materials to ensure accessibility, inclusiveness, and ease of comprehension for learners from diverse educational backgrounds. By minimizing culturally specific references, the materials become more adaptable to local classroom contexts and reduce the possibility of cultural misunderstanding or bias.

Second, the substantial inclusion of source culture appears to reflect an educational intention to preserve learners' national identity and promote local cultural values within the process of learning English. This orientation aligns with the broader objective of integrating character education and cultural preservation into the national curriculum. However, the limited representation of target and international cultures may also indicate a cautious approach toward foreign cultural influence, as well as a greater emphasis on linguistic competence rather than intercultural competence. Consequently, the textbooks tend to present English primarily as an academic subject rather than as a global means of intercultural communication. This imbalance potentially restricts learners'

opportunities to develop cultural awareness, pragmatic understanding, and adaptability in authentic cross-cultural interactions, which are increasingly important in the context of English as an international language.

However, from the perspective of English as an International Language (EIL), this dominant focus namely culture free may limit learners' opportunities to interact with the broader sociocultural diversity in which English functions globally. Zeng and Yang (2024) argue that the hegemony of English in cultural, educational, and technological domains has transformed English into a global communicative resource that transcends native-speaker boundaries (Zeng & Yang, 2024). In this context, English pedagogy should not merely emphasize grammatical competence or culturally neutral content, but also develop learners' intercultural communicative competence through exposure to diverse global perspectives. Similarly, Galloway (2024) highlights that English is increasingly used within multilingual and globalized environments where communication commonly occurs among non-native speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Galloway, 2024). Therefore, the limited representation of international target cultures in the textbooks potentially restricts learners' awareness of English as a pluralistic and intercultural language used beyond inner-circle English-speaking countries.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that English language education in Indonesia continues to negotiate between preserving local cultural identity and responding to global educational demands. The dominance of culture-free content may reflect institutional attempts to provide universally accessible and culturally safe materials for learners from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, Loor, Aguayo, Loor, Cevallos, Medranda, and Moreira (2024) strengthened that the spread of English has created diverse sociolinguistic contexts in which English functions as a first, second, or foreign language. Consequently, English textbooks should represent this diversity by incorporating wider intercultural content and multiple English-speaking contexts to prepare learners for authentic global communication. In addition, Alam (2023) emphasizes that divergent national policies regarding English significantly influence public acceptance of English and access to educational opportunities in non-English-speaking countries. The limited inclusion of target and international cultures in the textbooks may therefore reflect cautious educational policies that seek to minimize foreign cultural influence while preserving local values. However, such an orientation may inadvertently reduce learners' readiness to participate in international academic, technological, and professional environments where intercultural flexibility and global awareness are increasingly essential. Thus, English as international language-oriented pedagogy requires a more balanced integration of source, target, and international cultures to foster learners' intercultural sensitivity, global communicative competence, and ability to navigate multilingual realities in contemporary society.

From the perspective of Byram (1997), intercultural communicative competence refers to learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which requires exposure to diverse cultural perspectives, the limited presence of target culture and international target culture in the textbooks suggests that readers may have insufficient opportunities to develop broader intercultural

awareness, attitudes, knowledge, and communication skills needed for intercultural communicative competence development.

Cultural Elements (The Forms of Culture)

The textbooks clearly displayed person as cultural elements, for instance by displaying a picture of Sukarno and Hatta in English textbook *When English Rings A Bell Grade VII*. Both are national figures of Indonesia who proclaimed the independence of Indonesia on August 17th, 1945 in Jakarta. Their roles, struggles, and contributions for Indonesia are admitted and written in the national history of Indonesia. In addition, *When English Rings A Bell Grade VII* also mentioned R.A Kartini (Raden Ajeng Kartini) as person based-culture. She is a public figure and national heroin of Indonesia. She was born in 1879 in Jepara and died in 1904 in Rembang. She fought for girls' and woman's right of Indonesia for education, aspiration and emansipation. She is wellknown by her legendary letters which declared for education and equality for girls and woman in many sectors. The minister of Culture and Religion of Colonial Goverment of Dutch J.H Abendanon collected those letters and published in a single book in 1911 entitled: *Door Duisternis Tot Licht* and translated by Armijn Pane in 1922 into Bahasa Indonesia version: '*Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*'. This cultural element is appropriate with Yuen's theory (2011) about person who inspiring and famous individual.

The textbooks also contain cultural element-product. One finding was a picture of marriage invitation in *When English Rings A Bell Grade VIII*. It is classified as product because it is used to inform the couples of bride will celebrate their marriage. In Indonesia and also in other countries such invitation is commonly used by the society. This sample is appropriate with Yuen's theory (2011) related to product which means human creation. This cultural element is also useful to help readers to be aware of their product, not only marriage invitation, but also maybe historical sites like *Borobudur temple, museum*, or even simple daily stuff such as bag, teapot, etc. Moreover, English textbook also provides perspective-cultural elements. The findings show local perspective on the folklore of Mount Tangkuban Perahu in West Java. This sample is appropriate with Yuen's theory (2011) related to perspective which relates to myth, superstition, inspiration, way of thinking, etc. Way of thinking people who live in West Java and specifically in Bandung is different from other provinces. For instance, *Dayang Sumbi* is common in West Java and Bandung, others believe in *Malin Kundang* in West Sumatera, meanwhile in North Sumatera people believe in Toba and his son Samosir.

The English textbooks also contain practice as cultural elements. Finding shows the expression to congratulate someone's achievement, it is displayed in English textbook *Think Globally, Act Locally Grade IX*. It always naturally happens when someone wins a match, or got high score in a certain test like national test, final exam, or TOEFL, ILETS tests etc, his or her friend or people around him/her will congratulate on his/her achievement. Even in daily life when someone gets married, wins a lottery, contest or competition, people around him/her will congratulate him/her. This cultural element specifically practice is also important to teach to readers. There are many other local practices need to teach to readers such as greeting elder people politely, traditional play, traditional ritual like

selamatan, suroan, yasinan, etc. For English native speakers, one will say ‘*have a nice dream*’ to son or daughter who is going to bed. In different occasion, one will say ‘*good night*’ indicating to take leave meanwhile to meet, one will say ‘*good evening*’. The situation of taking leave after seeing someone is also slightly similar with Indonesian culture where people will say ‘*see you*’ replied ‘*see you later, take care*’. Expression ‘*take care*’ is quite commonly used among both English native speakers and Indonesian. Indonesians express ‘*hati-hati ya*’ or ‘*hati-hati di jalan*’ in Bahasa Indonesia. This sample appropriate with Yuen (2011)’s theory about practice which is related to daily habits. This kind of culture is important to introduce to readers in order they can behave properly and appropriately when they interact to their friends, elder people, family and people around them.

The overall results of the analysis of cultural elements in the English educational textbooks *When English Rings a Bell for Grades VII and VIII* and *Think Globally, Act Locally for Grade IX* reveal a total of 156 cultural elements, comprising 107 (68.5%) instances of product, 43 (27.5%) of practice, 2 (1.3%) of perspective, and 4 (2.5%) of person.

Table 2. Findings of Cultural Elements in English textbooks

Grade	<i>When English Rings a Bell and Think Globally, Act Locally</i>				total
	Cultural Elements				
	Prod	Pract	Persp	Persn	
VII	37	20	-	3	60
VIII	21	8	-	-	29
IX	49	15	2	1	67
total	107	43	2	4	156
%	68,5%	27,5%	1,3%	2,5%	99,8%

In terms of distribution findings of cultural element, the predominance of product-oriented cultural elements in the analyzed English textbooks may be attributed to the pedagogical tendency of curriculum developers and textbook authors to prioritize tangible, observable, and easily contextualized representations of culture, such as food, clothing, landmarks, traditional objects, and other material artifacts, which are considered more accessible for language learners at the secondary education level. In contrast, cultural dimensions such as perspectives and persons are significantly underrepresented because these aspects require deeper critical engagement with values, beliefs, ideologies, and individual sociocultural identities, which are often perceived as more abstract, sensitive, and cognitively demanding for learners. Furthermore, the emphasis on products and practices reflects a conventional approach to cultural instruction in English language teaching, where culture is frequently introduced through visible and descriptive content rather than through interpretative and reflective exploration of underlying cultural meanings. Consequently, the distribution of cultural elements indicates that the textbooks primarily promote surface-level cultural awareness instead of fostering comprehensive intercultural competence and critical cultural understanding.

The dominance of product-oriented cultural elements in the analyzed English textbooks carries significant pedagogical implications for the implementation of English as an International Language (EIL), particularly in fostering learners' intercultural communicative competence within an increasingly globalized and multilingual context. The overwhelming emphasis on cultural products and practices, alongside the minimal representation of perspectives and persons, indicates that cultural learning is primarily confined to observable and descriptive aspects of culture rather than encouraging critical reflection on cultural values, identities, and intercultural understanding. From an EIL perspective, such a tendency may limit students' ability to engage meaningfully with diverse global English users, despite the contemporary role of English as a transnational medium of communication.

In terms of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), the limited representation of perspectives and persons may restrict learners' opportunities to engage with deeper cultural meanings, values, identities, and intercultural interaction. Although cultural products and practices can introduce learners to visible aspects of culture, the imbalance in cultural representation suggests that the textbooks primarily facilitate surface-level cultural exposure rather than comprehensive intercultural understanding. Furthermore, intercultural communicative competence is supposed to have interconnected dimensions such as knowledge, awareness, attitude, and skills (Ertay & Gilanlioglu, 2024; Feng, Abdul Aziz, & Dalib, 2025) all of which can be strengthened through more internationally representative cultural content (Nushi, Aghaei, & Beheshti, 2024).

From the lens of Michael Byram (1997)'s theory on intercultural communicative competence (ICC) to findings of cultural elements, the predominance of tangible cultural products and observable practices may provide learners with introductory cultural knowledge; however, the limited inclusion of cultural perspectives and personal representations may constrain students' opportunities to develop deeper intercultural understanding, empathy, and critical cultural awareness. Since ICC requires learners not only to recognize visible cultural artifacts but also to understand the underlying beliefs, values, attitudes, and identities that shape intercultural interaction, the insufficient representation of these dimensions in the textbooks may hinder the cultivation of meaningful intercultural communication skills. Consequently, the findings suggest that the textbooks tend to emphasize surface-level cultural familiarity rather than fostering the interpretative, relational, and reflective competencies necessary for effective communication in culturally diverse English-speaking contexts.

The relationship between findings of cultural types and findings of cultural elements in the English textbooks *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VII and VIII and *Think Globally, Act Locally* for Grade IX demonstrates a strong tendency toward culturally neutral and surface-level cultural representation. The predominance of Culture-Free content, indicates that the textbooks largely present English language materials in contexts that minimize explicit cultural affiliation, thereby emphasizing general communicative functions and universal themes rather than culturally situated interaction. This tendency corresponds closely with the dominance of product-oriented cultural elements such as food, clothing, places, objects, and other observable artifacts are more easily adapted into culturally

neutral instructional contexts without requiring extensive engagement with specific cultural ideologies or social identities. Similarly, the substantial presence of source culture suggests that the textbooks attempt to maintain learners' familiarity with local Indonesian cultural contexts; however, this representation remains primarily descriptive because it is largely manifested through products and practices rather than through deeper cultural perspectives or personal experiences. In contrast, the minimal occurrence of target culture (TC) and international target culture (ITC) reflects the limited exposure provided to learners regarding intercultural diversity and global English-speaking communities. This imbalance is further reinforced by the extremely low representation of perspective and person elements, indicating that the textbooks provide insufficient opportunities for students to critically understand cultural values, beliefs, identities, and interpersonal dimensions of intercultural communication. Consequently, the interaction between cultural types and elements reveals that the textbooks primarily promote surface-level cultural knowledge and functional language learning, while offering limited support for the development of deeper intercultural awareness and communicative competence within diverse global contexts.

2. The Respondents' Perspectives on the Cultural Content in English Educational Textbooks

The semi-structured interviews conducted by involving 18 respondents from six different academic institutions revealed that cultural content holds a vital role in the process of English language acquisition. The respondents, who are actively engaged in educational settings, emphasized that understanding cultural aspects in English textbooks enhances readers and users' ability to grasp linguistic meaning more effectively. This finding underscores the importance of integrating culture into English educational textbooks to make the learning experience more relevant and meaningful.

The results of the interviews highlighted three key insights regarding the cultural contents in English educational textbooks. They are; 1) language used by a certain community is closely inseparable with their cultures; 2) culture provides authentic learning context by giving real-life meaning and situations during acquiring a language; 3) culture helps an individual become more engaged with English vocabulary and expressions by connecting new language concepts to familiar cultural experiences. Together, these points affirm that incorporating cultural content is essential for promoting effective and culturally aware English language learning.

First, language used by a certain community is closely inseparable with their cultures. Culture has a great share in shaping the evolution of language, and language also constructs culture as well. For instance vocabulary development or vocabulary evolution is unavoidably influenced by cultural experiences, indicating that language reflects societal norms and values (Niwanda, Harahap, & Rahmadani, 2024). In addition, the relationship between language and culture works in both directions-cultural shifts shape on an individual' language behavior and communication (Song, 2016), idiomatic expression and communication style (Al-Shawi, 2024), and influence how language is used, while language also affects

cultural expression. This dynamic interplay can be seen in how cultural meanings are embedded and interpreted through language, revealing the mindset and worldview of different cultural groups (Bayramova, 2016). One of the respondents expressed about culture is inseparably with language, and vice versa, voicing:

“Culture is reflected in language. Perhaps, as Indonesian, we use same English. But cultural background will drive us into different use of English itself, just like using vocabulary, pronunciation, accent, tense, or grammar.”

Second, culture provides authentic learning context by giving real-life meaning and situations during acquiring a language. When the topic of language learning comes to a certain traditions, foods, festivals, norms, social interaction, communication style, and even mindset, they do not only memorize the vocabularies or grammar. Instead they practice and enjoy the real-context of how a language concretely used in real life situation. A respondent amplified this during interview, stating:

“When culture is very familiar in our daily conversation, let’s say talk about *Borobudur* or *dodol*, where it is a temple and food all Indonesians know it, then mastering English far much easier”

Following this, cultural materials are far more relevant where strongly advocating the learners’ involvement in language learning (Loewen, Kinshuk, Suhonen, & Chen, 2017), stimulating an individual of engaging meaningful learning that mirror real-life situation (Billett, 2012), and contributing to shape language learning outcomes and intercultural communication (Dong, 2024).

Third, culture helps an individual become more engaged with English vocabulary and expressions by connecting new language concepts to familiar cultural experiences. When English terms are taught using examples, stories, or contexts that relate to readers’ own culture, they can understand and remember them more easily. This connection makes learning more meaningful because readers can relate foreign words to things they already know or experience in their daily lives. This was articulated by a participant as follows.

“By integrating cultural content, the meaning English language is easily predicted because the main topic is familiar, it is culture around us.”

As a result, cultural familiarity not only supports comprehension but also increases readers’ interest, motivation, and confidence in learning English. Subsequently, students are culturally familiar with English vocabularies and able to guess the meaning (Chouaf, 2017), English language learning more relatable and engaging (Prayuda, 2023), improving linguistics fluency in second language learning (Luo, Ren, & Zhang, 2022), maintaining students’ motivation and interest in language learning (Sheridan & Condon, 2020), and constructing their cultural identity (Prasatyo & Amaliah, 2024).

The integration of content analysis and interview findings in the present study demonstrates that culture occupies a fundamental role in English language

learning, both as a linguistic context and as a pedagogical medium for meaningful communication. The content analysis align closely with the interview results, which emphasized that language is inherently inseparable from the culture of the community that uses it, highlighting the interdependent relationship between linguistic competence and cultural understanding. Furthermore, the interview participants asserted that culture provides authentic learning contexts by presenting real-life meanings and communicative situations that facilitate language acquisition, suggesting that the predominance of culture-free and product-oriented content may support basic contextual understanding but may not sufficiently expose learners to deeper intercultural dimensions. In addition, the participants explained that cultural familiarity enhances learners' engagement with English vocabulary and expressions because new linguistic concepts become more meaningful when connected to recognizable cultural experiences.

Consequently, the relationship between the content analysis on English textbooks and the interview findings indicates that although the textbooks attempt to contextualize English learning through accessible cultural representations, the limited inclusion of perspectives, persons, and international cultural dimensions may restrict learners' opportunities to develop comprehensive intercultural communicative competence and critical cultural awareness within increasingly globalized English language use.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses two main points, firstly, it focuses on identifying the total occurrences of cultural contents across three English educational textbooks: *When English Rings a Bell* for Grades VII and VIII, and *Think Globally, Act Locally* for Grade IX. Based on the findings of cultural types (the origin of culture), the results of analysis revealed 156 appearances in total, comprising 60 appearances of source culture (38.5%), 6 of target culture (3.8%), 7 of international target culture (4.5%), and 83 of culture-free content (53.2%). Moreover, the analysis of cultural elements (the forms of culture) in the English textbooks *When English Rings a Bell* (Grades VII and VIII) and *Think Globally, Act Locally* (Grade IX) identified a total of 156 cultural elements. Of these, 107 were categorized as product (68.5%), 43 as practice (27.5%), 2 as perspective (1.3%), and 4 as person (2.5%). These results indicate that the textbooks place a stronger emphasis on culture-free and source culture materials, suggesting the need for a greater inclusion of target culture and international target culture to achieve better cultural balance.

Based on the findings, more specific recommendations can be proposed to achieve a more balanced cultural representation in English textbooks. In terms of cultural types, a more proportionate distribution could ideally allocate approximately 25-30% to target culture and 20-25% to international target culture, while reducing culture-free content to around 30-35% to ensure learners are sufficiently exposed to authentic and diverse cultural contexts. Source culture may be maintained at a similar level (around 30-35%) to preserve local identity without dominating the overall representation.

In regard to cultural elements, the data suggest a need to significantly increase the representation of underrepresented categories, particularly perspectives (currently 1.3%) and persons (currently 2.5%), which are essential for developing deeper intercultural understanding and human-centered cultural

awareness. These could be strengthened to at least 10-15% each by incorporating more values, beliefs, worldviews, and real-life cultural figures from both target and international contexts. Additionally, product-dominated content (68.5%) could be moderately reduced in favor of more practice-and perspective-oriented materials to promote not only recognition of cultural artifacts but also critical engagement with cultural meanings and behaviors.

Secondly, the result of semi-structure interview unmasked that respondents perceived that cultural content in English educational textbooks has crucial role for readers in English language acquisition process. Their perception of the role of culture in language learning summarized into three main points, 1) language used by a certain community is closely inseparable with their cultures; 2) culture provides authentic learning context by giving real-life meaning and situations during acquiring a language, 3) culture helps an individual become more engaged with English vocabulary and expressions by connecting new language concepts to familiar cultural experiences.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the view that language and culture are inseparable in English language teaching, as reflected in sociocultural and intercultural language learning theories. The findings support the notion that cultural content in textbooks functions not only as contextual support for language input but also as a medium for developing intercultural awareness and communicative competence.

The limitation of this study lies in its relatively narrow sample scope, as the analysis is restricted to only three English textbooks and it may not fully represent the diversity of cultural content found across other English textbooks or learning resources used in different regions or educational contexts. In addition, the study focuses primarily on textbook content and selected respondent perceptions, which may not capture the broader range of users, interpretations in real instructional settings. Therefore, future research with a larger and more varied sample of textbooks, respondents, and learning environments is needed to provide a more comprehensive and representative understanding of cultural representation in English language education.

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The Moral Paradox of War: A Platonic Analysis of “The Man He Killed” by Thomas Hardy

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Abstract. This study offers a Platonic analysis of “The Man He Killed” by Thomas Hardy, examining the moral paradoxes of war through the lens of Plato’s Tripartite Theory of the Soul or Moral Psychology. The research investigates how the poem’s speaker experiences internal conflict among reason (*logistikon*), spirit (*thymoeides*), and appetite (*epithymia*), highlighting the psychological fragmentation caused by war. The objective is to explore how Hardy uses irony, everyday language, and flawed reasoning to question the ethical excuses people make for violence and to highlight deeper philosophical issues about justice and moral responsibility. Using a qualitative interpretive method grounded in Platonic moral philosophy, the study finds that war disrupts the soul’s harmony, illustrating how individuals may act against rational moral instincts due to social duty, honor, and economic coercion. These insights deepen the understanding of Hardy’s anti-war message and support Sustainable Development Goals 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and 4 (Quality Education) by promoting ethical reflection and peace education through literature. Ultimately, the study underscores how poetic language can serve as a powerful medium for exposing moral contradictions and fostering critical engagement with issues of violence and justice.

Keywords: *Justice, Moralistic Analysis, Moral Conflict, Thomas Hardy, Tripartite Soul Theory, Plato, War Ethics*

INTRODUCTION

War has long been central to moral inquiry, often challenging the limits of ethical reasoning and human rationality. Thomas Hardy's "The Man He Killed" (1902) captures this complexity through a dramatic monologue in which a soldier reflects on the absurdity of killing an enemy he otherwise might have shared a drink with. Through irony and casual diction, Hardy exposes the contradictions of war—how social conventions and national duty could lead individuals to commit violence against those with whom they had no personal conflict, severing inherent human connections.

Before focusing on Hardy's poem, it is important to recognize that the moral and psychological consequences of war have also been extensively explored in other literary works. For instance, Wilfred Owen's *Dulce et Decorum Est* (1920) and Siegfried Sassoon's trench poetry expose the physical suffering and ideological disillusionment of soldiers, while Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) presents the long-term psychological destruction caused by combat. These texts collectively challenge traditional notions of heroism and patriotism by emphasizing the lived experience of soldiers within modern warfare. However, Hardy's "The Man He Killed" was selected for this study because of its distinctive dramatic monologue form and its use of conversational simplicity to express a complex philosophical contradiction. Unlike extended narratives or graphic depictions of war, Hardy compresses moral reflection into a single ironic encounter, making it especially suitable for analyzing how ordinary reasoning collapses under ideological pressure.

This study examines the poem's moral contradictions through Plato's Tripartite Theory of the Soul, which divides the psyche into reason (*logistikon*), spirit (*thymoeides*), and appetite (*epithymia*) (Plato, 1974). These three components differ in function and orientation: reason (*logistikon*) governs logical thought, judgment, and the pursuit of truth; spirit (*thymoeides*) is associated with emotions such as pride, anger, and honor, often motivating individuals toward social approval and moral action; and appetite (*epithymia*) relates to bodily desires and survival instincts, including fear, comfort, and physical needs. In Plato's framework, these elements are hierarchically ordered, with reason ideally controlling spirit and appetite to achieve psychological balance. The study explored how the speaker's internal struggle reflected a fragmented soul—reason questioning war's logic, spirit conforming to patriotic duty, and appetite seeking survival. By analyzing the speaker's justifications for violence, the study interrogated the ethical foundations of war and highlighted Hardy's critique of justice and of the construction of enemies.

While many scholars, such as Gibson (1996), have emphasized the poem's anti-war themes and ironic tone, and Lodge (1988) has highlighted Hardy's criticism of imperialism and nationalism, other critics further reinforce Hardy's moral critique of warfare. For instance, Fussell (1975) examined the disillusionment present in war literature, noting how ordinary soldiers often confronted the absurdity of violence, a theme evident in Hardy's poem. Similarly, Hynes (1990)

discussed how war narratives reveal the psychological strain experienced by soldiers, particularly the tension between duty and personal morality. Moreover, Kendall (2006) explored how Hardy's war poetry reflects the emotional and ethical conflicts of individuals caught in nationalist ideologies. In addition, Nemesvari (2011) analyzed Hardy's poetic treatment of conflict, emphasizing how his works question traditional notions of heroism and expose the moral ambiguity of war. Likewise, Stallworthy (1991) argued that war poetry often reveals the instability of moral justification in combat, highlighting how soldiers struggle to reconcile personal conscience with institutional expectations.

Despite these contributions, few scholars have explored the poem's deeper philosophical implications through a structured theoretical lens. Notably, existing scholarship lacks a systematic application of Plato's Tripartite Soul Theory to understand the speaker's psychological fragmentation. For example, Lodge (1988) has highlighted Hardy's criticism of imperialism and nationalism but has not analyzed the interplay of rational, emotional, and instinctual forces shaping the speaker's conflicted reasoning. This absence limits a deeper understanding of how Hardy's poem dramatizes not only ideological critique, but also the internal psychological breakdown of moral reasoning within the soldier's consciousness. This study aimed to bridge that gap by drawing on Platonic theory to offer a nuanced perspective on the moral and psychological tensions in "The Man He Killed".

The poem's historical context—the Second Boer War—added depth to its moral critique. As Pakenham (1979) noted, British soldiers, often ordinary men, were compelled by imperial motives to fight in distant lands, generating internal conflict between patriotic obligation and personal conscience. Hardy's portrayal of the speaker reflected this socio-political climate, where ethical clarity was compromised by the pressures of war.

By applying Plato's framework, this research situated Hardy's "The Man He Killed" within a broader discourse on virtue, moral agency, and the human cost of conflict. In doing so, it contributed to ongoing conversations in both literary and philosophical fields regarding the ethical impact of warfare and the fragility of moral reasoning under duress.

Overview of Moralistic Literary Approach

Plato's moral philosophy, rooted in his dialogues—particularly *The Republic* (Plato, 1974) and *The Laws* (Plato, 2004)—emphasized justice, virtue, and the ideal forms of morality. His framework was built upon the tripartite soul, consisting of reason, spirit, and appetite, where justice emerged when reason governed over the baser elements (Annas, 1981). According to Plato, moral actions aligned with the pursuit of the Good, which transcended subjective human inclinations (Ebrey & Kraut, 2022). His critique of war challenged whether acts committed in warfare genuinely pursued justice or merely served transient, worldly desires.

His notion of justice, as an intrinsic good rather than a social construct, underscored the relevance of his philosophy to an analysis of "The Man He Killed". Hardy's poem presents a scenario in which war forces the speaker into morally ambiguous actions that contradict an innate sense of justice. The speaker's reflection on the arbitrary nature of violence—questioning the rationale behind killing a man who could have been a friend—mirrored Plato's concern that external forces could distort rational justice (Reeve, 1992).

Moreover, Plato's condemnation of unjust actions, even when sanctioned by societal or political necessity, paralleled the ethical conflict depicted in the poem. His theory posited that moral decisions should be guided not by convention but by universal truth (Rowe, 2007). This perspective illuminated the irony and tragedy of war in Hardy's portrayal, where the speaker grappled with violence dictated by circumstance rather than principle. By employing a Platonic critique, this study offered a framework for examining the moral paradoxes of war in "The Man He Killed", particularly the tension between social expectations and individual moral intuition. This alignment with Plato's argument—that true justice resisted the whims of war—guided the analysis that followed (Syse, 2007).

In this context, the current study aimed to examine the moral paradox of war as depicted in "The Man He Killed" by Thomas Hardy through the lens of Plato's Tripartite Soul Theory. Through an analysis of the dynamic interplay among the three components of the soul, namely reason (*logistikon*), spirit (*thymoeides*), and appetite (*epithymia*), the study illuminated the speaker's internal moral conflict. It also explored how the fragmentation of the soul mirrored the broader ethical contradictions inherent in war, particularly the conflict between personal conscience and the socially imposed duty to participate in violence.

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Corpus

The main corpus of this study is the short lyric poem "The Man He Killed" by Thomas Hardy, a prominent English novelist and poet (1840–1928). Hardy is widely recognized for his critical engagement with Victorian society, particularly his exploration of fate, social constraints, and the moral paradoxes of human existence (Gatrell, 2004). The poem was first published in 1902 in *The Times Literary Supplement* and is frequently regarded as one of Hardy's most direct poetic reflections on the moral contradictions and psychological absurdities of war.

The poem is presented in the form of a dramatic monologue in which a soldier reflects on the possibility that, under different circumstances, he and his enemy might have been friends rather than opponents. Through its simple diction and conversational tone, the poem exposes the irrational nature of warfare by emphasizing how ordinary human relationships are transformed into acts of violence through opposing national allegiances. It highlights the tension between

personal humanity and institutional obligation, revealing the psychological and moral conflict experienced by individuals in wartime conditions.

There is no scholarly dispute regarding its authorship, as the poem is firmly attributed to Thomas Hardy. However, critical interpretations vary. Some scholars read the poem as an ironic critique of war, while others emphasize its psychological portrayal of a soldier attempting to rationalize his actions (Davie, 1973). Nevertheless, it is widely regarded as an anti-war literary text due to its exposure of the moral contradictions inherent in killing an otherwise ordinary individual who could have been a friend in another context.

In this study, selected lines from the poem were examined to explore expressions of moral reasoning, emotional contradiction, and ethical uncertainty. These textual elements were interpreted in relation to Plato's Tripartite Theory of the Soul in order to investigate how internal psychological conflict arises among reason, spirit, and appetite within the soldier's moral experience.

The study employs a qualitative literary analysis approach. This approach is appropriate for interpreting thematic, symbolic, and philosophical meanings embedded within literary texts. The poem was selected due to its clear representation of moral ambiguity in warfare, making it suitable for examining how literature reflects ethical dilemmas and disruptions of rational judgment under socio-political pressures.

B. Research Design

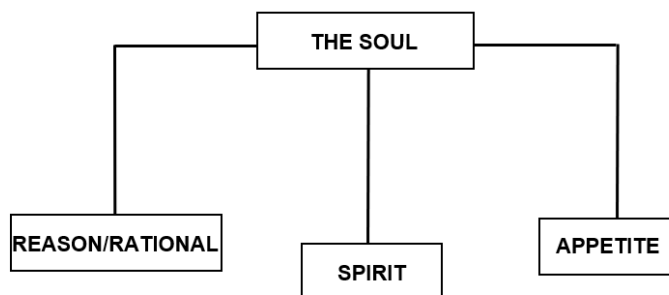


Figure 1: Plato's Tripartite Soul Theory

This study employed a qualitative research design guided by Plato's Tripartite Theory of the Soul as the framework to investigate the moral complexities of war as presented in the poem. In this theory, Plato divides the human soul into three distinct components: reason, which refers to the rational faculty responsible for logical thinking, judgment, and the pursuit of truth; spirit, which represents emotions such as anger, courage, and the drive for honor and recognition; and appetite, which pertains to human desires, including physical needs, pleasures, and material cravings.

Through this approach, the analysis revealed how Hardy portrayed the soldier's internal conflict as a disturbance in the balance among the three components of the soul: reason, spirit, and appetite, as articulated by Plato. The soldier's rational faculty, which usually guided moral decision-making, was overwhelmed by the urgent demands of military duty, resulting in a significant ethical dilemma (Santas, 2010). Motivated by culturally ingrained notions of honor and duty, the spirited element compelled him to act, while his reasoning later interrogated the righteousness of those actions. This internal dissonance reflected Plato's assertion that external conditions, such as warfare, could unsettle the soul's moral order, prompting individuals to behave in ways that conflicted with their rational understanding of justice (Kamtekar, 2017).

By analyzing the soldier's internal struggle through this philosophical lens, the study interpreted the poem as a critique of war's ability to override ethical reasoning. This approach offered insights into how external pressures, such as the militaristic ethos, disrupt the soul's harmony, leading to deeper philosophical inquiries into justice, morality, and the human condition in the context of warfare.

C. Data Collection

The data collection process in this study was conducted through a systematic close reading of Thomas Hardy's "The Man He Killed". The poem underwent multiple close readings to develop a comprehensive understanding of its narrative structure, tone, and thematic development. This iterative reading process facilitated sustained engagement with the speaker's reflections and enabled tracing the moral reasoning embedded in the text.

Relevant lines and expressions indicating moral ambiguity, internal conflict, emotional contradiction, and rational reflection were identified and extracted for analysis. These textual elements were interpreted within the broader context of the poem to preserve coherence and avoid fragmented interpretation. Each selected passage was examined in relation to surrounding lines to ensure that meaning was derived from textual continuity and contextual relations.

In addition, secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, literary criticisms of Thomas Hardy's poetry, and philosophical discussions on Plato's Tripartite Theory of the Soul, were consulted. These sources provided theoretical and interpretive grounding, situating the analysis within established scholarly discourse in literary studies and philosophy.

D. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative literary analysis guided by a philosophical interpretive framework based on Plato's Tripartite Theory of the Soul. This approach enables the examination of the poem not only as a literary text but also as a representation of moral and psychological complexity. Each selected excerpt was closely examined to identify manifestations of the three components of

the soul, namely reason, spirit, and appetite. The analysis focused on how the soldier's monologue reflects rational reflection, emotional response, and instinctive or socially conditioned behavior. Particular attention was given to instances of uncertainty, self-justification, and internal conflict, as these were considered key indicators of moral and psychological tension.

The interpretive process involved thematic classification and conceptual analysis. The identified textual features were then synthesized within the philosophical framework to explore how Hardy constructs war as a condition that disrupts the harmony of the human soul. Rather than asserting definitive conclusions, the analysis suggests that the poem may be read as illustrating the destabilization of rational judgment, the intensification of emotional contradiction, and the fragmentation of moral coherence under conditions of warfare. Overall, the findings indicate that the soldier's reflections may be interpreted as expressions of internal conflict shaped by external socio-political forces, positioning the poem as a critique of war's impact on human ethical and psychological equilibrium.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In "The Man He Killed", Thomas Hardy portrays the inherent paradox of war by highlighting the profound moral conflict soldiers face: rather than acting out of personal hatred, they are compelled to kill by the duties and circumstances imposed by warfare. Through the speaker's hesitant, fragmented reasoning, Hardy illustrated the breakdown of rational moral thought under the pressures of war. A Platonic analysis revealed that this moral conflict stemmed from the imbalance between the three parts of the soul, as outlined in Plato's tripartite soul theory: reason (*logistikón*), spirit (*thymoeides*), and appetite (*epithymia*). War coerces individuals to act against their intrinsic sense of justice, disrupting the natural harmony that should govern human action (Plato, 1974).

A. Reason (*Logistikón*) and Its Suppression in War

Plato's philosophy argues that justice is an objective, rational principle, unaffected by emotions or societal pressures (Bozkurt, 2023). In *The Republic*, he defines justice as "doing one's own work and not meddling with what isn't one's own" (Plato, 1974). According to Plato, individuals should act in accordance with their rational nature and fulfill their roles in society. In this view, war is inherently unjust because it forces people into roles that conflict with their rational and moral sense. The chaos of war disrupts the balance needed for a just society, preventing people from acting as rational agents.

This conflict between reason and the irrationality of war was exemplified in Thomas Hardy's poem, in which the speaker grapples with the nature of war and its impact on personal morality. The speaker realized that his enemy was likely a fellow working-class man who, driven by economic necessity, enlisted in the war not out of personal animosity but due to circumstances beyond his control. This recognition of shared hardship underscored the irrationality of war, where individuals were

pitted against each other despite having much in common. As the speaker reflected, he noted:

**"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps
Off-hand like—just as I" (Lines 13-14)**

Here, the speaker acknowledged that both men may have enlisted impulsively, driven by the same socio-economic pressures. The external forces of war—economic need or conscription—stripped both soldiers of their rational decision-making, forcing them into roles they did not choose, nor perhaps even morally endorse.

Plato's concept of justice requires that rational morality govern human actions. As Ladikos (2024) argued, this framework required individuals to act in accordance with their own reason. However, war disrupted this order by compelling individuals to adopt roles that conflicted with their rational sense of justice. In times of war, reason was often replaced by blind obedience to external commands, a shift that Plato would have deemed unjust. External pressures, such as military conscription, suppressed individuals' rational faculties, compelling them to perform actions that did not align with their personal moral understanding.

The internal conflict faced by the soldier in Hardy's poem illustrated this suppression of reason. The soldier struggled to justify the act of killing, attempting to rationalize the violence he had committed. The following lines demonstrated his attempt to come to terms with the act:

**"Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although" (Lines 11-12)**

The hesitation and fragmented syntax reflected the soldier's internal struggle. Though he ultimately identified his victim as a "foe," the fact that he needed to pause and rationalize this idea highlighted the emotional and psychological toll of the act. This moment revealed how reason, which should have governed moral decision-making, was compromised by the pressures of war, as the soldier was coerced into following the logic of the battlefield, even when he perceived its inherent absurdity.

The speaker's final justification for killing further emphasized the collapse of rational thought under the weight of war:

**"I shot him dead because
Because he was my foe" (Lines 9-10)**

The repetition of "because" signaled the soldier's attempt to rationalize his action. However, this tautological reasoning exposed the emptiness of the justification. The label "foe" is particularly significant, as it serves as the category that enables and triggers the act of killing; by defining the other as an enemy, the speaker suppresses his moral hesitation and conforms to the expectations imposed by the military structure. In this sense, he acts against his conscience, aligning instead with external military demands to eliminate his "foe"—an action that Plato would interpret as a

disturbance of the rational order of the soul, and thus a violation of true justice, particularly the rule of reason over impulse.

The absence of deeper moral reflection indicated that the soldier's decision was not the result of rational thought, but a reflexive response to external commands. Korsgaard's argument that reason should guide moral actions is pertinent here. According to Korsgaard (1996), moral reasoning enables individuals to determine their duties and to act in accordance with their ethical beliefs. Yet, in the context of war, individuals are often coerced into actions that contradict their rational moral compass. As Williams (1993) emphasized, military structures undermine ethical decision-making by compelling individuals to follow orders that may conflict with their personal moral values. In this way, war becomes a system that undermines reason and coerces individuals into fulfilling roles they may not personally endorse.

The suppression of reason in war leads to what Litz et al. (2009) describe as ethical dissonance: when individuals are forced to act against their moral beliefs, they experience psychological turmoil. This dissonance is evident in Hardy's poem, where the soldier's internal conflict results directly from being compelled to act against his moral sense. The speaker's struggle to justify his actions reveals the psychological and ethical toll imposed by the suppression of reason. Ultimately, the coercive nature of war disrupts rational moral agency, producing not only moral failure but also profound psychological strain as individuals are forced to engage in violence that contradicts their ethical understanding.

B. Spirit (*Thymoeides*) and the Influence of Honor and Duty

In Plato's tripartite soul theory, *thymos* (spirit) governs emotions such as honor, pride, and the desire for recognition, pushing people to follow societal expectations—even when these clash with their moral sense. Plato saw *thymos* as a helper of reason, supporting justice. But when it became too strong, like in war, it made people act against their conscience. Hardy's "The Man He Killed" showed this, as the soldier's sense of duty—shaped by military expectations—silenced his awareness of war's pointlessness and absurdity. The tension within the soul's spirited element was captured in the following lines:

**"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place" (Lines 5-8)**

Here, the soldier performed his duty as a combatant mechanically, fulfilling his prescribed role without personal animosity. Plato's theory suggests that *thymos* here compelled the soldier to act according to societal expectations—his role as a soldier in a war—despite the dissonance with his rational, moral understanding of the situation. This action reflected how unchecked *thymos* overrode personal reasoning and empathy, pushing individuals to commit acts that conflicted with

their consciences. This internal struggle became more apparent in the soldier's reflection:

"That's clear enough; although" (Line 12)

This line, though brief, signaled uncertainty and discomfort. The soldier's hesitation reflected the moment of internal conflict between *thymos*, which urged him to fulfill his duty, and his rational conscience, which resisted the futility of the act. Plato argues that when *thymos* dominates, reason is silenced, and the soul is thrown into disorder. The soldier's rational awareness of war's absurdity was momentarily pushed aside by the emotional pull of duty and honor.

Jorgenson (2018) noted that *thymos* often led individuals to prioritize duty and honor over personal judgment. This dynamic was evident in Hardy's portrayal of the soldier's action—not as an act of malice, but as an unconscious submission to the military's external demands. The soldier was not engaging in violence because of personal hatred but because of the societal roles imposed upon him. Walzer (2000) argued that war created a moral contradiction, dividing individuals who might otherwise have shared peaceful, rational goals, and ultimately serving the interests of ruling powers. Hardy's poem exemplified this: the soldier suppressed his personal empathy to fulfill an externally imposed duty, mirroring Plato's concern that an imbalanced soul, led by *thymos*, strays from the just path. The closing lines of the poem further underscore the absurdity of the soldier's situation:

**"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown" (Lines 17–20)**

Here, the soldier reflected on the irony of war: soldiers were compelled to kill those whom, in a different context, they might have befriended or assisted. This underscored the moral contradiction at the heart of war, where duty and honor, shaped by *thymos*, superseded rational moral judgment. Lear (2000) observed that military institutions manipulated *thymos* to ensure obedience, often at the cost of individual moral reasoning. Hardy's portrayal of the soldier's internal conflict highlighted this critique, revealing how war distorted natural human inclinations toward empathy and justice.

Similarly, Sherman (2007) argued that manipulating *thymos* in warfare fostered a sense of duty that overrode moral reasoning, compelling soldiers to engage in actions they might otherwise have rejected. This manipulation of *thymos* reflected Plato's warning: when *thymos* dominated reason, it led not to justice, but to moral disarray, which Hardy's poem poignantly captured in the soldier's inner turmoil and ultimately futile act of violence.

C. Appetite (*Epithymia*) and Economic Coercion

Bobonich (2002) explained that *epithymia* governed not only material needs but was also highly susceptible to external manipulation. Economic necessity, in particular, often coerced individuals into decisions that aligned with external pressures rather than their rational moral compass. This susceptibility was vividly illustrated in Hardy's "The Man He Killed", where the soldier's enlistment may have been driven by financial desperation.

**"Was out of work—had sold his traps
No other reason why" (Lines 15–16)**

These lines explicitly highlighted how economic deprivation may have led the other soldier to enlist. Selling one's "traps" (personal belongings or tools) signaled a state of financial hardship, suggesting that the soldier's immediate material needs, governed by *epithymia*, overpowered deliberate moral reasoning. This aligned with Hobsbawm's argument that war often exploited the working class, coercing them into conflicts that primarily served the interests of the elite (Hobsbawm, 1989). Woodruff (2014) similarly contended that economic necessity could override moral reasoning, compelling individuals to act in ways that contradicted their ethical principles. Hardy's choice of language, particularly the phrase "out of work," underscored how socio-economic precarity dictated personal decisions, illustrating how appetite-driven compulsion overrode moral autonomy under coercive conditions.

Furthermore, Hardy contrasted this with a vision of peace in the opening lines:

**"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn" (Lines 1–2)**

These opening lines establish a single conditional construction that governs the entire passage. Hardy imagines that if the speaker and the enemy soldier had met under ordinary civilian circumstances rather than on opposing sides of war, their relationship would not have been hostile. Instead, they would have become companions in a peaceful, familiar setting. This imagined scenario reveals that their enmity is not rooted in personal hatred but in circumstance, suggesting that war arbitrarily positions individuals as enemies. Within this same conditional framework, Hardy extends the imagined outcome of such a meeting:

**"We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!" (Lines 3–4)**

Here, Hardy develops the consequences of the same unrealized condition, imagining that if they had met, the two men would have shared a drink instead of engaging in violence. The use of "nipperkin" (a small measure of liquor) evokes a casual, friendly atmosphere, reinforcing the idea that their interaction would naturally have been shaped by ordinary sociability and companionship. This moment is therefore not separate from the opening lines but a continuation of the same conditional logic, in

which friendship and conviviality emerge as the natural outcome of a world without war.

Through this imagined scenario, Hardy emphasizes the stark contrast between potential human intimacy and the reality of conflict. The peaceful image of shared drinking highlights the soldier's basic human desire for comfort, companionship, and social connection—needs that are ultimately denied by the conditions of war. This contrasts sharply with the deprivation and coercion that led him into battle against another man he could just as easily have befriended. Through this irony, Hardy underscores how natural human impulses toward sociability and peace are overridden by external political and military forces beyond individual control, revealing the tragic absurdity of war.

This portrayal of coerced violence invites comparison with philosophical accounts of justice and moral agency. Plato, in *The Laws*, argued that "no one in a just society should be compelled to act against reason" (Plato, 2004). However, the soldier in Hardy's poem is driven into war by external circumstances, reflecting a breakdown in rational moral order. Such coercion distorts the individual's capacity to act in accordance with reason, replacing deliberation with necessity. This aligns with Scarry's assertion that war strips individuals of moral agency, reducing them to instruments of destruction (Scarry, 1985).

As Millgate (2004) observed, Hardy deplored the glorification of war, lamenting that "civilized nations have not learnt some more excellent and apostolic way of settling disputes." Through irony, Hardy critiques political systems that mobilize ordinary individuals for conflicts that serve the interests of ruling powers rather than justice. In this sense, "The Man He Killed" presents war as an institution that disrupts moral harmony, compelling individuals to act against reason, ethical judgment, and shared humanity. The soldier's participation in violence thus illustrates how lower impulses and survival pressures, shaped by social and economic necessity, can override rational deliberation, entangling individuals in unjust systems.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals how "The Man He Killed" by Thomas Hardy exposes the moral contradictions of war. Through a Platonic lens, the poem shows how violence can arise not from personal anger but from external pressures, leading to a conflict between reason, emotion, and desire. Hardy used irony, plain language, and broken logic to highlight the tension between social duty and personal conscience, echoing Plato's belief that justice should be based on reason, not political demands.

The poem also offered insight into how language shapes moral understanding. Its casual tone and conversational style showed how ordinary speech can both express and conceal ethical concerns, normalizing violence and shaping public attitudes. In doing so, Hardy underscored how war disrupts human

connections and weakens shared moral values, reflecting the social cost of conflict on community and identity.

Looking forward, further research could explore how literature like Hardy's contributes to peace education and ethical reflection, particularly in support of Sustainable Development Goals 16 (Peace and Justice) and 4 (Quality Education). Studying poems like "The Man He Killed" in academic settings can help students engage with the moral dimensions of war and develop critical thinking skills about conflict and justice. In today's world, this still resonates as conflicts persist, often leading to innocent lives being lost and soldiers grappling with post-traumatic stress. The moral ambiguity of war continues to challenge our understanding of justice, forcing us to question the true cost of violence in resolving global disputes.

Overall, by examining Hardy's poem through Platonic philosophy, moral psychology, and language analysis, this study highlighted how literature can serve as a powerful tool for questioning war and promoting ethical awareness in both personal and social contexts. These perspectives—philosophical critique, moral conflict, and rhetorical analysis—offered a deeper understanding of how poetic language can reveal and challenge the deeper truths behind human violence and societal norms.

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Conforming to Belong vs Resisting to Remain in Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* and Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams*

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Abstract. This study examines the process of Muslim female identity formation through a comparative reading of the characters Faten in Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005) and Arissa in Shaila Abdullah's novel *Saffron Dreams* (2009). Responding to the tendency of existing research to view identity as an end result, a form of resistance, or a social position, this study addresses the relative lack of attention to how identity is gradually formed throughout the characters' life journeys. This study integrates Muslimah Narratives, the Bildungsroman, and Postcolonial Feminism to examine character development, diasporic experiences, religious identity, and colonial power relations in shaping the characters' identities across different diasporic contexts. The findings reveal two contrasting patterns of identity formation. Faten represents a negative Bildungsroman, in which religious idealism and personal agency are gradually eroded by economic uncertainty, illegal migration, and patriarchal-colonial power structures, resulting in self-disruption and arrested maturation. In contrast, Arissa exemplifies a transcultural Bildungsroman, in which trauma, Islamophobia, and loss become catalysts for emotional and spiritual growth through reflective religiosity and narrative agency, particularly through writing. This comparative analysis demonstrates that the identities of Muslim women in the diaspora are neither static nor homogeneous; rather, they are shaped by legal status, material conditions, and access to symbolic spaces of agency. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Muslim women's identity formation in diasporic contexts and highlights the subjectivity of Muslim women's literature beyond reductive stereotypes of victimhood or resistance.

Keywords: *Identity, Diaspora, Muslim Women, Bildungsroman, Agency.*

<http://jos.unsoed.ac.id/index.php/jes>

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, literature and media have often portrayed Muslim women in ways that emphasize the conflict between Islam and modernity, as well as between oppression and freedom. Such portrayals not only shape global perceptions but also influence how Muslim women navigate their identities within diverse socio-cultural contexts. The formation of Muslim women's identity has become a major issue in postcolonial and feminist literary studies, reflecting broader concerns about agency, belonging, and resistance (K.K., 2025). Religion, gender, and politics often shape how Muslim women are perceived and how they perceive themselves in relation to Islamic and Western cultural frameworks. These experiences are represented in literature as responses to socio-political systems that shape beliefs about women, as well as their personal journeys.

This is particularly evident in literary representations of Muslim women, who not only face negative stereotypes about Islam but also contend with stereotypes of women as weak and oppressed victims. In previous research, Faten's identity has been portrayed as a victim of masculinity and patriarchy, a male-dominated social system (Lubis et al., 2024). She has also been depicted as the object of Orientalist sexual fantasy; Faten represents Arab migrant women who are constructed as exotic, sexual, and submissive figures in the Western imagination (Lamghari, 2022). Meanwhile, Arissa is portrayed as an indirect victim of the 9/11 tragedy who lost her husband and had to endure the discrimination he faced from Western society (Azzahra et al., 2024). Arissa is also portrayed as a victim of external pressures, showing how American Orientalism disrupts her identity as a Pakistani Muslim woman in America; however, she is also depicted as continually striving to adapt in order to survive (Musakar et al., 2023).

In the characters of Faten in Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* and Arissa in Shaila Abdullah's novel *Saffron Dreams*, Muslim women are portrayed through challenging life journeys that lead them to form new identities. Therefore, this study examines the process of constructing Muslim female identity through the characters of Faten in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* and Arissa in *Saffron Dreams*, exploring the narrative development of each character, the socio-political challenges they face, and the representation of Muslim female identity formed through their experiences and life choices. Both characters demonstrate how Muslim female figures in literary works negotiate faith, identity, migration, trauma, and social pressures in different ways as active subjects possessing agency.

This study analyzes the character of Faten, a Moroccan woman who immigrated to Spain and begins her journey in the novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (Lalami, 2005). She is juxtaposed with Arissa, a Muslim widow who lost her husband in the 9/11 attacks and must struggle to cope with life after his death and the effects of 9/11 in the novel *Saffron Dreams*, written by Shaila Abdullah in 2009 (Abdullah,

2009). Both novels depict different Muslim journeys, yet they are equally relevant. Faten in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* migrates to fight for her freedom amid social limitations in her home country, while Arissa in *Saffron Dreams* struggles against discrimination and Islamophobia. Both represent Muslim women who attempt to challenge stereotypes and construct their own identities.

The characters Faten and Arissa are analyzed with a focus on Muslim narratives, combined with Bildungsroman and postcolonial feminist theory, to examine how both negotiate Muslim female identity. Although studies on the representation of Muslim women in diaspora literature continue to develop, most previous studies have still used separate theoretical frameworks, such as postcolonial feminism or migrant Bildungsroman. There is still limited research that integrates Bildungsroman theory, Muslimah narratives, and postcolonial feminism to examine how Muslim female characters actively construct and negotiate their identities.

Several comparative studies have examined the formation of Muslim women's identities within diaspora literature. For example, Ouhiba (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of *The Translator* and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* to demonstrate how Muslim women challenge homogeneous Western representations and reconstruct multidimensional identities through religious and cultural negotiations (Ouhiba, 2021). Similarly, Jones-Gailani (2019) compares the experiences of Iraqi Sunni women of Arab and Kurdish backgrounds who migrated to Toronto and Detroit to show how the hijab serves as a symbol of politics, identity, and Islamic feminism in diaspora life. In this research, the hijab is an expression of political consciousness constructed through religion while simultaneously affirming agency (free will) as women (Jones-Gailani, 2019). Other studies focus on the negotiation of identity and belonging among Muslim women in diaspora spaces through postcolonial or Islamic feminist perspectives (Sulaiman et al., 2018).

Several studies have compared how Muslim women maintain or negotiate their religious identities within Western societies. However, most research has viewed identity as an end result, a form of resistance, or a social position, while few studies discuss how that identity is gradually formed throughout characters' life journeys. There is still limited discussion of character formation that negotiates between Islamic tradition, diasporic experience, and postcolonial power structures. Moreover, in studies of Faten and Arissa, both characters are still rarely discussed as subjects who actively construct their own identities; instead, they are more often discussed as victims of culture or patriarchy. Furthermore, there is a lack of comparative studies across different Muslim diasporic experiences (Arab-North African in Faten and South Asian-American in Arissa); most studies focus on Muslim Americans in relation to other Muslim Americans, or Arab diaspora in relation to the wider Arab diaspora. As a result, few studies examine how cultural contexts shape distinct patterns of identity development in Muslim women's literature. Previous studies have also predominantly employed postcolonial feminism or Islamic feminism to examine the position of Muslim women. Therefore, this study integrates Muslimah narratives, the Bildungsroman, and postcolonial feminism to analyze how character development, diasporic experiences, religious identity, and colonial power relations shape the characters' identities.

The Bildungsroman perspective is used to analyze how the journeys of the two characters form their identities in response to patriarchy and in the discovery of

self-agency, as well as how the authors depict them through Muslimah narratives—whether as victims/oppressed subjects or as active subjects with a voice, and whether their experiences show negotiations between Islam, local culture, modernity, or diaspora. Additionally, these perspectives are intertwined to analyze how these characters construct their identities through religious experience, modern life, social pressure, and social injustice. Postcolonial feminist theory is used to analyze the challenges and conflicts they face in forming themselves as postcolonial subjects, as well as how colonialism, race, class, culture, and local traditions influence women's experiences alongside gender factors. The analysis considers whether Faten and Arissa are portrayed as victims of culture or tradition, whether their freedom is measured by Western standards, and whether they are subaltern or have agency, focusing on narrative representation.

The Bildungsroman provides a structural framework for tracing each character's maturation, while female and immigrant variants of the genre highlight how gendered and diasporic experiences create nonlinear and discontinuous paths. This model serves as the main foundation for reading character journeys, although Moretti focuses heavily on European traditions and male experiences, thereby requiring enrichment from gender and ethnic perspectives (Franco Moretti, 2000). Maxine Hong Kingston, in *The Woman Warrior* (1976), shows that the journey to adulthood for women is not linear and is full of structural obstacles (race, gender, tradition). In her work, Kingston describes female characters who struggle against multiple social pressures (gender, race, class, and culture) (Pin-chia Feng, 1998). Women's journeys often involve alienation, the body, sexuality, and power relations. In Atwood's version of the female Bildungsroman, the journey to adulthood is not one of obedience but of critical awareness and resistance (Ellen McWilliams, 2017). In addition, Muslimah narratives further sharpen this analysis by highlighting Islamic identity, piety, spirituality, and agency as central elements in self-formation (Bodman & Tohidi, 1999).

In *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (2004), Amin Malak expands the scope of Muslim narratives to include not only Muslim writers but also those who are "affiliated" or "ambivalent" toward Islam. This opens space to read Muslim women from diverse perspectives. Muslim women are not merely objects of exoticization or stereotypes but are also subjects of narratives that present their own experiences (Malak, 2004). In *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2005), Saba Mahmood also argues that Muslim women should be understood as complex subjects rather than passive objects or stereotypes. Mahmood emphasizes that women's experiences shape what can be called a "subject of freedom" in a sense that differs from liberal freedom. According to her, freedom is not merely freedom from norms, but freedom within and through norms, through self-cultivation within norms (Mahmood, 2005).

Furthermore, postcolonial feminist theory reveals how colonialism, race, class, culture, and local traditions influence women's experiences, in addition to gender itself, and how they come to understand themselves. Postcolonial feminism emerged to challenge singular narratives and to emphasize the diversity of women's experiences across social, political, cultural, and colonial historical contexts (McEwan, 2001). In *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* (1988), Mohanty shows that Western feminism often depicts Third

World women as homogeneous: poor, oppressed, passive, and in need of rescue. Mohanty emphasizes that the term "Third World women" is not a neutral empirical category but a construct formed through assumptions, generalizations, and interpretations that overlook local heterogeneity, including class, ethnicity, and history (Mohanty, 1988). Postcolonial feminism also emphasizes that non-Western women often experience double oppression. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that the most marginalized groups or subalterns cannot truly "speak" in unmediated ways. She criticizes how Western scholarship often fails to represent subaltern voices, instead replacing them through mediated, translated, or silenced representations within power structures. According to Spivak, postcolonial feminism is not only a critique of patriarchy but also an examination of how colonial discourse silences women in the Global South (Spivak, 1988).

Together, these frameworks form an intersecting model that allows a comprehensive understanding of Muslim women's identity formation. The Bildungsroman traces narrative arcs; female and immigrant variants reveal structural barriers; Muslimah narratives center faith; and postcolonial feminism reveals power dynamics shaping identity.

This study aims to analyze how the narratives of Faten and Arissa combine elements of the Bildungsroman with Muslim women's narratives, highlighting how Muslim women negotiate identity, belief, and belonging in diasporic contexts. It also focuses on how Faten and Arissa represent distinct processes of maturation across two socio-political contexts, and how they articulate their identities amid migration, trauma, and discrimination. The analysis highlights how both characters face multiple forms of constraint, including religion, patriarchy, migration, and gender, which ultimately influence the formation of their identities.

This article is expected to contribute to literary studies by addressing the limited discussion of hybrid frameworks combining Bildungsroman and Muslim narratives. Overall, this study offers a new perspective by integrating Bildungsroman and Muslim narrative approaches informed by postcolonial feminism. It also aims to contribute to understanding how identity formation is shaped by discrimination and by the position of subjects whose voices are constrained by structural power relations. A character's identity can shift significantly under social pressures and external constraints that are often beyond individual control and that shape identity formation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive method because the data consist of textual narratives drawn from two selected novels. A comparative approach was employed to analyze similarities and differences in the characterization of the protagonists. Qualitative comparative methods treat cases as configurations of attributes and aim to identify how combinations of conditions relate to outcomes; they blend case-oriented and variable-oriented logic and are based on set-theoretic relations (Mello, Patrick A., 2021). This study used primary data consisting of textual evidence, including narratives, dialogues, and character actions, from *Hope and*

Other Dangerous Pursuits by Laila Lalami (2005) and *Saffron Dreams* by Shaila Abdullah (2009). Secondary data included theoretical books, previous studies, and journal articles related to character analysis and literary criticism. Data were collected through in-depth reading of both novels. Relevant text units from dialogues and important scenes were identified, marked, and coded or categorized to reveal character traits, conflicts, and character development. Document analysis was also applied to collect relevant supporting theories. The data were analyzed using Murphy's characterization framework (1972), which includes personal description, character as seen by others, speech, past life, conversations with others, reactions, direct comments, thoughts, and habits (Nisah et al., 2023). The study focuses only on selected dominant characterization techniques that are relevant to the topic of discussion. The analysis of the characters Faten and Arissa was conducted in three stages: (1) identifying textual evidence related to the characters, (2) classifying and analyzing the data based on Murphy's technique, and (3) comparing the results of the two novels to determine similarities and differences in characterization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Identity, Faith, and Religious Negotiation

The construction of Muslim female identity in both novels is closely related to how the characters negotiate their faith and religious practices amid social and political pressures. In *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005), Faten is portrayed as a highly religious individual who was actively involved in Islamic organizations during her studies. However, after migrating illegally to Spain, her religious practices decline significantly, and she becomes a sex worker in order to survive in her new country. This stands in contrast to her earlier expectations, in which she strongly upheld religious ideals and promoted values that were sometimes considered extreme by those around her. She is now forced to confront a reality that is far removed from her former idealism and the religious values she previously upheld.

Her transformation from a devout individual into a pragmatic survivor leaves her torn between her sacred past and a present defined by moral compromise. The values she once defended are now in conflict with her current circumstances. She experiences a profound dilemma between faith and survival.

"She stared at the ceiling for a while and then turned to look at her nightstand, where a pocket-size edition of the Qur'an lay, a thin film of dust over it. She remembered her college days, when she'd decided to wear the hijab and preached to every woman she met that she should do the same. How foolish she had been" (Lalami, 2005. p, 144).

Faten's life is characterized by dilemmas and regret following her migration. This excerpt illustrates the dilemmas and regret she experiences. Her gaze at a dusty Quran reflects her internal conflict, as she deeply regrets abandoning the religious values she once held dear. In literary analysis of novels, a sustained gaze at an object often symbolizes a character's internal conflict, such as emotional dilemma, regret,

or the revelation of a hidden identity through object symbolism. This technique is commonly used to depict trauma or psychological struggle, where the object becomes a representation of abandoned or remembered values, reinforcing the Bildungsroman narrative and character development (Djohar & Komalasari, 2024).

In reality, she was forced to remove her hijab to avoid being detected by the police and became a sex worker as a means of survival. She deeply regrets her inability to uphold these values and her involvement in actions that contradict them, while also questioning how she can return to her former life under the pressures of illegal immigration. Her regret over her past decisions is also evident, showing how her earlier idealism contributed to her current suffering.

In contrast, Arissa in *Saffron Dreams* demonstrates a different pattern of faith negotiation. After 9/11, the hijab is no longer merely a symbol of culture and religion but becomes a potential source of discrimination, violence, and social exclusion. Arissa experiences a moment in which she physically “discards” her hijab, or removes part of her religious appearance, not because she has abandoned her faith, but for her own safety in response to Islamophobia.

“Ma, I have decided to let go of my hijab.”

.....

Ma turned around slowly and then sat down on the blanket I had laid out earlier. I couldn't read her expression, but tiredness oozed from her. I kept standing, unsure of what to do with the rest of my sandwich. (Abdullah, 2009. p, 82)

Arissa's decision to remove her hijab after the 9/11 tragedy is not a rejection of Islam but a reflective attempt to question the meaning of faith amid trauma and Islamophobia. Her decision becomes a way to communicate with both God and herself. This raises the question of whether faith is solely measured through the hijab as a religious symbol. For Arissa, the hijab is part of her belief system; however, after 9/11, it also becomes a symbolic burden that produces feelings of alienation and suspicion within American society. This reflects a form of identity negotiation rather than a rejection of faith. Arissa chooses to alter her relationship with the symbol rather than renounce her belief.

Arissa is also representative of cases within the Muslim community in which identity and self-formation are profoundly affected by traumatic social conditions (Majeed et al., 2017). A parallel can be drawn with the story of Ammar ibn Yasir, who was forced to utter words of disbelief to escape torture, a narrative acknowledged in the Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl (16:106) (Dashti et al., 2019). Ammar was a close companion of the Prophet who endured brutal torture at the hands of Abu Jahl and the Quraysh.

In *The Story of Ammar ibn Yasir* by Aisha Stacey (2018), Ammar reached a breaking point after witnessing the brutal killing of his family. In a state of severe emotional distress, fear, and psychological collapse, he engaged in a form of survival “negotiation” by complying with Abu Jahl's demand to verbally denounce Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This act was not performed because his faith had weakened, but because the physical and psychological pressure exceeded human endurance. The Qur'an in Surah An-Nahl explains that

accountability is determined by what resides in the heart, not by statements made under coercion. This form of survival under extreme oppression is recognized in Islam as a dispensation (rukhsah) in emergency situations. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself defended Ammar against accusations of apostasy and affirmed that “Ammar is filled with faith from head to toe” (*The Story of Ammar ibn Yasir*, 2018). Thus, the actions of Arissa and Ammar ibn Yasir in survival contexts are not acts of religious betrayal but compromises under coercion, while their inner faith remains intact.

Migration, Trauma, and Socio-Political Pressures

Migration and trauma are crucial factors in shaping Faten and Arissa’s identity formation. Faten experiences illegal migration from Morocco to Spain as a response to academic failure and social repression in her home country. Her undocumented status places her in a vulnerable position, exposing her to exploitation and structural violence.

Faten experiences multiple forms of discrimination and exploitation during the process of identity formation. Before migrating and living in Morocco, her decision to wear the hijab, participate in Islamic organizations, and criticize corruption and social issues led to negative perceptions from Noura’s family and the surrounding community. This reflects the discrimination faced by Muslim women and demonstrates how social pressure functions as a form of oppression. She is perceived as unconventional and associated with radical ideas.

After leaving Morocco and migrating to Spain, she faces further exploitation and discrimination, not only as a Muslim woman but also as an undocumented migrant.

“Women in this country,” he said, shaking his head. “They don’t know how to treat a man. Not the way you Arab girls do.”

.....

“I’ve been reading up,” he said. “About the duties of the woman to the man and all that. It’s a fascinating subject.” (Lalami, 2005, p. 148 -149).

In the excerpt above, Martin, the man who hires Faten, discriminates against her. He not only belittles her as a woman and sex worker but also as a Muslim. The phrase “about the duties of the woman to the man and all that” illustrates male domination over women; in other words, it suggests that women must submit to men. In this excerpt, Faten is positioned as an object of ideology rather than as a subject with her own will. As an undocumented migrant from an Arab country and a sex worker, she is constructed as a symbol of an obedient, exotic woman who is ready to serve.

Martin’s perception of Faten reflects a long-standing Orientalist discourse that portrays Arab women as exotic and submissive figures who can be controlled by men. Rather than viewing Faten as an autonomous individual with agency, Martin interprets her through stereotypical assumptions about Arab women, thereby reinforcing what Said (1978) described as the Orientalist imagination of the East. In other words, Orientalist discourse and certain Western representations construct

women from Africa, Asia, and Latin America as passive beings destined to serve men and satisfy male desires (Lamghari, 2022).

Furthermore, when Faten realizes that Martin is like other Western men, she decides to reject his fantasies and challenge his assumptions. When Martin continues speaking about helping her with immigration papers and expressing care for her, she raises her hand to stop him. "I don't need your help," she says (Lalami, 2005: 150). Faten's decision to end her interaction with Martin—"I think you should just find someone else next time" (Lalami, 2005: 150)—affirms her autonomy and control over her body, choices, and decisions. She is not a prototype of the passive, obedient, and silent Arab woman whose sole purpose is to satisfy men, but rather an independent subject with agency. Her actions constitute a form of resistance against Western stereotypes about Arab women; she refuses to be reduced to a passive sexual object and negotiates her identity as an active, autonomous agent.

Meanwhile, Arissa's migration to the United States occurs in a different context. She had settled legally and maintained a stable domestic life before the 9/11 tragedy. However, the attacks become a traumatic turning point that drastically alters her position in the public sphere. Arissa faces systemic Islamophobia, social suspicion, and media pressure that force her to repeatedly explain her identity as a Muslim.

"They are not my people."

"They have the same religion as you."

"No, they don't. They don't have a religion." (Abdullah, 2009. p, 93).

This excerpt is an example of the discrimination against Islam experienced by Arissa. The dialogue takes place after the 9/11 tragedy, when Arissa faces social stigma against Muslims. She is perceived as one of the perpetrators of the attacks and is othered, even though she is also a victim of the incident. The multiculturalism previously embraced by society is no longer the same, as Muslim identity becomes increasingly associated with threat and suspicion (Majeed et al., 2017).

Arissa refuses to be associated with perpetrators of violence who act in the name of religion. The statement "They are not my people" signifies a rejection of generalization and the Orientalist gaze, a Western perspective that constructs Muslims as a unified threat. She rejects the Western monopoly of interpretation that reduces Islam to a discourse of terrorism.

Agency, Voice, and Subalternity

The issue of agency and voice becomes the main differentiator in the formation of Faten and Arissa's identities. Faten is portrayed as a subaltern figure who has lost the capacity to speak for herself. She experiences double marginalization, having no agency or voice either in her home country of Morocco or in Spain, where she migrates. In Morocco, as a young woman who critically engages with religion, she is excluded from the public sphere by male and elite power. She is silenced by patriarchal social structures. In Spain, as an undocumented immigrant from the Global South, she has no legal rights, social status, or recognition. She loses her voice and can only express her suffering.

“The guard had taken her to one of the private exam rooms, away from everyone else. Now they were just a part of a repertoire she’d learned by heart and had to put up with if she wanted to make a living.” (Lalami, 2005. p. 147)

The above excerpt illustrates how she loses her capacity to express her will. She is forced into sex work in order to survive and loses her right to choose. Her voice is silenced by structural and colonial systems in Spain.

“She stared at Martín in silence, trying to visualize herself in the way he saw her, the way he wanted her to be—that was the price she would have to pay every time if she wanted to see him.” (Lalami, 2005. p. 149).

In this excerpt, Faten has no space for self-expression. She attempts to imagine herself through Martín’s perspective rather than her own. She realizes that, in order to be accepted, she must conform to the image of a woman constructed by male desire. “That was the price she would have to pay” indicates that her existence is conditioned by male approval. She no longer has a self-defined identity; instead, her identity is shaped by Martín’s colonial and patriarchal gaze. Faten becomes a representation of the subaltern woman who internalizes oppression: she is aware of domination but remains constrained by it, as it is the only means of “existence.” This reflects how the subaltern cannot fully exist as herself but is only recognized when conforming to dominant colonial and patriarchal discourse.

Laila Lalami, as a Muslim diaspora writer, presents Faten as a complex figure. Faten is portrayed not only as a passive victim but also as a subject who continues to seek agency within structural constraints. She struggles to redefine herself as a modern Muslim woman, not only as a symbol of purity but also as a human being with desires, sins, and hopes. Faten becomes part of a Muslimah narrative that resists reduction to Western stereotypes (as oppressed) or local patriarchy (as moral guardians), and instead foregrounds her perspective as a woman struggling for existence and dignity. Meanwhile, Arissa gradually rebuilds her agency through writing.

“I had had enough of answering pestering reporters and funneling my way in and out of the building through them. They were all looking for one story because they had beaten the rest to a pulp. Muslim harmed by Muslim, how do you react? How do you?” (Abdullah, 2009. p. 93)

Arissa undergoes a process of becoming subaltern, which ultimately enables her to regain agency. She is subaltern in three dimensions: as a woman in a patriarchal society, as a Muslim woman subjected to Western stereotypes, and as an immigrant from the Middle East positioned within a Western-controlled discourse. This excerpt illustrates her exhaustion in facing Western media, which continually frames her through biased narratives. The phrase “They were all looking for one story” shows how Western media controls representation; they do not seek Arissa’s voice but rather a narrative that fits their framework.

However, her decision to continue her late husband's manuscript not only allows Arissa to revisit the past but also enables her to reconstruct her identity as an empowered Muslim woman. Writing becomes a medium for rejecting Western media narratives that reduce Muslims to perpetrators or victims of violence. In this context, Arissa moves from a subaltern position to a subject capable of producing meaning and representing herself. She escapes subalternity and regains her voice through the manuscript she writes.

Patterns of Growth: Negative vs Transcultural Bildungsroman

The fundamental differences in the outcomes of Faten and Arissa's life journeys can be understood through the framework of the Bildungsroman. The character Faten in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* represents a negative Bildungsroman or a failure in the process of maturation. A negative Bildungsroman refers to novels that undermine the classical Bildungsroman narrative by preventing the protagonist from achieving successful integration or maturity in society, often resulting in failure, withdrawal, or unresolved stagnation (Rüggemeier, 2023).

Faten is a teenager from Morocco with a modest economic background. She is described as a highly religious individual and was actively involved in Islamic organizations during her studies. A conflict with Larbi, the father of her friend Noura, leads to her academic failure and ultimately to her decision to migrate illegally to Spain. Once in Spain, she is forced to work as a sex worker to survive.

This trajectory is considered a negative Bildungsroman because it depicts Faten's failure to uphold the strong religious values she previously held. She shifts from an idealistic figure to a pragmatic one, engaging in actions that contradict her earlier beliefs. In her process of maturation, she fails to achieve self-realization and instead experiences self-disintegration. She becomes trapped between two worlds—Morocco and Spain—and is alienated from her friends, family, and religion, experiencing guilt and a loss of her Islamic values. Her story ends in solitude and sadness.

Her narrative, which does not conclude in a "happy" resolution aligned with her ideals, demonstrates that the process of maturation does not always lead to enlightenment but may result in self-destruction. The drastic transformation from a religiously devout individual to a sex worker, along with discrimination and loss of narrative voice, reflects the culmination of Faten's identity loss and her failure to achieve idealized development, making her an example of a negative Bildungsroman.

In contrast to Faten, Arissa represents a successful transcultural Bildungsroman. A transcultural Bildungsroman is a novel in which the protagonist's development is shaped by crossing cultural, linguistic, or national borders rather than integrating into a single national culture (Helff, 2014).

Arissa is a Pakistani-American Muslim woman who migrates to New York and lives there with her husband. Her life is initially peaceful and filled with love with her husband, Faizan, until the tragic events of 9/11 result in his death. Following this event, Arissa faces significant discrimination and conflict. She struggles to find meaning in life after this loss.

She experiences discrimination, loneliness, and trauma but gradually recovers through writing and devotion to her unborn child. Arissa continues writing her husband's manuscript and expresses her ideas as a Muslim woman through it. Her struggle against grief, combined with social discrimination as a Muslim woman and the birth of her disabled child, leads her toward self-acceptance and maturity, both spiritually and emotionally.

Amid her despair, she chooses to rebuild her life, raise her disabled child, and find new meaning in her existence. Arissa maintains her Muslim identity while also adapting certain aspects of her life to the social demands of her environment. She perseveres by transforming herself while preserving the core of her identity. This demonstrates that the Bildungsroman is not merely physical or external but also psychological and internal. Her process of self-transformation and identity formation serves as a successful example of a transcultural Bildungsroman.

Comparative Synthesis: Identity Formation of Muslim Women in Diaspora

Faten and Arissa come from different geographical backgrounds, ethnicities, and diasporic experiences. However, both face similar challenges as Muslim women within postcolonial diasporic contexts. Differences in structural conditions and access to agency result in markedly different patterns of identity formation. Both characters initially appear as active religious individuals; however, subsequent developments show that their faith and religious identities evolve along different trajectories under structural pressures.

The most significant difference in the formation of their identities lies in migration context and legal status. Faten migrates illegally to Spain, which immediately places her in a highly vulnerable social position. This undocumented status deprives her of legal and social protections, exposing her to exploitative power relations. Under these conditions, Faten's life choices cannot be understood solely as individual decisions but must be seen as the result of structural coercion. In contrast, Arissa lives as a legal immigrant in the United States and has access to a relatively secure domestic environment. Although she experiences discrimination after 9/11, her legally recognized status allows her to continue participating in social and symbolic spaces. This contrast demonstrates that legal status and class position play a crucial role in shaping the possibilities of Muslim women's agency in diaspora contexts.

In terms of religious practice, both Faten and Arissa experience a crisis of faith, but with different outcomes. In Faten's case, this crisis leads to a shift in religious practice that reveals a misalignment between belief, identity, and lived experience. Her religiosity, which was previously public and ideological—expressed through hijab, modest clothing, and active religious engagement—becomes more fragmented under social pressure. In other words, she no longer performs visible religious practices in the same way; however, this does not necessarily indicate a loss of faith, but rather a forced adaptation to the social injustice she experiences. Her religiosity, once a source of meaning, becomes a source of guilt and alienation, and no longer functions as a stable framework for self-development.

In contrast, Arissa's crisis of faith is reflective and dialogical. Her decision to remove her hijab does not signify a rejection of Islam but rather a reinterpretation

of piety in the context of trauma and Islamophobia. She reconfigures her relationship with religious symbols rather than abandoning her faith. This difference underscores that piety in Muslim women's narratives is contextual and strongly shaped by surrounding social conditions.

The most striking difference between the two characters lies in their capacity for agency and voice. Faten gradually loses her ability to define herself; her identity is shaped by patriarchal and colonial structures that force her into survival-based conformity. Although she is aware of this inequality, this awareness does not translate into effective resistance, leaving her in a subaltern position, as described by Spivak. In contrast, Arissa rebuilds her agency through writing, which enables her to reconstruct her self-narrative and challenge Western representations that reduce Muslim identity to simplified categories.

Overall, this comparative synthesis confirms that the formation of Muslim women's identities in diasporic literature is not homogeneous. Although both Faten and Arissa face patriarchy, religious discrimination, and postcolonial pressures, the outcomes of their trajectories are shaped by material conditions, legal status, and access to symbolic spaces such as literacy. This study demonstrates that Muslim women's agency is highly dependent on social structures that enable or constrain their ability to act and speak. Therefore, readings of Muslim women's narratives must remain contextual and comparative.

CONCLUSION

Through a comparative study of two novels by Lalami and Abdullah, focusing on the characters Faten and Arissa, this research demonstrates how Muslim female characters in literary works negotiate faith, identity, migration, trauma, and socio-political pressures in diverse ways. Furthermore, this study challenges monolithic understandings of Muslim women. Dominant representations in the West often generalize Muslim women within a single interpretative framework, thereby disregarding the social, cultural, political, and personal factors that shape their life experiences and religious practices. Such reductive representations contribute to the persistence of stereotypes and, in many cases, hinder efforts to present a more balanced and complex portrayal of Muslim women.

Thus, the significance of this research lies not only in revealing the processes of identity negotiation experienced by Faten and Arissa but also in showing how literary representation functions as a narrative intervention that challenges reductive portrayals of Muslim women. Rather than portraying Muslim women as passive victims of culture, religion, or socio-political conditions, both novels highlight their agency, complexity, and capacity to actively shape their identities within diasporic contexts. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Muslim women's identities as dynamic, multidimensional, and highly context-dependent.

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Cultural Translation Strategies of Cultural Elements in the English Version of *Gadis Kretek*: Translating Indonesian Cultural Nuances

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Abstract. This research explores the cultural translation strategies employed in the English version of Ratih Kumala's novel *Gadis Kretek*, which was translated by Annie Tucker as *Cigarette Girl*. Translating a literary work that is deeply embedded in Indonesian culture presents unique challenges, particularly in maintaining cultural authenticity while ensuring that the text remains accessible and comprehensible to international readers. Guided by Lawrence Venuti's (1995) theoretical framework of domestication and foreignization, this study seeks to identify various cultural elements contained in the source text, analyze the strategies applied in their English translation, and evaluate how effectively these strategies preserve the original cultural meanings. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on selected chapters that contain a high density of cultural expressions, including traditional customs, idioms, social values, and historical references. Each cultural element is analyzed to determine whether the translator adopts domestication, foreignization, or a hybrid approach in rendering it into English. The analysis reveals that Annie Tucker skillfully combines both strategies: she uses foreignization to retain the local flavor and authenticity of Indonesian culture, while applying domestication to make the text more understandable for global readers. The findings show that domestication and foreignization are applied complementarily to preserve Indonesian cultural identity while maintaining readability, reflecting Venuti's (1995) view that cultural authenticity and accessibility can coexist in literary translation. This research contributes to the field of translation studies by demonstrating how Indonesian literary works can reach international audiences without losing their cultural essence.

Keywords: *cultural translation, translation strategy, domestication, foreignization, Gadis Kretek*

<http://jos.unsoed.ac.id/index.php/jes>

INTRODUCTION

Translation functions as an essential bridge that connects languages, cultures, and societies through the transfer of knowledge, values, and perspectives. Rather than being limited to a purely linguistic activity, translation also represents a complex intercultural process involving the negotiation of meaning, emotion, ideology, and cultural identity across different social contexts. Bassnett (2014) argues that translation should be viewed not merely as the replacement of words from one language into another, but as a cultural practice that mediates between distinct systems of thought and expression. Similarly, Newmark (1988) defines translation as the process of rendering the meaning of a text from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) while preserving the author's original intention. Larson (1998) further emphasizes that effective translation requires the adjustment of linguistic forms to suit the grammatical and cultural structures of the target language without losing the core meaning embedded in the source text. These perspectives demonstrate that translation operates simultaneously as linguistic mediation and intercultural communication.

The relationship between language and culture becomes particularly significant in literary translation because literary texts frequently embody the traditions, ideologies, historical experiences, and collective identities of a society. Literary works are not only artistic expressions but also cultural artifacts that reflect the worldview of the communities in which they are produced. Consequently, literary translation involves more than transferring semantic meaning; it also requires preserving the cultural nuances and symbolic dimensions embedded in the original text. Baker (2011) explains that language reflects the worldview of its speakers, meaning that translators must carefully negotiate cultural meanings when rendering literary texts into another language. Translators therefore function as cultural mediators who bridge the world of the author and the world of the reader while maintaining both readability and cultural authenticity.

One literary work that illustrates the complexity of cultural translation is Ratih Kumala's Indonesian novel *Gadis Kretek*, translated into English by Annie Tucker as *Cigarette Girl* in 2015. The novel presents a rich portrayal of Indonesian social life, historical transformation, and cultural identity, particularly through its depiction of the kretek (clove cigarette) industry and the social realities surrounding it. The narrative intertwines personal relationships, historical memory, traditional values, and national identity, making the novel deeply rooted in Indonesian cultural experience. Translating such a culturally dense narrative into English creates considerable challenges because many expressions, customs, and social references

in the source text do not have direct equivalents in the target language. As a result, the translator must determine which cultural elements should be retained, adapted, explained, or modified to ensure that international readers can understand the narrative without losing the cultural essence of the original work.

These challenges are closely related to Lawrence Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization, two influential strategies in translation studies. Domestication refers to the adaptation of the source text to conform to the linguistic and cultural expectations of the target audience, thereby producing a translation that feels familiar and accessible. Foreignization, in contrast, preserves the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the source text, allowing readers to encounter foreign cultural elements even when they appear unfamiliar or challenging. Venuti argues that translation choices are not merely technical decisions but also ideological acts shaped by cultural power relations. Domestication may reduce cultural distance but risks erasing cultural uniqueness, whereas foreignization seeks to preserve the "otherness" of the source culture by resisting assimilation into the target culture.

The interaction between these two strategies can clearly be observed in Annie Tucker's translation of *Gadis Kretek*. Certain Indonesian cultural expressions are adapted or clarified to facilitate comprehension for English-speaking readers, demonstrating domestication. At the same time, culturally specific terms such as *kretek*, *sesajen*, and *klobot* are often retained in their original forms, reflecting a foreignization strategy intended to preserve Indonesian cultural identity. Tucker's translation therefore demonstrates a dynamic balance between readability and authenticity, suggesting that domestication and foreignization may coexist within the same literary work rather than functioning as entirely separate approaches.

Venuti (1995) primarily emphasizes the concepts of domestication and foreignization as translation strategies for negotiating cultural differences in literary texts. Drawing on broader translation studies perspectives, this study identifies several recurring cultural elements in *Gadis Kretek*, including culturally specific terms, proper names and titles, idioms and proverbs, social and historical references, food and culinary terms, religious and mythological elements, and gestures or body language. These elements are closely connected to the cultural context of the source language and often contain meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation.

These elements are deeply connected to the cultural systems of the source language and frequently carry meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation. Translators must therefore decide whether such elements should be preserved, adapted, substituted, or explained in order to maintain both meaning and readability. Baker (2011) similarly notes that idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and culturally bound references require careful contextual interpretation because they are inseparable from the cultural background of the source community.

The complexity of translating cultural expressions is particularly evident in literary works that rely heavily on symbolism, humor, idiomatic language, and historical references. Munday (2004) explains that cultural translation involves transferring embedded cultural meanings while preserving the emotional and stylistic qualities of the original text. Fernández (2012) also argues that many culture-bound terms lack direct equivalents in other languages, forcing translators to negotiate between borrowing, explanation, adaptation, or substitution. Such difficulties are visible in *Gadis Kretek*, where humor, figurative expressions, and traditional references are closely tied to Indonesian social and cultural contexts. For example, metaphorical expressions involving kretek culture may contain emotional and symbolic meanings that cannot be fully transferred through literal translation alone. In these situations, translators must decide whether to preserve the original cultural structure through foreignization or prioritize accessibility through domestication.

Idiomatic expressions also represent one of the most difficult aspects of literary translation because their figurative meanings frequently differ from their literal interpretations. Translators may employ equivalent idioms in the target language, paraphrase the intended meaning, or provide explanatory renderings depending on the communicative context. Such decisions highlight the translator's role not only as a linguistic converter but also as an interpreter of cultural meaning. Through these strategies, translators attempt to maintain the aesthetic quality, emotional resonance, and cultural significance of the source text while ensuring comprehension among target readers.

Several previous studies have discussed the translation of cultural elements in Indonesian literary works. Miskiyah (2020) analyzed the translation of Javanese cultural words using Newmark's classification and Davies' framework, focusing primarily on translation procedures for cultural terminology. Apandi and Afiah (2019) examined cultural translation in Cirebonese narratives through Newmark's model, while Sihite M. R. (2024) investigated student translators' difficulties in rendering Indonesian short stories into English using Venuti's domestication and foreignization framework. Although these studies provide valuable insights into cultural translation, many of them focus primarily on lexical items or traditional texts and pay limited attention to the ideological implications of translation strategies in contemporary Indonesian literature.

This study seeks to address that gap by examining how Annie Tucker negotiates domestication and foreignization in translating *Gadis Kretek* into *Cigarette Girl*. Unlike previous studies that concentrate mainly on isolated cultural words, this research investigates broader cultural elements, including idioms, social references, historical contexts, and symbolic expressions. By applying Venuti's (1995) framework, the study aims to analyze how translation strategies contribute

to the representation of Indonesian cultural identity in English literary translation and how these strategies shape international readers' understanding of Indonesian culture.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to translation studies that emphasize the cultural dimension of literary translation. By focusing on a modern Indonesian novel that has achieved international recognition, this study demonstrates how translation strategies can preserve cultural identity while simultaneously promoting accessibility for global readers. Furthermore, the study highlights the important role of translators as cultural mediators who negotiate between different linguistic and cultural systems in order to introduce local narratives to international audiences.

Accordingly, this research aims to: (1) identify the cultural elements present in Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek*; (2) analyze the domestication and foreignization strategies used in its English translation *Cigarette Girl*; and (3) evaluate how these strategies influence the preservation of Indonesian cultural meaning in the target text. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study explores how translation functions not only as a linguistic activity but also as a cultural and ideological act that shapes the global representation of Indonesian literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the translation strategies of cultural elements in Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* and its English translation *Cigarette Girl*, translated by Annie Tucker. According to Sukmadinata (2009), qualitative research focuses on interpreting meanings and understanding phenomena within their cultural and contextual settings. This approach was considered suitable because the study emphasizes the analysis of culturally bound expressions and the translator's choices in transferring Indonesian cultural nuances into English.

The study focused on identifying cultural elements in the novel and examining how these elements were translated using domestication and foreignization strategies proposed by Venuti (1995). Through close textual analysis, the research interpreted the effectiveness of the translation by examining whether the cultural meanings, contextual nuances, and readability of the source text were maintained in the target text. Therefore, the analysis was not limited to categorizing translation strategies but also explored how the translator balanced cultural preservation and accessibility for international readers.

The primary data of this study consisted of Ratih Kumala's Indonesian novel *Gadis Kretek* (2012) and its English translation *Cigarette Girl*, translated by Annie Tucker (2015). However, the analysis did not cover the entire novel. To maintain a focused and manageable scope, the researcher applied purposive sampling by selecting Chapter 8 and Chapter 14 of the Indonesian version, which correspond to

Chapter 12 and Chapter 17 in the English translation. These chapters were intentionally chosen because they contain a significant number of cultural elements relevant to the objectives of the study, particularly culturally bound expressions, social references, and idiomatic language that reflect Indonesian cultural identity.

The data selection focused specifically on cultural elements categorized under Venuti's (1995) framework, including culturally specific terms, proper names and titles, idioms and proverbs, social and historical references, food and culinary terms, religious and mythological elements, as well as gestures and body language. Cultural expressions were identified through close reading, annotation, and comparative textual analysis between the source text and the target text. Each selected datum was analyzed to examine how domestication and foreignization strategies were applied in the translation process.

To support the analysis, secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to translation studies and cultural translation. These secondary sources were not treated as equal data to the primary text but were used as theoretical and analytical references to interpret the translation strategies found in the novel. Venuti's (1995) theory of domestication and foreignization served as the main analytical framework for examining how cultural elements were translated, while previous studies were used to compare findings and strengthen the interpretation of cultural translation practices. Therefore, the secondary data functioned as supporting references that guided the analysis of the primary data, particularly in understanding how Indonesian cultural identity was represented and negotiated in the English translation.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher systematically identified, categorized, and interpreted excerpts representing seven cultural elements: culturally specific terms, proper names, idioms, social and historical references, food, religious elements, and gestures. The identified cultural elements were classified using Newmark's (1988) cultural categories, while the translation strategies applied to these elements were analyzed through Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignization framework to examine how Indonesian cultural nuances were represented in the English translation. Findings were presented in tables to highlight patterns between domestication and foreignization. Trustworthiness was maintained through triangulation, thick description, and continuous verification of interpretations. This methodological framework ensured that the study provided valid, credible, and insightful contributions to understanding how Indonesian cultural nuances are represented and negotiated in English literary translation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study entitled *Cultural Translation Strategies in the English Version of Gadis Kretek: Translating Indonesian Cultural Nuances*. The discussion not only identifies the cultural elements found in the novel but also analyzes how these elements were translated into English and how the selected strategies influenced the preservation of Indonesian cultural meanings.

The analysis focuses on Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* (2012) and its English translation *Cigarette Girl* (2015), translated by Annie Tucker. The findings are organized based on three main aspects of the study: the identification of cultural elements, the translation strategies employed, and the effectiveness of these strategies in conveying cultural nuances to international readers. This study identifies seven categories of cultural elements in Chapters 8 and 14, namely:

- (1) culturally specific terms,
- (2) proper names and titles,
- (3) idioms and proverbs,
- (4) social and historical references,
- (5) food and culinary terms,
- (6) religious and mythological elements,
- (7) gestures or body language.

Beyond presenting the data, this discussion also examines representative translation examples to understand why particular strategies were preferred and how they reflect the translator's approach in balancing cultural authenticity and readability. For instance, culture-bound terms such as *kretek* and *kebaya* were maintained in their original forms to preserve Indonesian cultural identity and introduce local cultural concepts to foreign readers. In contrast, several idiomatic expressions were translated using domestication to produce more natural and comprehensible meanings in English. These examples demonstrate that the translator applied translation strategies selectively, according to the cultural significance and communicative function of each expression.

Each category reflects the richness of Indonesian culture represented through the novel's narrative, characters, and settings, providing insight into how literary translation negotiates between cultural preservation and accessibility for international audiences. The findings of the cultural element analysis are summarized in the table below, followed by qualitative discussions of selected translation examples to provide a deeper interpretation of the translator's cultural mediation process.

Tables 4.1 Cultural elements analysis

No	Cultural Element Type	Example(s) from Source Text	Chapter / Page
1	Culturally specific terms	kretek, tingwe, kebaya, formula saus baru, mas, kursi anyaman rotan.	Ch. 8/ P 137,138,145,149 CH 14/P 251
2	Proper names and titles	Idroes Moeria, Pak Joko, Dasiyah, Rukayah, Roemaisa, Soedjagad, pitulungan 777, Djakarta, Kota M, Pak Trisno, Kudus, Gunung kawi, Yogyakarta, Malang, Mbah Djoego, Djagat Raja.	Ch 8/ P 137,138,141,142,144,145 Ch 14/P 248
3	Idioms and proverbs	seperti bunga yang disibak dari Semak, pergi dengan bersungut-sungut, meluap-luap girang, rumah yang tak beratap, kosong melompong, menyinggikan senyum, meroket, seperti kembang sepatu, tangan kosong, bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus, senyum mengembang, sekuntum kuncup yang mengembang, putrinya telah jadi kembang.	Ch. 8 /P 142,147,149,153,154,157,
4	Social and historical references	pribumi, PKI, 17 Agustus, bapak, Roro Mendut, orang jawa, perempuan china, bermata sipit, kakek buyut,	Ch. 8/ P 137,141,143,144,146,153, Ch14/P 257,251,
5	Food and culinary terms	pecel, tumpeng nasi kuning, tape ketan, sirih, gudeg krecek, ayam utuh yang dipanggang,	Ch. 8/ P 146,154, Ch 14/ P 241,250
6	Religious and mythological elements	Gunung Kawi, tirakat, pohon dewadaru, ritual minum teh poci, kembang setaman, sesembahan.	Ch. 8/ P 138,145,146
7	Gestures and body language	mengangguk kecil, tersipu sambil mengangguk, hati kami berbunga-bung, terpana,	Ch. 8/ P 142,143,156, Ch. 14/ P 249

Translation Strategies Applied

In translating the cultural elements of Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* into its English version *Cigarette Girl*, the translator strategically employs Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization to balance readability and cultural authenticity. Domestication functions as a means of adapting the source text to the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience. This approach involves replacing or modifying culture-bound expressions, employing familiar equivalents, simplifying culturally dense items, and adjusting idiomatic or context-specific language to ensure coherence and fluency. Through domestication, the translator enhances the accessibility of the text, making it more comprehensible to international readers. However, this strategy can also result in the partial loss of the source text's cultural identity, as certain nuances may be diluted in favor of naturalness and readability. Conversely, foreignization maintains the cultural and linguistic essence of the original work by deliberately retaining unfamiliar expressions and context-specific terms. This approach encourages readers to encounter and appreciate the distinctiveness of Indonesian culture, preserving the cultural "foreignness" that defines the source text's identity.

In operational terms, these two macro-strategies are manifested through a series of micro-techniques, including preservation, cultural specificity, literal translation, simplification, adaptation, and cultural substitution. Preservation involves maintaining original cultural terms without alteration, while cultural specificity emphasizes the uniqueness of Indonesian expressions and customs. Literal translation renders text word-for-word without structural modification, and simplification aims to reduce linguistic or cultural complexity for clarity. Adaptation replaces an element with one that performs a similar communicative function in the target culture, and cultural substitution introduces culturally equivalent items that are more familiar to English-speaking audiences. These techniques collectively illustrate the translator's negotiation between fidelity to the source culture and the communicative needs of the target audience. The subsequent comparative analysis demonstrates how these strategies function in practice, revealing the translator's nuanced approach to balancing cultural preservation and textual accessibility within the cross-cultural transfer of meaning. The results of the cultural element analysis are presented in the table below.

Tables 4.2 Translation strategies analysis

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
1	"Kretek Merdeka!"	"Independence kretek"	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
2	“tingwe”	“tingwe”	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization
3	“kebaya”	“kebaya”	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization
4	“formula saus baru”	“a new sauce formula”	Culturally specific term	Literal translation	Domestication
5	“mas”	“mas”	Culturally specific term	Preservation	Foreignization
6	“kursi anyaman rotan”	“woves rattan chair”	Culturally specific term	Literal translation	Domestication
7	“Idroes Moeria”	“Idroes Moeria”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
8	“Pak Joko”	“Pak Joko”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
9	“Dasiyah”	“Dasiyah”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
10	“Rukayah	“Rukayah”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
11	“Roemaisa”	“Roemaisa”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
12	“Soedjagad”	“Soedjagad”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
13	“pitulungan 777”	“lucky 777”	Proper name/title	Simplification	Domestication
14	“Djakarta”	“Djakarta”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
15	“Kota M”	“M town”	Proper name/title	Simplification	Domestication
16	“Pak Trisno”	“Pak Trisno”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
17	“Kudus”	“Kudus”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
18	“Gunung kawi”	“Gunung kawi”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
19	“Yogyakarta”	“Yogyakarta”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
20	“Malang”	“Malang”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
21	“Mbah Djoego”	“Mbah Djoego”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
22	“Djagat Raja”	“Djagat Raja”	Proper name/title	Preservation	Foreignization
23	“seperti bunga yang disibak dari semak”	“this flower peeking out from behind a leaf”	Idioms and proverbs	Simplification	Domestication
24	“pergi dengan bersungut-sungut”	“left in huff”	Idioms and proverbs	Idiomatic translation	Domestication
25	“meluap-luap girang”	“overflowing with great delight”	Idioms and proverbs	Idiomatic translation	Domestication
26	“rumah yang tak beratap”	“a house without a roof”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
27	“kosong melompong”	“soon lay bare and deserted”	Idioms and proverbs	Idiomatic translation	Domestication
28	“menyunggingkan senyum”	“a coy smile”	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
29	“meroket”	“skyrocketed”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
30	“seperti kembang sepatu”	“like a hibiscus flower”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
31	“tangan kosong”	“empty handed”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
32	“bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus”	“fighting like cat and dog”	Idioms and proverbs	Literal translation	Domestication
33	“senyum mengembang”	“a bold and glowing smile”	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural substitution	Domestication

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
34	“sekuntum kuncup yang mengembang”	“like a flower bud in bloom”	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural substitution	Domestication
35	“putrinya telah jadi kembang”	“had grown into a beautiful woman”	Idioms and proverbs	Cultural substitution	Domestication
36	“pribumi”	“pribumi”	Social and Historical references	Literal translation	Domestication
37	“PKI”	“PKI”	Social and Historical references	Preservation	Foreignization
38	“17 Agustus”	“August 17”	Social and Historical references	Literal Translation	Foreignization
39	“bapak”	“papa”	Social and Historical references	Preservation	Foreignization
40	“Roro Mendut.”	“Roro Mendut”	Social and Historical references	Preservation	Foreignization
41	“Perempuan cina”	“a Chinese women”	Social and Historical references	Literal translation	Domestication
42	“bermata sipit”	“china descent”	Social and Historical references	Adaptation	Domestication
43	“kakek buyut.”	“kakek buyut”	Social and Historical References	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
44	“orang jawa”	“javanese”	Social and Historical references	Literal translation	Domestication

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
45	“tumpeng nasi kuning”	“cones of yellow rice”	Food and culinary terms	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
46	“tape ketan”	“tape ketan”	Food and culinary terms	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
47	“sirih”	“sirih”	Food and culinary terms	Literal translation	Domestication
48	“gudeg krecek”	“gudeg krecek”	Food and culinary terms	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
49	“pecel”	“pecel”	Food and Culinary Terms	Cultural Specificity	Foreignization
50	“ayam utuh yang di panggang”	“whole roast chickens”	Food and Culinary Terms	Literal translation	Domestication
51	“Gunung kawi”	“Gunung kawi”	Religious and mythological elements	Preservation	Foreignization
52	“tirakatan”	“fasting and offering”	Religious and mythological elements	Adaptation	Domestication
53	“pohon dewadaru”	“dewadaru tree”	Religious and mythological elements	Literal translation	Domestication
54	“ritual minum teh poci”	“teapot ritual”	Religious and mythological elements	Adaptation	Domestication
55	“kembang setaman”	“a plant”	Religious and	Simplification	Domestication

No	Source Text	Target Text	Cultural Element	Translation Technique	Translation Strategy
			mythological elements		
56	"sesembahan"	"pilgrimage"	Religious and mythological elements	Adaptation	Domestication
57	"terpana"	"struck with wonder"	Gesture and Body Language	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
58	"tersipu sambil mengangguk"	"blushed and nodded"	Gesture and Body Language	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
59	"mengangguk kecil"	"a small nod"	Gesture and Body Language	Cultural Substitution	Domestication
60	"hati kami berbunga-bunga"	"hearts pounding"	Gesture and Body Language	Idiomatic translation	Domestication

Domestication is more commonly employed in the translation of *Gadis Kretek* than foreignization, although both strategies play significant roles in conveying the novel's rich cultural context. The analysis reveals that, out of 60 identified cultural elements, 32 instances were translated using domestication, while 28 instances applied foreignization. This relatively small numerical difference indicates that the translator sought a balanced approach between readability and cultural preservation. Nevertheless, the dominance of domestication demonstrates a tendency to prioritize the accessibility and fluency of the English version for international readers. Despite this, foreignization remains essential in maintaining the authenticity and cultural integrity of the source text. A closer examination of the data highlights the patterns and tendencies in the application of these translation strategies throughout the novel, providing deeper insight into how cultural nuances are negotiated in the translation process.

Translation Strategies and Cultural Representation

This section discusses how the translation strategies used in *Gadis Kretek* and its English version *Cigarette Girl* were interpreted in terms of their ability to preserve cultural meaning and readability. In this study, "effectiveness" does not

refer to statistical measurement but to the qualitative interpretation of how successfully the translated expressions conveyed Indonesian cultural nuances while remaining understandable for target readers. The analysis was conducted through close textual comparison between the source text and the target text by examining whether the translated expressions maintained essential meaning, reflected cultural context, and produced natural expressions in English.

The findings indicate that domestication was more suitable for idioms and figurative expressions because it improved clarity and readability for English readers, while foreignization was more effective in preserving the authenticity of culturally specific terms, food names, and socio-historical references. Rather than functioning as opposing strategies, both approaches complemented each other in negotiating cultural preservation and accessibility. The interpretation of effectiveness was further supported by expert validation to ensure that the analysis remained contextually and culturally appropriate.

The validator's analysis indicates that the translation of cultural elements in the English version of *Gadis Kretek* generally succeeds in preserving the cultural and historical nuances embedded in the source text. Material culture terms such as *kretek*, *tingwe*, *kebaya*, and *kursi anyaman rotan*, as well as culinary expressions including *pecel*, *tumpeng nasi kuning*, and *gudeg krecek*, are retained through literal transfer and borrowing strategies, allowing the ethnographic identity of the source culture to remain visible in the target text. Similarly, socio-political and historical references such as Idroes Moeria, Pak Joko, Kudus, Yogyakarta, Gunung Kawi, PKI, pribumi, and perempuan Chindo maintain their historical specificity without being replaced by culturally neutral equivalents. However, the validator also identified a noticeable shift in the translation of idioms, metaphors, and proverbs, particularly in expressions such as *seperti bunga yang disibak dari semak* and *bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus*. Although these expressions remain semantically comprehensible in English, the translation tends to reduce their emotional resonance and cultural depth, indicating the limitations of transferring culturally embedded figurative language across linguistic contexts.

Comparison of Translation Strategies Validated by Expert Triangulation

The results of expert triangulation demonstrate a well-balanced implementation of translation strategies. The preservation strategy (foreignization) was applied to culturally bound items such as *kretek*, *tingwe*, *kebaya*, Idroes Moeria, Pak Joko, and Gunung Kawi. Drawing on Venuti's concept of foreignization and Newmark's principle of cultural retention, this approach was highly effective in maintaining cultural authenticity, particularly for terms without natural English equivalents. Literal translation (domestication), exemplified by *kursi anyaman rotan* → *woven rattan chair* and *rumah yang tak beratap* → *a house without a roof*, proved

effective in conveying meaning clearly while adhering to English syntactic norms, aligning with Venuti's domestication and Nida's formal equivalence.

Idiomatic translation and cultural substitution, such as *pergi dengan bersungut-sungut* → *left in a huff* and *menyunggingkan senyum* → *a coy smile*, were found to be highly effective in maintaining tone, emotional nuance, and narrative flow while conforming to target language conventions, in line with Nida's dynamic equivalence and Venuti's domestication strategy. Adaptation and simplification, seen in *pitulungan 777* → *lucky 777* and *ritual minum teh poci* → *teapot ritual*, made culture-bound concepts more accessible to non-Indonesian readers, although with slight reductions in cultural depth. The use of mixed strategies for items such as *tape ketan*, *gudeg krecek*, and *kakek buyut* (retained with brief explanation) illustrates an effective balance between cultural preservation and readability.

Gestures and body language translations, such as *mengangguk kecil* → *a small nod* and *tersipu sambil mengangguk* → *blushed and nodded*, were likewise effective in conveying culturally embedded etiquette and emotional subtext, enhancing character portrayal. Overall, the application of foreignization successfully preserved the cultural depth of tangible items and proper names, while domestication ensured clarity and fluency in idiomatic expressions. The balanced integration of both strategies maintained cultural integrity and textual readability. Validator feedback confirmed alignment with Venuti, Nida, and Newmark's theoretical frameworks, underscoring this study's valuable contribution to the literary translation of Indonesian culture into English.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the translation of cultural elements in Ratih Kumala's *Gadis Kretek* into its English version *Cigarette Girl* reflects a complex process of cultural negotiation rather than a simple linguistic transfer. The translator selectively applied domestication and foreignization strategies depending on the communicative purpose, cultural significance, and contextual function of each expression. This indicates that translation decisions were strongly influenced not only by lexical equivalence but also by ideological and cultural considerations regarding how Indonesian identity should be represented to international readers. In this regard, the findings support Venuti's (1995) argument that translation is fundamentally a cultural and ideological act in which translators determine the visibility of the source culture within the target text.

The predominance of foreignization in culturally specific terms such as *kretek*, *kebaya*, *tingwe*, *gudeg krecek*, and *Gunung Kawi* suggests that the translator intentionally prioritized cultural authenticity and ethnographic representation. These expressions were retained because they contain historical, symbolic, and socio-cultural meanings that cannot be fully replaced by English equivalents without

reducing their cultural depth. For instance, the term *kretek* does not merely refer to a cigarette product but also represents Indonesian industrial history, social identity, and local tradition. Translating it simply as “clove cigarette” would make the expression more understandable linguistically, yet it would simultaneously eliminate the cultural resonance embedded in the original term. Therefore, preservation through foreignization became the preferred strategy because it allowed the translator to maintain the cultural uniqueness of the source text.

This finding strongly aligns with Venuti’s (1995) concept of foreignization, which emphasizes preserving the “foreignness” of the source culture to resist excessive assimilation into target-language norms. Through this strategy, the translator positioned Indonesian culture as something visible and legitimate within English literary discourse rather than adapting it completely to Western cultural expectations. The translator’s decision to retain original cultural expressions also reveals an approach that values cultural representation over full linguistic naturalization. In other words, the translator appears to treat the novel not only as entertainment literature but also as a medium for introducing Indonesian cultural identity to global audiences.

The preservation of proper names and socio-historical references such as PKI, *pribumi*, Pak Joko, and Yogyakarta further reinforces this cultural orientation. These terms are closely connected to Indonesian historical memory and social hierarchy; therefore, replacing them with generalized English expressions would potentially weaken their ideological and contextual significance. This finding is consistent with Newmark’s (1988) argument that culturally bound items should be maintained when they represent unique cultural realities that have no direct equivalent in the target language. The translator’s choice demonstrates awareness that literary translation involves transferring not only meaning but also cultural worldview and historical context.

However, while foreignization was dominant in culture-specific references, domestication was more frequently employed in translating idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and emotional language. Expressions such as *pergi dengan bersungut-sungut*, translated as *left in a huff*, and *bertengkar seperti kucing dan tikus*, translated as *fighting like cat and dog*, illustrate how the translator prioritized readability and communicative effectiveness for English readers. These idiomatic renderings were preferred because literal translation would likely sound unnatural, awkward, or semantically unclear in English. As Baker (2011) explains, idioms are deeply rooted in cultural context, making direct translation highly problematic because figurative meanings cannot always be interpreted through lexical equivalence alone.

The translator’s use of domestication in figurative expressions indicates an effort to reproduce equivalent emotional effects rather than preserving the original linguistic structure. This reflects Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence, which focuses on producing a similar response among target readers rather than

maintaining formal correspondence. For example, the translation of *menyunggingkan senyum* into *a coy smile* does not replicate the literal wording of the source text, yet it successfully conveys emotional nuance and characterization in a way that feels natural for English-speaking audiences. This suggests that the translator considered reader reception and narrative fluency as essential components of literary translation.

At the same time, the domestication strategy also reveals the translator's awareness of the limitations of literal translation in cross-cultural communication. Indonesian idiomatic expressions often contain symbolic associations that may not exist in English cultural systems. Therefore, adapting them into familiar English idioms becomes necessary to maintain narrative coherence and emotional accessibility. Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that some degree of cultural nuance was inevitably reduced during this process. Expressions such as *seperti bunga yang disibak dari semak* lost part of their poetic imagery when translated into a more simplified English expression. This confirms Baker's (2011) view that figurative language is among the most difficult cultural elements to preserve fully in translation because aesthetic meaning is strongly tied to cultural perception.

The findings additionally reveal that the translator did not rigidly separate domestication and foreignization as opposing approaches. Instead, both strategies were combined flexibly according to textual needs and cultural priorities. This balanced application demonstrates that successful literary translation requires contextual decision-making rather than reliance on a single strategy. Foreignization was mainly preferred when cultural authenticity and identity were central to the meaning of the expression, whereas domestication became preferable when clarity, readability, and emotional comprehension were prioritized. Such flexibility reflects the translator's role as a cultural mediator who continuously negotiates between preserving source-culture identity and ensuring accessibility for target readers.

This finding supports previous studies conducted by Miskiyah (2020), who found that cultural preservation is frequently applied in translating Javanese cultural terms, and Sihite et al. (2024), who observed that translators often combine domestication and foreignization when translating Indonesian literary texts into English. However, unlike those previous studies, the present research demonstrates more explicitly that translation strategies also reflect ideological positioning regarding cultural representation. The translator's choices in *Cigarette Girl* reveal an intention to maintain Indonesian cultural visibility while simultaneously ensuring that the narrative remains globally readable. Therefore, the study contributes to translation studies not only by identifying translation strategies but also by explaining how those strategies function as forms of intercultural negotiation and representation.

Furthermore, the findings challenge the assumption that domestication and foreignization must operate separately. The relatively balanced use of both strategies indicates that literary translation can preserve cultural identity without sacrificing readability. This supports Venuti's (1995) argument that the two strategies should not necessarily be viewed as binary oppositions but rather as complementary approaches that may coexist within the same translated text. The translator's balanced strategy in *Cigarette Girl* demonstrates that Indonesian cultural expressions can remain visible and meaningful even when certain adaptations are necessary for international comprehension.

From a broader perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of how translation participates in the global circulation of Indonesian literature. Through selective foreignization, Indonesian culture becomes visible to international audiences, while domestication allows the narrative to remain emotionally accessible and communicatively effective. Consequently, translation functions not merely as language transfer but as cultural representation that shapes how global readers perceive Indonesian society, traditions, and historical experiences.

Overall, the findings indicate that Annie Tucker adopted a culturally sensitive and reader-oriented translation approach. Her translation strategy demonstrates a careful balance between preserving Indonesian cultural authenticity and facilitating readability for English-speaking audiences. The integration of domestication and foreignization ultimately enables *Cigarette Girl* to function both as a literary work and as a medium of intercultural communication that introduces Indonesian cultural identity to a broader global readership.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the cultural translation strategies used in *Gadis Kretek* and its English version *Cigarette Girl* by focusing on the identification of cultural elements, the analysis of translation strategies, and the evaluation of their effectiveness. The findings demonstrate that the translation process involved a careful negotiation between preserving Indonesian cultural identity and ensuring accessibility for international readers. The presence of various cultural elements in the novel reflects the richness of Indonesian culture and highlights the challenges of transferring culturally bound meanings into another language.

The study reveals that the translator applied domestication and foreignization strategically according to the function and cultural significance of each expression. Foreignization was mainly used to maintain the authenticity of Indonesian cultural references and to introduce local cultural values to global audiences, while domestication helped create a more natural and comprehensible reading experience for English readers. These choices indicate that the translator

did not merely transfer language but also acted as a cultural mediator who balanced cultural preservation with readability.

Furthermore, the findings support Venuti's (1995) theory that domestication and foreignization can work together in literary translation rather than functioning as opposing approaches. The translation of *Gadis Kretek* into *Cigarette Girl* demonstrates that cultural identity can still be preserved without reducing the clarity and acceptability of the target text. In this way, the study contributes to translation studies by showing how literary translation can facilitate cross-cultural understanding while maintaining the uniqueness of the source culture.

Finally, this research suggests that future studies should explore cultural translation strategies in other Indonesian literary works and examine readers' responses to translated cultural expressions in order to gain a deeper understanding of cultural mediation in global literature.

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It's Look, That's Go: Usage-Based Innovation in Asian Englishes

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Abstract. This study extends previous research on the *it's + Vø* pattern in Asian English as a lingua franca (ELF) by presenting the first comparative analysis of the *it's + Vø* (e.g., *it's look* for 'it looks') and *that's + Vø* constructions (e.g., *that's go* for 'that goes'). It examines how usage frequency, functional motivations, and cognitive mechanisms shape constructional innovation across three English domains: institutionalised varieties, ELF interactions, and learner Englishes. Using a mixed-method approach that combines frequency and distributional analysis, collocational and collostructional profiling, and qualitative discourse analysis, the study systematically compares the constructions to identify structural and contextual motivations underlying their use. Findings show that *it's + Vø* is more frequent, lexically diverse, and socially widespread than *that's + Vø*, with highest productivity in learner Englishes, moderate entrenchment in ELF use, and marginal presence in institutionalised varieties. Analysis of recurring bare-verb patterns and functional clustering indicates fluid and context-responsive usage in ELF interactions, whereas learners' preference for evaluative or stance-marking expressions reflects pragmatic overextension. These patterns suggest ongoing processes of diffusion, schematic extension, and functional adaptation rather than stable conventionalisation. The study contributes to usage-based accounts of grammatical innovation in Asian Englishes and reframes these constructions as functionally motivated rather than erroneous.

Keywords: *emergent constructions; English as a Lingua Franca; learner English; Asian English morphosyntax; Construction Grammar*

INTRODUCTION

In canonical English, contracted forms such as *it's* and *that's* function as subject-copula units, where *s* represents the verb *is* and selects complements appropriate to the copular construction (Biber et al., 1999, pp. 1005–6). However, several studies working from different methodological approaches and theoretical orientations have reported instances in which *it's* or *that's* does not behave as a decomposable 'subject + copula' sequence. Instead, these forms appear as holistic, prefabricated subject units that can combine directly with a bare or uninflected verb (*V*Ø). For example, in a one-time task-based study of Dutch learners of English, Poulisse (1999, pp. 227–230) reported the use of *it's* + *V*Ø in *it's belong* ('it belongs') surfacing in her findings and interpreted such usage as slips of the tongue. In a longitudinal study on the morphosyntactic performance of an advanced Malaysian L2-English speaker, Mohd Yusoff et al. (2019, pp. 165–166) uncovered a consistent use of *it's look* ('it looks'), *it's mean* ('it means'), and *that's* + *V*Ø in *that's mean* ('that means'), and classified such usage as sporadic errors. A similar stance is evident in Hamid and Hasan's (2020) discussion of Bangladeshi English features, where the authors directly cited the use of "*that's*, " *meaning* " *that means* ", in a Bangladeshi magazine editorial as linguistic carelessness:

We may did something wrong during this year or still making mistakes, *that's mean* [emphasis added] we are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing ourselves, changing ourselves, changing our world. (p. 311)

Although these error-based interpretations provide insight into L2-English morphosyntactic performance, they raise a question of whether these forms may instead index emerging, systematic speech patterns.

Recent corpus-based evidence supports this possibility, suggesting that these constructions are not random or incidental errors but may reflect underlying cognitive processes. Zayani (2024) is the first study to specifically investigate the use of the *it's* + *V*Ø sequence in ELF interactions from the Asian Corpus of English (ACE), proposing that priming and chunking of canonical *it's* forms, combined with the variable English inflection, facilitate its emergence. While this work advances the discussion beyond prescriptive error-based interpretations, its empirical and theoretical scope remains limited. In particular, it does not incorporate other relevant cognitive mechanisms such as analogy, categorisation, and frequency effects (Bybee, 2010), nor does it consider processing pressures such as retrieval interference (Van Dyke & McElree, 2006). The study also overlooks experience-based social factors, including the role of speaker demographics, interactional roles, and communicative contexts in shaping constructional choice (Díaz-Campos & Pollock, 2023). Without integrating these cognitive and sociolinguistic dimensions, the analysis provides only a partial account of the processes driving the emergence and diffusion of *it's* + *V*Ø in ELF settings.

Although these previous studies have documented instances of *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø only in a small number of L2-English contexts (Dutch, Malaysian, and Bangladeshi) and in Asian ELF interactions, it remains unclear whether these forms should be understood as merely sporadic learner errors or as emerging, systematic constructions. This uncertainty is compounded by the lack of research examining the cognitive and functional mechanisms that may underpin their use, including the roles of analogy, frequency-based entrenchment, and the possible reanalysis of *it's* and *that's* as holistic stance-prefacing units. Furthermore, the

ways in which different usage contexts, such as institutionalised varieties, ELF interactions, and learner Englishes, shape the frequency, lexical range, and interactional functions of these constructions have not been systematically investigated. These issues indicate that the phenomenon is not yet well understood either structurally or functionally, nor in terms of the contextual pressures that may promote its emergence.

Despite the empirical and theoretical relevance of the *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* constructions, three major gaps remain. First, no study has directly compared ELF, institutionalised and learner Englishes corpora to determine whether these constructions exhibit consistent patterns across contexts or reflect environment-specific developmental trajectories. Second, their collocational and collostructional behaviour has not been systematically analysed, leaving unclear whether particular verbs or semantic domains (e.g., evaluation, stance, procedural meanings) drive their usage. Third, the functional motivations underlying these constructions, whether shaped by stance marking, discourse alignment, or frequency-based entrenchment, have yet to be examined. Addressing these gaps requires a comparative, multi-corpus approach that can reveal how the constructions behave across contexts and illuminate the structural, functional, and cognitive processes driving their emergence.

To address these empirical and theoretical gaps, the present study undertakes a comparative, multi-corpus investigation of the emergent *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* constructions, focusing on Asian English contexts to extend previous documentation, which has so far reported these constructions primarily in Malaysian, Bangladeshi, and Asian ELF settings. By examining how these forms pattern across institutionalised varieties (International Corpus of English; ICE), ELF interactions (ACE), and learner Englishes (International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English; ICNALE), the study seeks to establish whether they function as systematic constructions rather than sporadic deviations. This comparative perspective provides an integrated basis for explaining how high-frequency subject-copula units may be reanalysed as productive templates and how structural, functional, and cognitive pressures shape their emergence.

Accordingly, this study is guided by four objectives:

1. To provide a comparative account of the emergent *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* constructions across institutionalised varieties, ELF interactions, and learner Englishes.
2. To examine the structural, functional, and cognitive motivations underlying these constructions, including frequency patterns, lexical distributions, and collocational and semantic profiles.
3. To investigate and compare how different usage contexts shape constructional behaviour.
4. To contribute to usage-based and constructional accounts of grammatical innovation in Asian Englishes by demonstrating how high-frequency subject-copula units (*it's*, *that's*) can serve as templates for emergent syntactic patterns.

Beyond these objectives, the study's novelty lies in its integrated analytical framework and expanded empirical scope. It provides the first cross-domain comparative analysis of both the *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* constructions in Asian Englishes, drawing together insights from Construction Grammar and usage-based sociolinguistics. By documenting the previously unexamined *that's + Vø* pattern and extending the analysis to Asian institutionalised varieties and Asian learner Englishes, the study develops a comprehensive

account of the structural, functional, and interactional dimensions of these emergent constructions. Its combination of quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse examination links micro-level usage patterns to broader processes of variation and change, yielding new insights into how high-frequency subject–copula units become productive templates in Asian Englishes.

Theoretically, the study advances usage-based and constructional accounts of grammatical innovation by providing the first comparative evidence for how *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø behave across institutionalised, ELF, and learner Englishes. It identifies *that's* + *V*Ø as an emergent pattern, demonstrates how frequent subject–copula units may be reanalysed as holistic templates that license schematic extension, and supplies new empirical support for the roles of entrenchment, analogy, and processing economy in the development of non-canonical constructions. The contrasting patterns across the three domains refine our understanding of how context-sensitive interactional pressures shape constructional innovation in Asian Englishes.

In practice, the study reframes these forms as functionally motivated, context-dependent constructions rather than categorical errors, with implications for ELF-informed pedagogy, learner assessment, and the recognition of grammatical diversity in English. Methodologically, its triangulated mixed-method design provides a replicable model for future research on emergent constructions and usage-based grammatical change.

To examine the emergence, distribution, and stability of the *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø constructions, this study integrates two complementary perspectives: (i) Construction Grammar and usage-based cognitive linguistics, which explain how constructions arise and become entrenched; and (ii) usage-based sociolinguistics, which accounts for their selective diffusion across communities.

Constructional Emergence in a Usage-Based Framework

Construction Grammar (CxG) provides the primary theoretical lens for analysing the *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø sequences, conceptualising linguistic knowledge as a network of form–meaning pairings that range from highly specific lexical units to fully schematic patterns (Goldberg, 1995, 2006). Within this framework, constructions emerge from patterns in usage. This emergence is gradual, experience-driven, and grounded in domain-general cognitive processes such as categorisation, chunking, and analogy (Bybee, 2010).

Reduced forms such as *it's* and *that's* are particularly susceptible to chunking (see Vetchinnikova & Hiltunen, 2021, on *it's*), a process well documented for other English contractions (e.g., Bybee & Scheibman, 1999, on *don't*; Levshina & Lorenz, 2022, on *wanna*). Chunking encourages speakers to treat these strings as single processing units (Ellis, 2002, 2017). As *it's* and *that's* occur frequently in canonical expressions such as *it's not too bad* or *that's a good idea* (Biber et al., 1999, pp. 1005–6), they may become entrenched not merely as decomposable 'subject + copula' units, but as prefabricated discourse-prefacing constructions functioning as holistic cues for stance, evaluation, or frame-setting. As a result, schematic templates (e.g., '*it's* + predicate' and '*that's* + predicate') become well established in speakers' mental grammars.

When analogy enables speakers to map familiar patterns onto new verbs and discourse functions (Bybee, 2010), these entrenched templates can occasionally extend into non-canonical environments, such as *it's look* and *that's go*, paralleling canonical meanings *it looks*

and *that goes*. These sequences are consistent with accounts of constructional reanalysis in which high-frequency entrenched templates undergo functional extension and develop into productive, novel syntactic patterning acquiring new pragmatic and semantic values (Bybee, 2010).

Because usage-based theories emphasise experience-driven learning, the surrounding linguistic ecology (whether ELF interactions, institutional norms, or learner input) ultimately shapes how such emerging constructions arise, stabilise, or vary across contexts. This framework provides the basis for analysing the emergent *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* patterns across the corpora examined in the present study.

Sociolinguistic Conditioning in a Usage-Based Variation

While cognitive processes explain *how* constructions emerge, a usage-based sociolinguistic perspective helps account for *why* particular constructions are selected, extended, or restricted across speech communities. Constructional choices are reflected not only by frequency and processing factors but also by speaker demographics, interactional roles, participation frameworks, and community norms (Díaz-Campos & Pollock, 2023). From this viewpoint, emergent patterns reflect both experience-driven learning under specific social and communicative conditions.

In ELF contexts, interaction is guided by goals such as intelligibility, efficiency, and alignment (Mauranen, 2012, 2018). These communicative pressures favour reduced, prefabricated, and hybridised constructions that facilitate real-time negotiation of meaning. Because adherence to 'standard' morphosyntax is often unnecessary for successful communication (Seidlhofer, 2004), features such as absence of the third-person singular present tense -s (e.g., *he say*), redundant prepositions (e.g., *study about*), or semantically transparent repetitions (e.g., *black colour*) may occur without impairing understanding. Within this ecology, familiar templates such as '*it's + predicate*' or '*that's + predicate*' may plausibly extend to non-canonical realisations of the *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* patterns, as speakers prioritise ease of processing and shared understanding over standardised forms.

Institutionalised second-language varieties present a different usage profile. In these settings, widespread intracommunity exposure, community-level entrenchment, and long-term contact may stabilise particular constructional patterns (Mufwene, 2010; Schneider, 2007). At the same time, codification, educational standards, and normative expectations may channel or constrain innovation (Schneider, 2007). Such varieties may therefore exhibit selective retention or routinisation of emerging constructions, reflecting both entrenched usage and normative pressures.

Learner contexts represent yet another usage ecology. Learners often rely heavily on familiar, high-frequency items, which increases the likelihood of overextension or analogical mapping beyond canonical patterns (Ellis, 2002). Restricted input, pedagogical focus on formulaic sequences, and limited exposure to diverse registers shape constructional availability (Ellis, 2002). Consequently, learner Englishes may display innovations arising from systematic, experience-driven learning rather than community-level conventionalisation (Ellis, 1997).

In sum, usage-based sociolinguistics situates constructional emergence within socially and interactionally grounded distributions of experience. This framework predicts that systematic differences in the frequency, functions, and meanings of *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø*

will vary systematically across ELF interactions, institutionalised varieties and learner Englishes.

RESEARCH METHOD

Corpora

International Corpus of English (ICE)

ICE is a one-million-word corpus representing spoken and written varieties of institutionalised World Englishes (Greenbaum, 1996). Each national component comprises 300 spoken and 200 written texts of roughly 2,000 words, produced by adult speakers educated in the target variety. Only the spoken components (600,000 words), which are available through the official ICE website (ICE, n.d.), are used in this study. These cover a wide range of discourse situations (see Table A in Appendix A).

Asian Corpus of English (ACE)

ACE (Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2024) is a one-million-word corpus of naturally occurring spoken ELF interactions recorded across nine Asian locations between 2009 and 2014. The data span academic, workplace, and informal settings and include rich speaker metadata (age, sex, L1, nationality, education, occupation). The ACE online interface provides access to 145 files categorised by country, domain, and topic (ACE, 2024).

International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE)

ICNALE is a multi-country learner corpus containing over 15,000 spoken and written productions from more than 5,500 learners (plus native-speaker controls) across East, Southeast, and South Asia (Ishikawa, 2023). Only the 2.1-million-word spoken datasets are used here, consisting of 60-second monologues and 30–40-minute semi-structured interviews on two everyday ICNALE topics ('part-time jobs for college students' and 'non-smoking in restaurants'). Although elicited in institutional settings, these tasks yield conversational, informal registers, ensuring comparability with informal speech in ICE and ACE. The study uses Spoken Monologue v2.0 and Spoken Dialogue v1.3, the versions available at the time of data extraction (i.e. 2023). These datasets are accessible through the ICNALE online platform maintained by the project team (Ishikawa, 2023).

Including ICE, ACE, and ICNALE provides a balanced dataset spanning established, contact-driven, and learner varieties of English. ICE offers a norm-governed baseline for assessing whether *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø reflect broader diffusion beyond institutionalised Englishes. ACE captures ELF interactions where multilingual speakers negotiate meaning dynamically, making it a key site for observing whether these constructions function as adaptive resources in real-time communication. ICNALE complements these by revealing how the constructions surface in learner interlanguage, allowing insights into acquisition, transfer, and emerging conventionalisation.

Data Extraction and Preparation

Data extraction was conducted separately for each corpus. All corpus files were imported into LancsBox (Brezina et al., 2021), where concordance searches were performed for the forms *it's* and *that's*. The resulting concordance lines were manually examined to identify instances of the *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø constructions. The search procedure also included

tokens containing intervening elements (e.g., *it's not depend*), reflecting the schematic nature of the constructions as productive frames rather than fixed lexical sequences. For each identified token, the occurrence was extracted together with sufficient surrounding discourse context, and the corresponding speaker and source file were recorded. To facilitate subsequent qualitative analysis, the complete speech segments produced by each selected speaker were then compiled and retained for contextual examination.

ICE Dataset

Tokens occurred only in the Hong Kong, India, and Sri Lanka components, forming a 1.8-million-word ICE dataset. Speaker and file details with newly assigned speaker codes are listed in Table 1. Metadata completeness varies across components (particularly for Sri Lanka), limiting fine-grained sociolinguistic comparison but not structural analysis. Recording periods of the ICE dataset span from the 1990s to 2009 (Hong Kong and India recordings date from the 1990s (Nelson, 2002, 2006); Sri Lanka from 2003 to 2009 (Bernaisch et al., 2019).

Table 1. ICE Dataset (N = 11)

Filenames	Speaker Code	Sex	Age	Nationality	L1	Education	No. of words
S1A-058	ICE-HK-TagF1	F	31-35	Philippines	Tagalog	Secondary	2527
S2A-047	ICE-HK-CanM1	M	36-40	China	Cantonese	University	2282
S2A-053	ICE-HK-CanM2	M	21-25	China	Cantonese	University	2328
S1A-010	ICE-IN-BenF1	F	26-33	India	Bengali	Master's	1115
S1A-016	ICE-IN-TamF2	F	26-33	India	Tamil	Doctorate	789
S1A-001	ICE-IN-MarF3	F	50+	India	Marathi	Master's	777
S1B-026	ICE-LK-XXM1	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	334
S2A-036	ICE-LK-XXX1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2060
S2A-039	ICE-LK-XXM2	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2317
S2A-050	ICE-LK-XXM3	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2120
S2B-024	ICE-LK-XXM4	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2517

Note. Original filenames are included for full reproducibility. Speaker codes follow the format ICE-[component]-[L1, sex, sequence number], where region codes for components are HK = Hong Kong, IN = India, and LK = Sri Lanka; L1 codes are abbreviated forms of the speakers' L1 (e.g., Tag = Tagalog, XX = unknown); sex codes are F = female, M = male, and X = unknown. Sequence numbers are assigned within each nationality-sex combination in ascending order. Due to incomplete metadata in Sri Lanka, the analysis of this component focuses exclusively on structural patterns rather than socio-demographic variation.

ACE Dataset

Relevant tokens were found in the Brunei, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam subsets. Table 2 lists the selected speakers with assigned codes. For full reproducibility, the original filenames of the selected ACE dataset are listed in Table B in Appendix B.

Table 2. ACE Dataset (N = 24)

Speaker Code	Sex	Age	L1	Education	No. of words
ACE-BN-MalM1	M	20-30	Bruneian Malay	Postgraduate	1,627
ACE-CN-ChiF1	F	40-50	Chinese ^a	Postgraduate	905

Table 2 (continued)

Speaker Code	Sex	Age	L1	Education	No. of words
ACE-HK-CanM1	M	40–50	Cantonese	Postgraduate	5,044
ACE-MY-ThaF1	F	20–30	Thai	Graduate	197
ACE-MY-ThaF2	F	20–30	Thai	Postgraduate	441
ACE-MY-MalM1	M	20–30	Malaysian Malay	Postgraduate	984
ACE-MY-MalM2	M	20–30	Malaysian Malay	Graduate	1,541
ACE-MY-ManF1	F	20–30	Mandarin	Postgraduate	3,331
ACE-MY-BurF1	F	40–50	Burmese	Postgraduate	1994
ACE-MY-BurF2	F	30–40	Burmese	Postgraduate	328
ACE-MY-ThaF3	F	20–30	Thai	Postgraduate	1,745
ACE-MY-VieF1	F	30–40	Vietnamese	Postgraduate	715
ACE-MY-KhmM1	M	30–40	Khmer	Graduate	467
ACE-MY-VieF2	F	30–40	Vietnamese	Postgraduate	741
ACE-MY-ThaM1	M	30–40	Thai	Graduate	268
ACE-PH-VieF1	F	20–30	Vietnamese	Graduate	1,101
ACE-PH-BurF1	F	20–30	Burmese	Postgraduate	774
ACE-SG-MalF1	F	20–30	Malaysian Malay	Postgraduate	3,088
ACE-SG-ManF1	F	20–30	Mandarin	Graduate	3,181
ACE-VN-VieF1	F	30–40	Vietnamese	Postgraduate	282
ACE-VN-VieF2	F	30–40	Vietnamese	Postgraduate	1,532
ACE-VN-VieF3	F	20–30	Vietnamese	Postgraduate	2,081
ACE-VN-VieF4	F	20–30	Vietnamese	Postgraduate	1,728
ACE-VN-VieF5	F	<20	Vietnamese	Undergraduate	1,481

Note. Speaker codes follow the format ACE-[recording site]-[L1, sex, sequence number], where recording site codes are BN = Brunei, CN = China, HK = Hong Kong, MY = Malaysia, PH = Philippines, SG = Singapore, and VN = Vietnam; L1 codes are abbreviated forms of the speakers' L1 (e.g., Mal = Malay); sex codes are F = female and M = male; and sequence numbers are assigned within each L1–sex combination in ascending order.

L1 labels follow corpus metadata; *Chinese* is unspecific, whereas varieties (e.g., Cantonese, Mandarin) are indicated where available.

ICNALE Dataset

The ICNALE dataset consists of 61 speakers, drawn from 31 monologue files (29 speakers) and 48 dialogue files (32 speakers). Table 3 provides speaker information with assigned codes. For full reproducibility, the original filenames of the selected ICNALE dataset are listed in Table C in Appendix C.

Table 3. ICNALE Dataset (N = 61)

Speaker Code	Sex	Age	Nationality	Education	Proficiency	L1	No. of words
ICN-Man-M1	M	21	China	Undergraduate	B1_2	Mandarin	401
ICN-Man-M2	M	28	China	Master's	B1_2	Mandarin	427
ICN-Man-F1	F	21	China	Undergraduate	B1_2	Mandarin	503
ICN-Man-F2	F	20	China	Undergraduate	A2_0	Mandarin	432
ICN-Ind-M1	M	21	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_2	Indonesian	382
ICN-Ind-M2	M	22	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_1	Indonesian	464
ICN-Ind-F1	F	19	Indonesia	Undergraduate	A2_0	Indonesian	330
ICN-Ind-F2	F	25	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_1	Indonesian	373

Table 3 (continued)

Speaker Code	Sex	Age	Nationality	Education	Proficiency	L1	No. of words
ICN-Ind-M3	M	21	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_1	Indonesian	277
ICN-Ind-F3	F	19	Indonesia	Undergraduate	A2_0	Indonesian	596
ICN-Ind-F4	F	20	Indonesia	Undergraduate	A2_0	Indonesian	501
ICN-Ind-F5	F	20	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_2	Indonesian	560
ICN-Ind-F6	F	25	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_1	Indonesian	285
ICN-Kor-F1	F	24	Korea	Undergraduate	B2_0	Korean	309
ICN-Pun-F1	F	21	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	459
ICN-Pun-F2	F	21	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	516
ICN-Pun-F3	F	20	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	557
ICN-Pun-M1	M	20	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	556
ICN-Pun-M2	M	21	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	703
ICN-Pun-F4	F	24	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	562
ICN-Tha-F1	F	18	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	312
ICN-Tha-M1	M	19	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	265
ICN-Tha-M2	M	18	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	402
ICN-Tha-M3	M	18	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	399
ICN-Tha-F2	F	18	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	391
ICN-Tha-F3	F	20	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	385
ICN-Tha-F4	F	19	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	425
ICN-Man-F3	F	18	Taiwan	Undergraduate	A2_0	Mandarin	319
ICN-Man-F4	F	20	Taiwan	Undergraduate	B1_1	Mandarin	310
ICN-Man-F5	F	23	China	Master's	B1_2	Mandarin	2,306
ICN-Man-F6	F	21	China	Undergraduate	B1_1	Mandarin	1,657
ICN-Man-M3	M	22	China	Undergraduate	B2+	Mandarin	2,571
ICN-Man-F7	F	19	China	Undergraduate	B1_1	Mandarin	1,830
ICN-Man-M4	M	19	Hong Kong	Undergraduate	B1_1	Mandarin	2,727
ICN-Can-F1	F	22	Hong Kong	Undergraduate	B1_1	Cantonese	1,950
ICN-Can-M1	M	21	Hong Kong	Undergraduate	B1_1	Cantonese	3,326
ICN-Can-M2	M	20	Hong Kong	Undergraduate	B2+	Cantonese	4,608
ICN-Ind-F7	F	22	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_2	Indonesian	1,570
ICN-Ind-F8	F	33	Indonesia	Master's	A2_0	Indonesian	1,851
ICN-Ind-F9	F	24	Indonesia	Master's	B1_1	Indonesian	1,771
ICN-Ind-F10	F	24	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_2	Indonesian	2,395
ICN-Ind-F11	F	20	Indonesia	Undergraduate	B1_2	Indonesian	2,453
ICN-Ind-M4	M	25	Indonesia	Master's	B1_2	Indonesian	2,326
ICN-Jap-M1	M	18	Japan	Undergraduate	B1_1	Japanese	1,681
ICN-Jap-F1	F	21	Japan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Japanese	2,431
ICN-Pun-F5	F	21	Pakistan	Master's	B1_1	Punjabi	1,806
ICN-Pun-M3	M	21	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	1,912
ICN-Pun-M4	M	24	Pakistan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Punjabi	1,694
ICN-Pun-M5	M	22	Pakistan	Master's	B1_1	Punjabi	1,744
ICN-Tha-F5	F	23	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	2,459
ICN-Tha-F6	F	23	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	1,628
ICN-Tha-M4	M	22	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	1,603
ICN-Tha-M5	M	21	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_1	Thai	5,394
ICN-Tha-M6	M	20	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_1	Thai	1,998
ICN-Tha-F7	F	21	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	3,939
ICN-Tha-F8	F	21	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	2,408

Table 3 (continued)

Speaker Code	Sex	Age	Nationality	Education	Proficiency	L1	No. of words
ICN-Tha-F9	F	20	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_1	Thai	2,003
ICN-Tha-M7	M	21	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	2,538
ICN-Tha-F10	F	24	Thailand	Undergraduate	B1_2	Thai	2,367
ICN-Man-M5	M	19	Taiwan	Undergraduate	B1_2	Mandarin	1,286
ICN-Man-M6	M	21	Taiwan	Undergraduate	B2+	Mandarin	2,222

Note. Speaker codes follow the format ICN-[L1]-[sex, sequence number], where L1 codes denote speakers' L1 (e.g., Man = Mandarin), sex is coded as F or M, and sequence numbers are assigned within each L1–sex group. Numerical suffixes in utterance-level identifiers (e.g., ICN-Man-F1-1, ICN-Man-F1-2) indicate multiple corpus files for the same speaker and are used solely for traceability, not to distinguish speakers.

Data Coding

All extracted tokens were coded using a scheme capturing both macro-level (corpus-wide distribution) and micro-level (speaker-specific and contextual) features. Macro-level coding enabled quantitative analysis of overall frequency patterns across demographic and corpus variables; micro-level coding captured variation in speakers' contextualised deployment and the discourse functions of each construction. Coding was carried out systematically in Excel to ensure consistency and reproducibility across ICE, ACE, and ICNALE.

Quantitative Variables

For each speaker, the following variables were recorded:

- Demographics: sex, age, L1, education, and (for learner data) proficiency level.
- Total spoken word count
- Frequencies:
 - *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø
 - occurrences with intervening elements
 - canonical *it's*, and *that's*
- Pronoun–verb patterns:
 - singular pronouns (*he, she, it, this, that*) + bare/uninflected verbs (referred to as *pronoun–bare verb*)
 - singular pronouns (*he, she, it, this, that*) + –s inflected verbs (referred to as –s *inflected pronoun–verb*)
- Register or interactional setting for each token

Ambiguous cases (e.g., unclear boundaries, transcription uncertainty) were checked against source files and verified for accuracy.

Qualitative Variables

Each token was additionally coded for functional and discourse-level features, including:

- pragmatic or functional role of intervening elements
- indicators of cognitive entrenchment (e.g., repetition, priming)
- intra-speaker alternation between standard and nonstandard forms

These variables allowed analysis of how speakers use the constructions in context, complementing quantitative distributional patterns with functional and cognitive insights.

Coding Reliability

The coding scheme was piloted on sample data from each corpus, refined iteratively, and applied consistently across datasets. A subset of tokens was double-coded at different times to check internal stability. Although independent second-coder validation was not feasible, the procedures ensured reliable and transparent coding.

Quantitative Analysis

This study employs an integrated quantitative–qualitative approach to examine the distribution, associations, and discourse functions of *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* across ICE, ACE, and ICNALE. Four complementary analyses were conducted: (i) frequency and distribution analysis (to examine variation across corpora and speaker variables), (ii) collocational analysis (to identify verb co-occurrence patterns), (iii) collostructional analysis (to assess verb–construction associations), and (iv) correlation analysis (to test relationships with related pronoun–bare verb patterns).

Frequency and Distribution

Raw and normalised frequencies were calculated for demographic and corpus variables (register, sex, age, L1, education, and learner proficiency). Corpus-level frequencies were normalised per million words (pmw) to enable comparison across datasets. Variation was tested using two-tailed independent *t*-tests and one-way ANOVA.

Collocational Analysis

A five-word rightward window identified verb lemmas co-occurring with *it's* and *that's*. Measures included:

- verb distribution and distance from the node;
- intervening element types and functions; and
- association strength using Pointwise Mutual Information (PMI; Church & Hanks, 1990).

PMI was selected for its sensitivity to emergent patterning. Values above 2 were interpreted as indicating meaningful associations, with positive PMI values signalling a stronger attraction to *it's + Vø* and negative values indicating a stronger attraction to *that's + Vø*.

Collostruction Analysis

To compare verb preferences between the two constructions, 2×2 contingency tables were generated for each verb. Odds Ratio (OR) measured direction of preference (OR > 1 = favours *it's + Vø*; OR < 1 = favours *that's + Vø*), and Fisher's Exact Test provided exact significance values. Collostructional strength was computed as $-\log_{10}(p)$. Values above 1 (approximately corresponding to $p < .05$) indicate substantive attraction or repulsion.

Correlation Analysis

Spearman's rho tested relationships between constructional usage and related *pronoun–bare verb* patterns, including:

- emergent vs. canonical forms;
- cross-constructional relations with *pronoun-bare verb* patterns;
- sequential proximity to canonical *it's*, and *that's*; and
- parallel *pronoun-bare verb* patterns before and after each construction.

Qualitative Analysis

This analysis illuminates how speakers deploy the constructions interactionally, focusing on their discourse functions, pragmatic roles, and contribution to discourse organisation and communicative alignment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

This section presents the findings in relation to the four research objectives, integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence to account for the emergent *it's + V $\emptyset$* and *that's + V $\emptyset$* constructions. It first establishes cross-corpus differences in frequency and distribution across institutionalised varieties, ELF interactions, and learner Englishes, and then examines the structural, functional, and cognitive motivations underlying these patterns through collocational, collostructional, and discourse-based evidence. It then explores how usage contexts shape constructional behaviour, drawing on correlation patterns and intra-speaker variation. Finally, the findings are synthesised to demonstrate how high-frequency copular templates function as productive resources for grammatical innovation within usage-based and constructional frameworks.

Objective 1: Comparative distribution across institutionalised, ELF, and learner varieties

Frequency patterns reveal clear cross-corpus contrasts in the distribution of *it's + V $\emptyset$* and *that's + V $\emptyset$* . *It's + V $\emptyset$* is substantially more frequent in ICNALE (86 tokens; 40.95 pmw) and ACE (29 tokens; 29.00 pmw) than in ICE (7 tokens; 3.89 pmw), indicating greater productivity in learner and ELF contexts. In contrast, *that's + V $\emptyset$* remains consistently rare across all corpora (7–12 tokens; 3.89–12.00 pmw), suggesting limited diffusion.

This asymmetry indicates that multilingual and acquisitional contexts facilitate the expansion of *it's + V $\emptyset$* , while *that's + V $\emptyset$* remains comparatively restricted. The pattern aligns with usage-based expectations that high-frequency chunks such as *it's* provide a stronger analogical base for extension than less frequent alternatives.

Across registers, *it's + V $\emptyset$* clusters overwhelmingly in informal contexts (2.78–40.95 pmw), whereas *that's + V $\emptyset$* remains low and sporadic in both formal and informal settings. However, no significant register effects emerge ($p > .16$), indicating that situational formality does not strongly constrain distribution. Instead, the spread of *it's + V $\emptyset$* appears to operate below the level of conscious stylistic control.

Sociodemographic patterns further support its emergent status. In ACE and ICNALE, female speakers use *it's + V $\emptyset$* more frequently, with a significant effect in ICNALE ($t(54) = 2.04$, $p = .046$, $d = 0.56$). Younger speakers also favour the construction, with a significant difference between <20 and 20–30 groups in ICNALE ($t(53) = 2.06$, $p = .045$, $d \approx 0.74$). These patterns suggest that *it's + V $\emptyset$* is advancing through socially less constrained groups typically associated with linguistic innovation.

L1 background plays a role in ELF contexts (ACE: $F(4,13) = 5.42, p = .009$), with Burmese, Thai, and Malaysian Malay speakers showing higher usage, whereas no significant L1 effects appear in ICNALE ($p > .20$), likely reflecting task-controlled production. Education shows no significant effects ($p > .05$), and proficiency differences in ICNALE are non-significant ($F(3,51) = 0.68, p = .568$), although mid-level learners (B1_2) show a descriptive peak, suggesting a possible zone of heightened analogical experimentation.

Collectively, these results demonstrate that *it's + Vø* is most productive in ELF and learner varieties, where interactional flexibility and reduced normative pressure enable the expansion of emergent constructions.

While these distributional patterns establish where *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* occur and how widely they diffuse across varieties, they do not yet explain how these constructions are internally organised or why one expands more readily than the other. To account for this asymmetry, the analysis now turns to the structural, functional, and cognitive mechanisms underlying the constructions.

Objective 2: Structural, functional, and cognitive motivations underlying the constructions

Structural evidence from collocational and collostructional analyses shows that *it's + Vø* is undergoing schematic expansion, while *that's + Vø* remains lexically constrained.

Lexical diversity increases markedly from ICE (8 verbs) to ACE (17 verbs) and ICNALE (27 verbs), indicating progressive expansion of the verb slot (for a complete list of verbs attested in *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* across each corpus, see Appendix D). Recurrent cross-varietal pivots such as *mean*, *depend*, and *make* illustrate how specific verbs anchor early stages of constructional growth. In contrast, *that's + Vø* exhibits narrower lexical distribution, suggesting more limited schematic productivity.

Collocational strength further supports this asymmetry (Table 4). PMI results show that *it's + Vø* maintains moderate associations across multiple verbs, consistent with an emerging schematic construction. By contrast, *that's + Vø* displays stronger but highly selective associations (e.g., *mean* in ICE; *go* in ACE and ICNALE). Collostructional analysis reinforces this pattern: in ICE, *mean* significantly favours *that's + Vø* (strength = 1.39, $p = .041$), while in ICNALE, *go* shows a strong association (strength = 2.09, $p = .008$). Other verbs, such as *have*, *help*, *look*, and *make*, exhibit weak, non-significant tendencies (PMI values -1 to $+1.9$), indicating that *it's + Vø* expands through diffuse, low-strength associations rather than strong lexical fixation (for a complete list of verb-by-verb PMI scores, see Tables E1–E3 in Appendix E).

From a cognitive perspective, these patterns reflect schema formation through analogical extension. The construction is not generated through rule-based processes but emerges from repeated usage events, where low-level associations gradually generalise into a productive template. The asymmetry between *it's + Vø* and *that's + Vø* therefore reflects differences in entrenchment and accessibility of their source constructions.

However, these structural tendencies alone do not determine how the constructions are realised in actual discourse. Their development and distribution are also shaped by the contexts in which they are used.

Table 4. Cross-Corpus PMI Score Comparison for Recurring Verbs

<i>V</i> ∅	ICE	ACE	ICNALE	Cross-Corpus Pattern
<i>come</i>	—	+0.38	-0.80	Weak association with <i>it's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ACE and <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ICNALE
<i>depend</i>	—	+2.70	+1.40	Consistently favours <i>it's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in both ACE and ICNALE
<i>give</i>	+0.36	-7.65	+0.34	Weak association in ICE and ICNALE; Strong preference for <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ACE
<i>go</i>	—	-8.64	-11.72	Exclusively favours <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ACE and ICNALE
<i>have</i>	—	+0.38	-0.93	Weak preference for <i>it's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ACE and <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ICNALE
<i>help</i>	—	+0.38	-1.26	Weak association with <i>it's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ACE; Mild preference for <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ICNALE
<i>look</i>	+1.91	+0.38	—	Mildly favours <i>it's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ICE and ACE
<i>make</i>	—	-1.27	-1.26	Mildly favours <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ACE and ICNALE
<i>mean</i>	-2.32	+0.46	-0.80	Weak association in ACE and ICNALE; Mild preference for <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ICE.
<i>take</i>	+1.91	-1.27	-0.80	Weak association in ICNALE; Mild preference for <i>it's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ICE and <i>that's</i> + <i>V</i> ∅ in ACE.

Note. A dash (—) indicates that no tokens were attested.

Objective 3: The role of usage contexts in shaping constructional behaviour

Correlation analyses reveal distinct contextual dynamics across corpora. In ICE, canonical *it's* clusters locally ($p = .007$), but neither *it's* + *V*∅ nor *that's* + *V*∅ correlates with canonical variables, suggesting early-stage emergence with limited discourse integration. In ACE, stronger clustering patterns emerge: canonical *it's* and pronoun-bare verb sequences co-occur significantly with *it's* + *V*∅ ($p < .001$), while *that's* + *V*∅ also clusters with canonical and non-canonical sequences ($p = .020$; $p = .034$). ICNALE shows similarly robust clustering ($p < .001$), indicating reliance on formulaic sequencing in learner production. Collectively, these patterns suggest that ELF and learner contexts promote discourse chaining and local repetition, facilitating the spread of emergent constructions through sequential co-occurrence rather than global grammatical integration.

Qualitative evidence further clarifies how these mechanisms interact. Node-verb patterns (Table 5) show that while both constructions favour adjacency, *it's* + *V*∅ exhibits greater flexibility in ICNALE, where interveners such as *really* and *not* frequently occur. This suggests that speakers are actively testing constructional slots during early stages of entrenchment.

Table 5. Intervening Elements across ICE, ACE, and ICNALE

Corpus	Node	Intervening Elements	N = 36		<i>V</i> ∅
			<i>n</i>	%	
ICE	<i>it's</i>	<i>almost</i>	1	2.78	<i>remain</i>
		<i>fully</i>	1	2.78	<i>depend</i>
		<i>only</i>	1	2.78	<i>have</i>
ACE	<i>it's</i>	<i>more</i>	1	2.78	<i>guarantee</i>
		<i>really</i>	1	2.78	<i>depend</i>
		<i>not</i>	1	2.78	<i>depend</i>

Table 5 (continued)

Corpus	Node	Intervening Elements	N = 36		Vø
			n	%	
ICNALE	it's	<i>totally</i>	1	2.78	<i>affect</i>
		<i>very</i>	2	5.56	<i>bother, destroy</i>
		<i>more</i>	1	2.78	<i>need</i>
		<i>just</i>	3	8.33	<i>cause, give, harm</i>
		<i>really^a</i>	5	13.89	<i>create, disturb, give, have, help</i>
		<i>also</i>	5	13.89	<i>damage, destroy, have, help</i>
		<i>not</i>	6	16.67	<i>bring, give, influence, take</i>
		<i>not only</i>	6	16.67	<i>affect, damage, do, make</i>
		<i>that's mentally</i>	1	2.78	<i>affect</i>

Note. Percentages are based on N = 36 and are provided for descriptive purposes only.

^a Includes one use of *real* (adjective) for *really* (adverb) by speaker ICN-Ind-M2 (*it's real give them skill*).

Table 6. Categorisation of Intervening Elements by Functional Group

Category	Intervening Elements	N = 36	
		n	%
Degree/Intensity	<i>almost, fully, just, more, really, totally, very</i>	16	44.44
Negator/Contrastive	<i>not, not only</i>	13	36.11
Additive/Conjunctive	<i>also</i>	5	13.89
Restrictive	<i>only</i>	1	2.78
Manner/Evaluative	<i>mentally</i>	1	2.78

Note. Percentages are based on N = 36 and are provided for descriptive purposes only.

Table 6 shows that intervening elements are concentrated in a small set of functional categories, dominated by degree/intensity (44.44%) and negation/contrast (36.11%), with additive, restrictive, and evaluative functions occurring marginally. These elements function primarily **as stance markers**, as illustrated below:

1. *It is – **it's just give** harms – smoking just gives harm* (ICN-Pun-F1)
2. *You can take it to anywhere and - and **it's really help** you to study and to make a lot of things.* (ICN-Man-M3-2)
3. *that's your decision **it's not depend** on the contract at all* (ACE-MY-VieF1)
4. *it's a very bad manner in the restaurant, yeah, and, um – uh – it's – **it's not only damage** your health* (ICN-Tha-F4)
5. *the government take action on it because smoking is a bad and it's – **it's totally affect** the environment* (ICN-Pun-F3)
6. *when my friend and I were having a birthday celebration in a restaurant, uh, we noticed that some - some - there is a guy - there was a guy smoking near - near us and that has, uh – **that's mentally effect** our appetite.* (ICN-Man-M6)

These examples show that intensifiers and negators enable speakers to express evaluation, emphasis, and contrast within a flexible constructional frame. Crucially, they extend from canonical templates (e.g., *it's really + ADJ*, *it's not + X*) into *it's + Vø* environments, indicating analogical projection from entrenched copular constructions rather than rule-based generation.

Intra-speaker variation provides further evidence of contextual adaptation. In ICE, alternation between *it's* + $V\emptyset$, *that's* + $V\emptyset$, and canonical forms is infrequent and unsystematic, suggesting limited productive flexibility:

ICE-HK-TagF1 (*mean*):

1. So **that's mean** you just uh <,> have uh
2. So <,> in **that means** <,> you mean that you got uh some ideas from her
3. You know what it is, kin **that means** that you have close

ICE-HK-CanM1 (*mean*):

1. So **that's mean** we do not have enough <?> spared </?> classroom to support all the classes
2. **That means** <,> some of the classes will not will not <,> uh have any home room
3. When I when I say a <?> free </?> lesson **that means** a lesson will
4. So if we have more this sort of multi period lessons **that means** uh we we do not have <,> uh
5. Sorry five uh twenty five percent of uh schools use computers only for constraint checking <,> **that means**, uh, they have to make a decision
6. **That means**, uh if you if a school has a one hundred
7. So that **means** there are a lot of periods to be filled up, okay, but manually

In ACE, speakers (e.g., ACE-MY-MalM1) show more dynamic alternation across constructions within discourse:

1. S1: i didn't feel jealous i mean <pvc>lah</pvc>i didn't (.) **it's mean** i didn't develop
2. S1: yeah (.) **it's mean** the lecturer didn't notice me, **he noticed** someone else
3. S1: it's not it's not develop **[it's mean]** that you:: do your responsible <coughs> -lity
4. S1: i already do the er the photocopy and then **[she ask]** me er she said she told me like that
5. S1: Can you call [first name8] call [first name8] i don't think so **[he already picked]**
6. S1: and then even with [first name3] also i didn't speak at all **[he always looks]** down on me

This reflects a more strategic deployment of available forms for pragmatic alignment and discourse management.

ICNALE shows the highest degree of variability, with extensive alternation across constructions and verbs.

ICN-Man-F5:

1. The school's systems also use, uh, Windows, so we have no choice but to, uh, touch the MacBook or like that. So, **[it's need]** to take times about 2 or 3 days that - uh, to use - to use about, uh, the Mac - the Mac. (ICN-Man-F5-2)
2. Like I am a foreigner, uh, student, so **[it takes]** a lot of money, uh, for me if I want to continue my study in Japan, and as you know, the salary in Japan is totally higher than China, so **[it's make]** me feel a little successful. (ICN-Man-F5-3)
3. uh, I feel that I am a new people. Yes, **[that's make]** me feel exciting. (ICN-Man-F5-4)
4. this restaurant near Osaka station that's called Dancing Club. **That's have** seafood and my friend is just that day have a, uh, birthday... We can smell that - uh, everyone can smell that, so, um, **it's influence** us, so I think maybe it should be, uh, abandoned. (ICN-Man-F5-6)

5. *My friend, he – **she has** a sick, so she can't - uh, she can't stay there anymore* (ICN-Man-F5-5)
6. *Eddie was, uh, thinking about that maybe he can going to surfer, uh, when the day is sunny, but when **he consider** about his pocket, he - he thought that **he have** no money to go out - go to travel.* (ICN-Man-F5-1)

ICN-Tha-M5:

1. *Actually, I have a quote, that I - that's the reason why I love languages, which is like from Nelson Mandela, which is like what - what does it say, **it say** like if you talk to a man in the language he understands, **that's go** to his head, but if you talk to the man in his language, **that's go** to his heart. So yeah, so that exactly---* (ICN-Tha-M5-1)
2. *So, **he** basically **goes to that shop and tries to make- tries to- like, tries** to interview in order to get a job. Now, he got a work, and also ask for mom, like, how to say, **he get** salary, and **he** just **try** to keep some. And then so, finally after 4 months passed, **he collect** the money enough in order to buy a notebook, what he wants, wanted earlier. **He go** to work regularly - regularly, and tried to ask his - his mother for the money, yes.* (ICN-Tha-M5-2)

These patterns indicate ongoing analogical experimentation under reduced grammatical constraint, where speakers flexibly recruit available templates to meet communicative demands.

Overall, usage context—particularly ELF interaction and learner production—facilitates flexibility, repetition, and analogical extension, shaping constructional behaviour in ways that differ from more stabilised varieties. These context-sensitive patterns point to a dynamic interaction between structure, usage, and discourse, motivating a broader account of how such constructions emerge and stabilise within the grammar.

Objective 4: Implications for usage-based and constructional accounts of grammatical innovation

This study makes three contributions to usage-based and constructional accounts of grammatical innovation. First, it demonstrates how high-frequency subject-copula units (*it's*, *that's*) function as productive templates for emergent syntactic patterning in multilingual and acquisitional Englishes. Second, it shows that *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø follow distinct trajectories of entrenchment, shaped by differences in frequency and distributional range. Third, it provides empirical evidence that grammatical innovation is jointly driven by frequency, analogy, and interactional pressures.

Taken together, the study provides empirical evidence that grammatical structure emerges from usage, showing how conventionalised forms can be repurposed as flexible templates for new constructions. In doing so, it extends usage-based and constructional models by showing how the interaction of frequency, analogy, and discourse across diverse Englishes shapes innovation.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the emergent constructions *it's* + *V*Ø and *that's* + *V*Ø across institutionalised Asian Englishes, ELF interaction, and learner Englishes, showing that their development follows systematic, usage-driven pathways rather than representing random deviation from canonical copular structures. Across the four objectives, the findings

converge on a single pattern of asymmetrical constructional emergence shaped by frequency, analogy, and discourse use in multilingual ecologies.

First, the comparative analysis shows that *it's* + *V*Ø is widely diffused in ELF and learner contexts, whereas *that's* + *V*Ø remains comparatively restricted across varieties. This asymmetry suggests that high-frequency forms such as *it's* provide a stronger base for analogical extension and constructional expansion than less frequent counterparts.

Second, the structural and cognitive evidence indicates that *it's* + *V*Ø is undergoing schematic broadening through diffuse lexical associations and analogical projection from entrenched copular patterns, while *that's* + *V*Ø exhibits more selective verb alignment and constrained productivity. These differences reflect uneven entrenchment and differential access to productive templates in usage.

Third, usage context plays a central role in shaping constructional behaviour. ELF and learner settings promote repetition, discourse chaining, and flexible alternation between canonical and non-canonical patterns. These environments facilitate the real-time adaptation of constructions for interactional purposes such as evaluation, emphasis, and alignment, highlighting the role of discourse conditions in driving grammatical innovation.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that high-frequency subject-copula units function as productive scaffolds for emergent syntactic patterns. This study therefore contributes to usage-based and constructional accounts of grammatical change by showing that grammatical innovation arises from the interaction of frequency, analogy, and discourse-pragmatic function, rather than rule-based extension alone. Crucially, the results challenge deficit-oriented interpretations of non-canonical patterns in Asian Englishes. Instead, they support the view that multilingual Englishes are sites of systematic grammatical innovation shaped by dense language contact, variable normative pressures, and evolving communicative needs.

The comparative design of this study necessarily entails limitations arising from the corpora used. Differences in compilation principles, demographic distributions, register coverage, and data collection contexts across ICE, ACE, and ICNALE constrain direct comparability and may influence frequency and functional patterns. Each corpus also presents specific limitations, including variation in collection periods (ICE), uneven site representation and missing file dates (ACE), and the task-based, topic-restricted nature of ICNALE, which reduces interactional spontaneity. Occasional absences of canonical *it's*, or *that's* near emergent tokens, likely reflect these design features rather than speaker behaviour. In addition, manual coding introduces an element of interpretive judgement. Although reliability procedures were applied, the absence of a second independent coder and the context-sensitive nature of the constructions mean that some classifications may vary slightly across analysts. These limitations do not undermine the overall findings but should be considered when interpreting fine-grained patterns.

Future research should extend this line of inquiry through larger and more regionally diverse corpora to better capture the ecological conditions that promote or inhibit constructional diffusion. Longitudinal ELF and learner datasets would enable tracking of developmental trajectories over time, while experimental and processing-based studies could further clarify the cognitive mechanisms underlying analogical extension and entrenchment. Greater attention to prosody, discourse organisation, and sequential positioning may also reveal how these constructions function as interactional resources

beyond their structural properties. Finally, future work should investigate whether similar template-based innovations emerge around other high-frequency copular units, contributing to a broader understanding of constructional change across Asian Englishes.

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Appendix A

Table A. Standard Design of Spoken Component of ICE

Spoken (300)	Domains	Text categories	Filenames
Dialogues (180)	Private (100)	Face-to-face conversations (90)	S1A-001 to S1A-090
		Phone Calls (10)	S1A-091 to S1A-100
	Public (80)	Classroom Lessons (20)	S1B-001 to S1B-020
		Broadcast Discussions (20)	S1B-021 to S1B-040
		Broadcast Interviews (10)	S1B-041 to S1B-050
		Parliamentary Debates (10)	S1B-051 to S1B-060
		Legal cross-examinations (10)	S1B-061 to S1B-070
		Business Transactions (10)	S1B-071 to S1B-080
		Spontaneous commentaries (20)	S2A-001 to S2A-020
		Unscripted Speeches (30)	S2A-021 to S2A-050
		Demonstrations (10)	S2A-051 to S2A-060
		Legal Presentations (10)	S2A-061 to S2A-070
Monologues (120)	Unscripted (70)	Broadcast News (20)	S2B-001 to S2B-020
		Broadcast Talks (20)	S2B-021 to S2B-040
		Non-broadcast Talks (10)	S2B-041 to S2B-050

Note. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of files.

Appendix B

Table B. Selected ACE Dataset

Filename	Speaker Code
BN_ED_wsd_preparing caseline_facebook versus face-to-face interactions	ACE-BN-MalM1
CN_PO_int_china-saudi arabia bilateral relationship	ACE-CN-ChiF1
HK_PRS_qas_surgical technique	ACE-HK-CanM1
MS_ED_con_1	ACE-MY-ThaF1
MS_ED_con_2	ACE-MY-ThaF2
MS_ED_con_3	ACE-MY-MalM1
MS_ED_con_4	ACE-MY-MalM2
MS_ED_con_6	ACE-MY-ManF1
MS_ED_con_12	ACE-MY-BurF1
MS_LE_con_5	ACE-MY-BurF2
MS_LE_con_6	ACE-MY-ThaF3
MS_LE_con_11	ACE-MY-VieF1
MS_LE_con_11	ACE-MY-KhmM1
MS_PB_con_1	ACE-MY-VieF2
MS_PB_con_6	ACE-MY-ThaM1
PH_ED_sed_recounting lesson	ACE-PH-VieF1
PH_ED_sed_recounting lesson	ACE-PH-BurF1
SG_ED_con_4	ACE-SG-MalF1
SG_ED_con_5	ACE-SG-ManF1
VN_ED_qas_tesol_localised teaching strategy	ACE-VN-VieF1
VN_LE_con_culture	ACE-VN-VieF2
VN_LE_con_pho restaurant	ACE-VN-VieF3
VN_LE_con_pho restaurant	ACE-VN-VieF4
VN_LE_con_jobs and professions 2	ACE-VN-VieF5

Note. Country codes: BN = Brunei; CN = Mainland China; HK = Hong Kong; JP = Japan; MS = Malaysia; PH = Philippines; SG = Singapore; TW = Taiwan; VN = Vietnam. Setting types: ED = education; LE = leisure; PB = professional business; PO = professional organisation; PRS = professional research/science. Speech event types: int = interview; prc = press conference; sed = seminar discussion; wgd = working group discussion; wsd = workshop discussion; mtg = meeting; qas = question-answer session; con = conversation.

Appendix C

Table C. Selected ICNALE Dataset

Filename	Speaker Code	Filename	Speaker Code
SM_CHN_SMK1_022_B1_2	ICN-Man-M1	SD_HKG_001_12_SMK_RP_Main	ICN-Man-M4
SM_CHN_SMK1_045_B1_2	ICN-Man-M2	SD_HKG_009_04_PTJ_PD_QA	ICN-Can-F1-1
SM_CHN_SMK1_102_B1_2	ICN-Man-F1-1	SD_HKG_009_14_Reflection	ICN-Can-F1-2
SM_CHN_SMK2_102_B1_2	ICN-Man-F1-2	SD_HKG_009_12_SMK_RP_Main	ICN-Can-F1-3
SM_CHN_SMK1_113_A2_0	ICN-Man-F2	SD_HKG_017_01_Intro	ICN-Can-M1
SM_IDN_PTJ2_006_B1_2	ICN-Ind-M1	SD_HKG_025_06_PTJ_RP_Main	ICN-Can-M2
SM_IDN_PTJ1_050_B1_1	ICN-Ind-M2	SD_IDN_016_07_PTJ_RP_QA	ICN-Ind-F7-1
SM_IDN_PTJ2_064_A2_0	ICN-Ind-F1	SD_IDN_016_09_SMK_PD_Main	ICN-Ind-F7-2
SM_IDN_SMK1_025_B1_1	ICN-Ind-F2-1	SD_IDN_017_14_Reflection	ICN-Ind-F8
SM_IDN_SMK2_025_B1_1	ICN-Ind-F2-2	SD_IDN_019_07_PTJ_RP_QA	ICN-Ind-F9
SM_IDN_SMK2_019_B1_1	ICN-Ind-M3	SD_IDN_023_01_Intro	ICN-Ind-F10
SM_IDN_SMK2_056_A2_0	ICN-Ind-F3	SD_IDN_025_13_SMK_RP_QA	ICN-Ind-F11-1
SM_IDN_SMK2_070_A2_0	ICN-Ind-F4	SD_IDN_025_01_Intro	ICN-Ind-F11-2
SM_IDN_SMK2_072_B1_2	ICN-Ind-F5	SD_IDN_027_01_Intro	ICN-Ind-M4-1
SM_IDN_SMK2_076_B1_1	ICN-Ind-F6	SD_IDN_027_10_SMK_PD_QA	ICN-Ind-M4-2
SM_KOR_SMK1_067_B2_0	ICN-Kor-F1	SD_JPN_039_07_PTJ_RP_QA	ICN-Jap-M1
SM_PAK_SMK2_026_B1_2	ICN-Pun-F1	SD_JPN_073_06_PTJ_RP_Main	ICN-Jap-F1
SM_PAK_PTJ1_030_B1_2	ICN-Pun-F2	SD_PAK_009_04_PTJ_PD_QA	ICN-Pun-F5
SM_PAK_SMK2_044_B1_2	ICN-Pun-F3	SD_PAK_011_10_SMK_PD_QA	ICN-Pun-M3
SM_PAK_SMK2_054_B1_2	ICN-Pun-M1	SD_PAK_016_14_Reflection	ICN-Pun-M4
SM_PAK_PTJ1_071_B1_2	ICN-Pun-M2	SD_PAK_023_12_SMK_RP_Main	ICN-Pun-M5
SM_PAK_SMK1_086_B1_2	ICN-Pun-F4	SD_THA_003_13_SMK_RP_QA	ICN-Tha-F5-1
SM_THA_PTJ2_021_B1_2	ICN-Tha-F1	SD_THA_003_14_Reflection	ICN-Tha-F5-2
SM_THA_PTJ1_028_B1_2	ICN-Tha-M1	SD_THA_004_01_Intro	ICN-Tha-F6-1
SM_THA_SMK1_003_B1_2	ICN-Tha-M2	SD_THA_004_04_PTJ_PD_QA	ICN-Tha-F6-2
SM_THA_SMK1_004_B1_2	ICN-Tha-M3	SD_THA_004_07_PTJ_RP_QA	ICN-Tha-F6-3
SM_THA_SMK1_010_B1_2	ICN-Tha-F2-1	SD_THA_004_14_Reflection	ICN-Tha-F6-4
SM_THA_SMK2_010_B1_2	ICN-Tha-F2-2	SD_THA_019_13_SMK_RP_QA	ICN-Tha-M4
SM_THA_SMK2_019_B1_2	ICN-Tha-F3	SD_THA_021_01_Intro	ICN-Tha-M5-1
SM_THA_SMK2_043_B1_2	ICN-Tha-F4	SD_THA_021_03_PTJ_PD_Main	ICN-Tha-M5-2
SM_TWN_SMK1_013_A2_0	ICN-Man-F3	SD_THA_022_04_PTJ_PD_QA	ICN-Tha-M6
SM_TWN_SMK1_094_B1_1	ICN-Man-F4	SD_THA_024_07_PTJ_RP_QA	ICN-Tha-F7-1
SD_CHN_010_03_PTJ_PD_Main	ICN-Man-F5-1	SD_THA_024_09_SMK_PD_Main	ICN-Tha-F7-2
SD_CHN_010_04_PTJ_PD_QA	ICN-Man-F5-2	SD_THA_027_07_PTJ_RP_QA	ICN-Tha-F8
SD_CHN_010_06_PTJ_RP_Main	ICN-Man-F5-3	SD_THA_033_01_Intro	ICN-Tha-F9-1
SD_CHN_010_10_SMK_PD_QA	ICN-Man-F5-4	SD_THA_033_13_SMK_RP_QA	ICN-Tha-F9-2
SD_CHN_010_12_SMK_RP_Main	ICN-Man-F5-5	SD_THA_033_14_Reflection	ICN-Tha-F9-3
SD_CHN_010_13_SMK_RP_QA	ICN-Man-F5-6	SD_THA_034_10_SMK_PD_QA	ICN-Tha-M7
SD_CHN_039_14_Reflection	ICN-Man-F6	SD_THA_038_01_Intro	ICN-Tha-F10
SD_CHN_045_13_SMK_RP_QA	ICN-Man-M3-1	SD_TWN_029_04_PTJ_PD_QA	ICN-Man-M5-1
SD_CHN_045_04_PTJ_PD_QA	ICN-Man-M3-2	SD_TWN_029_14_Reflection	ICN-Man-M5-2
SD_CHN_047_06_PTJ_RP_Main	ICN-Man-F7	SD_TWN_040_12_SMK_RP_Main	ICN-Man-M6

Note. Numerical suffixes in utterance-level identifiers (e.g., ICN-Man-F1-1, ICN-Man-F1-2) indicate multiple corpus files for the same speaker and are used solely for traceability, not to distinguish speakers.

Appendix D

Table D1a. Verbs Attested in It's + Vø in ICE

<i>Vø</i>	<i>it's + Vø</i>	
	<i>n</i>	Norm.
<i>coincide</i>	1	0.56
<i>continue</i>	1	0.56
<i>give</i>	1	0.56
<i>look</i>	1	0.56
<i>mean</i>	1	0.56
<i>remain</i>	1	0.56
<i>take</i>	1	0.56
Total (<i>N</i>)	7	3.89

Table D1b. Verbs Attested in That's + Vø in ICE

<i>Vø</i>	<i>that's + Vø</i>	
	<i>n</i>	Norm.
<i>give</i>	1	0.56
<i>happen</i>	1	0.56
<i>mean</i>	5	2.78
Total (<i>N</i>)	7	3.89

Table D2a. Verbs Attested in It's + Vø in ACE

<i>Vø</i>	<i>it's + Vø</i>	
	<i>n</i>	Norm.
<i>belong</i>	3	3.00
<i>come</i>	1	1.00
<i>depend</i>	7	7.00
<i>guarantee</i>	1	1.00
<i>have</i>	1	1.00
<i>help</i>	1	1.00
<i>keep</i>	1	1.00
<i>look</i>	1	1.00
<i>make</i>	1	1.00
<i>mean</i>	10	10.00
<i>take</i>	1	1.00
<i>want</i>	1	1.00
Total (<i>N</i>)	29	29.00

Table D2b. Verbs Attested in That's + Vø in ACE

<i>Vø</i>	<i>that's + Vø</i>	
	<i>n</i>	Norm.
<i>give</i>	1	1.00
<i>go</i>	2	2.00
<i>improve</i>	1	1.00
<i>jeopardise</i>	1	1.00
<i>keep</i>	1	1.00
<i>make</i>	1	1.00
<i>mean</i>	3	3.00
<i>provide</i>	1	1.00
<i>take</i>	1	1.00
Total (<i>N</i>)	12	12.00

Table D3a. Verbs Attested in *It's + Vø* in ICNALE

<i>Vø</i>	<i>it's + Vø</i>	
	<i>n</i>	Norm.
<i>affect</i>	4	1.90
<i>bother</i>	1	0.48
<i>bring</i>	1	0.48
<i>cause</i>	1	0.48
<i>change</i>	1	0.48
<i>come</i>	2	0.95
<i>comfort</i>	1	0.48
<i>create</i>	1	0.48
<i>damage</i>	4	1.90
<i>depend</i>	11	5.24
<i>destroy</i>	3	1.43
<i>disturb</i>	4	1.90
<i>do</i>	2	0.95
<i>feel</i>	2	0.95
<i>give</i>	5	2.38
<i>harm</i>	3	1.43
<i>have</i>	5	2.38
<i>help</i>	4	1.90
<i>influence</i>	4	1.90
<i>make</i>	16	7.62
<i>mean</i>	2	0.95
<i>need</i>	3	1.43
<i>prepare</i>	1	0.48
<i>take</i>	2	0.95
<i>taste</i>	2	0.95
<i>warm</i>	1	0.48
Total (<i>N</i>)	86	40.95

Table D3b. Verbs Attested in *That's + Vø* in ICNALE

<i>Vø</i>	<i>that's + Vø</i>	
	<i>n</i>	Norm.
<i>affect</i>	1	0.48
<i>go</i>	2	0.95
<i>have</i>	1	0.48
<i>help</i>	1	0.48
<i>make</i>	4	1.90
Total (<i>N</i>)	9	4.29

Appendix E

Table E1. PMI Score for Verbs Attested in *It's + Vø* and *That's + Vø* in ICE

<i>Vø</i>	PMI Score	Fisher's Exact <i>p</i> -value
<i>coincide</i>	+1.59	0.438
<i>continue</i>	+1.59	0.438
<i>happen</i>	-2.87	0.438
<i>look</i>	+1.59	0.041
<i>mean</i>	-2.32	0.438
<i>remain</i>	+1.59	0.438
<i>take</i>	+1.59	0.438

Table E2. PMI Score for Verbs Attested in *It's + Vø* and *That's + Vø* in ACE

<i>Vø</i>	PMI Score	Fisher's Exact <i>p</i> -value
<i>belong</i>	+1.60	0.543
<i>depend</i>	+2.70	0.085
<i>give</i>	-7.65	0.293
<i>go</i>	-8.64	0.081
<i>improve</i>	-7.65	0.293
<i>jeopardise</i>	-7.65	0.293
<i>keep</i>	-1.27	0.505
<i>make</i>	-1.27	0.505
<i>provide</i>	-7.65	0.293
<i>take</i>	-1.27	0.505

Table E3. PMI Score for Verbs Attested in *It's + Vø* and *That's + Vø* in ICNALE

<i>Vø</i>	PMI Score	Fisher's Exact <i>p</i> -value
<i>affect</i>	-1.26	0.330
<i>bother</i>	-1.54	0.905
<i>bring</i>	-1.54	0.905
<i>cause</i>	-1.54	0.905
<i>change</i>	-1.54	0.905
<i>comfort</i>	-1.54	0.905
<i>create</i>	-1.54	0.905
<i>depend</i>	+1.40	0.313
<i>go</i>	-11.72	0.008
<i>help</i>	-1.26	0.330
<i>make</i>	-1.26	0.071
<i>prepare</i>	-1.54	0.905
<i>warm</i>	-1.54	0.905

A Sociolinguistic Study of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Podcast *MengANALISA*: Identity Construction and Professional Positioning

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Abstract. Nowadays, podcasts have emerged as popular digital communication platforms, particularly among younger audiences in Indonesia. The increasing use of bilingual expressions in podcasts reflects the growing interaction between local and global linguistic practices in digital media. This study investigated the forms, functions, and sociolinguistic meanings of code-switching and code-mixing in the Indonesian podcast *MengANALISA* hosted by Analisa Widyaningrum. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study applied the frameworks proposed by Shana Poplack and Pieter Muysken to classify bilingual utterances. The data were collected from the episode entitled “COACH or MENTOR: Which is More Important?” through documentation and verbatim transcription. The findings revealed 140 instances of code-mixing and 90 instances of code-switching, with insertion and intra-sentential switching emerging as the dominant forms. The bilingual expressions identified in the podcast served referential, expressive, directive, and phatic functions, particularly in discussions related to leadership, coaching, and self-development. Furthermore, the use of English within Indonesian discourse reflects broader sociolinguistic processes associated with professionalism, digital identity, and audience engagement. The findings contribute to contemporary sociolinguistic discussions by demonstrating that code-switching and code-mixing in digital podcast discourse function not only as linguistic structures but also as socially meaningful practices shaped by identity performance and communicative context.

Keywords: *bilingualism, code-mixing, code-switching, podcast.*

<http://jos.unsoed.ac.id/index.php/jes>

INTRODUCTION

Podcasts have become a widely favored medium among younger audiences due to their informal, spontaneous, and emotionally resonant nature. This media allows speakers to convey their opinions, experiences, and even life stories in a way that is easy to understand. Many speakers in this situation use Indonesian and English simultaneously as a speech strategy. Podcasts provide a non-formal discussion space that allows code-switching and code-mixing naturally and is not formally structured (Farha Aini et al., 2025). According to Burhansyah et al. (2023), podcasts that target young listeners in urban areas who are accustomed to using English in everyday life show the phenomenon of bilingualism.

The use of two languages in a single utterance is not merely a form of language decoration but also serves various pragmatic and sociolinguistic functions. In the Indonesian context, particularly in Jakarta, code-switching has become closely associated with the '*Anak Jaksel*' phenomenon, which is frequently linked to urban identity, modernity, and social prestige (Azyizah & Nuryanti, 2023). However, the use of code-switching in podcasts may not solely reflect prestige-oriented motivations; it may also emerge from habitual bilingual practices, audience design, linguistic convenience, or expressive communicative strategies. Furthermore, Fadillah et al. (2025) highlighted that tag-switching is often used as an expressive tool to emphasize certain messages or signal shifts in the speaker's attitude. This finding aligns with language patterns commonly found in reflective and emotionally driven podcast discourse.

This study focused on a reflective podcast hosted by a psychologist-content creator who frequently employs bilingual speech to convey professional insights in an accessible manner. Her name is Analisa Widyaningrum. She holds a degree in Psychology and has been active as a content creator on the #AnalisaChannel since 2019. In her role as host, she uses a code-mixing approach by incorporating English psychological terms, such as 'self-awareness', 'boundaries', or 'resilience', into speech written in Indonesian. This strategy creates a sense of credibility and professionalism for a non-English speaking audience. In addition, Widyaningrum's code-switching, such as changing sentences from Indonesian to English, is usually done to emphasize or facilitate understanding of certain terms. This suggests that code-switching is not only a style but also a theoretical and practical tool, which supports the perception of the host as a digital-based psychologist. This is in line with his professional identity and his original, contemporary, but still engaging communication style.

Although podcasting as a medium has drawn scholarly attention, research focusing on bilingual practices in podcasts, especially those related to mental health, leadership, and self-development, remains limited. Similar research by Marito Pasaribu et al. (2024) on comedy podcasts showed that code-switching functions not only as a linguistic choice but also as a representation of inner moods, cultural affiliations, and communicative strategies. However, the professional tone and reflective nature of psychological podcast content introduce a different context for exploring code alternation, requiring a more nuanced analysis of its social and functional implications.

Several studies have shown that code-switching and code-mixing are common in Indonesian digital media, particularly in podcasts and YouTube content. Situmorang et al. (2024) and Annisa (2024) found that insertion and intra-sentential switching were the dominant patterns in podcast discourse, indicating that bilingual interaction frequently occurs in conversational settings. Similarly, Azira et al. (2023) reported that intra-sentential switching was the most dominant type in the Daniel Mananta Network

YouTube channel, while Rini and Moehkardi (2021) argued that bilingual speakers use code-switching for lexical needs, conversational flow, and audience engagement. In contrast, Salsabila et al. (2023) emphasized that bilingual language use in Jerome Polin's content was strongly influenced by communicative convenience and lexical preference rather than interactional strategy.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into bilingual communication in Indonesian digital discourse, most remain primarily structural and descriptive. Previous research mainly focused on identifying linguistic forms and frequencies of code-switching and code-mixing using frameworks, such as Poplack (1980) and Muysken (2000). As a result, the broader sociolinguistic meanings of bilingual practices such as identity construction, professionalism, stance-taking, and audience engagement remain underexplored, particularly in a reflective and professional-oriented podcast context.

Contemporary sociolinguistic scholarship increasingly argues that bilingualism should not be understood merely as grammatical alternation between languages. Rather, code-switching in digital discourse can function as a socially meaningful communicative practice related to identity construction, stance-taking, audience design, and indexicality. In digitally mediated interactions such as podcasts, bilingual speakers may strategically alternate languages to project professionalism, construct authenticity, negotiate social identity, or establish an emotional connection with audiences. This shift from structural analysis toward interpretive sociolinguistic perspectives reflects broader global debates in digital sociolinguistics, where language is viewed not only as a linguistic system but also as a resource for social positioning and identity performance.

Foundational frameworks proposed by Poplack (1980) and Muysken (2000) remain relevant for identifying structural patterns of code-switching and code-mixing in bilingual discourse. Poplack categorized code-switching into inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching, while Muysken classified code-mixing into insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. We believed that structural frameworks alone are insufficient to explain the broader social meanings of bilingual practices in digital discourse. Therefore, this study drew on contemporary sociolinguistic perspectives concerning identity construction and professional positioning by integrating Poplack's syntactic classification of code-switching (1980) and Muysken's structural typology of code-mixing (2000).

Although previous studies have examined bilingual practices in Indonesian digital media, most focused on entertainment-oriented content or structural classification of code-switching and code-mixing. Limited attention has been given to reflective and professional podcast discourse, particularly regarding how bilingual practices function as communicative resources for constructing professional identity and audience engagement. Consequently, the sociolinguistic meanings underlying bilingual language use in Indonesian podcast discourse remain underexplored. Specifically, this study aimed to:

- (1) identify and classify the forms of code-switching and code-mixing in podcast discourse;
- (2) analyze the functions and motivations underlying bilingual language use; and
- (3) explore how bilingual practices reflect professional and social identity in Indonesian digital communication.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design aimed at identifying and analyzing the forms, functions, and sociolinguistic meanings of code-switching and code-mixing in podcast discourse. The primary data source was a YouTube podcast episode from the *Analisa* Channel titled “MengANALISA – COACH or MENTOR: Which is More Important?” featuring Ricky Setiawan, published in 2023. The episode was selected through purposive sampling because it contained extensive bilingual interactions within a reflective and professional-oriented discussion setting relevant to the study’s focus on bilingual practices, identity construction, and digital discourse. As a qualitative study, this research did not aim for statistical generalization but rather sought to provide an in-depth sociolinguistic interpretation of bilingual communication within a specific podcast context.

Data were collected through documentation and verbatim transcription of the selected podcast episode, which has an approximate duration of 38 minutes and 25 seconds. The researchers repeatedly listened to the podcast and carefully examined the transcript to identify utterances containing code-switching and code-mixing phenomena. The unit of analysis consisted of bilingual utterances containing Indonesian-English language alternation. Utterances were considered instances of code-switching or code-mixing when they contained identifiable insertion, alternation, or switching of English linguistic elements within Indonesian discourse based on the operational criteria proposed in Poplack’s (1980) and Muysken’s (2000) frameworks.

The data were analyzed using the linguistic frameworks proposed by Shana Poplack and Pieter Muysken. Poplack’s model categorized code-switching into inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching, while Muysken’s typology classified code-mixing into insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. These frameworks were used to identify and categorize bilingual utterances found in the podcast discourse. The analysis followed the interactive model of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. During the data reduction stage, utterances containing bilingual language practices were extracted and coded according to the established classifications. The categorized data were then organized into tables and accompanied by analytical interpretation related to communicative context, audience engagement, and identity construction in podcast interaction.

Since qualitative interpretation might involve the researchers’ subjectivity, the researchers remained aware of potential bias throughout the analytical process. To strengthen the credibility and reliability of the findings, theoretical triangulation was applied by combining Poplack’s and Muysken’s frameworks during analysis. In addition, Leavy (2023) peer debriefing was conducted in which selected portions of the coded data were independently re-examined by fellow researchers familiar with sociolinguistic analysis to evaluate consistency in categorization and interpretation. Any differences in classification or interpretation were discussed until agreement was achieved, thereby improving coding consistency, analytical reliability, and objectivity in the identification of code-switching and code-mixing instances.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings related to the forms, functions, and sociolinguistic meanings of code-switching and code-mixing identified in the selected podcast episode. The analysis focused not only on the structural patterns of

bilingual language use but also on how bilingual practices function as communicative resources for audience engagement, identity construction, and professional positioning within digital podcast discourse.

1. Identifying and classifying the forms of code-mixing and code-switching

1.1 Code-switching

This section presents the classification of code-switching instances found in the video transcript, analyzed using the framework proposed by Poplack (1980). Poplack divided code-switching into three major types: intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and tag-switching. In total, 90 utterances were identified as code-switching, which were classified based on their structural features as follows:

Table 1.1 Typology of Code-switching Results.

Code-switching Type	F	Percentage(%)	Description
Intra-sentential Switching	44	48.9%	Switching occurs within a single sentence or clause.
Inter-sentential Switching	34	37.9%	Switching occurs between sentences or independent clauses.
Tag-switching	12	13.3%	The use of tags or fixed expressions from one language in a sentence of another language.
Total	90	100%	

From the table above, the data show that the most dominant type of code-switching was intra-sentential switching with 44 utterances, accounting for 48.9% of the total, followed by inter-sentential switching with 34 utterances (37.8%) and tag-switching with 12 utterances (13.3%).

The prevalence of intra-sentential switching suggests that the speakers in the video are highly proficient in both languages, allowing them to alternate seamlessly within clauses or sentences. For example:

“*Sebenarnya apa sih, Mas ee perbedaan antara coach sama mentor?*”
(Excerpt 40)

This excerpt shows intra-sentential switching as the English words are embedded within an Indonesian sentence. Inter-sentential switching was also common, indicating conscious shifts between languages at sentence boundaries, such as:

“*Jadi kalau ditanya apakah number one number two-nya enggak ada.*”
(Excerpt 57)

The phrase “number one number two” appears as a switch after a complete Indonesian clause. Lastly, tag-switching involves expressions such as interjections or short phrases, as in:

“...eh *sorry* high commitment and low maintenance...”
(Excerpt 80)

The use of ‘sorry’ in excerpt 80 represents a common example of tag-switching. The analysis of 90 code-switching utterances revealed that intra-sentential

switching is the most frequently used type among speakers in the podcast. This pattern not only reflects bilingual fluency but also indicates the normalization of hybrid linguistic practices in Indonesian digital discourse. The seamless integration of English lexical items into Indonesian utterances suggests that bilingual communication has become an interactional resource for maintaining conversational flow while simultaneously indexing modernity, educational background, and professional competence. In this context, code-switching functions not merely as a linguistic strategy but also as a sociolinguistic marker associated with urban digital communication practices.

These findings align with other open-access studies in Indonesian-language digital media. For instance, Ayu et al. (2022) analyzed top Indonesian YouTubers' discourses and found inter-sentential switching to be dominant (59.4 %), though intra-sentential was still prevalent (26.7 %), highlighting that both types are common in multilingual content creation. Similarly, Rini & Moehkardi (2021) studied a Canadian–Indonesian bilingual YouTuber, Sacha Stevenson, and reported inter-sentential switching as the most frequent (42 %) with intra-sentential at 34 % and tag-switching at 24 %. In Zhafira Aqyla's YouTube video, intra-sentential switching was most frequently used at over 89 %, suggesting close alignment with our own pattern (Parinduri et al., 2024). Together, these studies reinforced the idea that intra-sentential switching is a resilient bilingual strategy across various digital platforms, while inter-sentential and tag-switching adjust depending on speaker style and context.

The dominance of intra-sentential switching suggests that bilingual language use in the podcast functions as a natural communicative strategy rather than occasional language alternation. The findings indicate that speakers strategically integrate English expressions into Indonesian discourse to maintain conversational flow, express specific concepts efficiently, and align with the bilingual communication style commonly found in Indonesian digital media.

1.2 Code-mixing

The type of code-mixing consists of insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. The data were analyzed using the criterion strategy by Muysken (2000) to determine the types of code-mixing. The analysis of 140 utterances revealed the results as presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Typology of Code-mixing Results.

Code-mixing Type	F	Percentage (%)	Description
Insertion	115	82.1%	Single constituent, nested a-b-a sequence, dummy word insertion, content word, selected element, morphological integration
Alternation	13	9.3%	Multiple constituents, non-nested a-b-a sequence, major clause boundary, peripherality, embedding in discourse, flagging, emblematic/tag-question, etc

Congruent Lexicalization	12	8.6%	Non-constituent, function word, bidirectional, homophonous diamorph, morphological integration, and doubling.
Total	140	100%	

The analysis of the 140 instances of code-mixing revealed three main types: insertion (115 instances; 82.1%), alternation (13 instances; 9.3%), and congruent lexicalization (12 instances; 8.6%). The dominance of insertion indicates that most mixing occurred at the lexical level, primarily at single words or short phrases embedded in Indonesian sentences. This pattern suggests that speakers find it easier and more natural to borrow content words, such as nouns and adjectives from English, especially concepts related to business, education, or personal growth. Alternation, though less frequent, reflects more complex bilingual competence involving clause-level shifts. Congruent lexicalization, while rare, shows overlapping syntactic structures where elements from both languages integrate fluidly. These patterns highlight that code-mixing in this podcast episode is more about enhancing expression and precision than about structural complexity. Below are examples from the dataset representing each type of code-mixing according to Muysken (2000):

1. Insertion

Insertion in code-switching is exemplified by the following excerpt: *“Terus beliau bilang high maintain eh sorry high commitment and low maintenance wow ini value yang menurut aku keren.”* (Excerpt 80) → The phrases ‘high commitment’ and ‘low maintenance’ are clearly inserted English noun phrases within an Indonesian sentence, indicating insertion, as these phrases act as single constituents.

2. Alternation

Alternation is reflected in the following utterance:

“Coaching itu tentang bagaimana meninggalkan skill.” (Excerpt 43) → The utterance shows alternation, where the English word “*coaching*” is followed by a full Indonesian clause. The boundary between languages is clear and alternates between the two grammars.

3. Congruent Lexicalization

Congruent lexicalization is illustrated in excerpt 57 below:

Jadi kalau ditanya apakah number one number two-nya enggak ada.” (Excerpt 57)

→ This sentence exemplifies congruent lexicalization, where Indonesian syntax and English numeral phrases are blended fluently (‘*number one, number two-nya*’), showing a high level of syntactic integration and bidirectional influence.

Our findings showed that insertion dominates code-mixing (82% of the corpus) with alternation and congruent lexicalization trailing far behind, closely parallels multiple recent sociolinguistic analyses in Indonesian bilingual settings. Nurpiana & Fithriani (2023) in a study of EFL classroom interactions in Medan, revealed 118 insertion instances compared to 49 alternation and only 10 congruent lexicalization, indicating reliance on English terms embedded into Indonesian for clarity and pedagogical value. Additionally, Ishak et al. (2025) observed even stronger insertion

dominance 151 cases (85.3%) among Gen Z university students, with alternation and congruent each representing far smaller shares of the data.

These results also resonate with findings from media discourse research by Aziz et al. (2023), who analyzed code-mixing in an Indonesian magazine and recorded 76.6% insertion (36 instances) and 23.4% alternation, with no cases of congruent lexicalization, further underscoring the rarity of syntactic overlap between languages in informal and semi-formal Indonesian written discourse. Similar findings from Indonesian public figures on Twitter also support the predominance of insertion. Putri (2022) reported that Jerome Polin produced 56 insertions, 7 alternations, and 12 instances of congruent lexicalization, while Jehian Sijabat produced 47 insertions, 7 alternations, and 11 instances of congruent lexicalization. These findings indicate a consistent preference for insertion over other types of code mixing across different digital communication contexts.

In light of these studies, our results reinforced insertion as the mainstream code-mixing strategy, particularly for introducing English lexical items into Indonesian. Alternation is employed structurally when clause-level shifts add rhetorical or clarificatory functions. Congruent lexicalization remains exceptionally rare, typically reserved for contexts requiring high syntactic borrowing or in very formal or shared bilingual speech contexts.

In summary, insertion emerges as the dominant form of code-mixing in the podcast discourse, reflecting speakers' preference for embedding English lexical items into Indonesian sentences. This pattern demonstrates how English functions not only as a linguistic resource but also as a socially meaningful element associated with modernity, professionalism, and digital communication practices.

2. Analyzing the function and motivation of using code-mixing and code-switching.

1. Referential Function (74 utterances)

Referential function appears when speakers use code-mixing or code-switching to better refer to specific terms, concepts, or cultural items that may not have an exact equivalent in the primary language.

Example:

"Terus beliau bilang high commitment and low maintenance."

The use of *'high commitment and low maintenance'* conveys a specific professional characteristic that may sound more precise and authoritative in English. This function appears most frequently in the dataset, which is understandable given the educational and professional nature of the YouTube content. The speakers often need to refer to technical terms, concepts in psychology, leadership, or organizational culture that are better captured in English. Rather than translating these terms which could result in loss of meaning or formality they choose to insert them directly, ensuring clarity and efficiency in communication.

2. Directive Function (32 utterances)

Code-switching and code-mixing has a directive function when it is used to give instructions, motivate, or invite the listener to take actions. This function is especially common in interactive or mentoring contexts. The following excerpt illustrate it:

"Yuk jadi coach, jadi mentor buat adik-adik kita."

Mixing occurs to emphasize roles such as ‘coach’ or ‘mentor’, which may carry stronger implications than the Indonesian equivalents. The directive function highlights how speakers use code-switching to guide, instruct, or encourage the audience toward an action or behavior. In motivational or coaching conversations, the English terms ‘coach’ and ‘mentor’ are not only more familiar in global contexts but also hold more prestige, enhancing the persuasive power of the utterance. This aligns with the goal of inspiring listeners to take practical steps.

3. Expressive Function (28 utterances)

Speakers also often do code-mixing to express emotions, personal feelings, or identity. It often occurs spontaneously in storytelling or personal reflection, as shown in the excerpt below:

“Aku pengen dapat oh aku mesti ngambil job ini.”

Mixing Indonesian words with the English word ‘job’ shows emotional emphasis and a sense of ownership. This function allows speakers to express their emotions, preferences, or inner thoughts more authentically. By switching into English for words like ‘job’, the speaker signals personal connection and urgency that might not carry the same weight if stated in Indonesian. It also reflects the speaker’s bilingual identity and comfort in moving between languages when expressing themselves.

4. Phatic Function (18 utterances)

Phatic function supports the maintenance of social relationships or the smooth flow of interaction. It includes greetings, affirmations, or small talk, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

“I agree with you.”

This simple phrase serves to maintain connection and flow in the conversation. In phatic communication, language serves to maintain social cohesion rather than convey content. The use of English phrases like “I agree with you” keeps the conversation engaging, casual, and relatable, especially for younger or bilingual audiences. This suggests that code-switching helps manage interpersonal relationships and social warmth within the discourse.

5. Metalinguistic Function (12 utterances)

Metalinguistic function is used when speakers comment on or refer to the language being used. This often occurs in podcasts when the speaker reflects on word choices, as reflected in the excerpt below: *“Makanya tadi chemistry yang aku sebutin di awal aku disclaim dulu.”* Here, the speaker is aware of and explicitly mentioned their choice of the term ‘chemistry’. This function occurs when speakers reflect on or comment about the language they are using. Switching to English terms like ‘chemistry’ and ‘disclaim’ shows not only language awareness but also the speaker’s familiarity with formal or academic contexts. It helps them mark important concepts or clarify their lexical intentions, particularly when the Indonesian equivalents may sound vague or awkward.

6. Poetic Function (6 utterances)

Language is used creatively, humorously, or with rhetorical flair. This function is less frequent but adds stylistic effect to speech. *“Critical thinking-nya ditrigger.”*

The repetition and rhythm create a poetic or humorous impact. Although

relatively rare, the poetic function adds stylistic flair to the communication. Code-mixing in this case is not merely functional but used creatively to capture attention or generate a humorous or memorable impression. It also reflects the trend in youth and media discourse to blend languages for impact and entertainment.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on bilingual practices in Indonesian digital media. Rini and Moehkardi (2021), for instance, found that code-switching on YouTube frequently serves referential and interactional purposes, particularly when speakers discuss culturally specific or professional topics. Similarly, Azira et al. (2023) observed that bilingual speakers in podcast discourse often employ English expressions to maintain audience engagement and align themselves with modern digital culture. Studies by Situmorang et al. (2024) and Annisa et al. (2024) also revealed that English lexical insertions commonly appear in Indonesian podcast conversations related to self-expression, professionalism, and social interaction. However, unlike previous studies that mainly focused on structural classifications of code-switching and code-mixing, the present study further emphasized the sociolinguistic motivations behind bilingual language use, particularly in relation to professional identity construction and digital audience positioning.

3. Exploring Bilingualism as a Reflection of Social and Professional Identity

This subsection discusses how bilingual practices in the podcast extend beyond linguistic alternation and function as sociolinguistic resources for identity construction, professional positioning, and audience engagement. The findings demonstrate that code-switching and code-mixing are not used randomly, but are strategically employed to construct authority, establish relatability, and align with the expectations of bilingual digital audiences. In contemporary Indonesian digital discourse, the alternation between Indonesian and English often carries broader social meanings associated with modernity, education, and global professional culture (Azira et al., 2023; Siregar & Sosrohadi, 2021).

3.1 Bilingualism as a Resource for Constructing Professional Authority

The findings suggest that bilingual language use in the podcast functions as a communicative strategy for constructing professional authority and expertise. English lexical items frequently appear during discussions related to leadership, mentorship, coaching, and self-development. The following excerpts illustrate this pattern:

a. Excerpt 40:

“Sebenarnya apa sih, Mas ee perbedaan antara coach sama mentor?”

b. Excerpt 43:

“Coaching itu tentang bagaimana meninggalkan skill.”

c. Excerpt 80:

“Terus beliau bilang high commitment and low maintenance wow ini value yang menurut aku keren.”

The use of English expressions such as ‘coach’, ‘mentor’, ‘coaching’, ‘skill’, ‘high commitment’, and ‘value’ does not merely reflect lexical borrowing or bilingual competence. Instead, these expressions index global professional discourse commonly associated with leadership training, self-improvement culture, and modern workplace communication. In Indonesian digital media, English terminology

is frequently perceived as more authoritative, professional, and internationally oriented compared to its Indonesian equivalents.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this phenomenon reflects the concept of indexicality, where linguistic choices point to particular social meanings and identities. The speakers strategically employ English terminology to position themselves as knowledgeable and professionally credible individuals. This aligns with Bucholtz and Hall's perspective that identity is socially constructed through linguistic interaction and discourse practices. In this context, bilingualism becomes a symbolic resource for performing educational capital, expertise, and professional legitimacy within podcast communication.

These findings are consistent with previous studies on Indonesian digital discourse. Siregar and Sosrohadi (2021) found that English lexical choices in Indonesian online communication often function as markers of intellectual authority and modern professionalism. Similarly, Azira et al. (2023) observed that bilingual speakers on YouTube podcasts use English expressions to strengthen credibility and align themselves with global discourse communities. Therefore, the use of bilingualism in this podcast can be interpreted not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a strategy of professional identity construction.

Overall, the findings indicate that English is strategically used to construct authority and expertise within podcast discourse. The insertion of professional terminology enables speakers to align themselves with global self-development culture while simultaneously strengthening their credibility among bilingual audiences.

3.2 Bilingualism and Audience Engagement in Digital Discourse

The analysis also revealed that bilingual practices function as a strategy for audience engagement and interactional closeness. The speakers frequently alternate between Indonesian and English to maintain conversational flow while simultaneously creating familiarity with listeners who are accustomed to bilingual digital communication. The following excerpts demonstrate this interactional pattern:

a. Excerpt 57:

“Jadi kalau ditanya apakah *number one number two*-nya enggak ada.”

b. Excerpt 80:

“...eh *sorry high commitment and low maintenance*...”

The use of expressions such as ‘number one’, ‘number two’, and ‘sorry’ reflects conversational bilingualism commonly found in Indonesian urban digital culture. Rather than functioning as formal language shifts, these expressions appear naturally within interaction and contribute to a casual, relatable, and engaging conversational tone. The speakers implicitly assume that the audience possesses sufficient familiarity with English expressions, indicating the presence of a shared bilingual repertoire between content creators and listeners.

This phenomenon can also be understood through audience design theory, which suggests that speakers adjust their language choices according to audience expectations and social context. In podcast discourse, bilingual expressions help maintain audience engagement by creating a communication style that feels modern, informal, and socially relatable. English expressions

serve not only communicative purposes but also interactional ones, particularly in maintaining conversational rhythm, humor, and interpersonal connection.

Furthermore, the alternation between Indonesian and English reflects stance-taking practices in digital discourse. English tends to appear during technical explanations or evaluative comments, while Indonesian remains dominant in emotionally expressive or relational moments. This linguistic pattern allows speakers to appear intellectually credible without losing intimacy and accessibility with the audience.

These findings support previous studies showing that bilingualism in digital media functions as an important communicative resource for audience engagement and social connection (Rini & Moehkardi, 2021; Situmorang, n.d.) Thus, code-switching and code-mixing in podcast discourse should not be viewed solely as structural linguistic phenomena, but also as interactional strategies for maintaining audience involvement within bilingual digital spaces.

In summary, bilingual language use in the podcast contributes significantly to audience engagement by creating conversational intimacy, relatability, and interactional flexibility. The strategic use of English expressions enables speakers to balance professionalism with accessibility in contemporary digital communication.

3.3 Bilingualism as Personal Branding and Modern Identity

Another important finding is that bilingual language use contributes to the construction of personal branding and modern identity in podcast discourse. The fluid alternation between Indonesian and English reflects how speakers position themselves as globally oriented, educated, and digitally connected individuals. This pattern is visible in several utterances:

(Excerpt 40) “Sebenarnya apa sih, Mas ee perbedaan antara *coach* sama *mentor*?”

(Excerpt 57) “Jadi kalau ditanya apakah *number one number two*-nya enggak ada?”

(Excerpt 80) “*High commitment and low maintenance*. Wow, ini *value* yang menurut aku keren.”

The integration of English expressions into Indonesian discourse reflects more than communicative convenience. These expressions are closely associated with contemporary corporate culture, motivational discourse, and urban middle-class communication styles. Terms such as ‘coach’, ‘mentor’, ‘high commitment’, and ‘value’ carry symbolic meanings connected to self-improvement, productivity, and global professional culture. Their use contributes to the construction of an aspirational identity associated with modern lifestyles and cosmopolitan values.

From the perspective of identity construction, bilingualism becomes part of personal branding in digital media. Podcast speakers are not only conveying information but also performing particular social identities before their audiences. The consistent use of English expressions helps project an image of modernity, global awareness, and educational sophistication. At the same time, the continued use of Indonesian maintains cultural familiarity and

emotional accessibility, resulting in a hybrid identity that is simultaneously local and global.

This finding resonates with broader sociolinguistic debates regarding bilingualism and symbolic identity in digital communication. Aditiawarman et al. (2025) argued that code-mixing in Indonesian media discourse often functions as a marker of prestige, modernity, and social aspiration. Therefore, bilingual practices in this podcast reflect not only language alternation but also identity negotiation within contemporary Indonesian digital culture.

Overall, the findings indicate that bilingualism in podcast discourse serves broader sociolinguistic purposes related to identity performance, audience positioning, and professional self-branding. The strategic alternation between Indonesian and English reflects how podcast speakers negotiate authority, modernity, and social connection within Indonesian digital media culture. These findings support contemporary sociolinguistic perspectives that view bilingualism as a socially meaningful communicative resource rather than merely a structural linguistic phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to identify the forms of code-switching and code-mixing, analyze their communicative functions and motivations, and explore how bilingual practices in podcast discourse reflect social and professional identity. The findings demonstrate that bilingual language use in Indonesian podcasts operates as a strategic communicative resource shaped by the interactional demands of digital discourse. The dominance of intra-sentential switching and insertion patterns indicates that English lexical items have become integrated into Indonesian professional and conversational communication, particularly in discussions related to leadership, self-development, and contemporary urban culture.

The analysis further showed that the use of bilingual expressions serves broader communicative purposes beyond linguistic alternation. English is frequently employed to convey professional terminology, emphasize key ideas, maintain conversational engagement, and construct interactional style. At the same time, Indonesian remains important for preserving emotional accessibility and interpersonal connection with the audience. This suggests that bilingual podcast discourse reflects a negotiation between globalized professional identity and local communicative intimacy.

Theoretically, the study contributes to sociolinguistic research by extending the application of structural frameworks proposed by Shana Poplack and Pieter Muysken into the context of contemporary digital discourse. The findings indicate that code-switching and code-mixing in podcasts should not be interpreted solely through grammatical classification but also through concepts such as identity construction, stance-taking, audience design, and indexicality. In this sense, bilingualism functions as a socially meaningful practice through which speakers construct credibility, professionalism, and modern digital identity.

This study has a limitation. It only studied a single podcast episode and therefore represented only one interactional context within Indonesian digital media. Future research could examine broader datasets involving multiple podcast genres, speakers, or social media platforms in order to compare bilingual practices across different communicative settings. Further studies may also incorporate audience

reception analysis or discourse-pragmatic approaches to better understand how listeners interpret bilingual language use in digital communication. Such directions would help expand current sociolinguistic understanding of bilingualism in increasingly hybrid and globalized media environments.

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